



Uttlesford District Council September 2022

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)

A summary report of the survey about the proposed Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme for Uttlesford for the financial year 2023-2024.

In April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by a new local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. The government required councils to protect pensioners so that they would receive the same level of support as they did under Council Tax Benefit. This means that LCTS has applied only to working age people.

The proposed scheme

Uttlesford District Council has been consulting local residents regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (the Scheme) since 2012 during which time the scheme has undergone various changes. For the financial year 2023/2024, the council has proposed that the scheme is set on the same basis as that for 2022/2023, namely to:

- freeze the contribution rate so that the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
- continue to protect pensioners, the vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

Consultation

As in previous consultations, respondents were asked to consider the proposals and provide their views in an 'open text box'.

The survey also invited (but did not require) participants to provide their name and a contact email address so that they



could be kept up to date with the results of the consultation and decision on the proposed scheme. Participants were also asked to identify if their response was on behalf of an organisation (such as major preceptors).

The online survey was run as a web form on the Uttlesford District Council “Lets talk” consultation platform. This could be accessed via a direct link or from the main website home page, directly from the platform itself or from links sent out in various promotions, publicity and newsletters.

Promotion

The survey ran from 20 June to 5 September 2022.

At the start of the consultation period emails inviting participation in the survey were sent directly to:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority
- Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex - Policing and Community Safety
- all town and parish councils in the district

The survey was widely publicised to the citizens of Uttlesford who were encouraged to take part.

A press release was distributed to all local media and newspapers on 23 June and a reminder release went out on 2 August.

It was included in the *District News* e-newsletter on 11 July that was sent to a total of 9,431 recipients.

Social media promotion went on throughout the consultation period with a total 9,998 reach, 323 engagements and 44 shares.

A reminder letter, promotional materials and paper forms were sent to all town and parish councils on 20 July.

Those people who do not use digital services were offered the option of requesting a paper copy of the survey and proposals to be sent out by post (details were provided on the website, in the press releases and in all publicity).



Results – overall submissions

The overall response rate for the survey was up 71.4% on that undertaken in 2021.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2022 (percentage)	Result counts 2021 (percentage)	Result counts 2020 (percentage)
Total number of paper forms returned	3 (6.25% of total responses)	0	0
Total number of web forms / direct emails submitted	45 (93.75% of total responses)	28 (100%)	27 (100%)
Total number of comments received	48	28	27



Results – submitted comments summary

General consultees

Of the submitted comments, 28 (or 58.3% of all the comments received) either directly supported the proposals for 2023-2024 or could clearly be interpreted as such. This is comparable to the 57.1% of comments received in 2021 that supported the scheme proposed for 2022-2023.

A further 13 comments suggested expanding or making amendments to the proposed scheme.

Notable this year are the number of references to the cost of living crisis, or to providing additional support to the most vulnerable in the district.

3 people who responded to the consultation chose to provide a view not directly relevant to the proposed LCTS scheme. These comments covered:

- making people on any kind of disability scheme a priority
- help for working single parents
- a report of alleged benefit fraud

Preceptors

4 preceptors also responded to the consultation. Of these, 3 support the proposed scheme. Thaxted Parish Council, though, asked that their objection to the proposal to remove the subsidy grant from the parish council be noted.



Comments received from preceptors

The response rate from preceptors was up 100% in comparison with the survey undertaken in 2021.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2022 (percentage)	Result counts 2021 (percentage)	Result counts 2020 (percentage)
Number of responses on behalf of/from representatives of preceptors	4 (8.3% of total responses)	2 (7.1% of total responses)	3 (11.1% of total responses)

Debden Parish Council

We support UDC's proposal for LCTS claimants to pay towards their Council Tax bill a maximum of 12.5%.

Elsenham Parish Council

Elsenham Parish Council support freezing the contribution rate at the same as last year.

Thaxted Parish Council

Thaxted Parish Council asks you to note its objection to the proposal to remove the subsidy grant from the parish council, which is not in keeping with the general principle of the grant scheme given by Central Government to principle authorities. A copy of a letter from Kris Hopkins MP, Minister for Local Government dated February 2015 can be found in the link as below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parish-funding-for-local-council-tax-supportscheme> and is also further enclosed for your convenience.

You will note from the letter the specific request from Kris Hopkins MP for the grant to be passed to town and parish councils, he further notes in his letter to Leaders of Billing Authorities that “it is essential they (town and parish councils) receive all the funds due to them in order to carry out their activities”

The National Association for Local Councils (NALC) also notes the following on its website:



“In 2013/14 and 2014/15 the Department for Communities and Local Government have paid Billing Authorities a combined total for each financial year of £3.3 billion to officially refer on to parish councils in their areas to minimise the reduction of parish precept revenue following the diminution of average council tax bases in parished areas over the last two years. Accordingly, In 2014/15 most Billing Authorities nationally passed on the Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) mitigation grant to parishes in their areas, but 15 did not. We lobbied the Government very hard to ensure that it put pressure on Billing Authorities to pass across to all parishes in their areas the maximum amount of LCTSS parish mitigation grant in 2015/16.”

Should UDC choose not to honour the intent from DCLG, it is not only in clear breach of the guidance and request from DCLG but is also acting outside of the essence and intention of the whole Local Council Tax Support Scheme process of how grants received from Central Government should be forwarded to town and parish councils.

It is further noted within UDC Minutes of 3rd May 2016 that “The Assistant Director Corporate Services said that the 2015 consultation survey had revealed that 93.3% of responses had supported the protection of the parish council grant. However, they would not necessarily have been aware of the financial implications of this arrangement”

It is exceptionally clear and demonstrated from the results of the 2015 consultation that the public is content with the LCTS subsidy continuing to be forwarded to town and parish councils for its intended purpose.

The loss of any funding will have a detrimental effect on Thaxted Parish Council continuing to provide and improve services to the residents and at a time when the Council is still settling its finances after taking on several services that have been devolved from Uttlesford District Council to us such as the Public Toilets and car Park.

The Parish Council therefore wishes to register its fierce objection to the withdrawal of this much needed grant to both town and parish councils. Please therefore consider this letter a formal response to the LCTS consultation process.

Saffron Walden Town Council

Saffron Walden Town Council considered the 2023/24 Local Council Tax Support Scheme report included within the consultation at the Full Council meeting on 11/07/2022. It was unanimously agreed to support the proposals included in the report.



Comments received from general consultees

Comments generally in favour of the proposed scheme

Comment 1

I support the proposals

Comment 2

I agree it should continue as it has this year to protect the vulnerable.

Comment 3

I support the scheme

Comment 4

I agree with the proposed scheme. I am a beneficiary of the scheme myself and greatly appreciate the support that UDC offers to people on low incomes.

Comment 5

Agree full support should be given to those with low income whatever age they are.

Comment 6

It seems fine.

Comment 7

I agree with proposals for the 2023/24 scheme.

Comment 8

It should continue.

Comment 9

I absolutely agree.



Comment 10

The most vulnerable need our support. I would pay a little more. As many will suffer with the cost of living crisis.

Comment 11

I agree with the proposals.

Comment 12

I am fully supportive of the scheme continuing but would like further considerations to be made for residents who may be struggling to pay energy bills. Maybe further reductions for those also in fuel poverty?

Comment 13

Any continued help from LCTS helps - especially for the vulnerable and elderly and low paid.

Comment 14

I agree.

Comment 15

Agree with a freeze.

Comment 16

I agree that this should continue.

Comment 17

Agree.

Comment 18

As a local family who have recently been deceased of my partner of 22 yrs (our bread winner and my boys father) and has had no income since January 2022 I support this proposal. We will sink if no help is provided.

Comment 19

I agree with the proposals. But the council should also be supporting people more in the cost of living crisis with help for heating and food bills.



Comment 20

I recommend leaving at the present level, at the very least.

Comment 21

Councils should help the vulnerable as much as is possible.

Comment 22

This is a good scheme and will help those who need it most.

Comment 23

Agree.

Comment 24

Absolutely Agree - I wish we could do more , with the Cost of Living Crisis.

Comment 25

As a family who pay council tax, I fully support this scheme and would be happy to pay 1% more - as if all did that we could help further.

Comment 26

As someone who grew up poor- This scheme proposed is as it should be - could we do more

Comment 27

Keeping the same support as the current 2022 scheme.

Comment 28

Yes, approve.



Comments received suggesting the proposed scheme be expanded or amended

Comment 1

That seems ridiculous that I have to struggle to pay my council tax in full yet others pay only 12.5 %. How is that fair. 50% maybe. No wonder I have to pay so much.

Comment 2

The scope of the scheme is too wide and will still not include the many who are property rich but money poor. There is a large proportion of the elderly who do not receive the full pension (born prior to 1952) & have saved a little money. They now find themselves having been frugal all their lives getting little return for their small investments as rates are SO LOW. The small amount of savings they have to pay for funeral and repairs to home has excluded them from any financial help. But all around them they see new home owners enjoying historically low interest rates on their mortgages. They have disposable income. They do not! Anything that may address this inequality must be good.

Comment 3

Should be at least 25%.

Comment 4

I feel that it's time to increase the amount paid to 15%. This is still a lot less than other areas and is 88p a week.

Comment 5

Pensioners are seeing inflation linked increases in income, many working in the private sector are not. It is unreasonable to continue to disproportionately recover from those working when non working people are receiving larger annual increases in income.

Comment 6

It is all very well supporting people who are on benefits but they get loads of help already. What about those of us who work sometimes 2 or more jobs but still have to pay for everything and we get no help at all it's like everywhere else if you try to help yourself you get nothing. The council should be helping all people who need it with their council tax and other bills otherwise what is the point.

Comment 7

I don't think they should pay any, I appreciate that's probably not possible - great initiative

Comment 8

The payment contributions need to increase were all struggling and the financial burden of this scheme should not continually be loaded on those that pay the full amount / tax payers.

**Comment 9**

Give even more support.

Comment 10

I can't help feeling that a wealthy area like Uttlesford should be doing more to help people who are struggling. Why make it that people in real need have to still pay 12.5%, surely Uttlesford can afford to cover the whole amount so that they pay 0%. And what about other shemes. This only helps people with their council tax now with rising energy costs there are going to be a lot of people especially pensioners who will not longer be able to afford to heat their homes. You should be doing something for them now, not thinking about it for some time next year.

Comment 11

How can the rate for a single person living alone not have a 50% discount in annual bill ?
I live in a 2 bed of app on my own but next door also a 2 bed has 5 people ?

Comment 12

I feel that, with the cost of living increase as high as they are, not only the most vulnerable should be given priority. ALL residents should be considered, despite their income or disability.

Families and pensioners who are sitting just above the threshold for discounted rates are usually the hardest hit.

12.5% is a very low contribution rate and should be revised and potentially increased.

Comment 13

Many years ago now I read in the local paper that despite Uttlesford being a relatively wealthy area there were people in all the villages near me suffering hardship.

It must be a lot worse in today's tragic circumstances and a feel that the support scheme lifeline must remain in place and be increased if possible. Council tax is not fair and many more benefits should be added to bring it up to date.



Comments received not specifically commenting on the proposed scheme

Comment 1

I believe that people on any kind of disability scheme and pensioners whose only income is state pension should be priorities. Then families on low income, UC etc.

Comment 2

As a single parent working more than 50 hours a week earning just over £32,000 a year and qualifying for absolutely nothing in benefits or council tax help I am struggling and will be in a worse position this winter with rising fuel costs! Where is the help for her working single parents who don't sponge off the state and sit on their backsides all day?

Comment 3

This needs to be applied in a firm but fair manner. I agree that there are households that need support but I personally know of a female who has ridden and abused this scheme for well over 6 years. For 3 of those years she lived in a Static Home on a stable yard avoiding paying for any Council tax.

She then moved to Cutlers Green and now lives in Henham and has used her physical and earnings capacity to live off benefits since I first met her.

By claiming that she cannot work full hours she keeps herself below the radar by working on the books for a minimum amount of hours and then topping her money up by working cash in hand jobs out of hours. At one stage she was earning well over £2300 per month and getting benefits paid, Pip, reduced Council Tax and working credits. She sees the "help" that she gets as a right not a privilege.

She is an example that I'm sure if we all looked is not isolated. This is why I believe that any scheme to assist should be rigorously enforced to weed out these people who see it as a way to make money rather than have a genuine need.