



**Uttlesford District Council September 2023**

## **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 2024/2025.

In April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by the 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.

### **The proposed scheme**

Uttlesford District Council has been consulting local residents on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Uttlesford since 2012 during which time the scheme has undergone various changes. For the financial year 2024/2025 the council has proposed that the scheme is set on the same basis as that for 2023/2024, 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



can be kept up to date with the results and the final decision on the proposed scheme. Participants were also asked to state if their response was on behalf of an organisation (such as a town or parish council).

The survey was run online through the Uttlesford District Council “Let’s talk” consultation platform. This could be accessed via the main council website home page, from the consultation platform home page, or from direct links sent out in various promotions, publicity and newsletters. A paper copy of the survey was also available on request.

## Promotion

The survey ran from 3 July to 4 September 2023.

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 4 July. It was included in the *District News* e-newsletter on 28 July that was sent to a total of 10,349 recipients. Social media promotion via Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram went on throughout the consultation period reaching some 824 people.

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



**Uttlesford District Council**  
26 July · 🌐

Uttlesford residents are being invited to have their say on how much support the council should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support which is designed to help the most vulnerable. For 2025/25, we are proposing to maintain the current scheme on the same basis as this year.

This means that we... See more

## Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Uttlesford 2024-25

We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

[letstalk.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-scheme](https://letstalk.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-scheme)

### Uttlesford Local Council Tax Support - have your say!

We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) which is designed to help the most vulnerable.

#### The 2024/25 scheme

The pandemic has left us facing some very big financial challenges. Our population is growing, people are generally living longer and the type of services that people need is changing. The cost of living is going up and as things become more expensive, we also have higher costs.

That's why we want to help to protect the most vulnerable people in our district. For 2024/25, we are proposing to maintain the scheme on the same basis as this year.

This means that we are proposing 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, vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

#### How to have your say

You can now give your views on the proposals using this form, or online at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-consultation>

#### Looking after your data

All the information you provide in this questionnaire will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Your contact details will be used solely for the purpose of this consultation. You should refer to our privacy notice for more information.

**DISTRICT NEWS**

Uttlesford District Council

Keep me posted

### Annual canvass is underway

Every year we contact residents to check the details on the electoral register are correct as part of the annual canvass.

We have sent out 37,000 emails and 30,000 letters so far. If you have received either from us, please follow the instructions carefully.

The annual canvass is in progress!

The Electoral Commission

▶ [Find out more about the annual canvass](#)



### Council Tax Support scheme consultation

There is still time for Uttlesford residents to have their say on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

The Local Council Tax Support scheme (LCTS) is designed to help the most vulnerable. For 2025/25, we're proposing to maintain the current scheme on the same basis as this year.

This means that we:

- freeze the contribution rate so 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

The consultation closes 4 September.

▶ [Find out more about the LCTS scheme and how to have your say](#)

[Home](#) / [Proposed LCTS 2024/25 scheme for Uttlesford](#)

### Proposed LCTS 2024/25 scheme for Uttlesford



We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) which is designed to help the most vulnerable.



**Key dates**

- 📅 Consultation starts  
03 July 2023
- 📅 Consultation closes  
04 September 2023



## Results: overall submission rate

The overall response rate for the survey was up 41.6% on that undertaken in 2022.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2023 (percentage)	Result counts 2022 (percentage)
Total number of paper forms returned	0	3 (6.25% of total responses)
Total number of web forms / direct emails submitted	70 (100% of total responses)	45 (93.75% of total responses)
Total number of comments received	<b>70</b>	<b>48</b>



## Results: submitted comments summary

Of the submitted comments, 44 (or 62.8% of all the comments received) either directly supported the proposals for 2024/2025 or could clearly be interpreted as such. This is slight increase on the 58.3% support registered for the 2023/2024 scheme in the 2022 survey.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2023 (percentage)
Fully or partly support the proposed scheme	44 (62.8%)
Do not support the proposed scheme	16 (22.9%)
Comments received on other related matters including suggesting additional support/widening the scheme	8 (11.4%)
Responses containing no comments	2 (2.9%)

Notable this year are the number of references to the cost of living crisis and suggestions for providing additional support to a wider range of people in the district.

### Preceptors and identified local organisations

No preceptors responded to the consultation this year. Local organisations who did respond include Uttlesford Foodbank, St James Church Swards End and local charities.



## Comments received

### Comments generally in favour of the proposed scheme

1. On paper, the proposals on paper seem to be fair and a positive step.
2. I think it should stay at the 12.5%
3. To continue the support as it is now
4. Fully approve the scheme.
5. All pensioners should qualify for reduced council tax
6. I feel disabled and also pensioners should receive help and a reduction but not people on benefits that don't work who can work just because they have children as it is unfair on those who do work and still have to pay full tax
7. Freeze at 12%
8. This county can afford to support more of those in need than it is currently doing, but overall this plan seems to provide some support.
9. I welcome the fact that the council is maintaining the scheme. The cost of living crisis is hitting so many people in so many ways. This initiative, although limited in its scope, can at least help some of the most vulnerable in the district.
10. I believe that those most in need - the unemployed, those of limited means, carers, etc. - should receive the maximum support possible.
11. People need support in these difficult times. Let's try and keep the level of support as high as can be afforded.
12. Good, continue
13. Makes sense to me
14. Everyone (bar property investors etc.) has faced falling real incomes; those on benefits, the long-term sick, and the disabled significantly more so than the population as a whole (see, for example, research by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation). These groups desperately need all the help they can get.
15. I support totally the scheme. I wish you could do more, I understand the limitations. Please ask the Government for more help.
16. Remain as previous years
17. I would be happy to contribute more, to help those who are vulnerable, caring for others.



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18. In these difficult times I would be prepared to pay more council tax if it helps people who are really in need.

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19. Support should be at least the same level, and preferably higher. Not all pensioners need support.

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20. I support the scheme to give as much as practical support where required

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21. Confirm my total support on the councils proposals to continue support to the low income groups

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22. At this time of serious hardship caused by the 'Cost of Living Crisis', exacerbated by high interest rates, there is an urgent need to support those in financial distress. The net is widening with the threat of negative equity looming.

It is not just those with mortgages, but also those in private rented accommodation who are in desperate need of financial help. Landlords are passing on their mortgage liabilities on to their tenants who are now facing the prospect of becoming homeless.

Those who are in need of care, or who are hanging on to an independent life in their twilight years, are being bombarded by ever increasing bad news of issues beyond their control.

The need for Council properties for rent is becoming of a contentious topic with many such buildings in serious disrepair, leaving a safety net missing for those in desperate need.

I believe that the above situation has created a vicious circle of high interests breeding greater levels of debt and that any assistance on Council Tax will make a valuable contribution to the mental, and physical, wellbeing of those caught in this financial trap.

I am willing to support the continuance of the LCTS scheme at 12.5% but, if matters get worse prior to April 2024, then I believe a reduction to 10% should be considered as a possibility.

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23. I agree the UDC proposal to keep at the same rate as this year.

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24. I am in agreement with the proposal to maintain the scheme at its current level

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25. I think that continuing this scheme is the right thing to do. Every civilised society should support its more vulnerable/less able members.

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26. As a higher rate tax payer I fully support this scheme.

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27. This is great help for those that can access it, but how will folk find out about the support and apply for it if they don't have the technology needed? Also, they have to prove their financial situation and this is ok for those who have ordered lives, but many struggling won't have and therefore won't be able to provided the necessary documentation needed? Reaching the most vulnerable and needy is always difficult - would the CAB &/or libraries &/or charities such as Touchpoint be able to help?



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28. I agree in principle.

However, I fail to see how young renters on low wages can be expected to pay high council tax bands on ridiculously small apartments.

Please reexamine Flat 5 The Pines, Wendens Ambo as an example.

This has been appealed by the managing agent but not been successful.

On top of £995 rent, the tenants have to pay over £200 council tax... for what?! Pure madness that needs addressing.

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29. As long as the help is properly targeted to those most in need, I am fine with the scheme.

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30. It should be retained

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31. The on-going support is welcome.

While 12.5% reflects a substantial reduction, there are other Districts across the UK where this has been reduced to zero. The rural nature of Uttlesford means that many household costs are consuming an ever larger portion of residents' household income, for example travel, access to services, access to affordable supermarkets.

DWP data relating to Child Poverty in Uttlesford (StatXplore) indicates that 7 in 10 children living in relative poverty are in working families. According to the Uttlesford Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the total number of children in this position = 3270. Schools across the district are noting increased use of discretionary bursaries (beyond those families already in receipt of PPG and free school meals) to support families who are struggling. Again the rural nature of our district means that working families often bear increasing costs related to attending work. Hyper local employment opportunities are limited, meaning that more money needs to be spent on getting to work - via public or private transport. This same challenge is encountered by older children who may be seeking part-time weekend employment. Rurality adds a level of complexity for working families and this can go unnoticed. Creating a protocol to support the challenges of 'in-work poverty' would mean more money in pockets to address other costs.

In summary, the rural nature of our District brings an additional challenge in relation to the financial wellbeing of households. It amplifies existing pressures and this is something which is important when developing local welfare protocols.

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32. I fully support the proposals. The more help that can be given to people on benefits the better.

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33. I agree





34. I realise UDC has more aspirations than funding to pay for them. However, ideally, I'd like the 12.5% to be reduced to 0%. I certainly would not support an increase of the 12.5%.  
I congratulate the UDC on the exceptional hardship fund, and cost of living support fund
35. If it's been satisfactory previously, I think it should be continued similarly. You know your financial position and if it is still affordable, go ahead.
36. Agree proposal - maintain levels as they currently stand
37. Maintain the current level of support as a minimum, but consider a council tax holiday for 1 year for people eligible for the scheme given the cost of living crisis, energy inflation and delays to the welfare payment system.
38. I wholeheartedly agree with supporting the vulnerable in our community and wish the LCTS scheme to continue for 2024/25
39. I am happy with the levels put forward
40. Maintain scheme as present
41. I would support maintaining the current level of LCTS into 2024/25. As an adviser at Citizens Advice, I am very aware that the scheme is a good way of targeting support at the most vulnerable in Uttlesford. It is particularly helpful in supporting those on very low incomes/pensions who do not have access to other means tested benefits e.g. housing benefit.
42. Fully support the proposal.
43. I support it
44. It should be available for everyone that is unemployed and on low income



## Comments generally not supporting the proposed scheme

Comments opposing the proposals for 2024-2025 or making suggestions for amendments to the scheme.

<p>1. I feel that central government via universal credit should be supporting those unable to pay council tax. A charge of 25% would be more appropriate given the burden the current rate places on other council tax payers and given the other financial pressures on current council finances to maintain statutory support in other areas.</p>
<p>2. The cost of living is squeezing everybody, more help needs to be available for middle earners, not just lower who often end up with more disposable income after benefits and tax are taken into account.</p>
<p>3. I do not agree, what percentage of my full paying council tax is paying for this subsidy?</p>
<p>4. Council should consider increasing the level. Inflation is still at a high level and although it is hopeful it will be lower next year it will still impact on those in greatest need. Keeping the benefit at the same level would represent a decrease in its value.</p>
<p>5. Where is the support for working people who are not entitled to working tax credits etc?</p>
<p>6. Reduce Council Tax instead. The top tier of managers are paid far too much. Chief Executive £130k is criminal plus other senior managers. The quality of the management and staff is very low and productivity non-existent.</p>
<p>7. Don't give the scroungers anything. Make them pay like the rest of us.</p>
<p>8. It will end up costing everyone else more to cover those that cannot pay, so not happy to pay more</p>
<p>9. The lowest rate of council tax should be 15%. This will still be lower than any other council except Colchester. It would also be a modest increase of roughly £1 per week. Council tax rates for other residents in Uttlesford are very high and I believe that the lower rate should be increased slightly. If people in other areas can afford 25% I'm not sure why people in Uttlesford are different. A £1 a week increase is very modest.</p>
<p>10. 12.5% seems too low, perhaps increase by rpi</p>
<p>11. I think the scheme should only be for carers and the disabled. The government and councils do not have the money to spend and something has to give. If I were the owner of this policy, I would be stating that it's a shame that everyone cannot be helped, but hard choices require hard decisions. The elderly are already advantaged by the triple lock pension. The youngsters need to know how hard life truly is, but the carers and disabled will struggle to find employment and/or further employment.</p>
<p>12. They do not take into consideration people's individual circumstances</p>
<p>13. No support should be provided as the priority should be essential services and road maintenance.</p>
<p>14. Same old same old can't work in these inflammatory inflationary times working families must be included into LCTS</p>



15. I would increase the rate and support for those on low incomes and the elderly

16. Why does Uttlesford only give 12.5% surely it should be more. This is a rich area and prices are high for people who do an ordinary job. Come on be more generous and spend money where it is really needed rather than on wasteful vanity projects.



## Comments received making general points

Comments on the cost of living crisis, making general points or querying some other support provided by Uttlesford District Council.

1. It is difficult to judge the proposal without other information such as how many claimants Uttlesford has, the ratio of claimants to full payers etc. The information that Uttlesford is more generous than the rest of Essex is difficult to interpret - is Essex in line with the national average, for example. It seems good that Uttlesford has a scheme, and it also seems good that the claimants still pay something. I cannot judge if the proposed level of support is a fair balance between the needs of the claimants and Uttlesford's overall needs.
2. I have not been aware of the LCTS until now, and it appears quite a complex set of means tested criteria. 12.5% seems very low and appears to be more generous compared to other local authorities. It could be steadily raised to 20 and 25% over a number of years. It is not obvious whether owning property would stop a person being eligible (previous comments suggest it doesn't), but property owners should certainly be excluded.
3. I do not claim any benefits and so do not receive help other than the 25% discount as a single person. I'm 80 years old, live on my own and believe that because of the reduced services that I need, this discount should be more. My bins are not even half full on collection day and yet apart from the 25% discount my council tax is the same as a much larger family pays.
4. I am 77 yrs old, married and a home owner with paid off mortgage and in good health I but now living off a diminishing pension.
5. I wish somebody would give me a load of money we all have to make sacrifices and judgement on what we spend our cash on it sickens me to see some people asking for money when they're fancy mobiles contracts on their phones contracts on their TV is going on holidays plenty of kids that I can't afford to keep fancy carThe list could go on
6. Refer to World Bank reports from 1947 to up to date. And you will find an answer.
7. Whilst I understand the LCTS scheme and who it is trying to support I have to say my finances are dwindling rapidly due increasing electric/gas/water and many other costs.I am not alone in this however on the horizon their is a time not to far away where my wife and I have got to seriously think of away to a cheaper area,wherever that is. We have lived in THX for 38yrs.



8. Does this scheme support people from Ukraine or refugees from Afghanistan? It makes no mention of these vulnerable groups so I suspect not. There are also other refugees in the district who need help. I think that it should be expanded to help as many people as possible and there are enough well-off tax payers who can afford to give a bit extra. And what is the Government doing to support these groups. They make a lot of fuss and then just abandon people. This leaves people like us to step up and help when millions of pounds are wasted on vanity projects.