



Uttlesford District Council October 2018

Have your say on Uttlesford District Council's budget and Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2019/20

A survey for town and parish councils and major preceptors

Over the period 24 July to 1 October 2018 the town and parish councils within the Uttlesford district were invited to participate in two district wide consultations which sought the views of residents and businesses alike. As key preceptors, town and parish councils were sent dedicated surveys and offered a longer period to respond to enable them to consult their members or to put the papers before committees.

The responses to the residents' and businesses' consultations are reported separately.

Below are the results from the two surveys sent to the town and parish councils, Essex County Council and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Council Spending – have your say

A summary report on the survey of businesses about council spending priorities for the year 2019-20

The consultation concentrated on asking for participants' views on the prerogatives for the future resourcing of specific service areas and, as in previous years, consultees were asked their views regarding the level of Council Tax that Uttlesford District Council should be levying in the coming financial year. An open text box was provided for respondents to offer additional comments regarding the questions posed in the survey.

These questions also appeared in the Council Spending questionnaire which was distributed district wide in July 2018 as an insert in the Summer Edition of the council's newsletter *Uttlesford Life*. They also featured in the Summer edition of the Uttlesford Citizens Panel survey as well as a telephone survey of 500 residents undertaken by a professional market research company, NWA Social and Market Research Ltd on behalf of Uttlesford District Council. Responses from district residents are reported separately.

The resulting data from all the streams of this consultation has been analysed using rated scores where more weight is given if a service area is selected as "High Priority" and a reduced weight for those selected as "Low Priority". For a full explanation of this method of calculation, please see Appendix 4 of "Council Spending – have your say. A survey of Uttlesford residents".

Spending priorities for the financial year 2019 to 2020

The dedicated Council Spending survey for town and parish councils and major preceptors received a total of 7 responses.

Consultees were provided with a list of council services and asked:

“For each service, please indicate whether you consider it to be a high, medium or low priority (please select one option for each service)”

Priority	Spending Area
Highest priority	Providing council housing and providing sheltered housing for older people (100.00%)
Second highest priority	Emptying your bins and running the recycling service (95.24%)
Third highest priority	Educating young people about the dangers of drugs and alcohol (91.67)%
Lowest priority	Collecting stray animals, microchipping dogs and cats and dealing with complaints from the public about pet and animal-related issues (40.00%)

A comparison of the results across all the listed services may be seen in Appendix 1.

Council Tax 2019 -2020

Consultees were asked their views regarding the level of Council Tax that Uttlesford District Council should be levying in the coming financial year. The results are tabulated below.

“Just under 9% of the Council Tax you pay goes to Uttlesford District Council. About 72% goes to Essex County Council, with the rest going to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex, and to your town or parish council, For next year (April 2019 to March 2020) do you think Uttlesford should... *(consultees were then invited to select one option only)*”

Headline	Percentage
Increase the amount of council tax Uttlesford District Council charges	66.67%
Keep the amount of council tax the same	33.33%
Reduce the amount of council tax Uttlesford District Council charges	0.00%

Of those respondents who offered an opinion, 66.67% favoured an increase to Council Tax during the financial year 2019 to 2020.

Participants were also invited to submit a literal comment regarding their response. One comment was received and Saffron Walden Town Council, who declined to complete the online questionnaire, submitted an emailed comment. Both comments may be viewed in Appendix 2 to this report.

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) and Empty Homes Survey

A summary report on a survey of town and parish councils within the Uttlesford district about Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) provision and the Council Tax premium charged for empty homes for the financial year 2019-2020.

This survey took the form of an online questionnaire and was sent as a link to the parish and town clerks within the Uttlesford district, as well as to Essex County Council and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. A total of four submissions was received.

These questions also appeared in the Council Spending questionnaire which was distributed district wide in July 2018 as an insert in the Summer Edition of the council's newsletter *Uttlesford Life*. Responses from the district residents are reported separately.

A total of four responses were received.

Results

Questionnaire Responses

Headline question	Result counts (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.	Yes: 4 responses (100%) No: 0 responses (0.00%)

Headline question	Result counts (percentage)
Do you agree with this?	
<p>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.</p> <p>For each 2.5% of increase the LCTS recipient(s) will need to pay, on average, an additional £38 of Council Tax each year.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Should the council keep the rate at 12.5%?</p>	<p>Yes: 0 responses (0.00%)</p> <p>No: 4 responses (100%)</p>
<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: 1 response (25%)</p> <p>No: 3 responses (75%)</p>

Saffron Walden Town Council declined to complete the online questionnaire but submitted an emailed comment as shown below.

“A response was considered at the Town Council’s Full Council meeting on 10th September 2018 and is recorded under Minute Reference FC481-18. At this meeting it was agreed that the Council was unable to complete the on-line survey and the Town Council’s response to this consultation is as follows:

“Resolved: No response to individual questions but to note that UDC retains all of the LCTS monies and no longer passes any to town or parish councils” “