

Council Tax Reduction Consultation 2021-22 Summary

In line with legislative requirements, consultation has been undertaken to test proposals for changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme from 1 April 2021.

The Sussex Police and East Sussex Fire authorities were consulted, alongside a public consultation that began on 20 October 2020 and concluded on 1 December 2020. Participation was encouraged by sending an electronic mailshot to a cross-section of approximately 13,000 residents. The voluntary sector was consulted using an on-line video conference session on 17 November 2020. For those residents not digitally enabled, a phone line was promoted through the on-hold message of the Council Tax public service line to enable paper copies of the consultation to be posted out, at request. In addition, customers who phoned the advice lines for Together Co and Possability People during this period were informed about the open consultation and the option to submit a paper response.

Police and Fire Authority

The Sussex Police Authority has responded that it fully supports the proposal to increase maximum CTR to 82%, and to reduce the minimum £5 award requirement of CTR.

The East Sussex Fire Authority has responded that it recognises the impact of Covid-19 on local communities and the need to support those who are vulnerable, both financially and for other reasons. However, in common with other local authorities they are already facing significant financial challenges due both to reductions in government funding and the impact of Covid-19. They further stated: "Council Tax is our most important funding stream (70% in 2020/21). The Authority will need to take account of any further reduction in council taxbase on its income when considering options for achieving a balanced budget for 2021/22 and beyond."

Public consultation

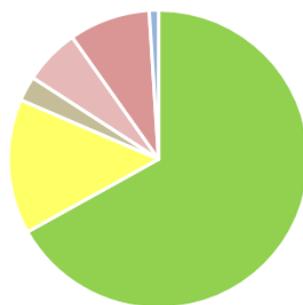
There were 597 responses to the public consultation. All of the proposed measures attracted strong support.

Analysis of the key questions

On the general topic of making the scheme more supportive, 81% either strongly agreed or tended to agree.

Q1a. Do you agree or disagree with making the CTR scheme more supportive to people on the lowest incomes, if funding allows?	Number of responses	Percent
Strongly agree	398	66.7
Tend to agree	87	14.6
Neither agree nor disagree	16	2.7
Tend to disagree	36	6.0
Strongly disagree	52	8.7
Don't know / not sure	6	1.0
Total	595	99.7
No response	2	.3
Total	597	100.0

Q1a. Do you agree or disagree with making the CTR scheme more supportive to people on the lowest incomes, if funding allows?

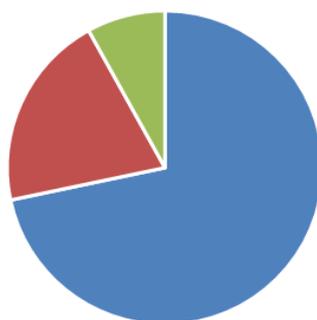


■ Strongly agree ■ Tend to agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Tend to disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know / not sure

When asked about increasing the maximum amount of CTR, again there was strong support, at nearly 72%. Among those who agreed with increasing the maximum, the most popular option was to increase it by more than 82%. This was almost twice as popular as the option of increasing it to 82%. When asked whether the amount should be increased further in future years, 64% were in favour.

Q2a. Do you agree with the idea of increasing the maximum amount of CTR?		Number of responses	Percent
Yes		428	71.7
No		121	20.3
No preference		48	8.0
Total		597	100.0

Q2a. Do you agree with the idea of increasing the maximum amount of CTR?

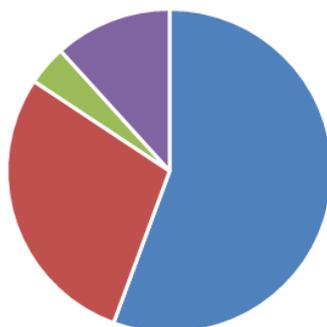


■ Yes ■ No ■ No preference

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Q2b. If yes, should we increase it from 80% to 82%, or a different amount?		Number of responses	Percent
Valid	More than 82%	238	39.9
	82%	123	20.6
	81%	17	2.8
	No preference	50	8.4
	Total	428	71.7

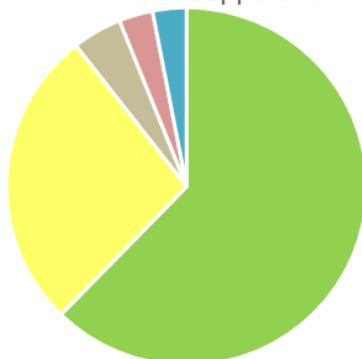
Q2b. If yes, should we increase it from 80% to 82%, or a different amount?



■ More than 82% ■ 82% ■ 81% ■ No preference

Q2c. Do you agree or disagree that in future years, subject to funding being available, we should continue to increase the maximum amount of CTR, to make the scheme more supportive?		Number of responses	Percent
	Strongly agree	266	44.6
	Tend to agree	116	19.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	19	3.2
	Tend to disagree	13	2.2
	Don't know / not sure	13	2.2
	Total	427	71.5

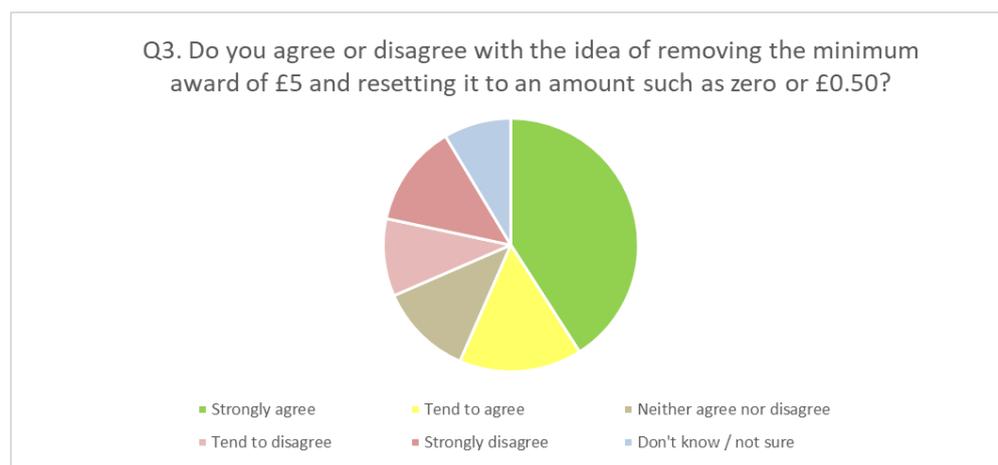
Q2c. Do you agree or disagree that in future years, subject to funding being available, we should continue to increase the maximum amount of CTR, to make the scheme more supportive?



■ Strongly agree ■ Tend to agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Tend to disagree ■ Don't know / not sure

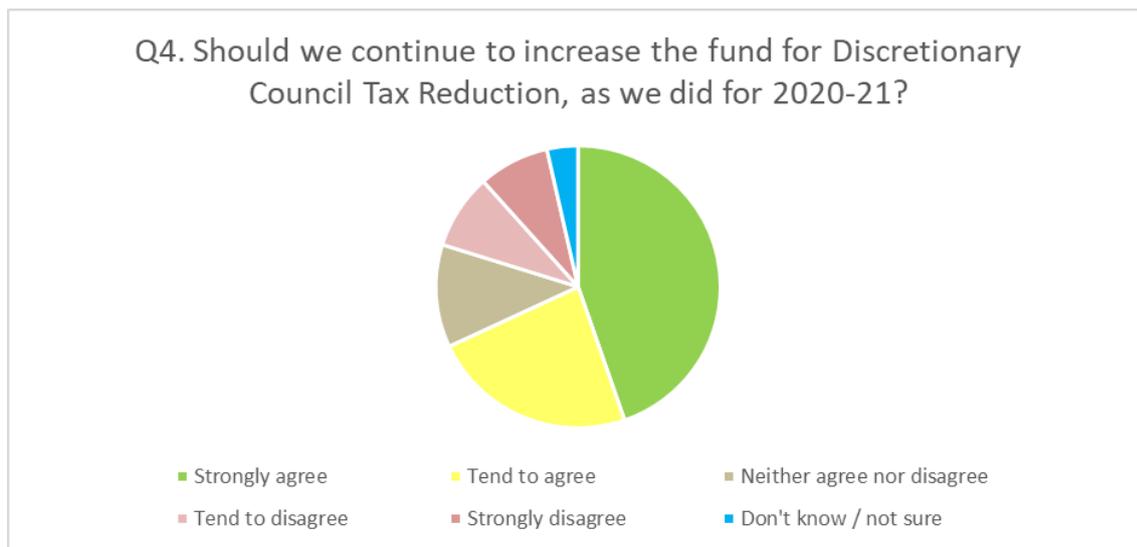
Removing the minimum award bar for CTR also proved popular, but at a notably lower rate than the other proposed measures. Around 56% supported this measure, still more than double the rate of those who did not agree.

Q3. Do you agree or disagree with the idea of removing the minimum award of £5 and resetting it to an amount such as zero or £0.50?		Number of responses	Percent
	Strongly agree	244	40.9
	Tend to agree	93	15.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	71	11.9
	Tend to disagree	59	9.9
	Strongly disagree	78	13.1
	Don't know / not sure	51	8.5
	Total	596	99.8



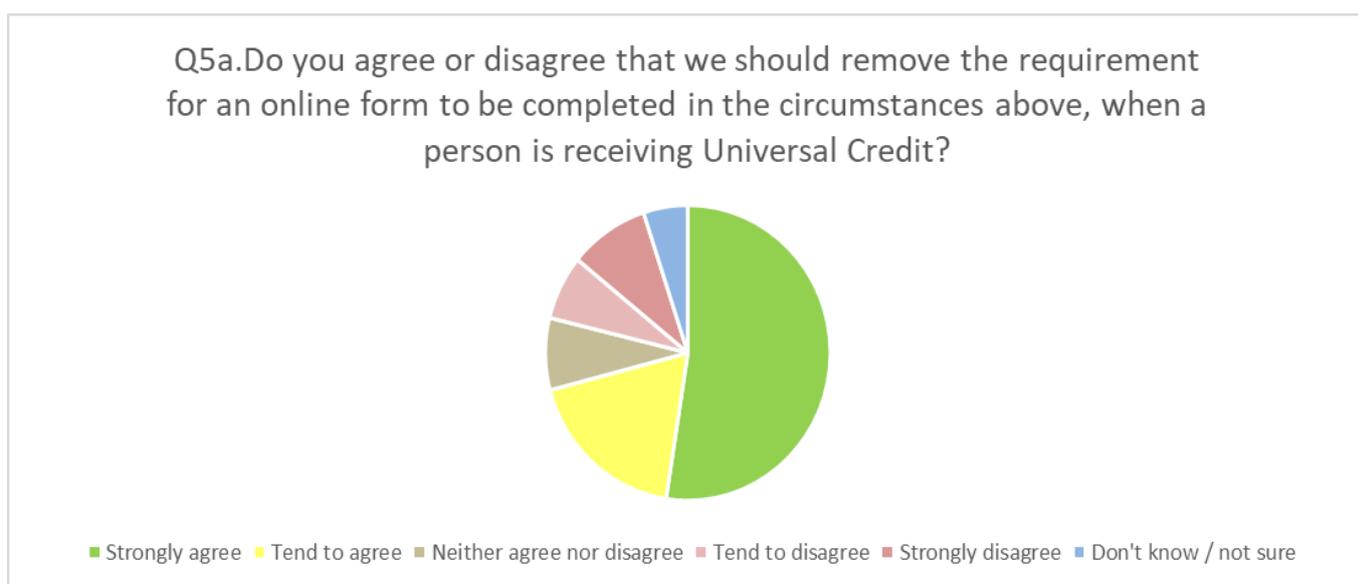
There was strong support for increasing the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction fund.

Q4. Should we continue to increase the fund for Discretionary Council Tax Reduction, as we did for 2020-21?		Number of responses	Percent
	Strongly agree	266	44.6
	Tend to agree	139	23.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	70	11.7
	Tend to disagree	51	8.5
	Strongly disagree	48	8.0
	Don't know / not sure	21	3.5
	Total	595	99.7



There was strong support for the idea of removing the need for a claim form in circumstances where the person has already made a detailed claim to Universal Credit. Over 70% agreed with that proposal.

Q5a. Do you agree or disagree that we should remove the requirement for an online form to be completed in the circumstances above, when a person is receiving Universal Credit?	Number of responses	Percent
Strongly agree	312	52.3
Tend to agree	110	18.4
Neither agree nor disagree	47	7.9
Tend to disagree	42	7.0
Strongly disagree	54	9.0
Don't know / not sure	30	5.0
Total	595	99.7



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Freeform comments

Across the consultation, there were several opportunities for additional comments to be made. Given the high number of consultation responses, there were a correspondingly high number of comments. These are covered in more detail from page 11 of this summary report. However, the following shows the most frequently occurring themes appearing in the comments, along with some example comments to represent the theme:

For Q1 - Do you agree or disagree with making the CTR scheme more supportive to people on the lowest incomes, if funding allows? - Q1b. Do you have any further comments about the general principle of making the scheme more supportive?

Theme	Mentions
All extra financial help is appreciated "Yes.. it is the kindest thing that you are recognising people in need."	77
Worried about income, including concerns about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food, fuel or general poverty • Debt • Covid reducing income • Self employed income • Universal Credit being reduced <p>"I am struggling. I lost two jobs due to covid and whilst I had a low income. Everything went up in price and was struggling to find money for food. I had £25 left for food for last month but had to pay 95 council tax and I'm still in arrears. It's scary and stressful and feels like a punch to the stomach when I tell the council I am struggling."</p>	32
Not happy to increase CT to pay for it "I can understand the need for lower income people to have support but this scheme will mean more tax burden for those who fall outside the threshold for support and /or less public funds and neither of those options seem fair to me"	24
Impact on middle income households / just about managing – these often miss out on any help but struggle just as much, or more "More support, fine. But seems like the burden falls on those working and struggling but don't have incomes low enough for such support. It's always the middle that ends up paying when the richest properties are in the same band. Those on average incomes with decent jobs will end up paying more to support this, despite using less council services."	22
Worried services would be cut/reduced to pay for it "It will depend on how it's funded (ie. what is cut)"	17
Council/service costs are too high / services are poor/ salaries too high "Already council tax is far too high and this just means that my council tax will go up by more. Generally the council should do more to cut its costs and overheads and focus on providing better services such as weeding the pavements (not done around here for some time) and sorting potholes in the roads (opportunities missed to do so during lockdown). Why should people on modest incomes be burdened in order to give others a free ride?"	16

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<p>Living costs, travel costs and rents too high</p> <p>“Brighton is low on the quality of life index. Mainly because of exaggerated prices in rentals the past 15 years. Living costs compare to that of London's prime areas when the salaries are not the same! Minimum wage should match the one in London to justify the increase on monthly rent payments. Along with the council tax being charged.”</p>	11
<p>Would like council tax to be reformed overall</p> <p>“Council tax is very in balanced : single occupants, area, property type. End up paying more per person than those in multiple occupancy households plus the amount of student properties allowed in one area-who do not contribute.”</p>	10
<p>Improve access to / awareness of CTR</p> <p>“Access needs to be more visible, especially for new movers and new tenants. Hence on top of sending a bill; perhaps a letter could be attached to the bill for the CTR scheme and the different methods of application and insuring that they are easily digestible for the public.”</p>	9
<p>Council Tax is too high</p> <p>“Having recently been looking to move out of the area, council tax has been a huge factor. I didn't realise how high it was in B&H and now I realise I can pay almost HALF in some areas of the country it makes me want to leave even more. The streets are absolutely filthy here for the price we're paying, if nothing else.”</p>	8
<p>Support people who need it, but not people who are taking advantage</p> <p>“Yes - we should support low paid people , but much more investigation to stop fraudulent claims.”</p>	8
<p>Happy to increase CT to pay for it</p> <p>“I would be PLEASED to pay more IF it will help people on low incomes.”</p>	5
<p>Amount to pay should be fair / those who can afford should pay for those who can't</p> <p>“You will probably read some horrible comments in here that will question your faith in humanity. Please know there are many of us who believe that we are only as strong as the most vulnerable in our community, and it is the responsibility of those of good fortune to do what we can for the betterment of us all.”</p>	5

For Q5 - Do you agree or disagree that we should remove the requirement for an online form to be completed in the circumstances above, when a person is receiving Universal Credit?

Themes	Mentions
<p>Removing the need for a form makes it easier</p> <p>“When someone is bombarded with too many forms when they are at rock bottom they need support not more forms. If they are entitled to universal credit then that is proof if enough! No need for more forms, keep it simple.”</p>	51

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Do sample checks / fraud concern mentioned “The system should be as simple as possible but also have safe guards from abuse.”	13
Expectation of cost saving (<i>nb.no cost saving is expected for this measure</i>) “We must become more efficient by seeking out and removing duplication of effort such as that described above. If we do that, we will reduce our costs which will contribute to the additional costs of supporting those who need it most.”	11
Be clear about when people still need to do form “Make it clear to all UC claimants as soon as possible that CTB is a different and separate scheme and may require additional details, so claimants are not confused. And contact those people repeatedly to obtain those details. Backdate any claims where the claimant has successfully claimed UC.”	5
whole system needs reform / increase support “Join in campaign to get Government to reinstate CTR for those on lowest incomes”	4
Forms are stressful “When someone is bombarded with too many forms when they are at rock bottom they need support not more forms. If they are entitled to universal credit then that is proof if enough! No need for more forms, keep it simple.”	3

Is there anything we haven't considered or any further comments you'd like to make about Council Tax Reduction changes? - Final Comments

Themes	Mentions
Would like council tax to be reformed overall / government welfare policy needs to be changed, including comments about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging students for Council Tax • Reforming / improving housing stock • Not paying for uninhabited properties • Those with second homes paying more • Higher Council Tax rate for premium properties 	27
Worried about income, including concerns about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food, fuel or general poverty • Debt • Covid reducing income 	23

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self employed income • Universal Credit being reduced <p>“Please listen to the people like myself who are struggling because it’s people like us who are not living happy we are just about surviving and it’s hard work and puts so much stress on our family. It’s not nice having to ask for help but some people just have no choice”</p>	
<p>Impact on middle income households / just about managing</p> <p>“Individual situations dictate that every case should be looked at individually, and not based on the previous yers but a few months and the consequence of loosing your job, or as it's trendy now days to blame it for everything, Covid 19. I had enough money saved to survive 6 months, today I'm about to loose my property etc, because work is no longer there, AND I am NOT entitled to anything including Universal credit.”</p>	17
<p>Worried services would be cut/reduced</p> <p>“There was no information provided at all about the consequences of the Council wishing to increase this funding. How will it be financed? What will be reduced as a consequence or there might be plans to increase the council tax for everyone else? For the next consultation a bit more comprehensive information should be given to seek more valuable responses. Thank you!”</p>	17
<p>Thank you / strong endorsement</p> <p>“I am amazed that I got an email to be consulted on this, but proud that my council would do such a thing. Great work! Providing help to the poorest in our city has never been more important, preventing homelessness is a top priority at all times, not just during a pandemic.”</p>	14
<p>Worried about people who are vulnerable</p> <p>“Great idea. This is a way of helping a small but significant chunk of the city's population at a time when things are awful for all of us, but like whenever something bad happens, it is the poorest in society who suffer most. Reducing the threshold will embrace more people who are entitled for this, and this is a good thing. Keeping this ethos in place into the future will enshrine the principle that it is about helping people always not just on a one-off basis in times of crisis.”</p>	11
<p>Council costs /service costs/ services are poor/ salaries too high</p> <p>“I’m very unsupportive of any of this until I see evidence that the council is spending its money more sensibly. For example, tidy up Brighton as it’s becoming a graffitied dump, get rid of all the new ludicrous empty cycle lanes, discourage rough sleepers from sleeping in shop doorways etc. It used to be such a lovely welcoming town.”</p>	11
<p>All extra financial help is appreciated</p> <p>“as difficult as it is to balance the council books - this pales in comparison to someone trying to balance the books on £73 a week (current JSA levels) - please do all you can - I expect you've seen a rise in unpaid council tax of late, but lets face it, it's hardly surprising when it's simply impossible to live on post austerity benefits ...”</p>	10
<p>Council should provide additional financial advice or sustainability of infrastructure</p> <p>“The council is limited in its scope of what it can do, but it is the most important local organisation in terms of signalling, leadership and coordination.</p>	8

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<p>It would be a good idea to design and undertake some form of formative and summative evaluation of the proposals, based on a coherent monitoring framework so that their impact can be measured. In my view, this should mainly be quantitative and could look at spending patterns and debt levels of recipients and also focus on how this initiative links with other initiatives to improve poorer people's well-being."</p>	
<p>Not happy to increase CT to pay for it</p> <p>"If you go ahead, this should be funded from the existing budget. NOT an increase for other payers of council tax."</p>	7
<p>Don't agree with CTR / benefits</p> <p>"You claim that by handing out more financial assistance for those "apparently" in need would result in a reduction in council services. I do not believe this would be the case. What I do believe is that those who DO pay their way will in fact be hit with even larger bills to cover the shortfall."</p>	7

Appendix – detailed comments section

Q: Do you agree or disagree with making the CTR scheme more supportive to people on the lowest incomes, if funding allows? - Q1b. Do you have any further comments about the general principle of making the scheme more supportive? (You will have an opportunity to answer questions about specific proposals in the following sections)

Don't know

- Really need to know details i.e. how much would my Council Tax need to rise as I am on a pension but wouldn't qualify for help as I have savings.
- Where's the money coming from?
- Although my personal income hasn't fallen, I do have to give more financial support to my partner/children and I would still be expected to pay the full Council Tax, which I am finding harder. The Council Tax for 21/22 will no doubt be another maximum increase which worries me, but I don't feel I can support others by suggesting they pay less when I can't pay less, even though I am in difficulty myself.

Neither agree no disagree

- I'm all for helping people in dire straights, but am concerned about where the extra money will come from. If it means in an increase for others, I'm not so keen. In my case, I'm a single occupant so do get a reduction. I'm not on universal credit, but I don't earn a lot, and I've also been furloughed for 6 months so things are tight as it is. If my council tax gets increased because of this, it's going to stretch me.
- I believe it is important to provide support to the most financially vulnerable in the community. I would be concerned if additional support is provided by reducing other Council Services and benefits.
- Not enough information has been made available regarding where the budget impact would be and whether council tax increases are being considered to fund this initiative,
- As long as this scheme will not make council tax increases for the others, it's alright. However if this will lead to increase council tax I'm not agree with it.
- I think it depends on how quickly the economy bounces back. We could be back to normality by April 2021. I would also imagine that council taxes will need to rise next year and many of us have not had pay rises for a while so we could all do with a council tax freeze instead.

Strongly/Tend to Disagree

- Council finances are going to be in bad position because of COVID-19 so use the money for services needed by the city
- Making CTR more supportive might mean higher council tax bills for others, who are also on low incomes but who are not entitled to benefits.
- We are all struggling financially and have all had to tighten our belts. Offering further reductions for some, whilst increasing the tax to cover it for others, means that plants working people like myself will struggle further. Rather than alleviate pressure you'll actually widen the pressure

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load across more households. Council tax bills in B&H are already very expensive compared with many other local authorities.

- I would rather see funding being used to upskill, educate, develop skills, bring communities together, develop more sustainable living; than simply increasing finances.
- The scheme being more supportive is not bad per say, but the increase in cost to those who pay full council tax is a problem. I am not content paying extra council tax so those who do not work can live more comfortably.
- Council tax is already too high for those on middle incomes. Those on lowest incomes already receive a vast amount of support; 'normal' people should not have to subsidise their lifestyles by paying more council tax.
- Persons on low income receive benefits as a means of support. Council tax should reflect the services that each household receives.
- Should wait and see what central Govt do e.g. furlough scheme has already been extended 6 months. Central Govt should have prime responsibility
- You have not provided any statistics on the incomes of these houses, nor the percentage reduction. You are asking us to agree or disagree with a "morale principle", which I think is rather sneaky, considering the actual implications/changes are hidden/redacted. Further, it is quite clear that "Funding" does not "allow", as council tax will go up, for BHCC, for Sussex Police, for social care specifically And for FRS, - so this isn't a "if funding allows", its a "how much will we cut services here and there, whilst also increases taxes on everyone But the poorest. - It serves no logic. If these are the households which use the vast majority of council funded services, then cutting their payments whilst also cutting internal services is analogous to a starving man using his last paycheck for suicide, rather than buying a week's groceries.
- 'if funding allows' - this is misleading. Funding depends on increasing our contribution which I am against unless it's for material improvements to the city
- This should be centrally funded from the government as this will be across all locations in the UK. If it is done locally, how do we track and manage what is really required and what if things change? Would you reverse the decision or revisit it?
- More support, fine. But seems like the burden falls on those working and struggling but don't have incomes low enough for such support. It's always the middle that ends up paying when the richest properties are in the same band. Those on average incomes with decent jobs will end up paying more to support this, despite using less council services.
- I would like the government to provide more financial assistance rather than the burden being placed further on local councils.
- I think at the moment there is so much the council need to support especially in mental health and adult social care.
- the efforts are made to support only the lowest income, whilst standard families are struggling as well but not eligible to any form of support
- Not sure how this is helpful we are all in it together. Why is the cut not universal?
- Without seeing any figures as to show how a low income is defined, and how many dependants that income is to support, without further subsidies, then I can't give a definitive answer. The principle of the scheme is of course a good one to help people TEMPORARILY through this crisis, but I can't see this being possible without a detrimental impact to other public services and potentially burdening full council tax payers with tax rises.
- There is already support provided through government funded initiatives

Strongly/Tend to Agree

- I think the idea that everyone should make a contribution to their council tax bill is sadly just impractical. The cost of chasing up unpaid council tax is surely greater than the revenue generated by low income families contributing towards their council tax bill. The system needs to be simplified and every time BHCC tries to simplify the system (e.g. the de minimus rules) it just makes it more complicated and expensive to administer.
- Years of austerity have made it incredibly difficult for people with a low income to pay their council tax, even at a reduced rate. People are struggling to buy food and pay bills, especially those on legacy benefits who bafflingly received no noticeable assistance to help them generally cope during the pandemic. How are such people expected to find money they simply do not have to pay a council tax bill?
- It's a direct and easy way to provide financial relief. Debt recovery, support for those in debt and assessment for discretionary relief all have their own costs.
- Yes as I am one of the people that this affects as I am disabled and am basically housebound also , you should also take into account of people like myself who also have to pay for health services on top of our other bills like care link and carers etc, that is in itself is a lot of extra money for people like myself to have to find to pay for these other services that we need, these should be ALWAYS taken into account when our council tax is to be looked into, these on average cost about an extra £50 a week and that's also excluding having any food services as well, and if you are like myself you are on legacy benefits which means that the government are illegally discriminating against EVERYONE on legacy benefits as we are not given the extra £80 a month for 12 months that people on Universal Credit receive and then there is disabled people who also have other health and care services like a car on motability, these cost about £50 a month upwards, and this is even before massive energy bills, Internet bills etc as well as trying to eat as well, unfortunately benefits even when they do go up, they do NOT go up in as much as the bills go up, so we are left with even less money, at 1 point of time, EVERYONE who was disabled didn't have to pay the council tax, now the benefits dont even pay for most of these services that anyone who is disabled needs to pay, my carers contribution is £35 a week, my care link is about £6.50 a week, this is roughly an extra £42 a week which is equal to a massive £168 a month, thats even before my other bills or my council tax amount on top of this huge amount. In my opinion these extra payments should ALWAYS be taken into account, as it is I cant afford all of my bills as it is, but I could not now go back to not having carers because of my health conditions getting worse since Covid-19.
- Yes we need to support families AND elderly isolated people who may need companionship and low level care to remain in their homes by providing free accommodation BUT not loose their right to single household status too.
- Should we even be questioning if we should offering the people struggling the most this support?
- This will make a big difference to people who are struggling to make ends meet. Council tax debt is pursued very strongly, and people are often forced to choose between paying council tax and paying for essentials like food, fuel and rent. Anything the council can do to ease this dilemma is very welcome.
- more support for low income, rather than non-working people
- Absolutely. This is a time of national crisis and if people lose their jobs or have reduced hours during this period of Covid-19 they should not be penalised further for this.

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- As someone who is in a family who both have lost jobs but we are just over the saving threshold we get absolutely NO help. So if the CTR scheme is on just income for this year, that would be much fairer.
- I as an individual living in Brighton for the last 9 years has never struggled more to pay for my household bills and council tax. I am self employed, working in teaching and the arts and I have been drastically affected by Covid. Like many of the other inhabitants of Brighton who work in the arts, I feel it's important to support those who make Brighton a cultural, creative and vibrant place to live.
- I am struggling. I lost two jobs due to covid and whilst I had a low income. Everything went up in price and was struggling to find money for food. I had £25 left for food for last month but had to pay 95 council tax and I'm still in arrears. It's scary and stressful and feels like a punch to the stomach when I tell the council I am struggling. Same response each time. You earn too much! £800 - £1000 a month wage is too much?! My rent is 900. It just seems to be worse than the last system. The last system you knew where you stood this system all bunched together makes even trying to tell someone you are struggling impossible. Please help us. I live alone and have to pay 95 a month for council tax when I use 1 bin bag a week. Never called the cops or used any of their services yet I just get threatened with action if I don't pay. I pay my road tax via the council coz I had to drive to that I understand in paying. To group council tax under this band is not fair!! I'm alone scared and hungry and council don't care they just want their money.
- I'd like to understand where the funding would be coming from to support this scheme but I am generally on support of helping those struggling
- I absolutely agree that this is the right thing to do.
- Council tax is very unbalanced : single occupants, area, property type. End up paying more per person than those in multiple occupancy households plus the amount of student properties allowed in one area-who do not contribute.
- Waiving council tax entirely for people with no employment would be suitable since they have no means to pay it and little means to gain employment during the pandemic.
- Need to help people, but costs should be realised through efficiency saving measures at the council.
- I think the scheme should be more supportive especially as some residents are all ready on furlough and struggling to live on less lower income like other residents on benefits
- If you lower council tax for those who are financially vulnerable, would that mean you will raise them for people who don't qualify (but might be struggling unbeknownst to you)? Will the council effectively be subsidising the income of private landlords who charge extortionate rents? Could landlords do their bit, and lower rents during this difficult time (they are very high for what you get anyway) and perhaps the utility companies could do their bit too, if they are not already? It seems to me that there are people/companies whose income will not be interrupted and in fact they do very nicely whatever the economic climate - then the burden gets passed on to other council tax payers. I think this inherently unfair and antisocial.
- Disabled people should not have to pay council Tax
- The scheme should automatically support pensioners.
- thank you for your support
- It will depend on how it's funded (ie. what is cut)
- I am self employed with no profit so maximum working tax credit which is less than universal credit and I can NOT afford the council tax, it adds up to a weeks worth of my money every month

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- Covid has been devastating and we owe a duty of care to those hit the hardest. I would be happy to see my council tax increase if that funded reductions for the most vulnerable.
- Everyone with reduced income (due to not being able to work in Lockdown) should have their Council Tax discounted
- I believe in making it more affordable, for example. I am in a tiny one-bedroom flat in Kemptown with my partner, we are in our 20's and are trying to save to buy a house. The £130.00 a month we are charged takes a significant dent out of our income, it is also more than our parents pay for 3/4 bedroom houses in Kent an equally affluent area. It seems slightly mismatched.
- The council should be more supportive with the sick, unemployed, disabled that are really struggling. They also need to consider business through a bad patch and some charities that enjoy the privileged status but revert little or nothing towards the community.
- We, the people have a real difficulty to understand the high salaries and benefits that some council workers enjoy at the cost of charging council tax to people in a mere weekly £71.
- I think the main point is to ensure that those who are involuntarily on the lowest incomes receive the support that they need. The question is whether a modest (£35 per year) reduction is the best way of doing this. I don't know. Any proposal, such as this, needs to be considered within the context of a wide package of monetary and non-monetary support. There is a risk that, seen in isolation, the impact of the initiative is of insufficient scale to be noticeable to the recipients at an individual level, but is viewed as an expensive cost at aggregated level.
- In the pandemic era, it would be appropriate to give the citizens a discount until they can get back to normality? You are punishing the majority of people who pay council tax every year without fail. Some of us may be experiencing some difficulties, and it would be decent and considerate to discount the council tax for all during the pandemic. In fact, council services are running at half the capacity and therefore we all are entitled to pay accordingly? Not ask us to pay the usual amount when the service provided by the council is running at half the capacity!?
- As long as funding is not taken away from essential services to facilitate this - i.e. it does not affect general healthcare services.
- Cut back on non-essential services before thinking about raising council tax.
- People should pay according to their ability
- I think the threshold for help should be increased. It is currently extremely low, and I think many who have had to start working part time will miss out on CTR, even though they can sometimes struggle just as much as those who are not working.
- I think you have to balance it out between supporting those with the greatest need and keeping all the important council services up and running.
- Happy to see extra support to people on very low income. Please don't increase council tax for those on fairly low incomes - e.g. as a nurse I earn about £24,000 p.a. which is only enough to make ends meet and I wouldn't want an increase in Council tax, but don't expect extra support either.
- Should be able to support more working family's
- My husband is a part time carer working in the community he earns around £800 per month. We also have two teenage children who both have autism and one also has ADHD and can be quiet a hand full for myself hence the reason my husband can only work part time so he can help out at home more often. I get carers allowance for one of my children yet we are earning too much money to be able to get help with the council tax. Each month it's a struggle paying my council tax on top of all the other bills we have to pay. It seems that the people who are trying and working but are earning low amounts are the ones who are struggling the hardest with having to take time off work every time they have a temperature because of COVID my husband also

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doesn't get paid for the first 3 days he is off sick so our income has dropped and goes up and down each month as we never know what work my husband is going to get given until the day before. Also with universal credit because it's always a month behind when we are in a month that my husband hasn't been given much work then we won't get the extra UC until the month after and by then it's too late as fines for late payments have already been given. It would be a massive help to my self and other family's in the same situation if you could change the max your aloud to earn to claim higher so those on low working incomes can benefit and not have to worry from one day to the next.

- We were told we earn too much to get a reduction which was heartbreaking as we're barely managing and finding £146 a month has been crippling so I would like to see the threshold made more accessible
- The poorest should be supported by those who can afford it. Not necessarily by those in the poshest houses. There are people on limited or fixed incomes who live in expensive areas.
- I agree with the principle of making the scheme more supportive but the process of deciding who actually needs the support has to be very stringent. I am concerned if there will be council tax rise to fund that. We just had a rise and it will be a huge burden on those who are not claiming CTR.
- You will probably read some horrible comments in here that will question your faith in humanity. Please know there are many of us who believe that we are only as strong as the most vulnerable in our community, and it is the responsibility of those of good fortune to do what we can for the betterment of us all.
- Concerns about where the cut off point is set and the effect on households who fall just below.
- The council tax is generally too high for all, so that need to be considered
- I believe that Council should also consider working single parents and single adult houses. Covid 19 increased costs in childcare meaning that not only lower income but also higher expenses.
- I think the up and down nature of the changes that people are going through with changes to support levels through covid is going to be harder than any part of it. Giving something and then taking it away is problematic.
- Cost of living has gone up tremendously, especially food cost and that's was even before covid. As a single working parent I am struggling and even more so now during covid. The cost of having my college son home 6/7 days a week has been crippling my finances as he's not getting his free meal, electricity bill has obviously gone up and so has everything else. Means other Bill's have to be sacrificed and debt rises.
- I am currently on universal credit and get 1343.00 per month for my household but do not qualify for council tax reduction and my rent is 1250.00 per month not leaving enough to live on yet alone pay my council tax which is getting in serious arrears but have no where else to go for help
- I am 100% supportive of it as long as those who continue to pay CT aren't expected to pay an increase in their payments to cover it. We are all suffering.
- The scheme should be more supportive and available, if not to everyone, then at least to as many people as the council can afford. There are a staggering amount of people in Brighton and Hove who are employed in either hospitality or the arts, and given that these two industries seem to be taking the brunt of the burden imposed by covid-19, it only seems fair that the myriad of people who now find themselves earning 80% of their wages on furlough (if they're lucky enough to even get furlough) shouldn't be paying the same amount of council tax which they were before. After all, many of us are now using the councils services less and less given that we are spending more and more time at home. Why should the amount paid remain the

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same if this is the case? I strongly feel that the scheme should be more supportive for people in low income, and feel that the criteria needed to apply for the scheme should be much more generous. The scheme should be more supportive and accessible to more people.

- It should be offered to more people. It strikes me that the definition of "low income" doesn't actually cover a lot of people who struggle on their income
- I do believe in supporting those on low incomes, however you need to understand the implications to those who are considered to be on a living wage too. £19K pa, living alone, paying all the bills doesn't mean you're solvent!

Q: Do you agree or disagree that we should remove the requirement for an online form to be completed in the circumstances above, when a person is receiving Universal Credit? - Q5b. Do you have any comments or is there anything we have not considered in relation to Removing the online claim form for Universal Credit claimants?

Don't know/ Neither agree or Disagree

- The system should be as simple as possible but also have safe guards from abuse.
- How much of the current council tax is going towards the bureaucratisation of this ludicrously complicated assessment?
- If you automatically provide CTR for UC claimants, will it be easier for claimants to hide 'non-dependent' households? If so, then I am against it. If not, I'm for it
- Surely the DWP can include the questions the council requires in their claim for universal credit. Making it far more streamlined???

Strongly/Tend To Disagree:

- In an ideal world we could just accept the claim details from UC as a claim for CTR. But UC are so bad at collecting and interpreting information that I wouldn't trust the details they pass on. During Covid they accepted a lot of claims they knew were fraudulent - do we really want to use such details?
- If they are completing everything online it should all be covered. There should be no need for more work to achieve many items when one element is already being done. Keep it simple for claimants, always.
- Stringent checks should be maintained. An additional application form and process will help ensure this.
- Unless it requires substantial additional work to assess these claim forms, you have just stated in the text above, that 13% needs further checks that includes fraud checks. Please do make sure that the council tax paid by us is only allocated to those who comply with all requirements and are in need of it. The city is a bad state, and there are many ways how the same pot of money could be spent rather usefully.
- Although I understand why this question is being asked, and although I do in principle agree with streamlining, I see this as checks and balances to make sure information is correct and the people who need the money are getting it.

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- If the requirement for a form is removed, 13% of UC claimants would receive CTR automatically when they are not actually entitled to it. At least, this is how your explanation above reads.
- CTR is a separate benefit, just as National Health Service reductions are awarded separately for anyone in a low non-means tested situation.
- I think the Council should help people who genuinely need it and to this end. I think it would be advisable for the claim form for universal credit claimants to stay in existence. Also I hope that for people who don't have an on line facility, paper claim forms can be sent.
- Claimants need to be transparent and this prompts that

Strongly/Tend to Agree

- This will help the people who are digitally unable to apply easily or unable to comprehend the fact that they need to make a second claim for something that they've already been asked by UC.
- Will produce efficiencies which is good
- Im on legacy benefits so Universal Credit doesn't affect me at all, but it seems totally stupid to have both the DWP and yourselves doing this, its just a complete waste of time.
- When someone is bombarded with too many forms when they are at rock bottom they need support not more forms. If they are entitled to universal credit then that is proof if enough! No need for more forms, keep it simple.
- All simplifications/ "tell-us-once" measures most welcome.
- Yes the online form should be discontinued especially as the council already have the claimants circumstances and benefit records to hand either from the housing benefit team at the council or from the DWP as this forms a cause great distress and not everybody has access to the Internet or is able to complete these forms online due to not having knowledge of how to go online like some elderly residents or people who can't afford a smart phone or tablet and have no access to the Internet
- This should result in administrative cost saving so this should be quantified as part of this proposal.
- These things are always complicated to design and manage. However, the principle should be to focus on reducing unnecessary bureaucratic processes and simplifying access even if this results in some moral hazard. The issue of waste and moral hazard are not primarily about benefits for poor people; they are probably much more of an issue amongst higher income groups.
- It should be considered that removing additional barriers to making a claim would reduce administrative burden and unnecessary complexity - it does not make sense to duplicate application requirements.
- Various departments should work closely and tightly to reduce cost to the departments and council as well as make it easier to the vulnerable to fill one form and have all departments act on it. The council must ensure tighter collaboration and minimal hurdles required for people to get to the process they need to.
- Checking for fraud should exist at all levels.
- When i made a claim for universal credit i wasn't told to apply seperately for CTR. I found out from someone else. The whe system needs a proper revamp!
- Improve process, and eliminate duplication and form filling. In 2019, the two did not link up properly. I am still paying back an over-payment of CTR as a result, despite my calls to update the council after a change to my circumstances, ie employment.

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- The fact that you are considering all this warms my heart.
- Why would the Council ever have required UC claimants to unnecessarily submit a 2nd benefit claim form? Such practice smacks of administration seeking to immorally 'minimise' benefit uptake.
- Common sense.
- This should also apply when UC stops. I got screwed for a lot of money because departments didn't talk to each other
- All the forms can be highly stressful for applicants, so if there's an unnecessary one, get rid of it. Make it easier.
- Remove this duplicated step will not only make it easier for claimants but also easier for the council to administer
- As long as it is made clear to the claimant whether they fall into the exceptional category where they are claiming UC but still have to do a form because of the other circumstances listed above. The system MUST be really transparent and straightforward for the claimant. It can be very difficult for someone who is on a low income or vulnerable due to disability or chronic illness to navigate all the forms and procedures so it must be guided clearly.
- It seems a waste of time to have to process a further online form when information is already available from UC claim
- Concerned additional online forms are difficult to complete for people with limited literacy or IT skills so any reduction in form filling would be good.
- I really think this should happen as I did not realise that I had to inform council tax when this happened to me and I have still had to pay the council tax for the 6 months I had assumed universal credit had taken care of. I felt that it was a unfair trap that was not fully explained.
- its 2020 just make life simpler
- Dropping an unnecessary form would save time and resources dedicated to administration over this particular area of the process.
- Use the money saved on admin to help support the CTR scheme.
- Providing we can rely on the information being provided by the DWP and receive that information as soon as it's available. Currently there's often a substantial delay of 2-3 months
- If nothing else is done, this change should definitely be implemented. The Council have the opportunity to remove a layer of bureaucracy that should not be there in the first place and I trust that the Council will act accordingly
- We must become more efficient by seeking out and removing duplication of effort such as that described above. If we do that, we will reduce our costs which will contribute to the additional costs of supporting those who need it most.

Is there anything we haven't considered or any further comments you'd like to make about Council Tax Reduction changes? - Final Comments

- Scheme should be run in way which avoids extra paperwork and time spent on very small claims.
- Given that the majority of public properties (museums, schools, etc) have been closed/unavailable for use for prolonged periods of time there should be a general reduction in the amount charged this year. This amount will be covered by the reduction in damage, maintenance, heating, etc. required by the properties during their unused periods.

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- Aim to be more proactive when someone first gets in to CT arrears, to check what is going on and what help can be put in from the start around benefits, and other financial inclusion support to prevent people getting into long term difficulty.
- Make it targeted towards single person households as well as families.
- You might like to consider an option of people paying more? A flexible contribution added either a percentage or specific amount. There are many generous people around and could consider their own circumstances to assist.
- What does “if funding allows” mean?!! The whole consultation appears to assume that Government funding for temporary support will not continue. Therefore the term “if funding allows” is vague and misleading. It’s very hard to support the proposal without knowing how it’s going to be funded!!!
- Council tax needs to be reduced for ALL, not for the few.
- Make DCTR available in 'lump sums' if necessary (like HBDP), rather than it having to be attached to benefit periods. The current method is seriously limiting DCTR's effectiveness in helping those in the most serious financial problems.
- Look at reform and restructuring in order to reduce Council Tax bill for all - as it has 'peaked' for many/most households - but ensure discretionary help is available in special cases.
- Let's do all we can to help those most in need. Good work!
- Just make the process easier and less stressful for people in need of this crucial help particularly during COVID 19.
- There needs to be balance which avoids people on low income who are not claiming paying more to help people on lower income. a payment of 20% would appear to be reasonable considering all the other calls on the councils finances.
- See earlier comment. This needs to be fairer to all based on income right now, in these challenging times. If not eligible for universal credit you can't get Any help with Anything at all, which seems wrong.
- I would like some more information as to how these will be funded. Which services are being considered for cuts? What new / increased funding streams are being contemplated?
- The discount for living alone should be significant! This is a very large outgoing for people to consider and not everyone is in a position to live with others.
- As before. We are all struggling and will continue to do so for years to come as our economy recovers. We all just need to knuckle down and work hard and bear the short term financial pains. Handing out more money To people isn’t the answer. Spending money on employment opportunities and training is a better use of taxes.
- The government have made multiple changes and given more and more money to help people in difficulty. To then take more money from local councils and their services to further subsidise just seems completely counterproductive - it’s just robbing Peter to pay Paul
- Increasing the single person's allowance from 25% to 50% it is very difficult for a single person to be paying 75% council tax along with all other bills and rent.
- If you raise council tax next year, then any changes you make to CTR are just going to result in a 'freeze' rather than a reduction for the people concerned. It doesn't sound as though it's going to help much. Rather than try and fiddle around with council tax, the pressure needs to be on utility companies and landlords to reduce their bills/rent. I think you're trying to be helpful, but you're just pissing in the wind (not being rude). This needs to be approached from a whole different angle, and you need to be a lot tougher with those who are making huge profits and offering poor service in the city. This is a very expensive city in which to live, and it DOESN'T provide the quality of life that it should. Landlords are driving Ferraris and the properties are

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dire! I also think wages in some sectors are quite low for such an expensive city - and considering we are living in the 21st Century!

- I am a variable hours worker, so I think that there should be provision made to award discount in individual months, rather than just annually. Although I have worked full time for this company for the last 10 years, my contract changed 2 years ago. As we are currently undergoing talks re. redundancy I may have to cut my hours or be completely cut from the company for a few months. It would be good to have the flexibility of a reduction month on month.
- I want to know what services are at risk of budget cuts, and where additional funding would come from before wholeheartedly supporting this.
- Increasing the discount for single income households where one is a student and the other is working
- There are people who are above the CTR funding line who still struggle. Do not increase funding for those under it when there are students leaving university and young people struggling to find affordable homes.
- Unpaid Family and Friend Carers should have an extra CTR discount entitlement.
- Should be targeted to help very lowest income, not extended to cover new people unless they fall into category due to reduced income, not sensible to lower thresholds
- Tax BTL, second home and holiday let owners to make up any shortfall in council income.
- Just that I'm receiving £383 a month UVC and have to pay £101 a month council tax how can I possibly pay it
- You guys always did an amazing job for the community keep up the good job. Thank you
- Yes - Central Government should sort this out nearer the time when we know what the situation is, not 6 months in advance, we could easily have a vaccine by Xmas - read the news
- As stated before, a small decrease/change in council tax will lead to nearly No benefit for the households at hand over the course of the months to come. It will however lead to reduced funding for the services on which these people rely. Why not use that money, instead for a few more key workers to support communities and help people develop themselves, or reduce exploitation and addition, and safeguard vulnerable children and families? - I'm sure the homeless could do with a discount to their hostels, "if funding allows"... They always seem to need a few more pounds for a place to sleep tonight. This seems like a terrible exercise of short-sightedness.
- Realistically there will be further hardship in 2021 as a result of COVID-19 and a committed increase for 2021 would help. I am very supportive of reducing complexity by removing duplicative forms when a universal credit application is made.
- Increased transparency and proactive publication of support provision and council performance needs to be alongside any changes.
- Like, I said the council must work closely and tightly with each other and fix disparaging systems that are making the council having to keep few systems up to date. Streamline so save money. The council must also extend CTR to people who are over 50 years old, and even if they are working, they are the most susceptible to mental and health risks. Some folks lost their job because of the pandemic and yet are not getting CTR?
- I approve of the efforts here but I would emphasise that more needs to be done to address HB rather than CT.
- You have said nothing about whether any of this initiative would be funded through council tax rises, and if not, which areas would be impacted by reduced budgets.
- If you go ahead, this should be funded from the existing budget. NOT an increase for other payers of council tax.

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- There was no information provided at all about the consequences of the Council wishing to increase this funding. How will it be financed? What will be reduced as a consequence or there might be plans to increase the council tax for everyone else? For the next consultation a bit more comprehensive information should be given to seek more valuable responses. Thank you!
- Looking at the people around me, we are all having difficulties. Personally I think it should remain the same but use the discretionary payments when needed.
- The majority of the people living in this City do not fall into the disadvantaged category in the way other areas of this country might be represented so I would urge the council to think about supporting the 'squeezed middle' we are the ones that need assistance
- I am amazed that I got an email to be consulted on this, but proud that my council would do such a thing. Great work! Providing help to the poorest in our city has never been more important, preventing homelessness is a top priority at all times, not just during a pandemic.
- Generally your CTR regime seems very favorable with such large discounts. Why not have a more staggered discount ladder to reduce the overall cost which after all falls to the other council tax payers.
- I am caught in a trap. Reduced hours to look after elderly mother. On minimum wage but no longer entitled to any benefits as don't work 30 hours. Work too much to claim carers allowance but annual take home is less than £10k per year. I would be better off not working and claiming benefits. Because I work I get penalised I get no help with council tax, take home less than 800 a month and pay 115 a month in council tax.
- I'd like the city council to also consider those who are not necessarily on low income, but might also struggle financially during this pandemic. Just because we're not on the lowest band of income does not mean that we don't have financial challenges. If we're to make the city fairer, everyone (even those on relatively high income) should benefit.
- I note that those in Council Tax Band D are entitled to claim 80% CTR. Band D suggests a large property. I am an advocate of helping those who help themselves but still cannot manage on their income, and of those who would otherwise fall through the gaps. I am not in favour of helping those who are living in large or expensive properties because they have a choice to adjust their circumstances. I would prefer to see Band D out of the equation. I would also like to know how the Council ensures claims are valid.
- Your proposed changes e.g. moving from 80% to 82% will make very little difference to a household income over a year but will make a huge dent in the council's funds so it seems fruitless
- Burdening the rest of us with hundreds of thousands of £ in costs to only save someone a few quid won't help us or them.
- Personally I think it's terrible that people on the lowest incomes are still asked to contribute 20%. Single people also living with disabled children get no extra help, just the 25% discount, regardless of the extra costs to them. The whole system needs looking at properly.
- I think anyone with a special needs person in the house should have to pay no council tax and not have to provide bank statements etc just DLA/PIP proof
- It should be automatic if someone has to apply for Universal Credit. Remove the duplication and room for errors.
- I wasn't even aware of the hardship form so this should be better publicised
- Can it please be available for those on Working Tax Credits or Child Tax Credits too
- I would like council tax to be reduced further for lowest income households, but you haven't said what other budgets for other services might be cut to fund this- without knowing that I can't express what I think the priorities should be

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- As CT is in essence a community tax I disagree that any such tax should be lowered. Rent caps should be introduced in the city and the minimum wage increased. I also work in the fraud world and believe such schemes are highly manipulated.
- I found the wording of the questions hard to understand what you meant (in the survey). Universal credit is a nightmare of a benefit, definitely make people's lives easier if possible. Also, increase the CTR to 100%. I receive full housing benefit for where we're living (full LHA) and as it's the Brighton rental market, I still have to pay a shortfall of £200 every month!! I seriously struggle to make ends meet and council tax on top of that is a real strain.
- I think supporting those most vulnerable in our community is the most important thing at any time but especially now. I strongly agree with steps being taken to do as much as we possibly can. Thank you for providing this
- Is there any way you could ask B&H council tax payers if they would be willing to pay more council tax in order to help the Council fund vital support services during this crisis? Some of us have not lost our jobs or seen a fall in our income. If you could do this, count me in.
- I personally think that people who are/were on u/c through COVID 19 were a lot better off than people who work that needed more help. I didn't even know that there was a discretionary payment plan maybe bit more guidance and publicity about it would of come handy for people that may of needed it
- Thank you for publishing this Consultation, and sending email alerting me and others to it. Thank you for caring.
- Council tax is too expensive even for people seemingly to have good income and need to be adjusted for all
- Allowing people to have informed opinions by advising where the money comes from to increase the reductions.
- if your universal credit does not cover your rent and living allowance council tax should be reduced or covered as this causes stress worry and families not being able to eat or have all the facilities they need
- The council is already struggling for money and will be more so ongoing. Giving more away in this current situation is not financially sensible as you have all citizens of B & H to think about. This idea will put more strain on the many families who sit just above being eligible for this benefits scheme but whom are also on low wages but who have to pay full Council Tax (which will no doubt increase to pay for others non payments - someone has to pay for it eventually). There is always a divide between the figure to qualify for assistance and the family who sits just above it and ends up financially crushed by further benefits being awarded. I know as I was there for many years as a single working parent with no financial help other than my modest salary. Taxation across the board will inevitably increase to pay for these schemes. Do not give away more money than you can afford!
- During the current economic hardship we need to support everyone to get through together
- Why is the threshold of savings that a person has before they are allowed to claim CTR so much lower in Brighton than anywhere else in the country? So many of us are losing our jobs, Brighton council is certainly ensuring that they get the biggest cut of the meager redundancy payments we receive first! Absolutely disgusting!
- The discretionary fund is vital as long as we can't afford 100% CTR.
- I think that 2021 will be extra hard for people on low incomes for obvious reasons. My feeling is that perhaps given the councils financial situation that this extra freedom of reduction continues for another year but then reverts back to pre covid arrangement. This allows people time to

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recover financially.. the most in need but doesn't create a huge ongoing expense issue for bhcc either.

- This consultation implies that any additional costs to the proposed changes cannot be funded by the Council's existing budget, and it is of grave concern that any additional costs will have to be met by those whose income has not been affected, or is above a certain threshold which is grossly unfair. The government is already providing benefits to those affected by Covid, which is a temporary situation and should not be the driver for changes to the CTR criteria. Additionally, council tax charges are already influenced by assumptions on levels of income, with charges being extremely high in the more affluent areas. We worked hard to achieve what we have, but have now retired and so we do not earn the same level as income as we previously did although we have been able to maintain the council tax charges. If these increase for us, they will become unaffordable.
- I do think that everyone should pay something. We need to focus on making the system efficient to administer. Could the council publish some info on the admin costs of collecting the council tax and admin.
- as long as the council tax reduction is made as fair as possible, without the social care needs of the community suffering I would be happy to go along with the council decisions
- For the cost of 3 packets of cigarettes a year for a claimant, I strongly believe the Council can spend the same amount of money more effectively for the whole community. But claimants should have a much simpler process and easier route to securing support.