



Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) and Empty Homes Survey

A summary report on the public survey about Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) provision in Uttlesford and the Council Tax premium charged for empty homes for the financial year 2019-2020.

Uttlesford District Council has been consulting local residents regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme since 2012 during which time the Scheme has undergone various changes.

Questions regarding the Scheme were included in the Council Spending questionnaire which was distributed district wide in 16 July to 6 August 2018 as an insert in the Summer Edition of the council's newsletter *Uttlesford Life*. Residents who preferred to participate electronically were provided with a link to an online version of this section of the questionnaire. In Appendix 2 a direct comparison can be seen between the responses from this year's survey and those from the 2017 survey. Overall the results show that the views of residents have changed little in the last twelve months.

Feedback was also sought from residents regarding a proposed amendment to the Council Tax premium charged on properties within the district which have been empty and unfurnished for two years or more. The results tabulated below show a distinct appetite from respondents to adopt the imposition of an increased premium.

Results

Questionnaire Responses

Overall submissions	Result counts (percentage)
Total number of paper submissions:	1696 (99.01%)
Total number of web submissions:	17 (0.99%)
Total number of submissions:	1713 (100%)
Postcodes data entered:	1544

Headline question	Result (percentage)
Q3a The Government has said pensioners on low income must be given full protection from the implications of the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. Uttlesford's current scheme also protects disabled people on a low income and carers on a low income. Do you agree with this?	Yes (94.50%) No (5.50%)
Q3b In the past few years the level that working age recipients in Uttlesford contribute towards their Council Tax bill has been set at 12.5%. This is the lowest contribution of any council in Essex. For each 2.5% of increase the LCTS recipient(s) will need to pay, on average, an additional £38 of Council Tax each year. The cost to the council of keeping the rate at 12.5% would be approximately £204,000. For each 2.5% increase recipients have to pay, the cost of the scheme for the council would reduce by approximately £3,958. Should the council keep the rate at 12.5%?	Yes (68.09%) No (31.91%)

Headline question	Result (percentage)
<p>Q3c Since 1 April 2013, councils have been allowed to charge a 50% premium on properties that have been empty and unfurnished for two years or more. The purpose of this is to bring empty homes back into use and help address the housing shortfall. Uttlesford District Council already charges the maximum premium allowed. From 1 April 2019, councils will be allowed to increase the premium to 100% – this means homeowners will be paying double Council Tax on a property if it is left empty after two years rather than one and a half times Council Tax as they have to at the moment.</p> <p>Should the council increase the premium on properties that have been empty and unfurnished for 2 years or more to 100% of the council tax?</p>	<p>Yes (83.59%)</p> <p>No (16.41%)</p>

In summary, response to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme questions indicates a majority view that the current scheme should remain unchanged but that the Council Tax premium on properties which have been empty and unfurnished for two years or more should be increased from 50% to 100% in the financial year 2019-2020.

More detail regarding the questionnaire, postcode profiling, comparative data from the previous year's LCTS survey and charts to illustrate response may be viewed in the accompanying Appendices.