
COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT – SCHEME APPROVAL

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Stephen Harker
Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**

Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Director of Resources

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To approve a Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2013/14 following consultation.

Summary

2. On 11 September 2012, Cabinet agreed a draft scheme based on a 20% reduction in benefits paid for consultation.
3. Consultation has been completed, response numbers are low and the majority of responses are from people who are currently entitled to Council Tax benefits. The majority of responses were in favour of protecting existing benefits.

The government has announced a “one off” grant to Councils who minimise the reduction in benefits to 8.5%. The cost of accepting this grant would be an additional £293,000 a year from 2014/15 and an additional £120,000 in 2013/14.

4. Following consultation with Leading Members, the scheme attached for approval includes a 20% reduction in entitlements.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Cabinet:-
 - (a) Consider the results of the public consultation exercise and the equality impact assessments.
 - (b) Recommend to Council the CTS scheme attached at **Appendix 9**.

Reasons

6. The recommendations are supported as the Council is required to publish a local CTS scheme by 31st January, 2013.

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Resources

Background Papers

Local Government Finance Bill 2012
Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012

Anthony Sandys: Extension 2512

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues
Health and Well Being	The reduction in Council Tax Benefit (CTB) may have an adverse impact on the health and well-being of low income groups
Sustainability	There is no environmental impact in this report
Diversity	Low income groups in receipt of CTB may be adversely affected by these changes. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken
Wards Affected	All wards are affected, but in particular those with higher numbers of people claiming CTB
Groups Affected	Anyone claiming CTB may be affected by these changes, although pensioners will be protected
Budget and Policy Framework	The issues contained within this report do represent change to Council budget and they will be considered by Full Council
Key Decision	This is a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an Executive decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report has implications for the 'Healthy Darlington' and 'Prosperous Darlington' themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Efficiency	The reforms to the CTB scheme represent a significant financial challenge to the Council and other precepting authorities.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

Background

7. Cabinet at its meeting on 11 September 2012 considered the report "Council Tax Support", the main part of the report is attached at **Appendix 1**. Cabinet approved a draft scheme for consultation which included a 20% reduction in discounts for all recipients except pensioners who are protected from any reduction in entitlement by legislation.

Consultation

8. Consultation on the draft CTS scheme has been undertaken in the following ways:
- (a) Details on the Darlington Borough Council website including an on-line survey
 - (b) Meetings with advice and support agencies
 - (c) Writing to those existing CTB recipients potentially affected by the proposals
 - (d) Writing to the Police and Fire authorities
 - (e) Articles in the October and November editions of the Darlington Together magazine and in the Autumn edition of Hot News.
9. The Council has received the following responses to its consultation:
- (a) 841 responses to the paper survey sent to existing CTB recipients
 - (b) 38 responses to the on-line survey
 - (c) 8 other responses in writing
 - (d) A response from the Police Authority
10. The Council presented 3 options to residents, as follows:
- (a) Option 1 - All people of working age should be protected from any cuts. People of working age who currently get CTB will get the same amount they get under the new scheme.
 - (b) Option 2 - All people of working age should pay some Council Tax. People of working age who currently get CTB will have to pay more towards their Council Tax - this amount will be a set amount for all people.
 - (c) Option 3 - Some people of working age should be protected from any cuts. This option would see some people of working age have their CTS cut, but not others. This means some people would have to pay more towards their Council Tax bill.
11. The results of the consultation on these 3 options are as follows:

	Paper survey	On-line survey	Other	Total	Percentage
Option 1	306	10	3	319	36%
Option 2	130	8	3	141	16%

Option 3	319	17	0	336	38%
No answer	86	3	2	91	10%

12. Overall response to the consultation exercise has been low. Most of the responses have been received from the current CTB recipients via the paper survey and they have favoured the options that protect existing entitlement to benefit.
13. Option 1: Full details of all the responses received in relation to option 1 are given at **Appendix 2**.
14. Option 2: Respondents were asked that if they supported option 2, to indicate what percentage of reduction in benefit should be applied. Responses were received as follows:

Percentage reduction	Number of responses
5%	2
10%	12
20%	13
25%	1
30%	2
50%	3
Not answered	108

15. Full details of all the responses received in relation to option 2 are given at **Appendix 3**.
16. Option 3: Respondents were asked that if they supported option 3, to indicate what particular groups should be protected. Responses were received as follows (some respondents indicated more than one group to be protected):

Type of group	Number of responses
Disabled people	127
Low income / receiving benefits / unemployed	68
Families / lone parents	50
Low earners / part-time employed	37
Carers	7
People receiving second adult rebate	2
Not answered	94

17. Full details of all the responses received in relation to option 3 are given at **Appendix 4**.
18. Full details of all other responses where the respondent did not select an option are given at **Appendix 5**.
19. The second part of the questionnaire asked if the respondent had any other comments to make about the proposed CTS scheme, particularly in relation to:
- (a) Self-employed earnings
 - (b) Work incentives

- (c) Backdating
- (d) Second Adult Rebate

20. Full details of all the responses to these questions are given at **Appendix 6**. It is recommended not to implement the original proposal to change the way self-employed earnings are assessed. This is because the change cannot be accommodated by the Council's Benefits IT system. It is estimated that this change will have negligible financial impact on these proposals.
21. The final section of the questionnaire requested details about the respondent and the answers are given at **Appendix 7**.
22. A response has been received from Durham Constabulary, as follows:

"Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation regarding local council tax support. Firstly the Police Authority is disappointed that the government has decided to reduce council tax support for some of the most vulnerable citizens within the Force area. It is unclear at this stage what impact it will have on each individual household in terms of their financial well-being in the future, and more widely, what impact it may have upon the Constabulary in terms of increased service demand. Secondly the Police Authority is supportive of any attempts which the council can take to mitigate lost council tax income through the review of council tax exemptions given. Thirdly the Police Authority does not agree with it having to contribute to the costs of council tax benefit as this reduces the amount of resource it has for frontline policing."

23. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and this is given at **Appendix 8**. Details of the potential impacts are contained within this assessment and responses from the consultation exercise have been used to identify the potential impacts. Most of the respondents are currently in receipt of CTB and believed they will be negatively impacted by these proposals. Some respondents believed strongly that certain groups of people should be protected from any cuts to benefit entitlement and in particular, disabled people and families with children. These groups are also likely to be affected by the cumulative impacts of other welfare reforms being introduced in April 2013, such as the benefit cap and the size criteria for social sector tenants.
24. However, the impact assessment also identified that these groups with protected characteristics will be treated differently in the assessment of their benefit entitlement, as certain types of income will be disregarded in the process. These include:
- (a) Disability Living Allowance
 - (b) Child Benefit and Child Maintenance
 - (c) War Widow's and War Disablement Pensions
25. It is felt that these income disregards will mitigate against some of the negative financial impacts on these groups. In addition, the Council will take a fair and equitable approach to Council Tax recovery and will take into account a person's means to pay, where they are making reasonable attempts to pay their Council

Tax.

26. In summary the consultation response has been low and the vast majority of responses are from current recipients who do not wish to see reductions in their entitlements. Members will understand these concerns and as set out in the original report, Members have to consider the impacts of the draft scheme against the impact on other Council services as if no reduction is made to the CTS scheme the Council services will see budget reductions of circa £1.1m and this is in the context of the Council needing to reduce overall budgets in the region of £15m.

Additional government funding

27. In November 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government announced that it is making available an additional £100m for one year to support local authorities in “developing well-designed council tax support schemes and maintain positive incentives to work.”
28. The grant will be payable in March 2013 to those authorities who adopt schemes that comply with criteria set by the Government to ensure that low income households do not face an extensive increase in their Council Tax liability in 2013/2014.
29. To apply for the grant, billing authorities must adopt schemes which ensure that those who would be entitled to 100% support under the current CTB arrangements would pay no more than 8.5% of their Council Tax liability. The amount of grant available for Darlington is £172,915 for 2013/2014 only, and can only be applied for once the Council has approved its CTS scheme.
30. Set out below is the key financial information comparing the option of accepting the government grant with the Cabinet's preferred scheme of a 20% reduction.

	8.5% Reduction in Benefit	20% Reduction in Benefit
Average annual increase in Council Tax to be paid by recipients.	68	160
Cost to the Council of the scheme		
2013/14	712,000	592,000
2014/15	885,000	592,000

Financial Implications

31. The estimated cost to the Council of implementing the new CTS scheme is £686,000 and this cost has been built in to the latest MTFP. It is difficult to accurately estimate the full cost as the number of recipients and pensioner who are protected from any reductions will vary year on year. The largest potential for variance in cost is the level of collection achieved and at this stage an estimated collection level of 50% has been used. The cost of the scheme will be monitored and reported to members. The grant payable from the Government in respect of the

scheme will not vary with the number and make up of recipients during 2013/4. In future years the grant has been incorporated in to mainstream local government funding and will be subject to adjustments in line with Government financial policy. It is estimated that as a result of this approach the funding will reduce by 26% by 2016/7.

Conclusion

32. In consultation with leading Members the recommendations in this report are to approve a 20% reduction in benefits in line with the preferred option selected in September and in common with emerging schemes elsewhere in the Tees Valley.

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Stephen Harker
Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith, Director of Resources

SUMMARY REPORT**Purpose of the Report**

33. To seek approval for a draft Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme prior to consultation with residents within the borough.

Summary

34. From April 2013, the Government is replacing Council Tax Benefit (CTB) with new local CTS schemes, designed and administered by local authorities. Grants will be paid to local authorities to fund the new scheme, but the overall amount will be cut by 10% from projected expenditure levels, although in reality the figure is more likely to be around 12%.
35. The Council will need to design and publish a new scheme by 31st January 2013, in time to implement for annual Council Tax billing in 2013/2014. A full public consultation exercise will need to be undertaken on the proposed scheme. The government has recently published a statement of intent and draft regulations, which set out the proposals for how CTS schemes should be developed.
36. In preparation for this work, and given the very short timescales to deliver this project, this report sets out options for delivery and in particular, whether the cut in funding should be passed on to the CTS recipients who would see a reduction in benefit. The figures are based on estimated expenditure for 2012/2013.
37. This is a significant policy and budget decision about whether or not to pass on the Government grant reduction to claimants and if so whether to pass the reduction on in total or in part. Given the impact of the decision on people across the Borough consultation with leading Members has taken place to assist in the preparation of options. Members were made aware that if a decision was made not to pass on the total cost then other Council budgets would need to be reduced to accommodate the loss of government grants. Set out below is a summary of a range of options for consideration.

38.

Option	Maximum Entitlement to Council Tax Support %	Loss of Entitlement %	Cost to the Council £'Ms
1	100	-	1.140
2	90	10	0.913
3	80	20	0.686
4	70	30	0.462
5	48	52	NIL

39. Appendix 7 includes option 3 as the preferred option for the purpose of consultation.

40. One option to offset the net cost of the new scheme is to review council tax exemptions following new guidance from Government which has the potential to raise £680,000 per annum.

Recommendation

41. It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- (a) Approves the draft CTS scheme at **Appendix 7**, for public consultation
- (b) A report be presented to a future Cabinet meeting on options to review Council Tax exemptions.

42. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) The Council is required to publish a local CTS scheme by 31st January 2013;
- (b) A full public consultation is required on the proposals, prior to approval of the final scheme.
- (c) To enable Members to consider options to change to the current scheme for Council Tax exemptions.

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Resources

Background Papers

Localising support for council tax in England: A Statement of Intent
Local Government Finance Bill 2012

Anthony Sandys - Extension 2512

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues
Health and Well Being	The reduction in CTB may have an adverse impact on the health and well-being of low income groups
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report
Diversity	Low income groups in receipt of CTB may be adversely affected by these changes
Wards Affected	All wards are affected, but in particular those with higher numbers of people claiming CTB
Groups Affected	Anyone claiming CTB may be affected by these changes, although pensioners will be protected
Budget and Policy Framework	The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council budget or the Council's policy framework.
Key Decision	This is a key decision
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'Call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report has implications for the 'Healthy Darlington' and 'Prosperous Darlington' themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
Efficiency	The reforms to the CTB scheme represent a significant financial challenge to the Council and other precepting authorities.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

CTB – the existing system

43. CTB is an income related benefit which may be claimed by an eligible person who is liable to pay Council Tax in respect of their sole or main residence. CTB is a national benefit with policy and rules set by central Government, but administered by local authorities. Administration is linked to the Council Tax billing arrangements and usually takes the form of a reduction to the Council Tax a person would otherwise be liable to pay.
44. The amount of CTB entitlement is calculated on a weekly basis according to a person's daily liability for Council Tax after deducting any disability reductions, discounts or transitional relief. Entitlement takes into account the means of the person claiming and of their household. The means test for CTB follows the rules for other income related benefits such as Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, and is based on a system of applicable amounts for living expenses set according to the circumstances of the family unit. The person's applicable amount is compared to their income and capital, including that belonging to any partner.

45. People with income at, or below, the level of the applicable amount are entitled to maximum CTB. This is the whole of their weekly eligible Council Tax less any set contributions assumed in respect of non-dependant adults who live in the household, but are not themselves liable for Council Tax. People who are not claiming income related benefits, including people who are working, may get CTB subject to an income taper. Claimants lose 20 pence in CTB for each additional pound of income that exceeds their applicable amount.
46. In CTB there is a lower capital limit; £6,000 for people of working age and £10,000 for pensioners, above which an assumed income from capital is taken into account. CTB is not payable to people with capital above the upper limit of £16,000 unless they are entitled to one of the income-related benefits.
47. Alternative maximum CTB, more commonly known as 'Second Adult Rebate', may be awarded to the claimant if they would be better off with this than with CTB under the main rules. Second Adult Rebate may apply when the claimant, as the owner or tenant of a property, shares their home with a non-dependant person (aged 18 or over) who has no responsibility to pay Council Tax and is not on the list of disregarded persons. The amount of the rebate is based on the gross income of the non-dependant person excluding any income related benefits, Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance. The claimant's own income is ignored and the maximum amount of Second Adult Rebate is limited to 25% of Council Tax liability.

Funding CTB

48. The cost of CTB is currently met by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) out of their Annually Managed Expenditure and is paid to local authorities as a reimbursement of their expenditure according to nationally-set criteria. Local authorities are reimbursed at 100% for correctly processed claims which they incur on behalf of eligible claimants. Payments are made to local authorities on a monthly basis, based on initial estimates submitted to the DWP during the year. Nationally, expenditure on CTB has more than doubled between 1997-98 and 2009-10.

The rationale for localising support

49. The rationale for localising assistance with council tax payments was set out in the August 2011 consultation paper, *'Localising Support for Council Tax in England'*:
 - (a) To give local authorities a greater stake in the economic future of their local area, and so support the Government's wider agenda to enable stronger, balanced economic growth across the country.
 - (b) To provide local authorities with the opportunity to reform the system of support for working age claimants. In particular it will enable local authorities to align the system of support for working age households much more closely with the existing system of Council Tax discounts and exemptions, simplifying the complex system of criteria and allowances.
 - (c) To reinforce local control over Council Tax. Enabling decisions to be taken locally about the provision of support with Council Tax is consistent with a drive

- for greater local financial accountability and decision-making, including the Government's proposals for local referendums on Council Tax levels.
- (d) To give local authorities a significant degree of control over how a 10% reduction in expenditure on the current CTB bill is achieved, allowing councils to balance local priorities and their own financial circumstances. Reducing the costs of support for Council Tax is a contribution to the Government's programme of deficit reduction. Localisation is intended to help deliver savings of around £500m a year nationally on the current CTB bill.
 - (e) To give local authorities a financial stake in the provision of support for Council Tax. This reform will create stronger incentives for councils to get people back into work and so support the positive work incentives that will be introduced through the Government's plans for Universal Credit.

CTS schemes

50. The *Local Government Finance Bill 2010-2012* provides for a new section in the *Local Government and Finance Act 1992*, which will mean that a person's liability to pay Council Tax will be reduced in accordance with the billing authority's CTS scheme. Liability may be reduced "to such an extent as the billing authority thinks fit." Billing authorities will be able to apply a reduction in particular cases or by determining a class of case. Billing authorities will be required to have a CTS scheme in place by 31st January 2013, with a view to implementation in the 2013-2014 financial year.

Prescribed requirements

51. The requirements for CTS schemes are set out in an amendment to the *Local Government Finance Act 1992*, under schedule 1A. This includes, that before making a scheme, the Council must (in the following order):
- (a) Consult major precepting authorities, which have a power to issue a precept to it.
 - (b) Publish a draft scheme in such a manner as it thinks fit.
 - (c) Consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.
52. There are a number of prescribed requirements that will apply to all local CTS schemes and will therefore not be included in Darlington's local scheme. These are set out in the Government's draft *Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012*, a copy of which can be found at:
- <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/draftprescribedregsregs>
53. A summary of the key features of the draft regulations are as follows:
- (a) There will be a prescribed scheme for persons who have reached the qualifying age for state retirement pension, which will be similar to the existing CTB scheme. It should be noted that out of a total of 12,172 current CTB recipients in Darlington, 5,341 (44%) are pensioners. (See Appendix 1 for

further details).

- (b) There will be the same restrictions as exist under the current CTB scheme to exclude foreign nationals with limited immigration status and non-economically active European Union individuals.
- (c) Individuals with refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary or exceptional leave to remain granted outside the immigration rules and who are exempt from the habitual residence test will continue to be entitled to support with their Council Tax.
- (d) Regulations will allow current arrangements for a person to act on behalf of another, for example where a person has been granted a power of attorney over a liable Council Tax payer.
- (e) Regulations will provide that a person who is in receipt of CTB, or who is waiting for a decision about a claim for CTB, immediately before 1st April 2013 is to be treated as having made an application for reduction under the local CTS scheme.
- (f) Formal rights of appeal will be set out in regulations. It is proposed that appeals will be heard by Valuation Tribunals.
- (g) Billing authorities are required to consider whether to revise or replace their CTS schemes each year and under such circumstances, to consider what transitional arrangements may be required to move from an existing local scheme to a replacement scheme. Schemes cannot be amended within a financial year.

Funding CTS

- 54. It is the Government's intention that grants will be paid to the billing and major precepting authorities (using existing powers), thus reducing each authority's Council Tax requirement and off-setting partially or fully the reduction on the Council Tax base as a result of the new CTS. Provisional allocations have recently been published, as part of a technical consultation paper on funding, setting out the grant proposals. The Government intends to make funding available based on 90% of the forecast for CTB expenditure in 2013/2014, but will take account of what provision might be needed for authorities facing the greatest pressures. Consideration will be given to a new basis for distributing grant (other than previous expenditure) from 2015/2016.
- 55. Grant allocations will be based on 2013/2014 projected expenditure levels, but this will not take into account:
 - (a) Any increases in the number of people claiming support with their Council Tax
 - (b) The Council Tax increase for 2012/2013
 - (c) Any Council Tax increase for 2013/2014.
- 56. Therefore, based on the provisional figures in the technical consultation document for the grant distribution, Darlington's funding is likely to reduce by approximately

12%.

Risk sharing

57. The Government is proposing that any deficit or surplus should be shared between the billing and major precepting authorities at the beginning of the following financial year. Any deficit will either be absorbed as a reduction in the Council Tax requirement the following year, or through a general increase in Council Tax.

Options for delivery

58. **Annexes 1 and 2** set out the relevant information about current volumes of claims for member's information, before considering options for delivery.

59. There are essentially three broad options to consider for the delivery of the new local CTS scheme, as follows:

- (a) **Option 1:** Develop a CTS scheme, but decide not to pass any reduction in government grant on to the recipients. This will mean that the 12% reduction in grant will have to be absorbed by the Council, together with any additional growth in CTB recipients and benefit rates etc. This amount is likely to be around £1.14m in 2013/2014 and may increase in future years (see Annex 3).
- (b) **Option 2:** Develop a CTS scheme and decide to pass on some or all of the 12% reduction to CTS recipients. Annex 4 provides a number of examples. Members will note that to achieve 100% recovery of the grant reduction, a flat rate reduction of 52% in CTS entitlement is required.
- (c) **Option 3:** Develop a CTS scheme and decide to pass the 12% reduction in grant on to the recipients in part or full, but protect certain groups. For example, some councils are protecting all disabled people and families with children under 5. The impact of protecting particular groups will either further increase the cost of the scheme to the Council or increase the reduction for other working aged recipients. For example, if in Darlington the above groups were fully protected and the 12% reduction in grant was fully passed on to CTS recipients, non-protected groups would see a reduction in benefit of at least 30%. In addition, these groups already receive additional entitlement under the scheme as:
 - (i) People with dependent children are protected as Child Benefit and Child maintenance are fully disregarded in the assessment of CTB.
 - (ii) People in work are protected as earnings and Working Tax Credits are partially disregarded in the assessment of CTB. Four week extended payments of CTB are awarded to people taking up work after periods of long term unemployment.
 - (iii) Disabled people are protected as Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance are fully disregarded in the assessment of CTB, and additional premiums are added into the calculation.

60. Cabinet are responsible for proposing the Council's MTFP and the decision required in this report represents a significant element of the next revision to the MTFP. Due to the timescale for implementation, consultation needs to commence now prior to the final decision being taken by Council in January 2013. Because of the responsibilities of Cabinet, the recommendations in this report has been drafted under the guidance of members of Cabinet. It is recommended that consultation with the public should include the five options but with a preferred option being Option 3 and it is Option 3 that is included in the appended scheme..

Draft CTS scheme

61. Darlington Borough Council has been working with the other Tees Valley authorities in developing a draft CTS scheme, which is attached at Appendix 7. The draft scheme seeks, where possible, to simplify the existing CTB regulations. Some additional proposals to modify the CTB scheme are set out in the executive summary of the scheme and will form the basis of the public consultation exercise.

Consultation and impact assessments

62. Consultation has already been undertaken with the major preceptors, the Police and Fire Authorities. Officer's opinion from the Police and Fire Authorities is that the reduction in government funding should be passed on to the CTS recipients in full. However, both authorities expressed a desire for their members to be consulted on the draft scheme, once it is published, as part of the public consultation exercise.
63. An internal officer impact assessment has recently been undertaken, to identify the potential effects of a reduction in CTS entitlement on individuals. Appendix 8 provides the case studies used in this exercise. The main impacts identified from this exercise are:
- (a) Older people are protected by central government from the impact of these proposals
 - (b) However, this means that the impact on other protected characteristics is greater than it would otherwise have been
 - (c) The impact on people who are single and under the age of 35 years is greatest, as this group has been affected most by changes to Housing Benefit, Tax Credits and a number of other proposals relating to welfare benefit changes
 - (d) If members agree to protect other groups such as lone parents, this could result in a disproportionate effect elsewhere
 - (e) Larger families may be impacted upon too, which could have implications for some religious and faith groups.
64. Once a draft scheme has been approved, a full public consultation exercise will be undertaken, including the options for delivering the scheme (i.e. those options approved by members in paragraph 20). Consultation will then be undertaken in the following ways:
- (a) Details on the Darlington Borough Council website including an on-line survey
 - (b) Meetings with advice and support agencies

- (c) Writing to those existing CTB recipients potentially affected by the proposals
- (d) Writing to the Police and Fire authorities
- (e) Writing to Parish Councils
- (f) Focus group meetings with CTB recipients and Council Taxpayers
- (g) An article in the October edition of the Darlington Together magazine

65. Full equalities impact assessments will be undertaken as part of the public consultation exercise. Details of the outcome of consultation and the impact assessments will be presented to members in the January 2013 Cabinet meeting.

Council Tax discount and exemption reform

66. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have issued a statement of intent on technical reforms of Council Tax that could help to mitigate the costs of the CTS scheme. In summary, the changes being proposed include:

- (a) Giving billing authorities power to levy up to full Council Tax on second homes
- (b) Replacing class A and class C empty dwelling exemptions with discounts, the amount of which would be for billing authorities to decide
- (c) Abolishing class L exemptions, and making mortgagees in possession of empty dwellings liable for Council Tax
- (d) Allowing billing authorities to levy an 'empty homes premium' for dwellings which have been empty for two years or more
- (e) Allowing Council Taxpayers to pay by 12 monthly instalments, by default, rather than 10 (as is currently the case)
- (f) Allowing billing authorities to publish on-line the information to be supplied with demand notices
- (g) Changes to eliminate potential tax complications from arrangements involving third party suppliers where solar panels are placed on the roofs of dwellings
- (h) Changes to the way 'granny annexes' are separately rated for Council Tax, when they are no longer occupied as a separate unit of accommodation.

67. Based on the information contained in the statement of intent (and assuming legislation will be passed this year), the changes could generate additional income for Darlington of up to £680k per year. This will impact on people with empty properties who, at the moment, are exempt for Council Tax for the first 6 months. An example of how this potential income could be generated is given at **Appendix 6**. Once more information is available, a report setting out the financial implications of the proposed changes will be made. However, if adopted, these options provide the Council with an opportunity to recover and mitigate against lost income if a decision was made whereby some or all of the reduction in Government grant is not passed onto CTS recipients. At the same time many of the changes identified in paragraph 29 will be beneficial in terms of tackling empty homes and bringing them back into use.

Financial context

68. The Council's current MTFP estimates the Council will need to reduce its spending by approximately £9.4m from a net budget of £80m, which represents a significant challenge for the Council. Included in projections is a provision of £1m to cover the projected loss of government grant in respect of CTB. Therefore, should members

choose not to pass on the grant reduction to CTS recipients, the estimated budget reductions required will remain at £10m. Any passing of the grant reduction to CTS recipients will reduce the £10m and therefore reduce the need to further cut Council services.

Conclusion

69. The Government's decision to localise CTS with an estimated reduction of funding of 12% (£1.14m in Darlington), represents a significant challenge to local authorities. Councillors have a difficult decision to make, they either:

(a) Reduce the cost of CTS by reducing the amount of support they provide within a new scheme therefore reducing the available income to residents already deemed unable to pay Council tax under the existing scheme

OR

(b) Retain the existing scheme and therefore fund the 12% (£1.14m) by reducing other services provided by the Council. Given the severe reduction in government funding already experienced and anticipated in the future this is a significant amount.

70. The impact of this change is disproportionate across the country, councils with greater deprivation and therefore more CTS claimants will face more significant challenges, the Government's decision to protect pensioners from any loss of support means the impact of reducing the cost of the scheme by 12% will impact more on non-pensioner groups, again across the country the impact of pensioner protection is different in local authorities depending on the number and income levels of the pensioners.

71. In a period of austerity, it is likely that the number of claimants for CTS may increase despite all the best efforts of the Council to stimulate the local economy, the cost of such an increase in numbers would appear to fall 100% on the Council although there is a lack of clarity in Government guidance.

72. All Billing authorities, Unitary, Metropolitan and District Councils are currently considering similar reports to this one, however at this stage there are no emerging pictures about what other Councils are doing. It is clear there could well be a "postcode lottery" in relation to CTS as Councils will undoubtedly make decisions based on their priorities, CTS claimant make up and their financial position.

73. The calculations attached at Appendix 4 illustrate the estimated impacts on CTS claimants of 10%, 20%, 30% and 52% reductions, there are an infinite range of reductions that could be applied but the key points would remain around the impact on claimants and the ability to successfully collect small amounts from residents on low income.

74. Members when considering this report at this stage will understand the implications of reducing the funding of CTS, what is harder to understand is the impact of a £1.14m reduction in services in the context of the Council needing to reduce expenditure in the region of £9.4m by 2016/2017. It is an option to leave the

existing scheme in place for a period of time whilst a greater understanding is gained of what the impact may be, however if this route was chosen, a protection scheme would be put in place which would mean it would take some time to achieve any savings, at this time guidance on a protection scheme is unclear.

75. Reference is made in the report to the potential to increase income from Council Tax by up to £680k from changes to Council Tax discounts A separate report will be presented to members outlining the options available to change the arrangements for empty property discounts and exemptions.

ESTIMATED GROSS CTB EXPENDITURE FOR 2012/2013

Group	No. of Recipients	Average Weekly CTB	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)	Percentage of Caseload	Percentage of Expenditure
<u>Pensioners</u>	5,341	£14.52	£4,033	43.88%	44.45%
<u>Working Aged</u>	6,831	£14.19	£5,040	56.12%	55.55%
Total	12,172	£14.33	£9,073		

NUMBERS OF CTB RECIPIENTS BY GROUP AND COUNCIL TAX BAND

Band	Pensioners	Working Aged Passported*	Working Aged Vulnerable**	Working Aged Other	Total
A	3,765	3,828	400	1,361	9,354
B	943	441	81	280	1,745
C	409	118	21	121	669
D	146	56	11	56	269
E	69	11	6	18	104
F	5	9	3	5	22
G	4	1	1	2	8
H	0	1	0	0	1
Total	5,341	4,465	523	1,843	12,172
Average weekly CTB	£14.52	£15.30	£13.67	£11.64	£14.33

*Working Aged Passported includes anyone who is in receipt of either:

- Income Support, or
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance, or
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance

**Working Aged Vulnerable includes anyone who is in receipt of either:

- War Widows Pension, or
- War Disablement Pension, or
- A disability related benefit, such as Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance

NOTE: Some recipients of a disability related benefit will be included in the passported claims (for example, a person may be getting Incapacity Benefit, topped up with Income Support). It is not known at this stage how many of these claims are included in the figures, as this information is not held by Darlington Borough Council.

**IMPACT OF A 0% REDUCTION IN CTB ENTITLEMENT FOR ALL WORKING AGED RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged Passported	4,465	100%	£15.30	£0	£3,552
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	100%	£13.67	£0	£372
Working Aged Other	1,843	100%	£11.64	£0	£1,116
Total	12,172				£9,073

Impact on Darlington Borough Council

A	Estimated expenditure 2012/2013 (£'000)	£9,073
B	Estimated reduced expenditure (£'000)	£9,073
C	Estimated reduction: A – B (£'000)	£0
D	Percentage reduced	0.00%
E	Uncollected Council Tax: assume 50% collection rate: C x 50% (£'000)	£0
F	Estimated government grant (£'000)*	£7,699
G	Annual gross cost: B – F + E (£'000)	£1,374
H	Annual cost to Darlington Borough Council: G x 83% (£'000)**	£1,140

*Extrapolated from the government projections

**Approx. 17% of the cost will be met by precepting authorities

**IMPACT OF A 10% REDUCTION IN CTB ENTITLEMENT FOR ALL WORKING AGED RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged Passported	4,465	90%	£13.76	£80	£3,195
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	90%	£12.02	£86	£327
Working Aged Other	1,843	90%	£10.09	£81	£967
Total					£8,522

Impact on Darlington Borough Council

A	Estimated expenditure 2012/2013 (£'000)	£9,073
B	Estimated reduced expenditure (£'000)	£8,522
C	Estimated reduction: A – B (£'000)	£551
D	Percentage reduced	6.07%
E	Uncollected Council Tax: assume 50% collection rate: C x 50% (£'000)	£277
F	Estimated government grant (£'000)*	£7,699
G	Annual gross cost: B – F + E (£'000)	£1,100
H	Annual cost to Darlington Borough Council: G x 83% (£'000)**	£913

*Extrapolated from the government projections

**Approx. 17% of the cost will be met by precepting authorities

**IMPACT OF A 20% REDUCTION IN CTB ENTITLEMENT FOR ALL WORKING AGED RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged Passported	4,465	80%	£12.22	£160	£2,837
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	80%	£10.43	£168	£284
Working Aged Other	1,843	80%	£8.59	£159	£823
Total					£7,977

Impact on Darlington Borough Council

A	Estimated expenditure 2012/2013 (£'000)	£9,073
B	Estimated reduced expenditure (£'000)	£7,977
C	Estimated reduction: A – B (£'000)	£1,096
D	Percentage reduced	12.08%
E	Uncollected Council Tax: assume 50% collection rate: C x 50% (£'000)	£548
F	Estimated government grant (£'000)*	£7,699
G	Annual gross cost: B – F + E (£'000)	£826
H	Annual cost to Darlington Borough Council: G x 83% (£'000)**	£686

*Extrapolated from the government projections

**Approx. 17% of the cost will be met by precepting authorities

**IMPACT OF A 30% REDUCTION IN CTB ENTITLEMENT FOR ALL WORKING AGED RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged Passported	4,465	70%	£10.67	£241	£2,477
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	70%	£8.86	£250	£241
Working Aged Other	1,843	70%	£7.17	£232	£687
Total					£7,438

Impact on Darlington Borough Council

A	Estimated expenditure 2012/2013 (£'000)	£9,073
B	Estimated reduced expenditure (£'000)	£7,438
C	Estimated reduction: A – B (£'000)	£1,635
D	Percentage reduced	18.02%
E	Uncollected Council Tax: assume 50% collection rate: C x 50% (£'000)	£818
F	Estimated government grant (£'000)*	£7,699
G	Annual gross cost: B – F + E (£'000)	£557
H	Annual cost to Darlington Borough Council: G x 83% (£'000)**	£462

*Extrapolated from the government projections

**Approx. 17% of the cost will be met by precepting authorities

**IMPACT OF ACHIEVING FULL RECOVERY OF THE GRANT FUNDING
REDUCTION FROM CTS RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged Passported	4,465	48%	£7.28	£417	£1,690
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	48%	£5.62	£419	£153
Working Aged Other	1,843	48%	£4.40	£376	£422
Total					£6,298

Impact on Darlington Borough Council

A	Estimated expenditure 2012/2013 (£'000)	£9,073
B	Estimated reduced expenditure (£'000)	£6,298
C	Estimated reduction: A – B (£'000)	£2,775
D	Percentage reduced	30.59%
E	Uncollected Council Tax: assume 50% collection rate: C x 50% (£'000)	£1,388
F	Estimated government grant (£'000)*	£7,699
G	Annual gross cost: B – F + E (£'000)	-£13
H	Annual cost to Darlington Borough Council: G x 83% (£'000)**	-£11

*Extrapolated from the government projections

**Approx. 17% of the cost will be met by precepting authorities

Comments in support of option 1

Unless the government is going to increase benefit to cover the 20%, the cost of council tax would take a person under the amount the law says a person needs to live on. Furthermore I do not see why a pensioner should be exempt as they receive higher rate of benefit regardless of whether they have worked or not.
People can't cut the price of food or there energy bills. Local councils could do more by savings made within.
Because life for most people is a struggle week to week and cutting benefits for the majority of good people will make living a nightmare, more than it is already. Ask gaffers in the top offices to take bigger cuts rather than bigger wages and bonuses. You won't though as it is easier to persecute the little man and make everyone's lives miserable. Go and pat yourselves on the back. I don't feel I get value as it is.
I am a single parent, get no help from my son's father. I'm looking for work. Out of my benefits I pay gas, electric, food, clothes plus the price of school uniforms and kit for school is expensive and I go without to clothe and feed my son, there is no way without me finding a job I could pay towards council tax. I have worked since I was 12 and gave up work to have my son in 2008. I couldn't go back to work as company closed down.
Because personally I struggle to pay bills as it is and could find myself in debt in the future.
Wheelchair disabled not the one with a bad back.
Anybody on benefits and low income people who cannot afford to pay out more money when they can't afford it because we certainly can't.
I believe all people of working age should be protected. The way our economy is at the moment everyone needs every penny they have.
Council tax would go up but their income remain static
Due to circumstances families face not being guaranteed no-one can foresee needing help. Having completed years of hard study to become a teacher I am now faced with finding employment, I have every intention of returning to work and paying all my council tax myself, however until this happens my family find it hard to cover the bills. By reducing the help we receive would only push us further into debt. We have always paid our council tax ourselves until I became a student, when my lack of income had huge implications. Wanted to better myself should not be punished.
How are people on JSA able to afford it?
If someone is on benefits they will be struggling anyways. I am and only receive jobseekers. I may for the first time in 38 years have to go into a council house as I've been out of work for almost a year and my saving have gone.
Everyone should be protected, if we had to pay more it would be unfair.
I should be protected from any council tax from the Darlington Borough Council. And that's should be the end of it all.
I like most people simply cannot afford to pay anymore. If you raise the amount I and other people like me, we will be fighting to keep our homes!
People should be protected from any cuts because people are not earning enough to pay for bills now, as wages are not enough for the rise in food and utility bills.
Because if you are on a minimum wage you are already paying taxes more taxes the less money we have to live on and already being taxed enough.
This country always takes from the lower class families. People who are in the higher bracket should pay more, I'm a single parent of work to keep s roof over my families head. Reducing housing benefits for me would have a terrible result.
A one payment everybody on band A property should be considered.
I am a carer and cannot afford to pay full rent.

<p>People of working age should be signing on (Available for work) The amount the government says you should be able to live on is the bare minimum. Any more taken off benefits (Or paid out of same) makes a GREAT difference. If a person is protected from any cuts, they have already met the desired requirements by law. For the government to make cuts for councils and those cuts to be passed on to those already struggling I think is just another way to hit the worst off in the country!</p>
<p>Close Dolphin Centre, its rubbish and cancel the new bins we are supposed to be getting.</p>
<p>All people of working age should be protected from any cuts because they work hard enough for their money.</p>
<p>I think all people of working age should be protected from any cuts because if people don't work at the moment and don't have much money not fair they should pay council tax and won't be able to afford to live.</p>
<p>It's unfair for people of working age to be paying more towards their Council Tax Bill.</p>
<p>Low earners should not pay as much, as the people who live in more expensive houses are paying more than enough.</p>
<p>Shouldn't be taxed in the first place. If you cannot provide a privately funded service you shouldn't be in business at all. It's your choice to provide these services why should people suffer out their own pockets because you have had less grants from the government,</p>
<p>The North East has the highest level of unemployment in the country. This is the region that needs the most help and support, not further cuts, people are already struggling to make ends meet.</p>
<p>The tory government should keep things as they are.</p>
<p>Those out of work or disabled have enough to pay out with L.H.A whereas housing benefit was total payment. To change this so we pay a proportion of council tax as well before long peoples health will suffer as food bills go down to compensate for yet more bills to pay their income is fixed, we can't just pull money out of thin air with no savings to fall back on so we all just starve instead. I pay £95 per month to my LHA as it is now, where would i get extra money for council tax support payments.</p>
<p>If people on benefits have to contribute to council tax as well as other household bills, it will have a drastic impact on their daily lives and quality of life.</p>
<p>It is my belief that anyone who us unemployed/on a low income i.e. Jobseekers/Income support etc. should be entitled to assistance regarding to paying Council Tax as many people are struggling to get by/make ends meet as I am my-self.</p>
<p>The reason why is because some people live off a very low income so how would you expect them to afford this cut happening. Also some people may not work because of other issues they have effecting them in their day to day life. Also I choose option 1 because it's not fair on cutting these low income people they should concentrate on the more richer people earn more money, get them to pay more Council Taxes.</p>
<p>Because the cost of living is going up all the time, I watched the news gas and electricity is going up. With less money it will be a struggle to pay bills.</p>
<p>As they might not have the money to cover the costs or if they pay then they would leave themselves short as they might need it for other bills.</p>
<p>Why have you let all these immigrants in? The cost of living is far too high. Wages have not been increased enough. People are working longer for less and until later in life (past 65yrs) if people have to pay more council tax this will lead to homelessness. On the councils conscience is it.</p>
<p>People on benefits based incomes already find it hard to survive and pay bills</p>
<p>I think that there should be no cuts, the reason is because a lot of people I know already struggle to keep on top of their council tax, I myself have fallen behind with payments, and that is why I think there should be no cuts, otherwise there is going to be a lot of people upset and worried in meeting the cost of extra council tax at the moment is already a ridiculous price monthly especially for those who live in flats or by themselves, there should be no cuts purely because it will lead to a lot of people falling into debt with their council tax bills.</p>
<p>Benefits cut, housing benefits cuts, food bills up, poor getting poorer, rich get richer.</p>
<p>I struggle to live on my weekly benefit. I could not afford to pay any more money out. I have stopped smoking after many years as I couldn't afford it.</p>

Shouldn't be paying more.
Circumstances in every household one different i.e., hours they work, how big or number of children in a family. Single, married, divorced etc. Income can be quite low and with prices rising wages are not. People struggle to meet household bills now. This will be a huge impact on people's budgets.
After paying toward rent, utility bills I am with approx. £30 per week to cover my food and clothes and any other household essentials i.e. toiletries and household items. I don't smoke nor drink, I have to rely on family or friends to feed me when I have no money left. How am i supposed to survive with everything going up?
People on low income/benefits cannot afford to pay more. Increased fuel/food/utility bills mean choosing between heating property or food.
I think working age should be protected as people are already trying and shouldn't be made worse off.
Unemployment and disabled people because they don't have enough money.
In my case I receive E.S.A plus D.L.A with the present cost of living I find it hard to manage. Never the less if I was fit and healthy in a full time occupation I would have ticked option 3.
Everybody should be protected from the cuts. I think if you cut non workers benefits and not cut workers it kind of isn't fair because everybody has the same rights and it would just be slinging people out.
I am currently looking for a job 16hrs a week and I think that the council tax and extra rent a week is a bill much.
If the council made more jobs for us unemployed that would be great if the council tax out of our money something else has to go like food & heating have you tried living on £64.00 a week try it and get back to me.
People on benefits over 60 they already had the bus pass stopped & heating allowance stopped 60-63 years old.
People with disabilities who live on their own. Supported living.
It's not a big amount for council but very big for people's budget. It is very hard to get any help from D.B.C and cutting this little help it's not fair. Council should find ways in their own budget not just once again take out money from people. It is easier but not better!
Lack of cash, jobs, without council help people could not afford council tax no help means move homelessness more crime. For years this council has wasted money on stupid useless stuff, Brick Train, Fountain, Steps those stupid daft coins dotted all over the town centre.
It isn't my brain wave idea of getting help with rent. All I know I don't work enough hours to pay my own rent. I'm a part time worker but with deterring health makes less money want help (ME).
Please consider that the amount of benefits is extremely small and leaves us no way to afford even more bills, the costs of electricity and gas are constantly rising and the unemployed are in severe poverty, another bill on top of this will further reduce living standards for those who have no hope of finding work in Darlington. The council must make cuts to its expenditures and for go 'their' perks in order to balance the books.
In order to rebuild society government and councils must let the people stay firmly on their feet. The population are the way to getting out of the recession, it will not be achieved by making the poor poorer, considering that's 5% of people have 95% of the wealth, i would say that's a lot of people you're going to affect with cuts.
Because everybody should be the same.
If you work you should pay tax, if you don't work you can't pay tax because you have no income to pay it with.
According to statistics 1 in 4 families are struggling to cope as single parents, for those not in employment cuts could mean families going without food if they have to pay extra council tax, fuel prices are rising and it will be difficult to make ends meet if no income.
Because life these days are very expensive and I think that it would be a small help for everybody.
Some people have disabilities and are unable to work therefore these people are on a low income.

<p>People are struggling already to pay council tax, this could cause more people to become in debt. I don't believe its fair to protect some people and not others unless their circumstances show a large difference in income.</p>
<p>Why should us who work even if part time suffer when there is so many people who don't or want to work and get everything paid for.</p>
<p>I think it's stupid I get £2.15 every 2 weeks out of this, I pay nearly £200 a year council tax and have to pay £10 a week rent, yet someone who gets the same as me and gets DLA Benefit on top of what I get example £215 every 2 weeks plus there DLA off £400 a month only has to pay minimum rent and no council tax at all! How is this fair on sick! Sick of living depressed suicidal and will deffo kill me self if i have to read any more of this s***</p>
<p>I think money is spent sometimes in places it should not be, when it could be added to the pot for things like this. Certain people struggle for good reasons and they deserve the help especially single people with children and the elderly</p>
<p>I am struggling to live now, it is not possible and not correct to be punished anymore.</p>
<p>Most people would be in danger of losing their home or having debt myself included.</p>
<p>some people of working age should be protected from cuts because they haven't got much to live on</p>
<p>Because money is hard enough. People have enough problems without adding something else to it.</p>
<p>Unfair for people to pay more money.</p>
<p>it wouldn't be fair for people to pay more</p>
<p>Anyone on income support is living on the bread line, how can they afford to contribute anything, this would cause poverty.</p>
<p>to make people on benefits pay is ridiculous how can they pay out what little benefit they get, you would be putting people into poverty, where are people going to find the money my income is £71 per week how on earth can I live on less</p>
<p>Most people who are on state benefits can't afford to live, and would not be able to pay extra council tax.</p>
<p>Everybody on benefits.</p>
<p>Due to the fact people of working age who aren't in work cannot afford to pay council tax and would be unfair to make them pay the shortfall.</p>
<p>I'm a single parent and having to pay out another amount of money for council tax would mean my child would suffer, they should take a cut from pensioners of whom are getting double money than me and who have no children to pay out for, clothes school things, etc.</p>
<p>All people of working age should be protected from any cuts because quite simply the present system does not give allowances easily anyway. People have to fill form enough at present. People deserve a life, disabled people and those who have no job at no fault of their own, must now be protected. One nation should mean one fair nation.</p>
<p>War veterans of UK forces conflicts + people of low benefits.</p>
<p>I agree with option 1, simply because on benefits you hardly have enough to live on, so paying extra. Toward council tax would be a struggle.</p>
<p>Definitely aren't keeping up with cost of living i.e. gas, electricity, water, food. I know things are tough for everyone but why are the unemployed made to suffer when it's not their fault I can't get a job due to being disabled.</p>
<p>Especially people on benefits (such as J.S.A) who live on own or with partners on same benefits for they struggle to make ends as it is. I have to start paying almost £20 a month any more payments and I'd have nothing left.</p>
<p>People on benefits get the lowest money the law says to live on.</p>
<p>Sick people, those over 55.</p>
<p>Even though we are working age, I myself find it impossible to live on benefits. I look for work every day and my money will only let me live in a hostel!!!!</p>

As all people are already struggling I have to add £20.00 a week already to my rent in a 1 bedroom flat. So live off \$40.00 a week until I find work.
Protect vulnerable people on benefits.
People on benefits are more vulnerable at this time or austerity.
People on low income. Disabled people have to out more for this, I can't see how people on certain benefit can be charged more, by low need a minimum to live on.
The reason we have council tax benefit is because we are on a very low benefit.
People on benefits and low income wages it should be the same as it is now. I claim job seekers allowance I get £45 a week, that to pay all my bills, water, gas, electricity, rent and food so as you can tell I couldn't afford to pay tax even if I wanted to. I struggle every week now. If i could find a job and could afford tax that would be different- but I think most on J.S.A will be in the same boat as myself so coking benefit people to pay tax even the smallest would amount would make the people who are struggling now even more worse off, and it all has an effect- I was working 50+ hours a week in 1997- and would gladly pay tax then- I could afford it. But now with no job- there just no way I could pay.
I think that all people of a working age should be protected from any cuts, especially those with young children, as a single parent myself with my 10 month old daughter I struggle to pay the bills on my income support as it is, so any extra cost to me would be very hard, i do not drink, i don't smoke, so i feel if i can't manage now how will i manage with extra to pay, I'm sure a lot of single parents feel the same i would love to have a job that is not an option for me at the moment with my daughter being so young.
Ex armed forces suffering with PTSD they served our country and should be looked after.
No work- can't pay.
It is difficult enough to make ends meet now, under the present system. If people have to make payments it will only increase hardship. There are far more viable ways to save money within council spending.
I receive JSA and live on what the government deem is what I need. If I had to pay towards C.T this means I would be living below the poverty line.
Not everyone can meet their needs and they don't have a big income whether they are working or unemployed. Everyone needs some kind of help against any cuts.
Disabled and elderly should be protected.
If working people of any age earn enough to pay they should pay what is a payable sum based on their income. I am a pensioner we receive over the odds as a couple so we have to pay.
I just think all people who are entitled should get what they need. The council needs to look at the things it wastes money on. Like for instance flowers!!! In the town centre so they can take part in another counties flower show!
when pay tax to the government I sustain a good standard of living
It's as fair as it is at the moment there should be no change for the disabled it just confuses you more.
I have already had my benefits cut due to government wanting to save and was seen to fail a medical which I have to appeal have had a large reduction in benefits while I wait approx. 1 year for an appeal to be heard. Also have been informed I can't get full h. benefits due to having a spare bedroom this is my daughters room who was killed and i can't leave this home with her possessions and memories i have to survive on much less money and yet must keep paying out more and more which can't be done.
I think that that all people who have had a severe disability and who are struggling to make ends meet at the present time should be helped in every way possible as everything is costing more and more i.e. heating which is a main concern for someone who is mobile as i myself am not.
Because some people rely on benefits to keep themselves in a home
Because everything is going up and up i.e. energy food cost of living money can only stretch so far at the moment it's a choice between heat or eat if your proposals go ahead the choice will be even worse i.e. eat or not eat at all
People can't afford to pay anymore they barely have enough to live on and make ends meet.

<p>Why should we suffer because of the mistakes made by previous governments and councils. My food bill has gone up, my petrol costs have gone up, my pay has only changed by pennies, I can't afford extra increase on my outgoings. My work hours have been cut due to council cuts (I'm a care worker part time) enough is enough i have a 14 year old to care for money will not stretch to another increase, oh and my electric bill has just gone up again!</p>
<p>If someone of a working age cannot meet employers expectations in getting them back into work no matter how hard they try. They could then find themselves homeless.</p>
<p>As an older man being made redundant having worked all my life why should I be penalised and have to pay full council tax out of my unemployment benefit when this isn't enough to live on I feel that the older man is overlooked in the job market having applied for many jobs without success it is not by choice that i claim benefits</p>
<p>Cost of living is at its peak - I feel it's wrong to have more people paying more council tax just because the government are cutting costs of no fault of ours. So I feel we should all be protected from any cuts why add more financial hardship</p>
<p>I work and just get enough money I never go out because I don't get enough money coming in I just pay my way I couldn't afford to pay more council tax.</p>
<p>It just sounds like the best option.</p>
<p>Because the current system is fairest. The well off simply cannot afford any more expenditure.</p>
<p>There are people that earn a low income with children council tax, people on benefits and council tax benefit.</p>
<p>How can people on the lowest incomes afford to pay an additional £3.08 a week??</p>
<p>I agree that working age should pay a little depending on how much they earn and what money come into each household.</p>
<p>I live on my own and run my own house on job-seekers allowance and couldn't afford to pay any council tax.</p>
<p>Pensioners and people on benefits like ESA and DLA should be protected because these people are vulnerable.</p>
<p>If people are receiving council tax benefit then they must need it to keep a roof over their heads!</p>
<p>I think the elderly and the most needy should be protected from the cuts as the elderly need to be looked after and obviously as the needy have very little.</p>
<p>I agree in principle that everyone of working age should pay council tax however if they have no employment this is NOT possible.</p>
<p>People living on benefits already find it a huge struggle to survive on a very low income. If you make this income even lower, many families will fall into severe poverty. Most people of working age want to work but there are insufficient jobs in this economic climate people with the highest council tax band should be made to pay higher rates to cover the deficit.</p>
<p>I currently work full time and have two young adults claiming JSA. I would struggle to pay the full amount if my Council Tax Benefit was reduced or stopped.</p>
<p>I am on a disabled premium and my dad died last year my mam is a pensioner but I am the claimant if I am made to pay as I can't work I will have to go out and commit crime to pay towards the cost of council tax so really it would be no good for me.</p>
<p>All young persons under 24 should pay Council Tax or made to stay in their parents' home, if they own their own homes. And pensioners should not be except as I have one near me in a 3 bedroomed house on his own and shouldn't be in it.</p>
<p>There are many types of vulnerable people and while the council are right to protect pensioners I think they should also be protecting those people defined by the Equality Act 2010 as being disabled. Many people (not all) cannot work because of their disability and they should not be left in fears of losing their homes because they cannot afford to pay for it if the council brings in its proposed changes.</p>
<p>Hard enough to make ends meet as it is.</p>
<p>I think people with little money should be protected.</p>

I elect councillors to protect and benefit community and it is the job of the council to be protectors.
We already find it difficult to make ends meet, when on JSA or ESA etc. I am a war veteran and already have moneys taken off me, and find it difficult to pay bills for heating, food, clothes, water.
We are already struggling to pay bills if I had to pay more I would then be left with no money for food. Employed 16hours
People income would fall below the amount I law says they need to live on
Find it hard with my money as it is, then you have that stupid water fountain in town doing nothing as costs loads money. For what purpose looks daft.
I believe all people regardless of age should be protected from any cuts. People just can't afford to find extra money especially with food and energy bills are increasing and this would lead to hardship and poverty, the council could have easily funded this if it decided not to go ahead with wheeled bins, refuse collection
Economically times are only getting harder with energy and the costs of living. Going up and pay rises being frozen or pay being cuts is it a total worry that people like myself being a single parent, working 1 day a week while struggling to increase hours that have to fit round childcare, may come under fire, we live as frugally aw we can but while not receiving child support i am frightened of the finance impact that having to pay a council tax percentage will have when i have chosen to rent private and top up housing benefits so my son has a better home. In 4 month time i am also liable to pay full council tax on a home that we were ordered out of my son's father and is now on the property market to sell. Please don't hit single parents!
Because they pay full council tax and shouldn't be penalised for having a job
Most working age people have families and single parents need hours in jobs to suit children's school hours not all jobs job vacancies offer this flexibility
I think people of a working age should be supported because there is no jobs out there for people with no skill as this means no employer will consider them therefore no money coming in.
All people should be protected
Any cuts in benefits along with the increases in the cost of basic food, water, heating and public transport, can only cause extra hardship for those that already struggle to make ends meet.
I can barely live now I am on Job Seekers Allowance and cannot afford any high bills of utilities I am practically on the poverty line now and cannot make ends meet as it is so someone has to help the likes of me.
Sick and disabled people should be protected from any cuts. They are worried and afraid of more pressure as they are struggling now to make ends meet, and not be put under further pressure.
Don't have enough money to live on as it is and that's another bill. There's been times I've had to do without food. I don't drink or take drugs and there's times I cannot afford to have even heating on in cold times, this would affect me deeply, I'm a single mam.
1. Rent support has already been cut. 2 fuel cost increase each year by at least twice in relation. 3 there is a recession on the poorest are being asked to pay the most relative to their income. 4 rent reduction and council tax increase round 10% increase to the poorest and 10% increase each year to fuel price the minimum option 2a this is my outgoing : £280 income a month. 65 rent = £145 per month for living. 30 water . 20 gas. 20 electric. 35 for food clothing etc. per week phone etc. come on! How much poorer do you want me to be.
People are struggling to live working or not cost of everything has gone up and people can't afford to pay more or have the fear of getting behind, receiving nasty letters, bailiff coming out to collect just not unfair on low income people
Why should people have to pay for council tax
The reason I picked option 1 is because no one has mentioned how the unemployed are to pay for any extra council tax even people in work can find themselves unemployed, finding it hard to pay bills for the simple reasons the cost of living is too high!. you won't be able to take anyone to court to get the money because they don't have money to spare and Darlington council can afford it either with the cutbacks, keep it simple don't expect the unemployed or low pay to foot the bill it won't happen
I can barely afford it now and don't think I could afford it going up

I think option 1 as it is fair
We pay too much and the council don't do enough
Those people protected from any cuts are those that need the help the most. If someone is receiving housing benefits and jobseekers or income support should be able to claim their council tax to paid for
Knowing how difficult it is to survive on benefits or a low income, I feel it's unfair to expect already struggling people to pay for something they simply cannot afford. If central government are willing to support people fully on this matter the responsibility falls to local government/council, even a small reduction to benefits could mean a huge difference to people's lives, pushing them into even further poverty, a few pounds doesn't seem much on paper but can mean the difference between not eating properly or not paying a bill things can soon spiral out of control when you are on a limited budget taking away peoples support or reducing it is not only unfair but morally and ethnically unsound
A lot of people are already struggling
People in low income
People on Job seekers allowance and disable people
This is why we pay our taxes!
People receiving JSA should be protected from any cuts, but if need be a 10% reduction in support to council tax would suffice.
I think people out of work looking for work should be protected from cuts because the benefit we receive is low enough without paying more.
Because we already have to pay towards things like grass verges being cut, to have waste taken away by the council and such like, we are about the only town that does not have wheelie bins in the North East. I feel we are already way less privileged than other local towns! We also have to pay to park in town on a Sunday now. I have Darlington people are being hammered enough by the Council!
People on benefits struggle to pay bills as it is so if it was cut and we had to pay more would see a rise in homeless people.
Providing that the Council continues to means test applicants for Council Tax Benefit on the same levels. Speaking personally I would find it very hard to pay any Council Tax bills as my monthly bills exceed my benefit receipts already.
This is the most ridiculous idea I have ever heard in my life. How is anyone living on JSA which is a guidance supposed to suddenly start paying this when its already a daily struggle trying to put food on the table and keep warm in the winter! This is nothing more than another direct attack on the poor. This will lead to suicides! People will also refuse to pay any if they are already on the breadline and I don't blame them.
People who are on ESA should not have to pay when they are not well to work and it is not fair as they have no choice about not working. Elderly people.
People are struggling now and I do not see how they could pay more on what they receive.
How can people out of work meet demand!! And on minimum wage raising a family is impossible. !!CHANGE GOVERNMENT!!
People who rely on benefits have already endured extra financial hardships due to welfare reforms and cuts, with many already living below the poverty line and unable to enjoy a basic standard of living as defines by article 25 of the universal declaration of human rights.
You've asked for ideas for who should make up the shortfall in Council Tax Support. Well, tax should be paid by people who have an income and/or assets. The government is proud of lifting low paid people out of paying income tax, so it would be inconsistent if these people were asked to pay any Council Tax. The shortfall should be made by people who have larger than average houses. After all, they pay the least Council Tax as a percentage of the value of their homes.

Before the poorer people of the town are once again penalized yet further can i suggest the following options be considered 1 Can the money put aside for the wheeled bins be redirected into other areas of need for the town and preserve local services which would on the face of it seem more important than wheeled bins? 2 Would there be any benefit from increasing the cost of planning applications by say double or even treble? 3 What would actually be the "service cuts" the town would suffer to cover the £1,140,000 shortfall? Would these cuts be acceptable to the people of the town? 4 Can the shortfall be in part met by the cancellation of any proposed/planned town hall developments? 5 Can local councillor's expenses be reduced further to assist? I would welcome some feedback on the above please

Parents or guardians of children with disabilities or mental health issues

How can people find extra money when they only have basic money to live on

I have picked option 1 because not everybody of working age is working or working full time. I myself am in this position and it is through no fault of my own. Many people are being made redundant who are at working age and like myself I was made redundant and am constantly looking for work. So therefore i have chosen option 1 to protect people who are in the same position as me who would no possible way to meet the higher council tax we would have to pay.

Many people on low income struggle now and if charges are imposed on these people it could leave less food, less money for heating, etc.

So its equal to everyone

All these people including myself struggle from day to day is a choice of eating or staying warm please consider this when making or choosing thank you.

Benefit money wouldn't be enough to cover paying council tax

All people should be protected from the cuts people wouldn't be claiming for it if they had a good wage and making us pay more where are we going to find the money

Should stay the same as you do not receive enough of the other benefits to cover any extra costs

I believe that the council would end up spending too much time and money chasing those who won't or can't pay their extra £3.08 per week. If pensioners were charged a nominee fee for every bus trip i.e. 10p then you would re coup your shortfall in your budget. Free travel is a luxury!!

Because after paying their rent food and gas and electricity and all the other living expenses travel etc., there would be no money left for paying their council bill.

How can people on income based benefits be expected to pay for council tax, when JSA is meant to cover basic and necessary bills.

I think that all people of working age should be protected, the cost of living in the current climate has increased, whereas the level of pay is not increasing, many people are unable to afford to basically live. The council has to think of the bigger picture and how everyone will be affected, those who have a low income household, the elderly and people with disability.

People entitled to council tax benefit are already very poor. Food banks are becoming increasingly popular as many can't even afford to put basic meals on the table. There's high levels of unemployment in country and most of the unemployed are finding it hard to find work. Someone receiving £71 per week JSA can't manage at present. Paying council tax will cripple them, with some being sent to prison if they don't pay. I think it's very unfair to propose this, particularly when HB cuts are taking place too. Shutting the library for a day, or not wasting money on planting flowers with unnecessary sculptures on roundabouts, or even closing eastbourne sports complex is a better option. I cannot support this proposal. I do not claim HB or CTB but the poorest cannot be allowed to suffer. Only a conservative council would allow this!!!

The benefits system is based upon paying people the amount it deems to be enough to live on. Making claimants pay Council Tax will create hardship. Instead, an increase in Council Tax for those living in top band accommodation should be considered.

I believe all people should be protected from this proposal for the following reason. Im sure that when the government work out peoples income support or jobseekers allowance it is worked out very precisely to the penny based on what people need in order to survive in a basic manner. I.e. what their expenditure would be on food and heating etc. I`m sure that the calculations would not involve "spare money" that they don't really need. Therefore in proposing to take away £5 or so from these people is surely going to push them well over the edge. There is already a widely reported issue with

<p>people in the area having to take food parcels in from charities. Surely these cuts are only going to exasperate the problem. Where else might they turn for money? Crime? What you save in the cuts might have to be handed over to the judicial system in order to prosecute people turning to crime just to get by. I would like to add to this that when you exclude pensioners from the cuts why do you also not also exclude the disabled? The severely disabled are essentially pensioners for life, living an isolated existence and often rarely leaving their houses yet they get hammered for cuts. Pensioners get annual winter fuel payments, the disabled have never received such payments yet we are equally isolated, unable to venture far and often even unable to move around to keep ourselves warm. In addition to this, Darlington council in the last 18months have removed the cap on the hourly rate that care can be charged at which hit the disabled hard in the pocket. Darlington council have also granted themselves the right to take 100% of a disabled persons severely disability premium to contribute to care rather than the 50% it was previously set at. How many more times is this council prepared to hit the disabled? Why not look to other areas to lay your cuts. This is not meant to be funny but Christmas is coming, in these meagre times most people will be cutting back on Christmas but I'm sure very soon the town will be covered in Christmas lights that will be switched on 24 hours a day running up, what I can only imagine, a sizable electricity bill. Axe it! Who cares! On the subject of lights, have you ever driven from Darlington to Middlesbrough on the A66? Its lit up like an airport runway, switch off every other light in your jurisdiction, most cars these days come with "headlights".</p>
<p>I cannot choose Option 3 because I believe in the principle of equality and disapprove of all forms of discrimination, whether positive or negative. Where a benefit is means-tested, I believe that the rules should apply in the same way to all groups so that everyone is treated equally such that people with the same means get the same benefit. There should be no positive discrimination in favour of pensioners or any other group. I realise that positive discrimination in favour of pensioners has been decided nationally and that Darlington Council cannot go against national policy. If you could do so, I would choose Option 2 but, as you can't, I believe that the only option that honours the principle of equality that is within your gift is Option 1 which gives the same protection to everyone that is going to be given to pensioners by the Government. I therefore believe that you should find the extra money needed to continue with the current approach from cuts to services rather than cuts to council tax benefit for some people and not others.</p>
<p>I feel that with all the other cuts to the welfare benefits that this proposed action would cause more stress and concern to those who are struggling to find work or only work 16 - 20 hours a week due to ill health. As usual its the people who need the help our the people who will suffer.</p>
<p>Because the government make enough money already. People who are on a low income like myself and single families should be able to get the extra help.</p>
<p>Jobs are so hard to come by in the Darlington area and most are agency work so you only get a days work here and there and no one can pay bills like that.</p>
<p>Because in the current climate increases will be hard.</p>
<p>Because I am of working age but on benefits and if I have to pay towards the council tax as I am in a private house I wont be able to feed my kids as I have to pay rent to my landlord excess.</p>
<p>I am currently unemployed however I am studying for a work related qualification as I am paying for these studies out of my own pocket (i.e. out of my benefits) This means I literally do not have a single spare penny left. I can only continue to afford these studies as long as my Council Tax Benefit remains at 100% should I be forced to leave my studies (In order to pay council tax) It would mean I remain unemployed for longer and ultimately cost the council more in benefit payments to me.</p>
<p>The reason why the government are making to many cuts, putting car insurance up the retail industry are raising their prices as the same for supermarkets things are getting too hard with out any more cuts. It could all put people out on the streets which in the long run could cost more money for the government.</p>
<p>Because Benefits are low enough as it is, and we cannot afford to get enough food and also we have to put about 30 pounds a week having to have a meter for gas and electric and so I cannot afford very much food or anything else after putting money on pre payment meter.</p>
<p>As a single mother working and have 2 sons living with me. I need all the help with payments towards council tax. As I only work 16 hours otherwise I would struggle.</p>
<p>If people are in receipt of benefits their situation is not going to improve with the current scare of the economy - rising food costs, cost of fuel bills. Therefore an increase in council tax bill could lead a family even further into poverty.</p>

Comments in support of option 2

I wonder how much money Darlington Council have wasted on this form being sent to everyone! Everyone who works should pay some council tax, having worked for the council I'm fully aware of how much money is wasted.
Most working as it is unfair we don't chip in together for public services.
Some working people should pay Council Tax because they work.
Anyone who works should pay some Council Tax and that is what I think.
20% - This would reflect the services they are likely to use.
I am currently in receipt of ESA and DLA and Housing Benefits. I will come off these shortly to start a job and therefore under the current system pay £66 per month on my single occupancy discount for my mortgaged 2 bedroom semi. Whilst I acknowledge saving needs to be made to meet the shortfall, I do not believe any decision to make changes should come into effect until after major changes to the benefits systems, including teething problems with the introduction of universal credits and removal of other benefits and reducing in overall personal finance, become clearer and properly fairly assessed, over a fair and reasonable period of time. It is fair to say that I am in the best position to provide an opinion, give my current circumstances. I do think it is right and fair that all adults of working ages should pay council tax. Inclusive of those who don't own their own property or rent, perhaps living with parents. however some group ages particular venerable low paid people with disability physical of mentally, drug addict alcohol dependents etc. under the equal act 2010 and previously the disability discrimination act 2005 I am personally of the opinion that these groups are particularly vulnerable and risk and therefore from any changes or at the very least large reduction in outlay. Bill Dixon recently stated that the changes in Darlington weren't to make up shortfall in council revenues. My opinion is therefore the revenues that have been generated should be spent on going to reduce any council tax shortfall.
Everyone should pay something, we all have the services and those that don't pay now are the ones that probably use the police, fire emergency etc. more the 1 million should be used to make all CT bills equal relevant if working or not if can't pay it GET A JOB!
So then the people who can't or however got a job can still get help to pay their rent until they get jobs.
Married couple with kids should pay no taxes the pay enough off their wages, in fact everything they get is taxes to the hill to keep the government
20% don't know
I don't know what % to suggest, but I don't believe that people who don't work deserve a bigger discount than those who work hard in a low income job!
Disabled people who cannot walk should be helped as much as possible as incapacity + disability money is very LOW
I really couldn't say is would be up to the council to decide on that. If I had to choose I would say people should pay some who won't but not as big chunk. But really I don't really know that's for the council to decide really.
A> Reduce Burden on local council. B> Before I got onto D.L.A this year- even on low wage- I had to pay some council tax. C> It would motivate people to look for work- In employment they would get more money.
Everybody should give a little bit back.
I think option 2: All people of working age should pay some council tax, but depending on their income! I also agree with option 1 as I currently don't pay as I can't afford much as my income is low even though I work part time. So option 2 if the amount was carefully thought out depending on income.
I think all people of working should pay some council tax- at least 50% or more, because our town must be clean and safe.

I am of working age and I struggle to make a living taxi driving. I am diabetic and can only work short shifts so I do not over burn myself and risk having hypo attacks. I do it so I can avoid being unemployed as I am unemployable so I do it self-employed. I get very little help because even though i do get some Council Tax rebate i am still paying £60 a month or more so my help is miniscule but i do think people on full benefit should pay 10% contribution. It is also my opinion the council provides very little public services in this town anyway and far too much money is wasted on self-gratification and over paying lazy employees. But that's another problem.
20%
I do think the fairest way to spread the costs is for everyone to pay. My only concern is the extra cost to vulnerable groups. I am a single parent with two young children and money is already tight. They should pay 25%
This is a difficult decision but the fairest. If you are able to work you should do therefore able to pay more. I know things are hard but there are a lot of people who just live on benefits as they say they are not better off working. So option 2 would a small way against this. Before council tax the old rates system was on per house and i paid more back then. Yes it is a good idea everyone should pay towards the council services as everyone uses them.
Should pay whatever they could afford.
Pensioners shouldn't pay any council tax. But everyone who is working age should, single people without children should pay more than single parents or couples with children. This should be around 20% or more.
Depending on people's circumstances, everyone should pay something i.e. 10% of earnings if they are working full time.
To help with cuts- as long as it's affordable and only paying some towards it.
People who go out working should pay a little council tax. They should be means tested. And perhaps those with families should not pay where there is or would be poverty, they shouldn't pay when I lived at home in my 20s or 30s I had a job. I used to have to pay a really big amount of council tax, and my late mam who was head of the house, it was because i had savings but i run my own home (rented) and opened a lot of money on food (i don't overeat) my gas bill will be high next year, don't know about the electrics and all of the rest of the bills, i won't be able to buy my own clothes (but i have enough and worry about my financial situation) I'm looking on ways to cut down i know i have savings but imp frightened they will stop one of my benefits i don't know how i would manage!
Option 2c
50/50 cause why should non workers not pay anything if there is nothing wrong with them (disability wise)
I feel the councils proposed scheme is a fair percentage. If those on benefits feel it is too much they will all be encouraged to find work.
20% everyone should pay something
10% would be enough as 20% on top of housing benefit going or gone down would be too much to take. I have mental health issues and struggling to pay things would make it far worse for me
20% as a contribution
The disabled should be looked at closely as cuts to government benefit & lack of employment mean a lot. Like myself are only just surviving week by week at the moment
I think working people should pay at least 5% of their bill that way you could put the extra money into something like more things for children to do or roads parks cleaning up after dogs etc. etc.
I think it should be based on earnings and agree that even people on benefits should be paying council tax.
2a or 2b- Amount of council tax payable is less than £5 per week. Benefit to council budget outweighs risk to personal solvency. 1> To expensive 3> Politian's answer- 'Create pots of money to help special groups.' Ends up creating complicated rules and means people try fighting to be classed as special group.
All people of working age should pay 10% council tax benefits.
People on very low income.

They should pay some because otherwise they are going get used to having it paid and take advantage so with them paying some tax they are taking responsibility for their property.
I think all people should pay something towards council tax. I know people are struggling, but it's not fair to ask so many to pay and not others so I think it's fair to ask everybody to contribute.
All old pensioner and them on long time sick with no cure.
They should pay 5% are reasons for getting rebate could be taken as a individual basis and not penalise people who do not have the money to pay the full amount.
Severe disabilities elderly people.
The amount to what we get should be going up because everything else has gone up. So the jobseeker dla/income support should go up.
10% people on how income cannot be expected to pay but the bare minimum of council tax
Whatever the wage they bring in work off how much they earn
People of a working age should pay up to 30% of council tax if not a bit more depending on their circumstances
2A
Single occupancy should still apply. Reduction.
The proposed scheme is to be means forced the amount each individual should pay should be based on their financial standing some are a lot better off than others- and still claim benefits!
You would have to have a tier system to work out what people should pay and it should also be means tested, with those on benefits receiving the highest amount of relief.
20% so everyone is equal, people can't blame unemployment for things, unemployed actually look for a job because they don't have enough money.-20
If you are working you should pay council tax.
Because I work 16 hours a week and pay a small amount of council tax.
I feel that the only fair way to deal with the new council task benefit system is for all people on the benefit to contribute. According to their property banding as set out in option 2 that way people in the highest band properties pay the most. If they can afford a high band house they can afford to pay the most.
I also think that government could implement higher council tax boards above it. I know Darlington does not have money houses solved over £300,000 (1991 prices) but this would be a way of making things fairer for all
I think all people should pay council tax it is only fair.
Share the load, money is tight both personal and at council level.
All people of working age should pay some council tax because if they are of working age then why not!! However those like myself who are of working age but have children and can't work for many reasons should be exempt how much? I really could not say.
I think every person earning should pay towards the Boroughs up keep and services. And help towards services being saved.
I think everybody should pay into a scheme if they expect to get something out of it.
50% to help others that are not working.
Option 2 seems the fairest of all the options, not sure how much percentage we should pay it should be one set rate for everybody.
All depends on income coming into the house, some people may be carers or disable
Depends on what they earn
20% of Council Tax.
I believe that people who earn more than £10,000 a year should pay more towards their council tax because they have spent a few years qualifying for their degree so they can afford to pay 60% of their annual salary, but others who do manual labour or earn £5,000 a year should carry on getting some help towards their council tax bill.

Single parents, pensioners and working adults because they pay enough in tax on their wage, products they buy and gas and electric, etc.
At least 10% of Council Tax bill should be paid- people on a low wage have to pay nearly 3/4 of council tax with the same allowances of someone who is out of work making them have to work more hours while other people don't have to do anything at all.
Option 2 %80 well is workers they should get enough to cloud it
All moneys paid to us - me are benefits - not rights, and it's only fair that everyone should pay something towards the bill. + council tenants should pay towards the bill instead of paying nothing in some areas so option 2B
10% towards CTAX for services
All people of working age should be treated the same with a 10% reduction in benefit and the shortfall being made with cuts to other services.
Some people like myself who receive the higher rate of incapacity benefit pay the Council Tax, yet people on Job Seekers do not it should be the same for both benefits one way or the other, both groups either exempt or both pay.
I think all people of working age should pay some Council Tax not a lot though just about 10-20% otherwise people will find that working means you pay more out then what comes in. And families as well.
I think if you are a single working mum with children you should pay less Council Tax I think 10% is enough to pay.
I am disappointed to see yet more proposals of cuts to normal tax payer's services. I am not on a high income however. My family struggles to pay the tax without any assistance, but we are expected to lose more services in the town it appears that everything in the town goes towards people who are not working with benefit help and sure start centres but for the normal working family more cuts. I support option 2 but perhaps money could be taken from councillors and the major of the town I mean what car is he been driven around in? When the rest of us Are facing yet more cuts to services. may I also take this opportunity to express my disappointment that once again firework display was not provided in town again this year but other areas local to us have not cut there firework display.
Hi I have just read about the changes to the council tax benefits, i would like to know what in Option 3 does except pensioners and other groups mean what other Groups? I am not a high paid worker I earn less than 19,000 pa and my wife is part time on 8,000 pa we have always paid our taxes and feel that others are not contributing anything which is unfair we all get the same local services but pay more for working hard and not working without trying to get a job is not right. If you are on benefits you should be contributing a small amount form your benefits towards this we are all in this together.
As a 30 year council tax payer who has in the last 15 years seen double figure rises amounting to around a 130% increase over the same period, I believe it's the council duty to finally start protecting ratepayers as after all we keep getting told 'WERE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER'! CTB has been used and abused by many of its recipients over the decades and they need to feel the financial pain all taxpayers have suffered over the last few years. Why cannot the full cost of the reduction be passed on to non-protected CTB recipients, why are they still being protected at the cost of other services - the biggest expenditure for any council (after wages) is its social welfare commitments - so make the full cut or are we not all in this together!!!
2B
20% or less the amount that fits in with the council proposal seems the fairest
Option 2b
All residents should have something to pay including pensioners, who are the richest people and have the most "spare cash"
All people of working age should pay 20%, this would be the fairest way. People's individual circumstances should still be allowed for within the applicable amounts and disregards.
I am disabled and had to give up work due to my disability, and have a works pension so pay some Council Tax. Too many people who can work, but prefer to sit on benefits "because they can" should be made to pay their fair share. They should pay the short comings of the new scheme.

Council Tax should be payed so it helps with bill for councils.

They should pay what they can afford based on their income.

80% paid maximum leaving 20% to pay per household, I think this would be fair to people who work and pay full Council Tax and families currently not working to pay something towards their own Council Tax.

Everyone (apart from the rich) are being squeezed so its only fair that everyone chips in to help. To continue to exempt everyone is not an option.

Comments in support of option 3

Disabled, Elderly, People claiming benefits.
Pensioners, Disabled, Those on income support as this is already the absolute minimum to live on.
People who aren't earning enough on a weekly basis or monthly, people on benefits need help as it is not enough to get by on their means, elderly people on a pension.
I believe people on low income and on benefits should be protected.
Groups who are claiming middle or high rate DLA should be protected, along with their carers. Caring for a disabled person is hard enough without having to constantly worry about extra financial worries
People who should be protected from any cuts: The sick; the disabled; their carers (if they are family); anyone who cannot work; anyone with no income. For example, I have suddenly found myself in a position where I cannot work due to a disability, so I have no income other than that received in benefits; so if I had to pay anything all towards council tax, it would come out of my benefits and would cost me in not being able to get food, utilities or clothing.
People on very low incomes disabilities etc.
People who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit appear to receive more support than those in work (including self-employed) on very low incomes and the disabled who have limited capacity for work.
People who are out of a job and are on benefits/pensioners, basically because they struggle as it is, they would become homeless and destroy people's lives who couldn't afford it. And also people who have a disability obviously. And people who haven't got good grades from school, they wouldn't have a chance, e.g. weather they went to a bad school, or never stook in at school or even have a disability.
People who work + on low incomes disabled people who can't get employment due to health or medication they take single parents to children under 5 due to child care costs etc.
People on low pay or unemployed and disabled because they have little money to pay towards bills
Working people should be protected, disabled and unable to work people should be protected, people who don't show willing to work should not be protected.
Low paid and disabled people should be protected.
Single parents option 3 disabled.
Single parents. Those who are unable to work e.g. sickness, disability etc. Those who have paid their taxes for a lot of years who have unfortunately been laid off etc.
I think that certain groups should be protected. Lone parents, disabled people, families with 3 or more children, pensioners, low income families
Unemployed, single parents and disabled people
People with low incomes and people unable to work full time due to health issues many struggle to pay their council tax so should get more help. However people should be aware of council tax changes and be prepared for potential changes
I think people on low income and disabled and elderly should be protected from cuts
Low income, unemployed + disabled people already have financial hardship, hence they receive benefits. How will these people be able to fund any increase in council tax
Students/unemployed/disabled/old people
People on job seekers or income support plus those getting disabilities or long term impaired would find it impossible to cope. Unless they are working full time and earning over £22k in individual house hold than yes as I do know people on disabilities high rate able to work fulltime but have one leg longer than the other etc. and this has no bearing on their abilities at all. Those will learning issues they should be left alone.
Disconnected young people from broken homes. Disabled people + young disabled mental health issues = 18 +yr. old

<p>People on benefits and those working but not earning a high wage especially those with children, with rising costs in food, gas and electricity it is getting difficult to decide the little income one has without facing council tax increases for services which are also affected by cut backs. Food, warmth and shelter are 3 basic and essential needs without them you will be creating health issues which will drain NHS funding. Basic needs before council and government profit help the lower paid and those on benefits instead of killing them off.</p>
<p>Sick, old and low paid workers.</p>
<p>I chose option 3 because there are disabled and regular people out who work part time or are on minimum wage. I think because of this they are just managing to make ends meet, if they were to have to incur more council tax charges it will make life unbearable for them and their children. this could cause a rise in crime</p>
<p>People who can't work and the ones who can but on benefits should unless have full responsibility of kids and obviously don't have enough benefits to pay for someone to watch them whilst working.</p>
<p>Single parents working part time should be protected</p>
<p>People with children should not pay as long as they are working, looking for work actively- or a student trying to better their future.</p>
<p>Knowing the difference between claiming benefits and having a mortgage to pay on my own and claiming benefits whilst living in council property, I think it is unfair to label these two groups as the same. I had to pay my mortgage for 3 months when receiving JSA of £67 per week. I was refused Council Tax Benefit which incurred high debts to bailiffs and i nearly lost my home so this scheme really needs to be assessed on the individuals and not categorised as it's unfair on people who choose to try and keep running their own homes! Some groups should be protected like me, a lone parent, my own home and now back working full time to settle council tax debt!</p>
<p>Disabled on incapacity benefit, un married or single mothers with more than 2 children. Not just disabled on higher level but lowest level. Older people in their early 60s who have been made redundant early. Most of the walking disabled also need help too.</p>
<p>Disabled - It's not their fault they are unable to work. This would cause more financial pressure on them. Low income family - They are out working but don't earn enough to live as it is. Single parents who work - They don't have a great deal of money to live as it is.</p>
<p>Some people should get help such as people looking after a disabled relative or a young person living on their own who is disabled. Some young mothers who have no family support to help child mind if children are under school age may need this help</p>
<p>Long term disabled, because they normally have to pay more for fuel etc. as they are in the house longer due to their inability to go out. Lone parents with pre-school children as bringing up babies is very expensive.</p>
<p>I feel the disabled should be protected, and those with large families</p>
<p>Disabled pensioners, persons (single) with children of school age under 14 years.</p>
<p>I think that people with disability, unemployed with young children or pensioners should be protected, although assessments for the unemployed should be carried out. People who have already been means tested (Whose situation will improve i.e. disabled or pensioners) should not have to undergo further means testing.</p>
<p>Certain people that earn under a certain amount or single parents,</p>
<p>People who only work 16hrs with children who only get a low income as can't make ends meet even with council tax benefit it's still too much to pay.</p>
<p>Because off low paid jobs and people with families to support.</p>
<p>Some people of working age that work find it hard today to pay all of their bills, that's why it is important to help those that help themselves by working while have children to look after.</p>
<p>People on low income (plus all the vulnerable groups, such as single mothers) should be protected from any cuts because constant increase of bills and prices of food already make it difficult for the needs to be met. Plus difficult economic times make it hard to find a job that would help increase the minimum standards of living.</p>
<p>Pensioners disabled unemployed people should be protected as these people are on small amount of income.</p>
<p>Option 3: certain people may be out of work/or on low income so this should be taken into</p>

consideration as it is now under the present scheme!
Single occupants or couples who receive income based jobseekers allowance and housing benefits who are of working age. As soon as these people find employment they would have been paying council tax. People receiving DLA or sickness benefit, but should be more strictly assessed. Self-inflicted illness like an alcoholic should be made to receive help and could then be employed so would then pay council tax.
People of working age that are on J.S.A get £71.00 per week this is the minimum that the low states they need to live on. Having to pay council tax would mean they are living on less than the low states as minimum.
Disabled, young people without families to help.
Unemployed - especially 18-24 age group means tested. People in full time education and training in order to seek full time employment means tested. Single parents means tested. The incapacitated - any age - means tested. Pensioners - means tested.
I think it's really unfair to take away the Second Adult Rebate, as a single person earning + low wage, why should I pay the same as a couple earning double or more. This will make low earners from the option 'why work' meaning less revenue.
I disagree with the proposal to abolish the second adult rebate, As a widow living with my son who is unemployed and under 25 years of age, I would struggle to pay my council tax if I did not receive help from the council. As my son who is under 25 years he would not be eligible for housing benefit if he had a place of his own. It would seem that the government are forcing the under 25's to live with parents but then also abolishing second adult rebate.- This isn't fair
People on benefits
People on benefits need the help
I think some people should be protected as people on genuine benefits should be exempt as they are now as they effect could cause hardship and destitution and some people would here then go to soup kitchens or be forced to leave their homes, as people couldn't afford to live in a property with other rising cost.
People on state benefits should also be protected
Because if you're unemployed you do not get enough money to spare to pay extra bills. Try taking it off people who get alcoholic payments they get £30-£40 extra to drink. My wife cannot work because she's ill she'd work if she could. But drinkers just drink because they're paid to so why work.
Unemployed persons should be protected unless their benefit goes up in comparison. Best plan get rid of current government it's like thatcher all over again!
People claiming j.s.a, e.s.a, i.s, edc, should be protected as they are on benefits only people who are working should pay extra also benefits are being cut in 2013, so where does the extra come from if you are claiming benefits
All benefits should be means tested as those with funds over what is deemed to be the minimum european standard for living should be able to afford a small increase in council tax where as these who subsist only on benefits will be placed in poverty by any increased especially with the vulnerable benefits due to be reduced from 2013 to start with pensioners should be included for means tested.
People on pensions and benefits should be protected because other things are rising in price, like gas & electric food, etc. this is really making people suffer.
People who are on benefits because benefits are low anyways and it is hard to survive on them as it is
Those who have a mortgage and receive Council Tax Benefit should be protected. I have a mortgage and receive £10 per week help towards it. My benefits have been severely cut by £28 per week and if I do not keep up the rest of my mortgage payments myself, my house will be repossessed, making me homeless. Those who rent properties get the full amount of rent paid anything from £350 per month plus it is they i feel who should perhaps contribute towards their Council Tax.
Council Tax Benefit is there for a reason, to help those who are on benefits or are financially below the amount needed to live. I live on benefits due to poor health and live on less than is said can lived on by the government due to extra rent and still you want to take more after working for years and putting into the system.

I think carers of disabled should be protected as it is not their choice not to work. I am a carer and do not get as much money as if what I would working in my profession. My son is disabled and I think when he gets to working age he shouldn't have to pay towards council tax as again a lot of money out of benefits especially with the cuts to housing benefits.
I can reply on behalf of my son, only as he is the only case on which I have close knowledge and for whom I am a carer this problems are of a mental nature and he is unable to work. The adult social services (*housing) have identified his needs as critical + substantial and I think people in this category should be protected. My second choice is option 1
People that are on Disability Benefit or unable to work plus pensioners as you say.
Protection from cuts should be given to disabled people who have such a disability that even though they are still of working age, there is no way what so ever that they can do any work now or in the future. These should include conditions such as Huntington's disease, motor neurons, Alzheimer's disease and other conditions that occur due to no influence from the person themselves. Benefits already received by these people is already stretched especially if one of the partner's is a full time carer and there are still youngsters living at home. Protection from cuts should not be automatically given to disabilities that are caused by lifestyle choices i.e., smoking, drugs alcohol or obesity. There are also other not all disabilities where it is purely physical and work can be done when mental facilities have been impaired.
Those who are disabled and unable to work should be protected. If one is disabled and able to work they should pay some council tax.
Disabled
Disabled people should be protected people who are in low paid jobs should be protected.
People on means tested benefits and long term incapacity benefits + disability benefits like D.L.A
People with any long term unable to work I.E Disability etc.
Disabled people who cannot work or afford to pay council tax due to lack of finance. Due to benefits slashes already.
People on ESA should be protected because they are ill and on a low income.
People who have had to retire early with poor health or cannot work anymore.
I would work if I could. I have already lost a % of my housing benefit and my ESA has been cut because I get a war pension which is now being taxed. I am disabled and also have brain damage which limits me in many ways.
People who are unable to work should be protected from any cuts.
Disabled people.
As pensioners are already protected then the next group to be protected should be the disabled I feel that if they are unemployed or on low income they should be offered some protection here.
Disabled people should not pay any council tax. Low income means not a lot of money!
People who have disability because it is hard to get work. People with young kids because it is hard for people with young kids to pay council tax.
I think disabled people should be protected from any cuts, as life is difficult enough for vulnerable people regardless of age, also the elderly it is all very well cutting benefits to get people in work, but if there are no jobs how are people supposed to live.
Learning Disabilities, mental health people with disabled children all due to lower job possibilities, not earning enough money to pay all their bills.
Certain groups who are unemployed and disabled who cannot work, let's say 60 year old or over or younger if disabled, who have worked all their working lives etc.
Disabled people & pensioners shouldn't have to pay.
Disabled who are unable to work due to their disability and are on a fixed income.
All pensioners- physically + mental disablement the most vulnerable SHOULD be protected.
Disabled people or people who are not allowed to work due to health conditions.

I think disabled people should be protected and people long term sick. People unable to work (even if a job was available) due to physical or ill health.
Disabled people should be protected from any cuts because, even if they are of working age their ability to earn additional income is seriously compromised.
People who are disabled + can't work also the elderly as the pensioner have already been at employment.
Sick and disabled people should be protected from any cuts, people are really disabled and can't work because these and classes as vulnerable and in need of some more help in society. The scheme that government proposed for disabled people in not fair at all and our council itself should look into it and change the scheme frame benefit of need disabled people.
The sick and unemployed and disabled should NOT have to pay any because they already struggle to make ends meet this will just punish them more, DO NOT give any CT benefits to new immigrants or asylum seekers!
Some people need more help, people with medical problems.
Disabled people as costs for care has already risen massively and they do not always have a choice about being able to work.
I have chosen option 3 because people who are disabled should not have to pay any council tax. Some people who are on the sick who have worked should not pay any.
Pensioners and the disabled
the people who are on low income due to an illness that restricts their working conditions
pensioners and the vulnerable i.e. disabled who are struggling even now should receive help
people with a disability because having very limited means and ever increasing costs leads to stress which aggravates their medical situation even more
People who generally cannot go out to work should be protected.
The disabled & most vulnerable in society.
I think disabled people and people with low income should be protected.
People in receipt of severe disability living allowance should be protected as they are unable to work and are therefore dependant on benefits such as this towards their living standards.
As it is impractical for all working age as some people with disabilities are not capable of full time employment due to pain, discomfort and mobility problems.
As a recipient of DLA and a war pension following my service in the Armed forces I find it grossly unfair that there is no option for the disabled in the options above. I acknowledge that there are people who are able to work and I agree that they should have to pay butt those of us who are disabled and are already struggling financially should not have to.
Disabled people of any age who received disability benefits and are obviously unable to work. They are under enough pressure at moment facing benefit reductions.
Disabled people
Disabled people should be exempt.
If they can't afford to live in a band a property they should move to where they can into considerably. I also think people on D.L.A disability living allowance should pay working man. When is most cases their illness doesn't justify what they get paid.

<p>I thought the Prime Minister announced no council tax increases for a further 2nd years at the conference. You have not started WHY we are even discussing 'increases'. Aged 57 I am an incapacity Benefit + D.L.A, it is hard to make ends meet now (I do pay some CT already) & what with the recent rise in fuel cost, the fact that H.B does not cover my rent a doubt less you already have similar ideas for Housing Benefits, the rising coast in food... WHY should the genuinely ill have to suffer (I did work at Bondays for Myrs before being diagnosed with full shown Bi-Polar Disorder at the hands of the benefits cheats + workshy? I genuinely think that those on long term IB who've never seen the inside of a pub or even had a social life for years because of the strict financial circumstances we are band to, should be exempt from increases. As for pensioners, including my parents + many friends they are the richest people I know, but I'm glad that the genuinely poor pensioner no increase will burden them. Decrease rates + H.B support and you may as well go out now and dig a pauper's grave in some unconsecrated ground.</p>
<p>Disabled people at working age who find there selves unable to find work due to their disabilities and age should be protected. The government's proposed freezing at benefits and cost of fuel + food bills are added bill of even 10% would surely affect these people. Putting them into financial leading to premature death through lack of food or heating even suicide.</p>
<p>Disabled people should be protected as we have to pay more from our low incomes than are bodied do e.g. tax fares costing approx. double than ordinary taxes- £7.50 EACH WAY also working people on very low incomes should not have to pay more I cannot see how people on certain benefits can be charged more as by law they need a minimum amount to live on. The only people who should have to pay more are wealthiest.</p>
<p>I think disabled people should be they have not been mentioned nor do the homophobic Nazis in white hall class disabled as working age too.</p>
<p>Believe that new scheme should not just look at physical disablement but also mental health disablement which can also be just as difficult.</p>
<p>those of who are on long term sickness due to mental health, we get only basic benefit and have to pay council tax will create problems, either going without food or heating</p>
<p>disabled should be protected as their income is limited</p>
<p>Disabled people mentally and physically low income severe medical problems those in adequate housing</p>
<p>Older people and disabled people that are unemployed or to disabled to go to work</p>
<p>I worked and paid taxes for nearly 30 years. Now, through no fault of my own I have a chronic illness and am reliant on incapacity benefit. At present I have a carer, however will lose her next year due to the cuts. At a time when fuel and food are both everyday necessities, are rising it appears i will also be losing more support £3.08 may not sound like a lot of money however it is 3% of my income. It would be a great show of support if council leaders also take a 3% cut, thereby helping to reduce the bill further but I won't hold my breath.</p>
<p>I think that people of working age that have a disability or illness are unable to work should be protected. Some people with a disability or illness have limited chance of working and therefore do not have the choice to change their circumstances.</p>
<p>People who have a disability that prevents them from working should be protected as they have no opportunity to improve their standard of living. It looks as though the universal credit will reflect in a number of people with already receiving a reduction in benefits before having to contribute towards council tax.</p>
<p>If a high rate or middle rate of care OR mobility component of DLA.</p>
<p>No one chooses to be unemployed or disabled, if the choice of working was only that simple. I think that disabled people should be protected. As the huge rise in every bill and other rises would make it difficult to add council tax to them. As disabled need to have heating on throughout the day for illness reasons finding it to find or pay this.</p>
<p>People who are unable to work because of illness and disability should be protected from cuts in benefit because of low income and added stress a rise in living costs would be stressful.</p>

<p>Disabled people often already live on or below the poverty line, and further unfair decisions re sickness benefits are likely, they need to be protected from yet further cuts. They often don't have a choice about where they live. They often are unable to earn a living through no fault of their own disability is not a lifestyle choice.</p>
<p>DISABLED PEOPLE SHOULD BE PROTECTED FROM THESE CUTS. Disabled people have no choice about being disabled, and did not become disabled through selfish or irresponsible choices (such as teenage mothers who have choices) In addition disabled people have faced an inhumane barrage of cuts from this current 'Nazi-like' government and unless they are going to drag us out into the street to shoot us and put us out of our misery this further could should not affect disabled people.</p>
<p>I have a learning disability and think I should be protected.</p>
<p>those who cannot work etc. disabled</p>
<p>I think people that can't or are restricted to work should still be protected from any cuts, after all nobody asks to have disability</p>
<p>This is because those with extreme circumstances and those with disabilities should be exempt. Those are the certain groups</p>
<p>Severely disabilities who cannot work and receive middle higher rate care allowance and highest rate mobility allowance</p>
<p>I get ESA benefit and would be able to pay anymore council tax because I already pay council tax, £7 a week now I'm left out my money to buy food for a fortnight is 5 pound that's all.</p>
<p>People who are vulnerable such as disabled people, disabled people have already been targeted with the current cuts such as increased care bills and cost of living. DLA has also been changed to EESA which has affected some people. These people can barely live as it is and would be pushed to their limits if further cuts were made.</p>
<p>I am my boyfriend's full time carer as he is disabled. I think disabled people should be protected as we will have cuts coming next year with changing of dla and need this cash for travel costs</p>
<p>Disabled people who are sick and can't work!! And are the main householder.</p>
<p>I think people with learning difficulties or physical/mental illness should be protected as it is difficult enough coping with severe illness and often very hard to make ends meet as it is on benefits. The extra cost and worry of having to pay council tax would be unfair.</p>
<p>Benefited i.e. ESA and disabled. Their income is too little to have to pay more.</p>
<p>Disabled People.</p>
<p>I feel the most vulnerable elderly and disabled should be protected. Adults with more than two children and have never worked should pay something as they keep having children and the Council has to fund this. I am sorry for poor hand writing my arm and hand do not work anymore.</p>
<p>A lot of people suffer from mental and physical problems which counts them out in regards to working. These conditions are not always visible.</p>
<p>I think anyone who has not received benefit for less than 12 months should be protected. Also anyone that has a terminal illness.</p>
<p>I believe that not all people of working age are able to work for some reasons, people like this should be protected if it's for good reasons.</p>
<p>The people who work and get paid a low wage should be protected from any cuts.</p>
<p>The mean temp works are people who are struggling with young family, and therefore she have help, such as single person!</p>
<p>Working people have hit enough by cuts it has become out of hand.</p>

I think people such as myself and get the single occupier discount should still get this. We only have 1 income coming into the house and no support from anywhere else so it wouldn't be fair that we should pay more as money is tight enough as it is. £3.08 a week may not seem much to the council but when you add that up each month it means that there is some other bill that we pay that we just cannot afford. I have just got a new job after being made redundant 5 weeks ago but it is only part time, low pay and temporary till Christmas. I don't know if i can survive on this let alone pay more money for council tax! Please think of us single people!
People on low working pay or minimum pay.
I think it should depend on how much people earn as to how much council tax benefit they get.
Some people who should be protected from any cuts, are like ourselves, self-employed, struggling trying to do best, don't want to become unemployed. Having to pay towards any cuts makes it harder for us. Everything going up, no extra help just make a lot of people suffer more.
People on working tax credit.
people on a low wage or people that work part time
The lower paid working age people can barely afford to live and pay bills as it is. Hit the smug wealthier arrogant wage earners and gibe the poorer at least a chance to exist and maybe one day strike again! Ps. I know this is headed for the bin, but have made a copy for the papers?
They should be protected as there wage wouldn't cover it need help.
Low paid people.
I think some people of working age should be protected depending how much they earn
Low paid income.
In my point of view, people who haven't got enough earnings need mostly to be protected.
I think it is going to be very hard for someone like me to have to pay anymore Council Tax as I only work 16hrs a week, as I am on my own I can just to say manage now. I am fortunate to own my home if I had to pay mortgage or rent I could not manage.
Those who are on low wages.
Single working people with only one income coming into the house, especially low paid workers who have no additional benefits coming in e.g. women living on their own with no children.
People in employment of any part time hours, why because at least they are contributing something more than others.
I think some people of working age should be protected against any cuts. Mainly single parent families with young children.
I am on my own with a children getting benefits could not afford to pay council tax, but come people could perhaps pay.
I have selected this option as some people may be of working age, however if they have dependants and are unable to go to work. This would be another bill that they would have to try to pay. However, if someone has no dependants and is able to work, they would have less outgoings and therefor more means to pay (in theory)
As a single mother of 4 children (2 under 5), I am not currently working and have to survive on income support and child tax credit. I currently have a mortgage and so do not get my rent paid. I have one child art nursery, two hours per day and three at school. If I were to work I would have to work over 16 hours and would lose help with my mortgage this making me worse off. Until all my children are in full time education it would be difficult to work. I could not afford to pay and council tax as I have insufficient funds to life on as it is. Those of working ages who chose to work less hours for less money in order to receive benefits should have to contribute towards council tax because they either have no dependents or have any children in full time educating. I could not afford to pay any contribution toward council tax as I am struggling to survive financially as it is.
Families with children because with the price of utilities going up and food going up to is a big struggle itself
People with young children should be protected from the cuts

<p>People on low income with families should be protected, as the children will suffer they don't have the things children from well off families have. It leads to all sorts of problems from general unhappiness, although we try our best with day to day entertainment for them, to bullying at school not everyone has a good paying job however we still go out to work.</p>
<p>I am a single parent with one little boy (age 1) and I receive help with my council tax. Money is quite tight (due to cost of living i.e. groceries etc.) however I do manage to budget our pennies, therefore I would be able to cope with making a contribution to council tax. But i do feel they are a lot of people with children who don't do so well with their money either through lack of education or through selfishness and these children already suffer. What these adults value as a need (expense) often isn't, leaving little money for essentials. This is where option 3 would be hard to decide who still gets help and who is ok. It's not just dependent upon what money they receive, it's in need of looking how they spend it or budget it, so as to ensure their children do not suffer further however having to take some responsibility themselves may help people to want to leave getting help, really everyone should pay some but sadly in Darlington I think too many children will then go without. Schemes need to be in place to educate parents here, as they have only know what they have grown up in.</p>
<p>As I am due to be a single parent, I do not believe that paying council tax is unaffordable as I have to spend more of the benefits I receive on providing for my baby. I also think that others in similar situations should be protected but others should make at least some contribution.</p>
<p>I think some people should be protected from certain cuts because of their certain circumstances, i.e. single parents or people who couldn't get help off others.</p>
<p>As a full time mum, I think if I was to pay any council tax I could not afford to keep my house on bills running on the money I'm on 50 so I think its bang out of order if you start charging single mum and people that aint working.</p>
<p>I think families with children to provide for who are on benefits should be protected. It is hard enough providing for your children and yourself when on benefits and not everyone wants to be on benefits or chooses to be on them.</p>
<p>People with young children + elderly people should be protected not young people who don't have any responsibilities shouldn't be protected as they are able to pay as they should beat work.</p>
<p>Single parents with children under 5 and pensioners.</p>
<p>Lone parents, now have to claim jobseekers once youngest child turns 5yo. With a tough job market and childcare and all other parent expenses. They deserve to be given a break. However childless or single unemployed adults who could take any work (no children restrictions) shouldn't be entitled to free house and contribute nothing to our borough!</p>
<p>People like myself of working age with children on benefits should still receive help. We don't receive a lot of help as it is. We have to live a poor way of life, so why not cut the 1st class, rich people who can easily afford it instead of making us struggle more. And by all means cut those of working age that abuse the system, stop punishing the children!!</p>
<p>I am a single parent of 2 and struggle now accepting when possible. I honestly couldn't afford to lose any more money to pay this</p>
<p>Single parents and if you are on low income.</p>
<p>Single parents should be protected most people or working age either drink, smoke or both, if you can afford fags + booze then you should pay towards your council tax bill.</p>
<p>Single parents, vulnerable adults</p>
<p>Single mothers and people who are in education, I believe people who have no responsibilities 24/7 should pay towards council tax. (Job Seekers) Single mothers don't get a lot of money to support themselves, home and children and would struggle and affect their quality of life. Job Seekers- This may make them struggle and are more likely to find a job.</p>
<p>People of working age who can work but choose not to (like most people claiming Job Seekers Allowance) should have to pay the extra costs as there is nothing stopping them from working like everyone else. They are just lazy so make them pay the extra for it. BUT those people of working age but who have small young children should not have to. This is because they choose to stay at home and look after their children and make a nice home life for their family some people struggle to juggle both work and running a family, so don't work because they can't. Supporting a family is expensive so those on benefits looking after small young children should not have to pay the extra.</p>

Those with young children and on tax credits
Those with a family (young children). It can be hard enough now to pay council tax and those with children are going to need the help more than single people living on own or even with a partner, but have no children. Those with children are going to need to make sure a roof can be kept over their heads. Whereas others do have more options for example a 19 year old could move back home until finances are better or move in with a friend. more money has to be pulled out just to ensure families can feed their babies and children due to rise in prices, a rise in their council tax will not help their situation
Single parents with no partners and no or those not getting child support of family support. Not the young mothers who could have taken precaution and have family support and most cases partners paying tax will make the young think twice about have babies
Families on low income with young children.
Option 1: If only working hard time it's going to be really hard and have low income for food n bills. Option 3: Again think about people on low income and that have to support students as they have to rely on parents and I just don't get enough money sometimes we go without food for this.
People on low income should be protected from any cuts.
People on low income.
Those on a low income can't afford it.
People on a low income should be protected and get help, people with a high income should pay towards council tax.
Those on low incomes as they are struggling as it is.
I think people on low incomes, people who are on benefits and students should be protected from cuts as they may find it difficult to pay council taxes and may result in debt because of this.
Any one on a low income, that would have to cut back on heating the home and cut back on eating because of less money because of cuts
People that only have a small income or no income
Some people who are very poor through no fault of their own who, if they had to pay, would struggle to feed themselves or keep their homes warm should not have to pay. Although some people who are the 'usual suspects' in avoiding paying but live a very good lifestyle should pay.
Some people are stuck on a fixed income or are getting less.
People on low incomes should be protected because they struggle enough to support themselves/families as it is with the cost of everything going up without having to pay out even more. If the government stopped being so greedy and brought all the prices down then people on low incomes will be able to afford to live and will find it easier to get a better job as less businesses will go bankrupt.
For someone on a very low income a rise in council tax of at least 3.08 a week would have a big effect trying to make ends meet, I am especially against using the 16x the minimum wage calculating. This is hitting the lowest paid in society who are making the effort to work but are already paid litter for what they do.
Means tested benefits are fairest the poorest should still be protected.
The people on the lowest incomes should still get this support. There needs to be a strict assessment scheme in place.
Any people not have enough income and struggling with their expenses.
People who need the help with things like the rent and council tax should still get the help.
Because some people earn more than others and some don't work at all.
Some people aren't as able to pay as others and they may struggle to afford to pay Council Tax as they may have had it paid for them in the past or more help towards paying it.
I think people on high wages should pay more they can afford it, it would not put them in hardship!
Cuts should depend on the individuals circumstances i.e. Income and if they have children

<p>We are both pensioners my wife and early retired ill health myself took early redundancy. Any increase in our pension wiped out by increases in both utility bills and council tax it effect of inflation. We also care for my wife's mother at own costs. Applying for job seekers allowance is no good because i am getting a pension is £318 per month. Further as of next year our son leaves for university so we will not get child tax credits.</p>
<p>People that can't work to find the extra money</p>
<p>After 40 years old it's very difficult to find a job.</p>
<p>Depending on their monthly/yearly income.</p>
<p>It most some age be protected from any cuts.</p>
<p>Some age be protected from any cuts.</p>
<p>I agree with option 3 only if it is means tested</p>
<p>Those receiving more amount of income support/help.</p>
<p>Certain groups of people should be protected, I believe, the payments that people receive to help with council tax should be staggered according to children in the family, earnings etc. just as I think universal credits will be. I believe all people (or nearly all) should at least a small amount per week but this - if people are charged as some of the figures in option two - would cause a lot of people in this town more and more bills and more stress I think this the most sensible idea.</p>
<p>A number of residents in the country have a genuine reasons for seeking help and support and should therefore not be penalised as a result of the majority who are making fraudulent claims</p>
<p>The council has already decided the measures it intends to adopt. The only reason you are wasting money sending out questionnaires is so that you can say that you have consulted widely, in the honoured way.</p>
<p>They should take into account people's economic ability if people have valid reason not to work why should they have to pay.</p>
<p>People who try to help themselves, not people who have never worked and keep having babies and expect others to pay for them.</p>
<p>People who have a legitimate reason to be claiming such support should be protected from any cuts.</p>
<p>I think vulnerability of some people should be taken into account.</p>
<p>Individuals, who have elderly relatives living with them who if such elderly relatives lived alone, would be immune from such proposed council tax increase.</p>
<p>Students and the elderly should be protected as they have less money than the average working person</p>
<p>People should have to pay different rates of Council Tax according to their income. A person that earns £20,000 a year shouldn't pay the same as someone that earns half that amount and receives benefits.</p>
<p>All circumstances are different for all involved some, not of their own doing depends on health and income, for all of us!</p>
<p>If they are just not working and not because of an illness or disability</p>
<p>Depending on their circumstances if unemployed people are made to pay for a house to live in when they cannot yet afford to keep themselves, I think it's unfair also those working under 16 hours should be protected they barely earn enough either.</p>
<p>People over 50 as they have already worked hard and do not need more burden if they are unemployed and low income, you should hit all single teenage parents who do not work they have too much money, out on weekends, most of them smoke, learning to drive obviously they are getting to much benefits to live on all they need is enough to live on not make a career out of it and not given houses until they are over 21 years old they don't, won't work they just want all the trimmings that go with having kids and more kids, just give them flats.</p>
<p>Unemployed people because it's very difficult living with difference between rent or council tax payable and benefits received as I do at the moment. I think if I was told to pay council tax now I would probably lose my house as I already live on 25 pounds a week.</p>
<p>I think we need a balance between protecting the most vulnerable people and yet also realising that the Council needs to save money in every way they can. I think option 3 is a sensible middle ground</p>

as there are some people who are too old to get a job yet are not of pensionable age - how are they supposed to meet the financial demands of everyday living?
Myself and my husband are both disabled and have a very limited income and therefore would really struggle to pay anything at all.
Certain people groups should be protected from any cuts. Those with illness and disabilities who are unable to work. I already struggling to pay my bills. I cannot pay any increase in council tax, If so i have to leave my council house and be homeless.
I think vulnerable people who, for example, have a disability or mental health problem, should be protected because they may have additional costs such as extra heating, if they are at home a lot. And to find extra money to pay for Council Tax would make them short of money.
Obviously people on a low wage can't afford to pay more
I think the chronically sick and disabled should be protected from the Council Tax cuts as they will be badly affected by the reductions in benefits. For instance when the Disability Living Allowance is stopped, how are they going to manage to pay Council Tax when they will find it hard even to pay for the cost of transport which they rely on heavily.
I would say that all disabled people and anyone who has any terminal illness or long-term health-related condition should be protected from any Cuts, along with anyone who has a net annual income of £10,000.00 or less. They have more expenses to pay than anyone else, so should not have to pay the price for the Council flitting money down the drain over the last 21 years or so that the current Cabinet Members have been in power.
Residents protected from any cuts: 1. Pensioners 2. Family with 3 or more children 3. Family with disabled child. 4. Disabled people. 5. Family on low income including lone parents. Those certain groups should be protected from any cuts. Disabled people, pensioners and disabled children are vulnerable. Family on low income and having 3 or more children need extra help with living costs, as they cannot afford paying all those cost without any financial support.
Those on low incomes and part-time workers
Single parents - obviously People trying to get back to work that are obviously not workshy i.e. volunteers
The people who should be protected are the disabled people of a working age, those which are on the highest rate mobility with care /carer. These people are the ones not likely ever to be able to get a job and need help looking after themselves and mostly their carers are their spouses and are unable to work because they are the carer. These people are the forgotten, they don't get help with winter fuel payments unless they are pension age but are at risk with the cold just as much. Many can't have the heating on all the time as they can't afford it, having to find extra for council tax as well will put even more pressure on the disabled.
People on long term sick or who have a disability. Everything is going up and money is getting tighter taking that extra bit of them would be the difference of having the heating on over winter. Also the people who are sick spend more time at home and use up more gas and electric.
Whilst I believe that because of local Government financial constraints all people should make a greater contribution, I recognise that certain groups will find any increase a great burden - in particular those on benefits and low, fixed incomes. Even so, I believe that many could make some extra contribution, but the amount has to be a small increase, otherwise it will form too high a percentage of their income and reduce money available to service vital purchases and expenditure. Those who are working/on higher incomes should be the first to bear a reduction in tax benefit, and only then, those on lower incomes/benefits. If an increase was levied firstly on the higher income groups, then hopefully the percentage increase for the vulnerable groups could be constrained.
Disabled should be protected as they are getting benefit cuts and need all the help they can get.
Disabled people and unemployed people as these two groups already have limited income on benefits and taking money from them would lead to more poverty and hardship for them.
Some people of working age may be employed in positions which their pay is so low, they will struggle to exist. If governments and councils stop asking people for outragous council taxes for what is provided, people would have more money to look after their own existence.
I think people on benefits should be protected because it is hard to live on benefits as it is.
Anyone who cannot work due to illness or disability, as this can affect a husband or wife who acts as a live in carer.
People who are genuinely unable to work because of disability or for being a carer of someone who is disabled. The people who should have their benefits cut are the people who don't do enough to look

<p>for work. The people who sit back and do nothing but receive hand outs from the government and spend it all on drink and drugs.</p>
<p>Disabled groups should be protected from cuts as these people fall into a different category from working age people who are just unemployed. If you cannot work because of a physical or mental disability you have no other way of improving quality of life.</p>
<p>Like myself I have 4 children but 3 who are in full time education my son is 19 who is at collage since he turned 19, he gets no help "EMA has been stopped" so I have to pull out more money for him. I can't work as I have my great nephew off social services and I only get child benefit and tax credits get no extra for having him, so I am saving the government money as I got him out of foster care, I cant work as I have to supervise visit with parents and see when they want a visit, which is saving the government as if they had visits in contact center it would cost government more money I think there should be certain criterias. My daughter who is 24 is in same situation but has no children and stopped her life for her niece.</p>
<p>I feel that people who are receiving Council Tax Benefit should continue to get it. I think that a lot of people including myself would struggle because of other household bills going up all the time, also people on low incomes and with families, a 20% reduction I feel could mean the difference of eating or paying Council Tax.</p>
<p>I do agree that some people of working age should be protected for the reasons I am a single working parent, and at this present time am really struggling with all the other cost of living rises and feel that I am working hard and earning a living and those who don't work have everything handed to them too easily, therefore are NOT willing to work.</p>
<p>Some people on low Incomes or who act as carers or work part time should be protected as it's not fair that only those that don't work are protected as the majority of people are able to work but choose to rely on the state, which means those trying to be better are the ones penalised.</p>
<p>People who work full time but are either off work due to maternity leave or sickness/injury that is either work related or a disability. Personally I feel frustrated that people who are receiving benefit that could work but don't or can't be bothered receive help because this gives them no motivation to work!!!</p>
<p>Disabled and unemployed as they are already on poverty line with pitiful benefits they receive.</p>
<p>I have studied the options for the council tax benefits, I would like to vote for number one but believe this could be very difficult for the council, so my vote is for option 3 above all we must protect the elderly and disabled people in our area. Also these may be the same people to be hit by the spare bedroom tax.</p>
<p>People who are on low income should be protected. I only have about £50 to live and that has to feed clothes and provide heat for me.</p>
<p>Because not all working age people can actually work or if they do they don't earn enough money to pay the high rate.</p>
<p>Option 3 I think people with learning disabilities who are not able to understand and take part in everyday living skills should be protected . I also think that vulnerable elderly people on low pension should also be protected including elderly people in care homes.</p>

Comments where no option preferred

Think it all wrong what you are doing to people.
Disabled people should be protected from the cut they didn't ask to be like they are.
Under the new Welfare Reform, as a family, our Benefits have already been reduced substantially. It is very hard to survive during this recession and to support a family. We do not receive the extra assistance given to all pensioner (regardless of their financial situation) only min cold weather payments. To have to pay towards out council tax will really make my life more difficult.
Things should stay as they are. I don't get enough money as it is.
People over the age of 60 who have lived in council property for more than 30 years plus and brought their family up on council accommodation why should we be put under so much stress at our ages, what about all the immigrants that come into the country they get preference over us. They have not put a penny in the pot, tell me how this can be right,
The people who are disabled or classes as vulnerable and the is paid members of the public should be protected from any cuts.
People on benefits should not pay as the don't get enough money to pay more bills sometimes I find it hard to pay the bills I have already got.
People who are on the dole should pay at lease £5.00 a month council tax. I am on dole and the services I get are worth £5.00 a month.
The disabled should be protected from cuts.
I think people with low income or disabled should be protected, but people who work and are getting a good wage should pay council tax, but how much I don't know
I find it difficult to choose between option 2&3. If it were means tested then those who have worked hard all their lives will be made to pay more whilst those of us, myself included who are on benefits would not be paying towards the cut at all. Having said that I already struggle to pay my way and any extra would mean I couldn't pay other things such as gas and electric and food. I am not educated enough to work out the maths either or fully understand so I do apologise.
All I would say is that, as a pensioner, my wife and I do not get the luxury of a holiday, either in this country or abroad, and every penny we spend - give or take the odd pound when in Sunderland - is spent in Darlington. So like many other pensioners in the same situation, we contribute a very large percentage of our income to the local economy whereas many working families are able to take off and go to the Tyneside Metro and maybe have two foreign holidays a year, which results in the benefit of their citizenship of their town being diluted. This is the challenge that the town faces. I offer this as some defence for the situation that pensioners find themselves in.
I am writing in response to your article in the November Issue of Darlington together to give my views on changes to council tax benefits. I am concerned that the council is considering reducing or abolishing the single persons 25% council tax reduction. To do so would be totally unfair when you take into account the call on services the average single person uses compared to a family. To reduce or abolish the reduction would be a stealth tax on thousands of single people across the Borough. There are a high proportion of public sector workers in Darlington and you will be aware that they face increases in pension contributions, a continuing pay freeze at a time when inflation is high and utility and fuel costs are going through the roof, an increase in council tax for these workers is simply unfair, unjust and unaffordable.
I cannot believe you are still publishing your form on council tax changes. The Government has said the changes in council tax benefit will be CAPPED AT 8.5% by themselves. This consultation is therefore FICTITIOUS as you CANNOT reduce benefit by the as per the options you have suggested! These consultations may cause undue distress to benefit claimants and I believe you are therefore failing in your duty to the public. In disgust.

Other comments about the proposed scheme

I can't afford to pay Council Tax as I am on employment supplement as I am on sick I suffer with epilepsy and severe depression something like this is making me ill.
I think it just help them a bit more in paying their bills.
I feel rather charging people on low income by the BAND area, income should be means tested. So the amount of 'cut' to council tax support (you mention 20%) should be dependent on income. Perhaps people who, like us, who are on the 'minimum income' that the government say we need to live on should be either exempt of pay a minimum 10% (Even £160) (20%) is a lot of money to find per year. (Food from our children's mouths!)
Have less foreigners in the country and there would be more jobs for us.
Because I don't work at all because I am disabled. I should not pay Council Tax it takes me all my time paying the rent you are not getting money out of me for Council Tax.
I have lived in council property for 40 years plus, I started with a two bedroomed property then as my family grew I get a three bedroomed house then one by one they left home so I am in a three bed property with my wife, I am disabled so I sleep in a separate bedroom, my son visits on a weekend and helps out with things. Will this affect my rights?
Supplement of cash instead of straw, with disability! Of certain degrees! (Humanity, hope, logic)
Why can't you put things back the way they were and this means the high row as well, all you have done is destroy the town.
Why don't the Darlington put up toll booths on the A1 M and the A66 the cars, vans, trucks, bike who Darlington part of the motorway or the duel carriageway. Yes if they have any green patches of land which the council cut/ask the residents to cut it and say the council money offer them 5% off bill and same with litter left councils to pick it up. Same with the cemetery get the local cemetery and they get 5 per cent of bills. Same with street litter, all council would supply is tools. And best kept street will get a month free council tax the following year.
I think people on benefits who do some form of voluntary work should be exempt from these proposal and should receive other kind of bonus. The council should consider making cuts such an extravagant amount spent on hanging baskets and flower beds. Perhaps regenerating the market square would bring people into the town to shop. Darlington market is very poor especially when compared with Stockton etc. Maybe a brik a brak market and second hand clothes market aid week could help. I have seen those work in other area. If the council rented out stalls midweek it would generate income for the council.
Council Tax Benefit to continue for six months after finding employment.
I have recently gone self-employed and it is not easy making ends meet but hate signing on as is demeaning on character. I suggest the council stop spending ridiculous amounts of money on needless road works and stupid pointless sculptures and starts looking after its people.
For people who have previously paid their council tax but have found themselves in a situation where they cannot afford to pay the full amount should be given support. Maybe only for the time the study and look for work. Those people that have never paid towards the different taxes should be given a reasonable time limit to find work and contribute
Perhaps reducing the salaries and expense claims of council 'fat cats' would help
Yes I think I would struggle to pay £12.32 every four weeks.
Disabled people should be protected it's not our faulty; as do 'work incentive' where is the work? All councillors should take a wage freeze and should the High Management of the council get all of 'community support' they are pointless- what do they do?
Get people on community service, to clean up this dirty town up it is disgusting, and get rid of the top earners.
Stop being so greedy and putting Council Tax up. Try reducing the salaries of the 3 top cats of Darlington Council when their getting £180,000 a year plus bonuses. Do you really think the public don't know about it?

<p>Instead of putting new fences up near the main roads in town when the old ones are fine, how about rejuvenating the town centre, creating jobs so less people rely on benefits. Darlington is run down and destitute needs serious work a s*** town to live in.</p>
<p>As I am long term unemployed/looking for work- 19 months almost 600 vacancies applied for, currently on a work programme, completed several courses to enhance my prospects of gaining suitable employment. Give people more support/hope of securing a better/prosperous future, but also as i live in Sadberge (no transport) re-consider withdrawing our vital bus service.</p>
<p>I think that there should be more help towards the younger generation finding work unless there are reasons why they can't go into work like being a full time career then these people should not be expected to be penalised on these benefits. There should be more help for people signing on to help find work, however only if you're on a higher income you should be expected to pay council tax.</p>
<p>Reduce Council Tax bills if you don't have children and paying for school education. My parents paid for mine before they retired.</p>
<p>Why are you making it more difficult for the low income people? Why are you taking off the people who can't afford it pay more e.g. Footballers, (politicians) million + billionaires plus you can't increase work in centres with no work available</p>
<p>You could help the unemployed by giving cut bus passes so that we can look for employment. Get rid of councillors allowances and expenses, also sell off the dolphin centre, and civic theatre I have never used either due to the expense. Make more on the job training, so people can learn as they work.</p>
<p>Councillors should not receive any payment other than actual expenses, i.e. bus fares.</p>
<p>Why can't people get help getting part time work try in to go self-employed and credits have been slashed or stopped.</p>
<p>Should make it a lot fairer for people who work elderly.</p>
<p>People on low incomes e.g. JSA who live with their parents should not be eligible to pay council tax as it is a relative who they live with e.g. a pensioner. If I was to pay council tax I would struggle with my house.</p>
<p>Work initiatives? Where are you going to find the jobs? Darlington is an unemployment black spot! There are simply not enough jobs to go around and this town needs a major wake up call to bring it into the 21st century. The council needs to: Stop paying benefits to immigrants, take better care of its residents and promote better employment prospects before you start penalising the unemployed who are trapped with no way out! I feel that I MUST protest any change to the present council tax benefits will be a horrific blow to our already desperate standard of living.</p>
<p>I have only recently become unemployed, it can happen to the best of us. As a generation unemployed are the victims, they are treated that way. They get put on silly unnecessary jobcentre courses etc. (that have no benefit at all) councils and governments need to stop backing the unemployed into corners with these cuts and JC courses, because only one thing happens when you back something into a corner...</p>
<p>I believe that if more support was given to young adults whilst being a student it would encourage them to gain a qualification, making them more employable in the future. I feel people who are not studying, just on jsa are better off and are entitled to full council tax benefit. I think this is very unfair.</p>
<p>Yes get government to set minimum wages higher so that people will want to work in first place!</p>
<p>1 stop giving money to unnecessary causes 2 stop giving money to overseas charity 3 try +get money from those with money and stop trying to hit those already suffering without any.</p>
<p>people who are fit and well should work 1 day a week to help the council in parks grass cutting etc.</p>
<p>Make people better at in work not by taking away benefits but by helping with like council tax and housing help the ... system helps but earning rates are too low before having to pay full council tax and housing costs. I wish I could come up with more ideas but I can't I know it's not easy but making the people with very little to start with pay more is outrageous.</p>
<p>Yes it would be a good idea to increase work incentives to motivate people more to go out and get a job.</p>
<p>I'm on a low income wage so the less council tax I would have to pay would be better for me.</p>
<p>People in this country on benefits are struggling enough without having to pay out more money.</p>

Work incentives for people in my opinion is a silly description and misleading way of suggesting people will find employment. Just simply by so called work incentives. People need jobs, not gimmicks nor silly money wasting schemes. Government needs to wake up and spend money making jobs. Don't waste places like avanta or other white elephants. Most people are unemployed by no fault of their own.
Cut wagger off high earnings in the council + that will cover the shortfall in costs.
Keep the promises the government made in the forces character men that fort for this green and pleasant land.
More helpful and better set up at Bondgate house, considering this place is supposed to be the job centre the only access to potential jobs are the electronic job points. There are often not working or the jobs are already filled due to the length of time they have been there.
Those who sit about popping out kids just for the money and cannot be bothered to find a job should have to pay towards rent or council tax. But some people are trying their best to find a job.
Lots of people want to work but there are no jobs out there for most of the unemployed.
Jobs are not easy to come by there are not enough jobs out there, most places that do that do employ only employ 16-24 hours work a week and people rely on council tax benefits to be able to make ends meet. £3 a week does not sound much but that's a loaf of bread + 4 pints of milk with fuel bills rising and most council properties central heating only now the cost of keeping warm takes most of the week income so £3 could make a difference to some people
Try to suggest training schemes that could help back into work
That people are rewarded for paying their council tax bills whether working or not.
More jobs should be available.
Helping people to work will mean they can pay towards their council tax. The council should review its own expenditure cut down on waste and make savings. I do not have £3 per week spare. I cannot make any further cut backs on food and fuel.
Why not create more jobs in the council to deal with these changes!! You could also save money by not sending out pointless surveys. You've already decided you're going to penalise the poor so why pretend you're a council with a heart.
Cut the wheelie bin collections save money there, also traffic wardens limit to one each, car park I have seen them in twos. People who live in these big houses getting too much benefit HB paid cut it, save there. I am not, I am under any body taking to court for crimes there fines should go to the council.
Reduce the amount of traffic wardens on the car parks to one. Bin collections to once a fortnight. Anybody who goes to court who gets fined pay the money or costs to the council tax department,
It has been in the local press recently that the council is going to find one million pounds for wheelie bins in Darlington, whilst I believe in waste management, this scheme is completely inappropriate, wheelie bins shouldn't be put before people's welfare. This should be scrapped to concentrate on that money been put into protecting the most vulnerable of society including those with disabilities.
Why not have a Darlington innovation centre, for people to come forward with ideas they have, like myself who has an idea to create jobs and save money for the local councils. An office/organisation to allow people to come in and chat. Just a thought!
still allow single parents to receive full council tax benefits enable them to use the theatre/ dolphin centre and other council run venture
Allow older people 45-65 be given the chance to work because all the young ones are getting the jobs whether they have had experience or not which applies in the main people like myself who want to work but can't because of reasons stated so is the reason why i should receive help in reductions.
Bonuses i.e. xmas bonus and people making a decent living should not be given bonuses, people who receive fuel allowances who are in full time employment or are getting other incomes should be means tested for this. The biggest incentive would be for people to find employment they jobs are not there, also minimum wages are not enough for people to live on. If wages were enough they would not have to claim benefits. Some people of working age could do voluntary work within the services that could be cut as part of receiving benefits.
People like me need work incentives but an actual job offer! Is what most unemployed people want. Then if we were working we would be happy to pay a bit more CT

Do 1 hours community work a week instead of having to pay towards Council Tax if on benefits that way people will be active ready for work IE grass cutting, litter picking etc.
Employers should be MADE to be more flexible in order that us single mams can go back to work! Child care should be more AFFORDABLE! We are not all lucky enough to have a partner or a supportive family to enable us to go out to work while juggling family life, school runs etc. It is hard enough affording to live, due to the rise of gas and electricity bills, the weekly food shop etc. And why shouldn't pensioners have to pay towards their Council Tax?! They get enough freebies, bus passes, heating allowance and various other discounts. VERY UNFAIR to penalise lone parents.
I have no objection to any scheme that tests council tax recipients with regards to their efforts in finding work. I, personally am working very hard to get back into work and consider this as a pre-requisite to receiving any state or local council benefits.
What has finding work got to do with the Council?! That is the job of the DWP and other organisations.
People on ESA cannot work due to illness and it is not by choice they are different to Job Seekers.
Give them a volunteer position to work for Benefits received, plenty of people out of work want to work.
Recognise and reward voluntary work. Perhaps people could earn Council Tax credits working in a voluntary capacity, many of those unable to support themselves due to ill health are able to work in a part time capacity and could also benefit from a scheme such as this.
You ask for ways to increase work incentives for people receiving support with their Council Tax. Well, receiving support with the Council Tax isn't a lifestyle choice. At any one time the number of jobs, including temporary and part-time, is about 150,000, and the number registered unemployed is about 2.5 million. So the ratio is about 17 to 1. So, how can everyone have a job? This isn't a rhetorical question. Please tell me. Then tell the Government.
As previously stated if the council was to cut council tax benefit then a lot of genuine people are really going to suffer meaning the genuine people who have lost jobs and are struggling to find work and who already struggle to pay the council tax they already have to.
I don't see any evidence of improving or increasing in social housing. How many businesses we being run from buildings which have been converted from dwelling to businesses premises is would make sense to utilize empty office buildings by offering have been empty for years! Ps. how much has it cost to conduct this survey? i.e. postage/ questionaries' etc.
Push for a project to localise employment in Darlington. We quite literally are becoming a caring/services town. It is an absolute fantasy that the unemployed need an incentive to work. They simply need jobs to go to. Whilst I see unpaid volunteers looking after verges, where council gardeners are reduced to emptying litter bins. It should be the other way round or unless it's a charity to pay them. I see factories been built in Washington, Sunderland and not one in Darlington. My proposal would be to ask the regeneration staff to quantify their roles. Publish their K.P.'s. How many jobs have been created against how many we need. My employment has for 25years been out of Darlington. Now my sons are having to find work outside of Darlington. With the cost of fuel, we have to ask ourselves, why live in Darlington! Just ask yourself the question or do a poll on where will your son be working and stop blaming the unemployed they are the victims no the perpetrators.
The problems I have found with jobs in Darlington is that say I did casual support staff work at the priory in Middleton St. George. The hours are hugely variable. No hours to 50 hours for week. Current rules on ESA only permit you to do 12 month permitted work i.e. getting paid on top of benefits for a year. This is stupid in my opinion because when the 12months is up you have no choice with a non-guaranteed income and a mortgage to pay, but to quit the job. All people on benefits should be able to do work casually work on top of benefits for 2 years to try and get to full time contactable hours.
Stop giving support, you either need a job to live or not. Too many happy to get things paid for them. If they don't work they get no money simple!
Every company should give people changes to show what they like at working instead of putting their noses up at them
Stop wasting money on little islands in middle of road and wasting on speed ramps workers just standing about talking 3-4 to many on jobs flowers on fences waste of money to many workers in town hall too much money wasted on booze for town hall meeting too many hangers on over all Darlington town council too many chiefs too many expensive police cars.

There aren't any jobs so who are you kidding??
I feel we don't have enough jobs or businesses in Darlington for people to get work. There seems to be loads out of work but the work just isn't there which as a home owner is very worrying trying to get bills paid and keep a roof over my head and would have the same issues if elderly would have the same issues if on their own.
Clean the streets- Work incentive. No scheme- No Dole- I had to do this in the 1990's.
I'm not so sure it's a council capability and not more like a government issue. But I think in the past governments have been happy to give benefits to people subsidise low wages. Instead of now making people feel guilty about taking help to survive, why not stop subsidising companies low wages with benefits and make them pay living wages if prices are going to be allowed to rise on housing, rents, taxes, food, fuel and gas, water and electricity year on year then wages need to be paid at liveable levels without a dependency on assistance. We did not choose this way, consecutive government have let this happen.
Grants for setting up your own business. The government says there are grants there, but the job centre says they can only give you £250 towards starting your business. There needs to be help and clearly visible for people with ideas. People on income support don't have any money but have good ideas to get work but are not getting help in Darlington.
It's a good idea for the young, and people who are able to work. I don't work anymore I will be 60 on December 14th 2012. I don't get up till late in the morning, not because I'm lazy but am just not awake early on so how would I possibly go out to work, sometimes I'm not well.
The government must understand disabled couples on minimum part time wage will also have to cut other things to pay increases especially disabled. There must be some grey area in any choice you make not black and white every can't be classed the same just because are working common sense must come in
Why don't you help people out for the first year then after that increase it year after year I think this would be fair
I suggest that the role on scheme for one month continues as it helped me 100% when I went back to work in September.
Allow small earning to be allowed more favourably. E.g. less steep taper. End artificial employed/unemployed boundary (e.g. 16 hpw) Promote part-time work. Increase discretionary support for people who have been on JSA for less than 26 weeks (e.g. New Enterprise Allowance). In work benefits for staying employed to reduce 'revolving door' claimants.
I think even though people on low incomes and out of work, they should still contribute in some way even if they are lone parents, disabled everyone should help, we are all in difficult times and something has to give somewhere.
All new English should set no benefits until they have paid into the scheme for at least 5 years.
I think council payments should go up. Because people finding hard to coup cause everything else is going up
Increase the minimum wage for those in receipt of it especially amongst the young
Stop wasting money on survey like this. Stop selling off what belongs to the people of Darlington i.e. civic theatre, arts centre, stressholme. Stop spending on street fountains i.e. steps etc. stop paying senior staff big wages i.e. chief ex etc. cut councillors wages by 50% be the first council to go bankrupt and see what the got does. (i.e. news)
Very difficult to increase work incentives if you are between 60-65 no one wants to employ you at this time of life. Might be beneficial to younger people with families- ECT.
Tax business more, tax the wealthy more don't make any cuts to the councils expenditure as it's bad enough already. Collect rubbish once every 2 weeks. Don't have a mayor who needs one realistically SACK HIM/HER. Do your newsletter on cheap paper in black and white with on staple in the corner.
This questionnaire I hope is funded by government and that you have received payment before you had to print and send out this document!!
Everyone should pay council tax to ease the burden.
Those who receive Job Seekers should when the snow comes should do snow clearing and gritting to receive a one month exemption from Council Tax.

Why don't you say to people who are not in work and get help for their Council Tax to pay a little amount towards it and say to them they will get more help and support if they have found work so they will think that they need a job to be better off.
I think if people are unemployed and claiming council tax benefits they should do voluntary work to help the council
Stop paying councils for doing nothing, leave them alone and stop giving us stress.
Have not had time to read it yet. Will let you know once read if any ideas come from it
The treatment of self-employed people on low incomes by introducing a minimum assumed weekly income (16* minimum hourly wage) is harsh and deviates from the likely to force self-employed people back onto the unemployed normal employed people with respect to assessment of income.
Help people find a job and for the government to give people who are over 25 get an apprenticeship and advertise the help and support a lot better. And it would give people a better chance in life and stop cutting jobs, if people who are over 25 and get an apprenticeship off the government they would have a trade behind them and they'd have something to fall back on. And even build their own business and employ people to help the job shortage.
There are no jobs but kids shouldn't leave school until in employment
Enforce employees to give young people etc. a living wage and not 7.50 an hour. Give people more support financed and direct for longer or when needed in the first year into new employment. It is very expensive to live on your own. So extra help is needed or encourage house sharing to improve living standards
Council tenants could do certain jobs on council estates for % of relief with housing or council tax bills
Put high wage earners, Banks and Businesses who are making more money than what they know to do with on the top of your agenda, otherwise there will be more of a divide between rich and poor. Do not make the lives of the people who cannot afford to pay worse. People are struggling to survive and you and the government are making it more difficult for them. TAX THE RICH. Those earning above £26,000 per year on a scale going up. Those between 18000-26,000 on a minimum sliding scale.
Take the money off the so for rich and leave the old and poor alone.
If they work more than 30 hours at work they should receive help on council tax they should have people under 30 hours should consider looking for another job also to receive help.
If you don't work + have NO reason not too, pay council tax or get a job.
Ensure job centre staff are updated with information they provide- as they miss inform people all the time. I had no incentives at all but still returned to work. Providing individuals with a support network which encourages, supports and reviews the employment process on a personal basis would turn things around. I challenge the council to employ me for a 6 month trial as a qualified advisor in both counsellor advice and guidance i know i have the skills to change the though process of the unemployed.
Means testing is always lower level disabled loss. I have just lost my carers because I am on low level disabled, yet I not only cannot pay, but I am still now without help.
People that work very hard on low income need help with their council tax and it means a lot by giving them a little help by stopping the help, people will think what is the point of working if they cannot even pay their bills and people that don't work get everything!
I am unemployed I get jobseekers allowance I sign a contract for this which the government give me enough to live on not to pay more council tax and where am I suppose to find this extra money from if the government only give me enough to live on. Answer on a post card?
People returning to work after a period of unemployment should receive the benefit of housing benefit and council tax for a period of 2 months after employment to enable them to get back on their feet
Increase for those on benefit, who seem to have a better lifestyle than those who work.
I have no idea. My son applies for 8 jobs a day and rarely receives a reply. Sometimes he gets a telephone interview then hears no more. Working links have said he has an excellent CV and his interviewing skills are very good. There just aren't the jobs out there, don't axe the second adult rebate.

I think that people are on higher income should have to pay more council tax also that should also depend on their higher bands and areas ill people don't suffer as this works the same always that the richer get richer and the poorer get poorer- the wealthy people are laughing all the way to the bank
Stop cutting funding and personal and there would be less people to support. Reduce the retirement age as your classed as past it at 50 now a days and there is a lot of young unemployed.
Provide better work opportunities with wages above the regional/national average! The only incentive would be a payment holiday allowing someone just taking employment at the Darlington average wage a small life way at a time of uncertainty and high cost.
Please be very considerate in your decisions especially as benefit have been dramatically cut, people such as myself with depression are finding it very difficult now. Perhaps as suggested by my comments on the previous page, you would consider those who would not manage at all by having to pay Council Tax. Thank you
Create more jobs instead of job cuts, get a better idea of the local migrant workforce who work and claim benefits then send the money back home to their own countries instead of boosting our local economy and there are plenty give more to help the unemployed who are looking to rejoin the workforce.
I think the council needs to focus on young people who receive housing benefits and do not work and also on families where both parents do not work.
People who have been affected by these misfortunes of birth have lives + can never enjoy the luxuries other people can work for it would be a gross injustice to further deprive them of some of their reduced income. I appreciate your predicament and wish you a wise + compassionate solution.
People on long term unemployment i.e. young people should be given the chance to having training on what sort of work would suit them.
People who currently receive benefit and can do work of some kind should be expected to do some form of community work to help those less fortunate. It could be anything from tidying an elderly person's garden or helping someone fill a form in for something. Help and support could also be given to help someone become self-employed even in these times. Work ethic needs to be changed.
Young people who have never worked or young woman who get housing pregnant or
Higher wages, cheaper rents.
I do agree that the council get tenants to pay a greater percentage of their council tax as the council as landlord cannot continue to make up the shortfall next year after the cuts that have already taken place.
I'm afraid I am not informed enough to suggest anything. Incentives are like disincentives WHO exactly determines a positive outcome.
This town is a labour voted town and out council should come about vulnerable and poor people and council should protect these kinds of people. There are some businesses in Darlington taking advantages of current policies and a basing the system by cheating on their VAT and income taxes. Also there are some people cheating the system and by tracking these kinds of people, then council could find more jobs for some other people.
These proposals should not go ahead the disabled/unemployed etc. cannot afford to pay. Other services should be looked at first, councillors allowances, parish precepts, re absorb parish councils into the borough, no wheelie bins, make Ada Burns pay, stop having the mayor's ball, put the market back into the market square with no parking fees to encourage visitors, do not pay for immigrants or any asylum seekers, stop wasting money on the together magazine, stop wasting money on paperwork with pre-paid envelopes, cut the number of councillors each ward only needs one our 2 are useless but still take, take!
Tell the govt to stop all the closures of factories and making all these redundancies anyway whatever I say won't make a difference you don't hear of pay cuts in the govt or job losses in London, not just the poor, the worker and the north it's a disgrace.
Bring back more apprenticeships or even better service
People who leave their homes empty for half the year (travellers, many in my street) should pay council tax in full as technically they have 2 homes by living in caravans as well as houses. They always seem to 'get away' with paying less than any ordinary residents.

In my opinion I'd love to have a job and pay my bills as I have in the past. I think some of the bands should be reviewed a guide to how much you will have to pay compared to what you earn would make it easier to understand and there are some very rich or well of pensioners why should they be exempt. I also think the rich people should pay more anyway. And private landlords should pay council tax on any property that they own occupied or not.
Work incentives? Where is a 40-hour a week job to be found? Shops + factories are CLOSING!! My son, who has a degree has been working on a 4 hour contract job for a year now. He HATES going to sign on but at least he is doing something where others are not. The triers aren't praised but penalised for every job he's held he's overqualified. How can you increase work incentives when there's no work to be had + the young are frustrated and empty with despair? Do we all live on the same planet? In the some country? I think NOT.
Firstly, drastically cut the wages of highest earners In the council- e.g. ADA Burns who receives an obscene amount and has just had a pay rise when the council is supposedly short of money- with the money saved from this, there would be hardly any other savings needed to be made. Also, instead of botching things up when called out to be repaired- use decent items in the first place- that would save LOADS of money in call outs and parts and after hours wages- when refurbishment properties use decent contractors- not time cheapest cowboys whose mistakes have to be sorted by the council at even extra costs.
Haven't read executive summary as have no internet access. Other proposals I would think of implementing are to stop winter fuel payments to those people abroad and means test the current bus pass skeme. I know of people with two cars taking up this freebie!! I think it is all too easy for organisation to take things from the people who are already finding it difficult to make ends meet
The council and government will do what they deem is 'best' regard less of comments and suggestion made by the inhabitants of this country/country etc.
Job centre staff require more training. They often are not aware of opportunities/training options. People are often given little help in finding work and are not better off as work related costs i.e. travel, extra rent costs leave them out of pocket (FACT)
I think it is long over-due the country made cuts at the top! Including significant wage cuts at the top, councillors expenses should be stopped or at least means tested to the same levels at poor/disabled e.g. If they earn under £15,000 & do not have assets of savings over £6000- EQUAL STANDARDS! People on large incomes do not need to claim £400 per month just on food, wining and dining! Whilst disabled people and others have less than £40 per month for food. Darlington should vote on whether we really need a mayor anymore to wine and dine with the rich and if this is cost effective and essential in the current and forth coming financial climate.
Better off pensioners should be affected.
More child minding facilities for single parents so they can work and not claim as much
People on benefits can't live now on what they get off state benefits, I think you make people who work pay more council tax not us.
Target people who are able to work and choose not to and leave the people with very serious disabilities meaning they cannot leave their home on their own and live a life without any kind of independence or dignity.
I think people who are disabled and can't work should be treated like pensioners and be exempt, if not where are we supposed to find the extra money from, as are benefit is already the minimum need to live on.
I think a lot of young people aged between 18-28 struggle to find work as most have little or no qualifications or working skills and once a young person's starts claiming benefits and have never worked they become lazy. They need help and guidance maybe more apprenticeships available to them.
Stop placing obstacles in the way of people who are already trying to gain long term employment.
Small businesses can't succeed and no help for them. More education courses for working adults so people can get work and stay in work from local companies.

<p>Cut things they don't need like council workers coming out, lifting slabs, sticking a shovel full of sand underneath and then putting slabs down. Then the supervisor coming out to check and then signing work off. I watched this a couple of years ago and it took 3 people all afternoon to do this. What a waste of our money which could have been better spent on services that we need like highways money and tidying Darlington up! Also more staff at lower levels and less at management levels would help the council budget. People who can work but don't should be made to either get a job or train for a job or part of their benefit should go towards paying the benefit you have!</p>
<p>Lots of people are going to suffer. Get these people who don't want to work on something, to receive benefit, otherwise stop their money.</p>
<p>Despite the cost of printing and postage for those questionnaires and surveys, Joe public is seldom or if ever listened to or heard by councillors or over paid politicians, who arrogantly strut around ignoring the people who put them in a position of trust. You're going to proceed with this at all costs anyway, so why ask us!</p>
<p>I would suggest more work trials and courses for people to retrain if they have been out of work for some time and need skill refreshing. Training programs in-house with business where the business has the option of employing the trainee at the end of the scheme . In a lot of cases a person is better off not working as they lose more in benefits then they gain in wages. Those with mortgages shouldn't instantly lose help with that because it makes working makes them financially worse off. Encourage single parents to work up to 16 hours by not making it effect income support payments</p>
<p>Our own experience is, it's getting that there is now less incentive to work, over the past six months we are paying rent, council tax which we didn't before and also my weekly tax credit has been reduced per week by £18.00 in total we are worse off by £48.00 per week I am nearly 52 years of age worked all my life expect for two years when unemployment and I have never struggled like we are now. More cuts will break families up.</p>
<p>Haven't yet read the draft c.t policy but feel that sadly all the talk about 'work initiatives' and getting people away from benefit is very well, but they are not enough jobs full stop. Employers not affording to employ, so until jobs are created and something is done to boost our economy (creating jobs) people have no choice but to remain the same. Under our current government we all get asked to pay 'more, more, more' in every area of life, but no opportunity to somewhere earn build up the money to do this. Poor getting poorer, morals getting lower.</p>
<p>If you earn so much have decreased levels of council tax to pay.</p>
<p>I also think that people who do work (working families or working parents) should receive some help with housing and council tax as well, because once you are working you are paying for everything so therefore working people are no better off.</p>
<p>For children/lone people living in a property alone (no children/disabled residents there) there should be a maximum period that HB and CTB is paid for! Not years upon years for people who don't contribute in anyway! (1 year maximum for example)- They can stay with other people, relatives/house shares etc.- don't need house to themselves for free.</p>
<p>Help us with experience for work. Employers are being way to picky. Happy with no qualifications as training is given but won't give people benefits of the doubt when it comes to no experience and low disability! We are all humans so why do we all get treated so differently! Why not give us, that want to work, to be able to have a nice life, a chance.</p>
<p>Try making proposal more inviting to read and less like a legal document lost interest and went back to job search!!!</p>
<p>Very difficult as there are very few opportunities and the opportunities available have a huge amount of interest.</p>
<p>Make the people seeking Job Seekers Allowance go into work placements or only let people seeking job seekers allowance (without children) be able to sign on for a limited amount of time in which to seek work then if necessary stop it and take it away from the lazy people who just won't work.</p>
<p>There may be no correlation between work incentives and people receiving support with their council tax. You cannot motivate people. You can only create the conditions where people will motivate themselves.</p>
<p>If we were paying for 1 prime minister that would save a fortune.</p>

Other people suffer like the old or people with disability or ill health while a lot of young people should be made to work to many young people claiming benefits when there is nothing wrong with them
A lot of unnecessary over paid staff should be cut or have to salary cuts imposed to stop many people who can't afford to pay having to struggle to try and pay. Also money should not be continued to be thrown at 'slum' landlords in housing benefits etc.
SIMPLE. Less tax = better income= less poverty= better living for everyone. The British government is a joke, they tax working class people left right and centre so that they can live like kings therefore leaving others struggling to survive. Less foreigners= more jobs for the British people- simples!!!
I think if the council is going to start to get people to pay money to look into how much to charge people. Not everybody will be able to pay a lot.
Families with 2 or more wages coming into homes should pay more.
We are both in our mid to late 50's. This is an age group with a lot of people who have taken redundancy etc. I did start on a retraining scheme but the cost of travel and long hours was only paying for the travel and not the bills. There is the problem of not only getting a training place but getting employment after on a long term basis also we have to compete with a lot of younger people some have never worked or had any training
I am unsure how the universal credit system will work. The thought of paying council tax whilst on such a low income terrifies me. I appreciate the difficulty the council must have in finding ways to save money.
Darlington's culture needs to be addressed due to the fact that even our local MP is aware that the percentage of girls having children far exceeds the number seeking further education. It has become quite normal to drop out of school and seek benefits rather than earning an honest living and this needs monitoring
The Red Tape for looking after children should be, not more relaxed but easier and quicker to obtain and we should not give foreigners benefits so easily they (NOT ALL) are taking the mick, they come here for an easy life.
I believe that when people return to work they should be given help until they get back on their feet.
Money bonus incentive after 12 months completed in work/job might work.
Totally agree pensioners who are just on state pension should get more help, but what about pensioners who have works pension or state pension. Everyone should pay a contribution according to their means.
I think that job opportunities for 18-24 year olds should be available within the council.
Protect the unemployed and pensioners benefits getting rich to pay more, get the employers to take people on or give people a chance, I'm currently on a 3 interviews of which I heard nothing but that's out of approx. 200 application cut some of these training course I've done 5 since being unemployed and they have made no difference what so ever.
Those who are fit & able could perhaps work for the council free to offset their council bill. I don't know exactly how this would work, but there are lots of people in the town who would or could do jobs such as cleaning streets, tidying up eyesores or even if they were able they could do more qualified jobs such as office positions, driving jobs or similar. This is a possibility for disabled recipients too who can't do full time job.
I think that giving people the opportunity to participate in work experience programs would increase the incentive to work. This could include but not be limited to providing work experience within the councils own departments, the library, Civic Theatre, dolphin centre etc. The council could also liaise and work with local businesses in the town to support this scheme, which would enable the people affected to learn new skills which may assist them in finding a new job.
Maybe the council could offer unemployed people voluntary work experience and training within the council. This would help with cuts to council jobs, boost their confidence and help the unemployed into work by giving work experience and references. People could volunteer in lots of roles such as librarians, gardeners , cleaners, clerical and much more. This would be beneficial to local people and the council itself.
I would seriously recommend that the staff at the most senior level within the Council could take a pay cut of up to 50%. I am saying this, as they all seem to get paid much more than the Prime Minister and have way and ahead less responsibility than he has. There is no need for anyone in the Public Sector to be paid more than the Prime Minister, as nobody else within the Public Sector has any more

responsibilities than he has. As for work incentives, a system should be put in place which makes it so that, whatever job a person has, they will be earning more whilst working than they would if they were claiming Benefits. There also needs to be continuous support to enable disabled people to get into work, along with anyone else who has more difficulty getting into work.
More PROPER work opportunities
The best way to increase work incentives is to invest in job creation at a living wage rather than penalise those out of work through no fault of their own where no jobs are available.
Possibly the young people could do work for the council, i.e. to get full council tax benefit they could do the gardens of the elderly care homes, the old people's homes, may be the parks and gardens around the council area. Keeping the town clean, litter pick, help remove fly tipping mess if they work in gangs, saving council money and giving the people a feeling of self-worth. They work for the benefit and the council keeps their bills down.
Again, for reasons of equality, I do not think it is right to treat self-employed people worse than employed people. I therefore think that your system should use only method a) which is the weekly equivalent of the amount of earnings, as described by HMRC in the previous tax year. Self-employed people are used to this year's tax code being based on last year's income so they would be fine with this year's benefit being based on last year's income. It is always better to use actual income rather than estimated income so I do not think method b) should be used. And you should certainly not use method c) as self-employment is a very precarious business and to assume, in the current economic climate, that people are able to make 16 x the hourly minimum wage per week is not only unrealistic, it shows no empathy or understanding of the struggles of self-employed people. I understand that this is the method that is going to be employed by the Tory government when they introduce the Universal Credit but Darlington is a Labour Council and Labour have been very clear about not dividing the nation into north and south, rich and poor, public and private yet method c) creates a division between employed and self-employed people that is just as divisive as any of the above divisions. Many self-employed people would much prefer to be employed with sick pay and paid holidays but they cannot find work so have no choice but to be self-employed if they want to work. To penalise people for having chosen self-employment over unemployment when employment isn't available is grossly unfair. I understand the pressure the council is under to save money but please do not allow the principle of equality to suffer as a consequence. Please do not create a new division. And please do not make assumptions about minimum levels of self-employed income as this will leave people whose real income doesn't match the hypothetical income with no choice but to register as unemployed. It cannot be right to put people out of self-employed work when there is not enough employed work for the people who are currently unemployed. Finally, if means-tested benefits are based on hypothetical means rather than actual means, does it not undermine the whole concept of means-testing. And how is it means testing, anyway, if you're going to invent a figure for a person's income and not assess their actual means?
Having worked in various Government departments (including the DWP) I know that the administration cost of a scheme can be reduced by using some common-sense ideas. In particular the design of letters/benefit statements can reduce costs (using as few sheets of paper as possible, double-sided printing, sending letters together rather than in separate envelopes etc.). Depending on the legality of this, I believe that many people would be happy to view Council Tax bills/benefits etc. online, using a secure server. If someone needs a hard-copy then they can produce one, or even approach the Council for the necessary evidence, as required. For those who have no internet access or experience, then they could receive the existing letters. A single IT system might be used for both the processing of claims by the Council and to allow us all to view our council tax bill/benefit statement. If even a percentage of people use such a system it could help save on printing/postage costs and reduce the environmental impact of the traditional scheme. The council could offer this service to all new and existing claimants; those who wish to receive a paper-based service could then opt-out of an online service. Finally, and having claimed benefit myself, I know that the existing award letters can be confusing. To enable claimants to better understand their benefit award it would be useful to actively invite people to see any new design of letter/statement before introduction, and take notice of their feedback. This can reduce confusion and future calls/visits to the Council by claimants. In addition, using a simple to understand format and language (where possible) can cut the number of pages you actually need to present the information to a claimant.
The maximum earnings to qualify for council tax benefit needs increasing in line with inflation.
If people get more from working than they do from benefits, housing benefit and ctax benefit then there if was work then people would want to work.

Reduce and re-structure the pay civil servants receive for the poor service and incompetence. Also to look into how many immigrants are living in this country, you hear as many foreign accents as you do English.
Majority are already working and are in low paid roles. Also cannot increase hours due to current climate.
Lower the amount of savings you are allowed to have to qualify for help with Council Tax. Long term unemployed should receive help for the first few months of returning to work to help transition from benefits to wages as often there is no pay for the first few weeks.
To save money cut services, another point can I just say is cut the bin collections down to once a fortnight, listen to my option and you will save money.
All people on Job Seekers Allowance, who don't get a job within 6 months of their initial claim should be made to pay a percentage of rent and council tax, as I know people who have never had a job and won't as "its not worth them working". A percentage should be made to pay their fair share regardless of income.
I think single parents should get help or people on low income as its hard enough to live especially when people want a job but theres not much out there and so many people apply for them.
Why does the Council not cut back on other services that are not needed and protect the Council Tax benefit for people who would find it hard to pay the extra money. They say they want to protect people who are struggling but in most cases their life line is taken. There is so many other cut backs on benefits at the moment.
I think it should all stay the same. As the government are putting the strains on the councils. And if they don't meet the governments requirements would our council be shut down.
I think if people have a long term history of not working these people should be made to pay something to encourage them to go out to work and earn a living.
Give people a set amount of time before they are forced to take a job or they lose their incentives, or when kids are school ages people should work. If they are allowed to rely on the state indefinitely they will keep taking and not offering anything back. If they do take up work then they should get discounted rates if you don't work then they should get help until kids are at school then their help should stop.
All I know is all these cuts are making life hard, especially for our kids, what sort of a childhood does the majority of under privileged kids have. I am only self employed as my boss sees this as a way to avoid sick pay (holiday pay/pensions) I do the same hours same venue every week. Take more money off me and I'll be homeless with 2 minors , maybe assess each situation differently I work, but only have one wage coming into my house, my wage has not ever altered not has my CSA, as he hides his earnings as ex has own business. Help those that need/deserve it.
Councils should also offer council tax incentives to get unemployed back to work by offering a discount to those who make an effort to get back to work or even offer courses in the first year - stipulations to ensure they are employed for at least a year to ensure consistency rather than people using/abusing the system. Families that continue to have children but not work should get no benefit at all.
Having completed this questionnaire online am surprised council have wasted money sending a paper version.
Dont be so generous with the support! This is why people dont want to work as they get more in benefits than they would working.
You should send this questionnaire to households who are not in receipt of benefit, - 99% of darlington's residents who do not receive any help towards their bills are having to pay more for those on benefits and think it is unfair how some dont work and get it all paid for, yet their opinion is not asked for, especially when we pay!

Details about the respondents

Do you live in Darlington?

Yes	841
No	3
Not answered	43

Are you currently receiving CTB?

Yes	800
No	27
Not answered	60

Status:

Disabled	215
Employed (full-time)	65
Employed (part-time)	121
Pensioner	20
Self-employed	13
Student	13
Unemployed	384
Not answered	56

Age range:

18-24	75
25-34	133
35-44	156
45-54	279
55-60	162
61+	20
Not answered	62

Gender:

Female	419
Male	383
Not answered	85

Ethnic origin:

White:	
British	787
Irish	4
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3
Other (Polish)	10
Other (Lithuanian)	1
Other (Czech)	1
Other (not stated)	2
Black/Black British:	
African	2
Caribbean	1
Asian/Asian British:	
Indian	1
Bangladeshi	5
Other (Burmese)	1
Other (not stated)	1
Mixed:	
White and Black Caribbean	1
Other ethnic group:	
Iranian	2
Iraqi	1
Iraqi-Kurdish	2
Kurdish	2
Russian	1
Not answered:	
Ethnic origin not stated	59

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes	398
No	392
Not answered	97

1 Equality Scheme: ANNEX 3



Equality Impact Assessment Record Form 2012-16

This form is to be used for recording the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of Council activities. It should be used in conjunction with the guidance on carrying out EIA in **Annex 2** of the Equality Scheme. The activities that may be subject to EIA are set out in the guidance.

EIA is particularly important in supporting the Council to make fair decisions. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Using this form will help Council officers to carry out EIA in an effective and transparent way and provide decision-makers with full information on the potential impact of their decisions. The purpose is to avoid inadvertent disadvantage or discrimination resulting from decisions.

EIA is not a fixed process – it will vary according to the scale and type of activity. The form and guidance are designed to cover all eventualities. Officers should not be discouraged by the form, but should use their discretion in using it flexibly according to the activity they are assessing.

EIA does not happen at a single point in time. It is an ongoing and integral part of the development of the activity or proposal. This EIA template should be kept open and live as a planning document, and updated as the activity or proposal progresses.

Section 1 – Service Details and Summary of EIA Activity

Title of activity:	Council Tax Support scheme
Lead Officer responsible for this EIA:	Anthony Sandys, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Telephone:	X2512
Service Group:	Place
Service or Team:	Revenues and Benefits
Assistant Director accountable for this EIA	Pauline Mitchell, AD Housing and Building Services
Who else will be involved in carrying out the EIA:	Wendy Tarelli, Operational Manager Revenues and Benefits

<p>What stage has the EIA reached?</p> <p>This table provides a ‘cover note’ of progress to be maintained as the EIA is developed over time.</p> <p>Stage categories 1-3 listed below refer to the funnel model. Note the stage reached and any consultation or engagement carried out. Simple activities may not need all these stages. Provide details of population/individuals affected in Section 2</p>		
Stage	Date	Summary of position
Stage 1: Initial Officer Assessment. Whole Population likely to be affected identified		<i>All residents within Darlington who are liable to pay Council Tax</i>
Stage 2: Further Assessment. Target Population likely to be affected identified		<i>All current Council Tax Benefit recipients</i>
Stage 3: Further Assessment. Individuals likely to be affected identified		<i>All current working age Council Tax Benefit recipients</i>

Stage 4: Analysis of Findings		<p>Most respondents believe they will be negatively impacted by these proposals. Some respondents believed strongly that certain groups of people should be protected from any cuts to benefit entitlement. Some groups will be treated differently in the assessment of their benefit entitlement, as certain types of income will be disregarded in the process. The Council will take a fair and equitable approach to Council Tax recovery and will take into account a person's means to pay, where they are making reasonable attempts to pay their Council Tax.</p>
Stage 5: Sign-Off		
Stage 6: Reporting and Action Planning		

Section 2 – The Activity and Supporting Information

Details of the activity (including the main purpose and aims)
<p>From April 2013, the Government is replacing Council Tax Benefit with new local Council Tax Support schemes, designed and administered by local authorities. Grants will be paid to local authorities to fund the new scheme, but the overall amount will be cut by 10% from projected expenditure levels, although in reality the figure is more likely to be around 12%.</p> <p>The Council will need to design and publish a new scheme by 31st January 2013, in time to implement for annual Council Tax billing in 2013/2014. A full public consultation exercise has been undertaken on the proposed scheme.</p> <p>This is a significant decision about whether or not to pass on the Government grant reduction to people receiving Council Tax Benefit and if so, whether to pass the reduction on in total or in part. Given the impact of the decision on people across the Borough consultation with leading Council Members has taken place to assist in the preparation of options. Members were made aware that if a decision was made not to pass on the total cost then other Council budgets would need to be reduced to accommodate the loss of government grants.</p> <p>Three options were given to residents, as part of the consultation, as follows:</p> <p>Option 1 - All people of working age should be protected from any cuts. People of working age who currently get Council Tax Benefit would get the same amount they get under the new scheme.</p> <p>Option 2 - All people of working age should pay some Council Tax. People of working age who currently get CTB would have to pay more towards their Council Tax - this amount will be a set amount for all people.</p> <p>Option 3 - Some people of working age should be protected from any cuts. This option would see some people of working age have their Council Tax Support cut, but not others. This means people not protected under this option would have to pay even more towards their Council Tax bill.</p>
Who will be affected by the activity?
<p>See the guidance on carrying out equality impact assessment within the Equality Scheme 2012-16. Provide details of the groups and numbers of people affected below, updating the table as the EIA develops and the understanding of who will be affected emerges in more detail.</p>
Whole population
<p>Potentially all residents in Darlington who are liable for Council Tax could be affected by these proposals. If the Council were to decide that all or part of the cut in Government funding should be met by the Council (and not passed on to the benefit recipients), then other Council budgets would need to be reduced to accommodate the loss of government grants. This could result in a reduction in services and/or an increase in Council Tax to meet the shortfall.</p>
Target population
<p>All current recipients of Council Tax Benefit could be affected by the changes, although pensioners are protected by any reduction in benefit. The prescribed regulations only permit council's to reduce the benefit entitlement for working age individuals. These are defined as people who have not yet attained the qualifying age of state pension credit, which will be 62 in April 2013. Pensioners represent approx.</p>

45% of all Council Tax Benefit recipients.

Individuals

All current working age recipients of Council Tax Benefit could be affected by the changes, if the Council decides to pass on all or some of the reduction in government grant to Council Tax Benefit recipients. Approximately 6,800 households could be affected by these changes. These include; disabled people, people in work and on a low income, other groups such as unemployed people and lone parents not in work.

What data, research and other evidence or information is available which is relevant to the EIA?

The following information is currently available:

NUMBERS OF CTB RECIPIENTS BY GROUP AND COUNCIL TAX BAND

Band	Pensioners	Working Aged Passported*	Working Aged Vulnerable**	Working Aged Other	Total
A	3,765	3,828	400	1,361	9,354
B	943	441	81	280	1,745
C	409	118	21	121	669
D	146	56	11	56	269
E	69	11	6	18	104
F	5	9	3	5	22
G	4	1	1	2	8
H	0	1	0	0	1
Total	5,341	4,465	523	1,843	12,172
Average weekly CTB	£14.52	£15.30	£13.67	£11.64	£14.33

*Working Aged Passported includes anyone who is in receipt of either:

- Income Support, or
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance, or
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance

**Working Aged Vulnerable includes anyone who is in receipt of either:

- War Widows Pension, or
- War Disablement Pension, or
- A disability related benefit, such as Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance

NOTE: Some recipients of a disability related benefit will be included in the passported claims (for example, a person may be getting Incapacity Benefit, topped up with Income Support). It is not known at this stage how many of these claims are included in the figures, as this information is not held by Darlington Borough Council.

**IMPACT OF A 10% REDUCTION IN CTB ENTITLEMENT FOR ALL WORKING AGED RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged Passported	4,465	90%	£13.76	£80	£3,195
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	90%	£12.02	£86	£327
Working Aged Other	1,843	90%	£10.09	£81	£967
Total					£8,522

**IMPACT OF A 20% REDUCTION IN CTB ENTITLEMENT FOR ALL WORKING AGED RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged Passported	4,465	80%	£12.22	£160	£2,837
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	80%	£10.43	£168	£284
Working Aged Other	1,843	80%	£8.59	£159	£823
Total					£7,977

**IMPACT OF A 30% REDUCTION IN CTB ENTITLEMENT FOR ALL WORKING AGED RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged	4,465	70%	£10.67	£241	£2,477

Passported					
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	70%	£8.86	£250	£241
Working Aged Other	1,843	70%	£7.17	£232	£687
Total					£7,438

**IMPACT OF ACHIEVING FULL RECOVERY OF THE GRANT FUNDING REDUCTION FROM CTS RECIPIENTS
(FIGURES ARE BASED ON CURRENT ENTITLEMENT LEVELS)**

Group	No. of Recipients	Maximum Entitlement	Average Weekly CTB Entitlement	Estimated Extra Annual Council Tax to Pay	Estimated Annual Expenditure (£'000)
Pensioners	5,341	100%	£14.52	£0	£4,033
Working Aged Passported	4,465	48%	£7.28	£417	£1,690
Working Aged Vulnerable	523	48%	£5.62	£419	£153
Working Aged Other	1,843	48%	£4.40	£376	£422
Total					£6,298

Check: before proceeding to the officer assessment, have you obtained all the data and information that is currently available?

Section 3: Officer Assessment

Use this table to record your views on potential impact on Protected Characteristics. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here. It is important to be searching and honest about this – many Council activities are planned to be of positive benefit to identified target groups but can often have the potential for inadvertent effects on other groups.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable			Potential level of impact				Summary of Impact
Age		N			M			Pensioners are not affected by the Council Tax Support scheme and will be protected from any reduction in benefits. Pensioners are defined as people who have not yet attained the qualifying age of state pension credit, which will be 62 in April 2013. The government has stated that pensioners should be protected because they are unable to go out to work to improve their income. Therefore, potentially anyone of working age could be negatively impacted by these proposals and would be treated differently from pensioners.
Race			NA				nil	There are no impacts specifically relating to a person's race.
Sex			NA				nil	There are no impacts specifically relating to a person's gender.
Gender Reassignment			NA				nil	There are no impacts specifically relating to a person's gender.
Disability (summary of detail on next page)		N			M		nil	Potentially, anyone of working age with a disability could be affected by these proposals. Although pensioners are protected, the government has stated that Councils should consider protecting other 'vulnerable groups', such as disabled people who may be unable to go into work to improve their income. However, disabled people are treated differently in the assessment of Council Tax Benefit, as some incomes, such as Disability Living Allowance are disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.

Religion or belief			NA				nil	There are no impacts specifically relating to a person's religion or beliefs.
Sexual Orientation			NA				nil	There are no impacts specifically relating to a person's sexual orientation.
Pregnancy or maternity		N			M			Potentially, anyone of working age could be affected by these proposals. Although pensioners are protected, the government has stated that Councils should consider protecting other 'vulnerable groups', such as lone parents or families with young children who may be unable to go into work to improve their income. However, families with children are treated differently in the assessment of Council Tax Benefit, as some incomes, such as child maintenance and Child Benefit are disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.
Marriage/ Civil Partnership			NA				nil	There are no impacts specifically relating to a person's marital status.

Section 3: Officer Assessment - continued

The Council must have due regard to disabled people’s impairments when making decisions about ‘activities’. This list is provided only as a starting point to assist officers with the assessment process. It is important to remember that people with similar impairments may in reality experience completely different impacts. Consider the potential impacts and summarise in the Disability section on the previous page. Officers should consider how the ‘activity’ may affect a disabled person.

Mobility Impairment		N			M			<p>Working age people with mobility impairments and in receipt of Council Tax Benefit may be negatively impacted by these proposals as all working age people could see a reduction in benefit entitlement. People with mobility impairments may find it more difficult to obtain paid work to improve their income. However, the mobility element of Disability Living Allowance is fully disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.</p>
Visual impairment		N			M			<p>Working age people with visual impairments and in receipt of Council Tax Benefit may be negatively impacted by these proposals as all working age people could see a reduction in benefit entitlement. People with visual impairments may find it more difficult to obtain paid work to improve their income. However, the care element of Disability Living Allowance is fully disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.</p>
Hearing impairment		N			M			<p>Working age people with hearing impairments and in receipt of Council Tax Benefit may be negatively impacted by these proposals as all working age people could see a reduction in benefit entitlement. People with hearing impairments may find it more difficult to obtain paid work to improve their income. However, the care element of Disability Living Allowance is fully disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.</p>
Learning Disability		N			M			<p>Working age people with a learning disability and in receipt of Council Tax Benefit may be negatively impacted by these proposals as all working age people could see a reduction in benefit entitlement. People with a learning disability may find it more difficult to</p>

							obtain paid work to improve their income. However, the care element of Disability Living Allowance is fully disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement. In addition, many people with a learning disability are exempt from paying Council Tax.
Mental Health		N			M		Working age people with mental health problems and in receipt of Council Tax Benefit may be negatively impacted by these proposals as all working age people could see a reduction in benefit entitlement. People with mental health problems may find it more difficult to obtain paid work to improve their income. However, the care element of Disability Living Allowance is fully disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement. In addition, some people with mental health problems are exempt from paying Council Tax.
Long Term Limiting Illness		N			M		Working age people with long-term limiting illnesses and in receipt of Council Tax Benefit may be negatively impacted by these proposals as all working age people could see a reduction in benefit entitlement. People with long-term limiting illnesses may find it more difficult to obtain paid work to improve their income. However, the care element of Disability Living Allowance is fully disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement. In addition, some people who receive long term care may be exempt from paying Council Tax.
Multiple Impairments		N			M		Working age people with multiple impairments and in receipt of Council Tax Benefit may be negatively impacted by these proposals as all working age people could see a reduction in benefit entitlement. People with multiple impairments may find it more difficult to obtain paid work to improve their income. However, Disability Living Allowance is fully disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.
Other – Specify (war disabled)		N			M		Working age ex-forces personnel with disabilities and in receipt of Council Tax Benefit may be negatively impacted by these proposals as all working age people could see a reduction in benefit entitlement. People with disabilities may

								find it more difficult to obtain paid work to improve their income. However, War Disablement Pension is fully disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.
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Cumulative Impacts

The officer responsible for this EIA should seek input from the Corporate Equalities Group on the potential for this activity to combine with other recent, current or proposed activities, both Council and in the external environment, to result in more severe impacts on people with Protected Characteristics through their cumulative effects. The Corporate Equalities Group will advise on the content for this section of the EIA.

Change activities	Potential cumulative impacts
Welfare reforms from April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size criteria for the social rented sector will see Housing Benefit for Council Tenants and Housing Association Tenants restricted, where they are under occupying their property • A Benefit Cap will be introduced, which will limit the overall amount of benefits and Tax Credits to £350 per week for single people and £500 per week for couples and lone parents. Housing Benefit will be restricted in these cases. • A new local welfare provision, replacing some elements of the Social Fund will be introduced, although groups with protected characteristics are prioritised as part of the eligibility criteria. • Changes to Disability Living Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance will limit the number of people who currently qualify for these benefits. • Changes to Working Tax Credits will limit the number of people who currently qualify for this tax credit.

Section 4: Engagement Decision

The decision about who to engage with, and how and when to engage, is the key to effective EIA. Please see Annex 2 of the Equality Scheme for guidance on the engagement decision.

Is engagement with affected people with Protected Characteristics required, now or during the further development of the activity?	Yes
If YES, proceed to the next section. If NO, briefly summarise below the reasons why you have reached this conclusion.	

If you have come to the conclusion that engagement is not required, seek ratification from the Corporate Equalities Group through your service Equalities Co-ordinator.

If engagement is not required but the officer assessment has identified changes that should be made to the activity, please complete Sections 7 and 8. If not the assessment can be signed-off at Section 9.

Any reports to decision-makers during the development of the activity, for example feasibility or options appraisal reports, should include content on the latest thinking and findings of the EIA even though, like the activity, further development of the EIA may be required before final reporting.

The findings of the officer assessment should be included in any reports to decision-makers. These may be feasibility or options appraisal reports where the activity is at an early stage of development, but it is essential that any equality findings are taken into account in formal decisions at all stages of development of the activity.

2 Section 5 – Involvement and Engagement Planning

Has the assessment shown that the activity will treat any groups of people with Protected Characteristics differently from other people? Yes
<p>If yes, please state which groups and how</p> <p>Although all working age people will potentially be impacted by these proposals;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disabled people may be treated differently from other people as some of their income, such as Disability Living Allowance is disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.• Households with children may be treated differently from other people as some of their income, such as child maintenance and Child Benefit are disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement.• War pensioners and people leaving the armed forces due to a disability may be treated differently from other people as some of their income, such as War Widows Pension, War Disablement Pension and other armed forces compensation schemes are disregarded in the assessment of benefit entitlement. <p>Potentially the Council does have the option to protect certain groups who are negatively impacted by these proposals, although this could have an even greater impact on other non-protected groups, as they may see a larger reduction in benefit entitlement.</p>
Will the differential treatment advance equality for people with Protected Characteristics? Yes
<p>If yes, please state which groups and how</p> <p>As above.</p>
Will the differential treatment cause or increase disadvantage for people with Protected Characteristics? No
<p>If yes, please state which groups and how</p>

From the above, prepare a simple plan using the template overleaf for involving and engaging with the organisations, groups and individuals likely to be affected by the activity.

There may be several stages of involvement and engagement, particularly for more complex activities. Initially it may be possible to identify and engage only with stakeholder and representative organisations for the people with Protected

Characteristics who may be affected. Further development of the activity may be required before the individuals who will be affected can be identified.

The Involvement and Engagement Plan should evolve accordingly, with new engagement proposals added as they are identified.

Involvement and Engagement Plan

Which organisations, groups and individuals do you need to involve or engage and how?

Date of plan entry	Organisation, Group or Individuals	Date of event or activity	Type of activity – venue, channels, method and staffing
Sept 2012	All residents of Darlington	Sept to Dec 2012	On-line survey to be set up on the Darlington BC website. Adverts in the October and November editions of Darlington Together
Sept 2012	Council Tenants	Sept to Dec 2012	On-line survey to be set up on the Darlington BC website. Adverts in the Autumn edition of Hot News
Sept 2012	All working age recipients of Council Tax Benefit	Sept to Dec 2012	Paper copy of the survey to be sent to all individuals potentially impacted by the proposals.
Sept 2012	Advice and support agencies	Sept to Dec 2012	Meetings to be held with CAB, DAD, First Stop and the Supporting People Core Strategy Group

Engagement to identify impacts works best in face-to-face and small group settings

Section 6: Engagement Findings

	Date/summary of engagement carried out	Summary of impacts identified
Age	Sept to Dec 2012	From the 887 responses to the consultation received, all but 20 were from working age people who could potentially be impacted by these proposals. From the options given to respondents, 319 stated that all Council Tax Benefit recipients should be protected from any cuts to benefit entitlement. 141 stated that Council Tax Benefit recipients should pay some Council Tax, whilst 336 stated that some groups of Council Tax Benefit recipients should be protected from any cuts to benefit entitlement. 91 respondents did not specify a preferred option.
Disability	Sept to Dec 2012	<p>From the 887 responses to the consultation received, 398 were from people who identified themselves as disabled. From the 336 respondents who stated that some groups of people should be protected from any cuts to benefit entitlement, 127 stated that disabled people should be protected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents stated that they felt disabled people were already assessed as being on minimum levels of income and that they could not afford to pay any additional Council Tax, although this could apply to anyone currently receiving Council Tax Benefit. • However, there were strong opinions that disabled people have limited or no opportunities to go out to work to improve their financial situation. Although there was nothing to suggest that disabled people would be any worse off than other benefit recipients, there was a sense of injustice that disabled people were at a disadvantage because of this. • Respondents indicated that disabled people are already seeing reductions to disability related benefits, increases in costs for care and increases to utility bills where additional heating is required. • Respondents indicated that benefit cuts could increase stress for disabled people, which could aggravate their medical condition.
Mobility Impairment	Sept to Dec 2012	
Visual impairment	Sept to Dec 2012	
Hearing impairment	Sept to Dec 2012	
Learning Disability	Sept to Dec 2012	
Mental Health	Sept to Dec 2012	
Long Term Limiting Illness	Sept to Dec 2012	
Multiple Impairments	Sept to Dec 2012	
Other - Specify		

Race	Sept to Dec 2012	There were no impacts identified
Sex	Sept to Dec 2012	There were no impacts identified
Gender Reassignment	Sept to Dec 2012	There were no impacts identified
Religion or belief	Sept to Dec 2012	There were no impacts identified
Sexual Orientation	Sept to Dec 2012	There were no impacts identified
Pregnancy or maternity	Sept to Dec 2012	There were no impacts specifically identified for women who are pregnant. However, from the 336 respondents who stated that some groups of people should be protected from any cuts to benefit entitlement, 50 stated that families with children should be protected. Again there were many comments that families on a low income could be adversely impacted by these proposals and that their children's quality of life would be affected.
Marriage / Civil Partnership	Sept to Dec 2012	There were no impacts identified

Section 6: Engagement Findings – Continued

Drawing on the engagement findings and your understanding of the effects of the activity, indicate how it will contribute, if at all, to the three strands of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

a) How will the proposal help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?
These proposals recognise that some people with protected characteristics may need to be treated differently and all the options continue to include disregards to certain disability benefits, child related benefits and war pensions.
b) How will the proposal help to advance equality of opportunity?
The process will be the same for everyone. If option 2 is selected, everyone of working age will see the same reduction in benefit entitlement. There is an appeals process for people who disagree with any decision relating to their benefit claim.
c) How will the proposal help to foster good relations?
As above.

During the engagement process were there any suggestions on how to avoid, minimise or mitigate any negative impacts? If so, please give details.
Many of the comments about the proposals suggested that the only way to avoid, minimise or mitigate any negative impacts was to protect all, or certain people currently entitled to Council Tax Benefit from any cuts. Some suggested everyone in receipt of Council Tax Benefit should be fully protected, others suggested that any reduction should be minimised, whilst some suggested that certain groups only should be protected from any cuts.

This completes the assessment, but there will be further work to do to contribute to the reporting and implementation stages of the activity. First though, it is important to draw a line under the assessment to maintain a separation between assessment of impacts and any proposals to manage those impacts. The assessment should therefore be signed-off at this stage.

Section 7 - Sign-off when assessment is completed

Officer Completing the Form:		
Signed	Name:	
	Date:	
	Job Title:	
Assistant Director:		
Signed	Name:	
	Date:	
	Service:	

Section 8 – Reporting of Findings and Recommendations to Decision Makers

The findings of the EIA may be reported to decision-makers at several stages during the development of an activity. For example, the initial officer assessment findings may be included in a feasibility report or options appraisal to be considered by the Transformation Board or Chief Officers' Executive.

Any report for formal decisions by Cabinet or Council should include the latest findings of the EIA, even if these are at a relatively early stage. The report recommending final approval of the activity should await and include the findings of the completed EIA. The report should present clearly the impacts that have been identified through the engagement process, including potential cumulative impacts.

The report may include recommendations based on the findings of the EIA, but these should be separate from the reporting of impacts. Recommendations will be developed separately from the EIA and arise from considering equalities impacts combined with other aspects of the activity such as finance, the benefits of the activity, and so on.

Based on the EIA findings, the report may consider the options in the table below, but the report must contain a clear statement of the impacts so that decision-makers can understand the effects of the decision that is being recommended.

What does the review of the information show?	
a)	No negative impact on people because of their Protected Characteristics - continue with the activity and monitor progress on implementation
b)	Negative impact identified – recommend continuing with the activity; clearly specify the people affected and the impacts, and providing reasons and supporting evidence for the decision to continue
c)	Negative impact identified - adjust the activity in light of the identified impact to avoid, minimise or mitigate the impact
d)	Negative impact identified - stop activity and provide an explanation why

Section 9 – Action Plan and Performance Management

The report to decision-makers, and the decision made may require actions to be taken to avoid, minimise or mitigate the negative impacts of the activity. Option C in the table in Section 8, combined with mitigation measures that may have been highlighted during engagement and listed in Section 6 (if adopted) will require action planning to implement them.

Any actions to address equalities impacts should be listed below, with performance management review proposals, to complete the full EIA.

What is the negative impact?	Actions required to reduce/eliminate the negative impact (if applicable)	Who will lead on action	Target completion date
Certain income types will no longer be disregarded in the proposed scheme	Check benefit entitlements before bills are issued	Anthony Sandys	March 2013
Delays in claims and appeals, leading to incorrect benefit entitlement	Ensure claims and appeals are dealt with quickly and accurately	Anthony Sandys	April 2013 onwards
Recovery actions for unpaid Council Tax will impact on those affected by these proposals	Ensure payment arrangements are as flexible as possible Minimise court actions where customers are making genuine attempts to pay Consider writing off court costs where payment arrangements are made	Anthony Sandys	April 2013 onwards

Performance Management	
Date of the next review of the EIA	January 2014
How often will the EIA action plan be reviewed?	Annually
Who will carry out this review?	Anthony Sandys

Darlington Borough Council

Draft Council Tax Support scheme

2013 - 2014

3 Introduction

- 3.1.1 In April 2013, Council Tax Benefit, the current means of helping people on low incomes meet their Council Tax obligations, will be replaced by a new localised Council Tax Support scheme defined by each Council.
- 3.1.2 The Government has stated that pensioners will be protected from the effects of the local schemes by a national framework of rules and eligibility. Working aged people will however be subject to the provisions of the locally defined scheme.
- 3.1.3 This document sets out Darlington Borough Council's proposed scheme and should be read in conjunction with the consultation questionnaire seeking comments and views on the proposed arrangements.
- 3.1.4 The proposals may be subject to change, for example in response to findings from the consultation process and any statutory provisions made that take precedence over the scheme proposals.
- 3.1.5 However, the final scheme shall be subject to approval by the Council no later than 31st January 2013.
- 3.1.6 The Council is required to publish details of its proposed draft scheme and some of the contents of this document are by its very nature, technical in detail.

4 Executive Summary

4.1 Overview of the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme

- 4.1.1 Council Tax Benefit is an income related benefit which may be claimed by an eligible person who is liable to pay Council Tax in respect of their sole or main residence. Council Tax Benefit is a national benefit with policy and rules set by central Government, but administered by local councils. Administration is linked to the Council Tax billing arrangements and usually takes the form of a reduction to the Council Tax a person would otherwise be liable to pay.
- 4.1.2 The amount of Council Tax Benefit entitlement is calculated on a weekly basis according to a person's daily liability for Council Tax, after deducting any disability reductions, discounts or transitional relief. Entitlement takes into account the means of the person claiming and of their household.
- 4.1.3 The means test for Council Tax Benefit follows the rules for other income related benefits such as Income Support and income-based Jobseekers Allowance, and is based on a system of applicable amounts for living expenses set according to the circumstances of the family unit. The person's applicable amount is compared to their income and capital, including that belonging to any partner.
- 4.1.4 People with income at, or below, the level of the applicable amount are entitled to maximum Council Tax Benefit. This is the whole of their weekly eligible Council Tax less any set contributions assumed for non-dependant adults who live in the household, but are not themselves liable for Council Tax. People who are not claiming income related benefits, including people who are working, may get Council Tax Benefit, subject to an income taper. Claimants lose 20 pence in Council Tax Benefit for each additional pound of income that exceeds their applicable amount.
- 4.1.5 In Council Tax Benefit there is a lower capital limit; £6,000 for people of working age and £10,000 for pensioners, above which an assumed income from capital is taken into account. Council Tax Benefit is not payable to people with capital above the upper limit of £16,000 unless they are entitled to one of the income-related benefits.
- 4.1.6 Alternative maximum Council Tax Benefit, more commonly known as Second Adult Rebate, may be awarded to the claimant if they would be better off with this than with Council Tax Benefit under the main rules. Second Adult Rebate may apply when the claimant, as the owner or tenant of a property, shares their home with a non-dependant person (aged 18 or over) who has no responsibility to pay Council Tax and is not on the list of disregarded persons. The amount of the rebate is based on the gross income of the non-dependant person excluding any income related benefits, Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance. The claimant's own income is ignored and the maximum amount of Second Adult Rebate is limited to 25% of Council Tax liability.

4.2 Prescribed requirements

4.2.1 There are a number of prescribed requirements that will apply to all local Council Tax Support schemes and are therefore not included in Darlington's local scheme. These are set out in the Government's draft *Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012*, a copy of which can be found at:

4.2.2 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/2885/contents/made

4.2.3 Where the prescribed regulations apply, reference has been made to the relevant parts in the Council Tax Support scheme. A summary of the key features of the draft regulations are as follows:

4.2.4 There will be a prescribed scheme for persons who have reached the qualifying age for state retirement pension, which will be similar to the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme.

4.2.5 There will be the same restrictions as exist under the current Council Tax Benefit scheme to exclude foreign nationals with limited immigration status and non-economically active European Union individuals.

4.2.6 Individuals with refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary or exceptional leave to remain granted outside the immigration rules and who are exempt from the habitual residence test will continue to be entitled to support with their Council Tax.

4.2.7 Regulations will allow current arrangements for a person to act on behalf of another, for example where a person has been granted a power of attorney over a liable Council Tax payer.

4.2.8 Regulations will provide that a person who is in receipt of Council Tax Benefit, or who is waiting for a decision about a claim for Council Tax Benefit, immediately before 1st April 2013 is to be treated as having made an application for reduction under the local Council Tax Support scheme.

4.2.9 Formal rights of appeal will be set out in regulations. It is proposed that appeals will be heard by Valuation Tribunals.

4.2.10 Billing authorities are required to consider whether to revise or replace their Council Tax Support schemes each year and under such circumstances, to consider what transitional arrangements may be required to move from an existing local scheme to a replacement scheme. Schemes cannot be amended within a financial year.

4.3 Key features of Darlington's proposed Council Tax Support scheme

4.3.1 The requirements for Council Tax Support schemes are set out in an amendment to the Local Government Finance Act 1992, under schedule 1A.

This includes, that before making a scheme, the Council must (in the following order):

- Consult major precepting authorities, which have a power to issue a precept to it.
- Publish a draft scheme in such a manner as it thinks fit.
- Consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

4.3.2 The fundamental difference between the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme and the proposed Council Tax Support scheme is that entitlement for working aged claimants will be worked out on 80% of their Council Tax liability (as opposed to Council Tax Benefit, where entitlement is based on 100%).

4.3.3 The proposed Council Tax Support scheme has been developed in collaboration with the other Tees Valley authorities. In general, the Council Tax Support scheme will follow the principles of the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme, although the regulations will be greatly simplified.

4.3.4 However, the key changes the Council are proposing in this draft Council Tax Support scheme are as follows:

4.4 Temporary absence from home

4.4.1 The rules for restricting support for people who are temporarily absent from their home will be removed. Anyone who is liable for Council Tax and not subject to one of the existing Council Tax exemptions will be able to claim Council Tax Support.

4.4.2 This change is being proposed to ensure anyone absent from their home can either claim Council Tax Support or a Council Tax exemption.

4.5 Students

4.5.1 The rules for restricting support to students will be removed. Again, anyone who is liable for Council Tax and not subject to the Council Tax student exemption will be able to claim Council Tax Support.

4.5.2 This change is being proposed to ensure anyone who is a student can either claim Council Tax Support or a Council Tax exemption.

4.6 Extended payments

4.6.1 It is proposed to relax the rules for extended payments, to remove some of the restrictions under the current Council Tax Benefit scheme. Anyone losing entitlement to a qualifying benefit, such as Income Support or income-based Jobseekers Allowance due to moving into work or increasing their hours or pay, will automatically qualify for a 4 week run on of their Council Tax Support.

4.6.2 This proposal has been included to increase work incentives, particularly for people considering temporary work, or for those who frequently move in and out of work.

4.7 Backdating

4.7.1 An automatic backdating rule will be introduced for new Council Tax Support claims, although backdated Council Tax Support will be limited to a maximum of one month only.

4.7.2 The existing rules, where a person has to show 'good cause' as to why they didn't claim earlier will be removed.

4.7.3 This change is being proposed to make the process of claiming Council Tax Support for an earlier period clearer and fairer.

4.8 Second Adult Rebate

4.8.1 Second Adult Rebate for working aged recipients will be abolished.

4.8.2 This proposal has been included because the take-up and amounts of Second Adult Rebate awarded are very low, but complex to claim.

4.9 Overpayments

4.9.1 It is proposed that all overpayments of Council Tax Support, however they were caused, will be recoverable, although the Council will still have the discretion not to recover an overpayment.

4.10 Discretionary discounts

4.10.1 The Council will still retain the power under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, to reduce the Council Tax liability of a person "to such an extent as it thinks fit". This includes the power to reduce the amount to nil.

5 People who can claim Council Tax Support

5.1 Who can claim

5.1.1 The rules for making an application to Council Tax Support is set out in Schedule 8, Part 2, paragraph 4 of the regulations. These state:

- In the case of a couple or members of a polygamous marriage an application is to be made by whichever one of them they agree should apply or, in default of agreement, by such one of them as the council decides.
- Where the person who is liable for Council Tax is unable to act the Council will accept or appoint a person who may make an application on their behalf.

5.1.2 The scheme is open to the following groups:

5.2 People in receipt of a qualifying benefit

- Working aged
- Liable to pay Council Tax on a dwelling they occupy as their sole or main residence
- Entitled to Income Support, income-based Jobseekers Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Have made a claim for Council Tax Support

5.2.1 Will be entitled to the maximum support of 80% of their eligible Council Tax, less any deductions for non-dependants

5.3 People with income equal to or less than their living allowance

- Working aged
- Liable to pay Council Tax on a dwelling they occupy as their sole or main residence
- Capital is less than £16,000
- Income is equal to or less than their living allowance
- Have made a claim for Council Tax Support

5.3.1 Will be entitled to the maximum support of 80% of their eligible Council Tax, less any deductions for non-dependants

5.4 People with income more than their living allowance

- Working aged
- Liable to pay Council Tax on a dwelling they occupy as their sole or main residence
- Capital is less than £16,000
- Income is more than their living allowance
- Have made a claim for Council Tax Support

5.4.1 Income will be compared to the living allowance. The amount of Council Tax Support will be reduced by 20% of the amount the income exceeds the living

allowance. Entitlement will be up to a maximum of 80% of their eligible Council Tax, less any deductions for non-dependants

5.5 Pensioners with war pensions

- Pension aged
- Liable to pay Council Tax on a dwelling they occupy as their sole or main residence
- In receipt of War Disablement Pension, War Widow's Pension or War Widower's Pension
- Have made a claim for Council Tax Support

5.5.1 Council Tax Support entitlement will be assessed in accordance with the prescribed regulations for pensioners. War Disablement Pension, War Widow's Pension and War Widower's Pension will be fully disregarded.

5.6 Pensioners

5.6.1 The provisions for pensioners are set out in Schedules 1 to 6 of the regulations.

5.6.2 The meaning of who is and who is not a pensioner is set out in paragraph 3 of the regulations. These state:

- A person is a 'pensioner' if they have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit; and
- They, or their partner is not in receipt of income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, income related employment and support allowance, or universal credit.

5.7 Membership of a family

5.7.1 Council Tax Support will be calculated based on a means test, which takes into account the income, capital and "living allowance" for the claimant and, where appropriate, members of their family.

5.7.2 The meaning of a 'couple' is set out in paragraph 4 of the regulations. These state a 'couple' is:

- A man and woman who are married to each other and are members of the same household,
- A man and a woman who are not married to each other but are living together as husband and wife,
- Two people of the same sex who are civil partners of each other and are members of the same household; or
- Two people of the same sex who are not civil partners of each other but are living together as if they were civil partners.

5.7.3 The rules for polygamous marriages are set out in paragraph 5 of the regulations. This regulation applies to:

- A person is a husband or wife by virtue of a marriage entered into under a law which permits polygamy, and

- Either party to the marriage has for the time being any spouse additional to the other party.

5.7.4 The meaning of 'family' is set out in paragraph 6 of the regulations. These state a 'family' is:

- A couple
- A couple and a member of the same household for whom one of them is or both responsible and who is a child or a young person
- A person who is not a member of a couple and a member of the same household for whom one of them is or both responsible and who is a child or a young person

5.7.5 The rules for circumstances in which a person is to be treated as responsible or not responsible for another is set out in paragraph 7 of the regulations. These state:

- A person is to be treated as responsible for a child or young person who is normally living with them.
- The arrangements for children or young people who spend equal amounts of time in different households.

5.7.6 The rules for membership of a household is set out in paragraph 8 of the regulations. These state:

- The claimant and any partner who are treated as responsible for a child or young person, that child or young person and any child of that child or young person, are to be treated as members of the same household.

5.8 Non-dependants

5.8.1 The meaning of non-dependants is set out in paragraph 9 of the regulations. These state a 'non-dependant' is:

- Any person who normally resides with the claimant or with whom the claimant normally resides.
- This excludes any member of the claimant's family, any person who is jointly and severally liable to pay Council Tax in respect of the dwelling, and any person who is liable to make payments on a commercial basis to the claimant or their partner in respect of occupation of the dwelling.

5.9 Persons from Abroad

5.9.1 The rules for persons treated as not being in Great Britain are set out in paragraph 12 of the regulations. These state:

- Persons treated as not being in Great Britain are a class of person prescribed for the purposes of paragraph 2(9)(b) of Schedule 1A to the 1992 Act and which must not be included in the Council's scheme.
- A person is to be treated as not being in Great Britain if the person is not habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland.
- A person must not be treated as habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland unless the

person has a right to reside in one of those places.

5.9.2 The rules for persons subject to immigration control are set out in paragraph 13 of the regulations. These state:

- Persons subject to immigration control are a class of person prescribed for the purposes of paragraph 2(9)(b) of Schedule 1A to the 1992 Act and which must not be included in the Council's scheme.
- 'Persons subject to immigration control' has the same meaning as in section 115(9) of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

5.10 Living allowances

5.10.1 The Living Allowance will be made up of a number of elements. These may include, depending upon individual circumstances:

- A personal allowance for the claimant and their partner.
- An amount for every child or young person who is a member of the family.
- A "family addition" where at least one child or young person is part of the family.
- Additions for people in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance.
- Additions which may apply in special circumstances.

5.10.2 The weekly amounts to be included in the living allowance are detailed below. The rates given are based on Council Tax Benefit rates for 2012/2013. The rates for the Council Tax Support scheme for 2013/2014 will be updated in line with the prescribed scheme for pensioners and other income related benefits.

Personal allowances	Weekly amount
Single claimant aged 18 to 24	£56.25
Single claimant aged 25 or over	£71.00
Lone parent	£71.00
Couple	£111.45
Plus for every child or young person until the day before their twentieth birthday	£64.99
Plus for every household which includes a child or young person	£17.40
Employment and Support additions	Weekly amount
Claimant in receipt of the work related activity component of Employment and Support Allowance	£28.15
Claimant in receipt of the support component of Employment and Support Allowance	£34.05
Special circumstances additions (entitlement to only one of the additions below)	Weekly amount
Disability Addition (single) – the claimant is registered blind, or in receipt of one or more of the following:	£30.35

Attendance Allowance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Living Allowance • Mobility Supplement • Long term Incapacity Benefit • Severe Disablement Allowance • The disability or severe disability element of working tax credit • Personal Independence Payment 	
Disability Addition (couple) – the claimant or partner is registered blind, or in receipt of one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance Allowance • Disability Living Allowance • Mobility Supplement • Long term Incapacity Benefit • Severe Disablement Allowance • The disability or severe disability element of working tax credit • Personal Independence Payment 	£43.25
Carers addition – the claimant or partner is entitled to Carers Allowance	£32.60
Special circumstances additions (these can apply as well as any others awarded)	Weekly amount
Severe disability addition (single rate) - for a single claimant, lone parent or couple where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The claimant or partner is receiving Attendance Allowance or the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the higher or middle rate, and • No non-dependant adults reside with them, and • No one is in receipt of a Carers Allowance for looking after them. 	£58.20
Severe disability addition (double rate) - for a couple where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the claimant and partner are receiving Attendance Allowance or the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the higher or middle rate, and • No non-dependant adults reside with them, and • No one receives Carers Allowance for looking after both of them. 	£116.40
Enhanced disability addition (single) – where:	£14.80

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The claimant has limited capability for work related activity, or • The highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance is payable for the claimant or any member of the claimant's family. 	
<p>Enhanced disability addition (couple) – where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The claimant or partner has limited capability for work related activity, or • The highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance is payable for the claimant or any member of the claimant's family. 	£21.30
<p>Enhanced disability addition (disabled child) – where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance is payable for a dependent child. 	£22.89
<p>Disabled child addition - where a dependent child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receives Disability Living Allowance, or • Is registered blind. 	£56.63

6 Making a claim

6.1.1 The rules by which a person may apply for a reduction under an authority's scheme is set out in Schedule 7, Part 1 of the regulations. These regulations state that:

- The claim may be made in writing, by electronic communication means or by telephone.
- A claim made in writing must be made to the Council on a properly completed form.
- Where a claim is defective because it is not accepted as being properly completed or has not been made on a form approved for the purpose, the Council may request the claimant to complete an approved form or supply other information and evidence.
- The Council must provide the claimant with sufficient opportunity to correct any defect with their claim.

6.2 Time and manner of making a claim

6.2.1 A claim for Council Tax Support will be made with the Council and in writing on a form prescribed and provided by the Council. A claim made in any other way will not be accepted by the Council.

6.2.2 Where the Council becomes aware that a person may be entitled to Council Tax Support, or where a claim form has been requested, they will invite a claim by sending the person a claim form.

6.2.3 The Council will offer assistance to the claimant to make their claim for Council Tax Support, where this is requested or where assistance is required.

6.3 Evidence and information

6.3.1 The rules for the evidence and information required to support a claim or ongoing award of Council Tax Support is set out in Schedule 8, Part 2, paragraph 7 of the regulations. These state:

- The claim must be accompanied by a statement of the person's national insurance number and information and evidence to establish that that number has been allocated to that person.
- Where the person has applied for a national insurance number, the claim must be accompanied by evidence of the application for a national insurance number to be allocated.
- The claim must be accompanied by any certificates, documents, information and evidence in connection with the claim or an award as may reasonably be required by the Council to decide the claim or a continuing award.
- The claimant must provide the Council with the information and evidence it requires to decide the claim or a continuing award within one month of a request to do so, or such longer time as the Council may consider reasonable.

6.4 Amendment and withdrawal of claim

6.4.1 The rules for the amendments and withdrawal of a claim for Council tax Support is set out in Schedule 8, Part 2, paragraph 8 of the regulations. These state:

- A person who has made a claim may withdraw it at any time before a decision has been made on it.

7 Income and capital

7.1 Treatment of income and capital

- 7.1.1 The income of the claimant and their partner will be added together, for the purpose of calculating entitlement to Council Tax Support.
- 7.1.2 Income will be calculated on a weekly basis. Any income paid for a period other than on a weekly basis, will be converted to a weekly figure.
- 7.1.3 The income to be taken into account will be the likely average weekly income of the claimant and partner. This will be calculated over such a period as is likely, in the opinion of the Council, to provide the most accurate estimate.
- 7.1.4 In the case of earnings from employment, where employment is due to commence an estimate of likely earnings will be based on information available from the employer.
- 7.1.5 A tariff (standard rate) income from capital will be calculated and added to other income.

7.2 Earnings

7.2.1 The meaning of remunerative work is set out in paragraph 10 of the regulations. These state:

- A person must be treated as in remunerative work if they are engaged on average, for not less than 16 hours a week, in work for which payment is made or expected.
- Where a person's hours fluctuate, regard must be had to the normal cycle of work, the number of hours they are expected to work, or the 5 weeks immediately prior to the date of claim.
- Where a person works at a school or other educational establishment, any vacation periods or holidays where they are not required to work will be disregarded for establishing the average hours for which they are working.
- Any periods of absence from work, such as holiday, will be disregarded for establishing the average hours for which the person is working.
- A person will not be treated as engaged in remunerative work if they are on maternity leave, paternity leave, adoption leave, or if they are absent from work because they are ill.

7.2.2 A claimant or partner's net earnings will be the gross earnings less:

- Income Tax
- National Insurance contributions
- Half of any sum paid by the employer towards an occupational or personal pension scheme.

7.2.3 The following sums will also be disregarded in the calculation of earnings:

- Temporary care provision payments in the calculation of earnings.
- Any payment relating to former employment paid after retirement.

- Compensation payments for loss of employment.
- Guarantee payments on medical or maternity grounds.
- Any payments for items wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in the performance of the employment.
- For a single person, the first £5 per week of any earnings.
- For a couple, the first £10 per week of any earnings.
- For a lone parent, the first £25 per week of any earnings.
- For people in receipt of contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance, where a permitted earnings disregard applies, the first £95 per week of any earnings.
- For people entitled to the disability addition or the severe disability addition, the first £20 per week of any earnings, except where the permitted earnings disregard applies.
- For people entitled to the carers addition, the first £20 per week of any earnings.
- For people in certain special occupations, the first £20 per week of any earnings. These are:
 - Part-time fire-fighters.
 - Auxiliary coastguards.
 - Part-time life-boat workers.
 - Members of the Territorial Army or similar reserve force.
- For people in receipt of the additional earnings disregard in Working Tax Credit, an additional disregard of £17.10 per week of any earnings.
- Child care charges (see below).
- Drawings from a self-employed business.

7.3 Child care charges

7.3.1 Child care charges up to a maximum of £175 per week for one child, or £300 per week for two or more children, will be deducted from earned income, plus any Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit where:

- A single claimant works 16 hours per week or more, or
- Both members of a couple work 16 hours per week or more, or
- Where one member of a couple works 16 hours per week or more and the other member of the couple is disabled, and the disability addition is included in the couples living allowance due to this disability, or
- Where one member of a couple works 16 hours per week or more and the other member of the couple is on maternity leave and receiving Statutory Maternity Pay or Maternity Allowance.

7.3.2 The child must be under 15 years of age, or 16 if they are disabled, and the care must be provided by one of the following:

- A registered Child minder.
- A registered nursery or play scheme.
- An out of hours scheme run by an approved provider.
- An out of hours club provided by a school on school premises (this applies only if the child is aged 8 or over).

7.4 Self-employed earnings

- 7.4.1 The weekly earnings of a self-employed claimant or partner will be calculated based on:
- The most recent year's trading accounts, if the claimant or partner have been self-employed for one year or more, or
 - The estimated net weekly profit figure provided by the claimant or partner, if they have been self-employed for less than a year, together with any evidence of their recent actual income and expenses.
- 7.4.2 In calculating the estimated net weekly profit figure, the Council will include any expenses which are wholly and reasonably incurred for the purpose of the business. The following will not be allowable in the calculation of the estimated net weekly profit figure:
- Sums employed or intended to be employed in setting up or expanding the business.
 - Capital repayments on business loans, except for where these are for replacing business equipment or machinery.
 - Any other capital expenditure.
 - Depreciation of any capital asset.
 - Losses incurred before the beginning of the assessment period.
 - Debts, other than proven bad debts.
 - Business entertainment.
 - Any sum for domestic or private use.
 - Drawings from the business.
- 7.4.3 For child minders, one third of the gross profit will be used to calculate the gross income. The net income will then be calculated by deducting tax, national insurance and half of any pension contributions.
- 7.4.4 In cases where tax and national insurance contributions are not provided, the Council will estimate the likely tax and National Insurance payable.

7.5 Student income

7.6 Student grant

- 7.6.1 The whole amount of a person's grant income will be taken into account, with the exception of the following:
- Payments for tuition fees or examination fees.
 - Payments in relation to the student's disability.
 - Payments for term-time residential study away from the student's educational establishment.
 - Payments for another home at a place other than which the student resides during the course.
 - Payments for books and equipment.
 - Payments for travel expenses to attend the course.
 - Payments for child care costs.
 - Any other amounts intended for expenditure necessary to attend the course.

7.6.2 A student's grant income will be apportioned over the period of study the grant relates to.

7.7 Covenant income

7.7.1 Where a student is receiving a grant and a contribution has been assessed, the whole of the covenant income will be taken into account.

7.7.2 A student's covenant income will be apportioned over the whole calendar year and an amount of £5 per week will be disregarded.

7.7.3 Where a student is not receiving a grant, the whole of the covenant income will be taken into account. In these circumstances, a student's covenant income will be apportioned as follows:

7.7.3.1 Any covenant income up to the amount of the standard maintenance grant will be apportioned over the period of study, less any amounts to be disregarded as set out above in 'Grant Income'.

7.7.3.2 Any covenant income over the amount of the standard maintenance grant will be apportioned over the whole calendar year and an amount of £5 per week will be disregarded.

7.8 Student loans

7.8.1 The whole amount of a person's student loan will be taken into account, less any amounts to be disregarded as set out above in 'Grant Income'. A student's loan will be apportioned over the period of study the loan relates to and an amount of £10 per week will be disregarded.

7.8.2 A person will be treated as having a student loan in respect of an academic year where:

- A student loan has been made to them for that year, or
- They could have taken reasonable steps to acquire a loan. In these cases, the amount to be taken into account will be the maximum amount they could have acquired for that year.

7.8.3 A loan for fees, known as a fee loan or a fee contribution loan will be fully disregarded.

7.9 Payments from access funds

7.9.1 A payment from access funds will be disregarded as income, with the exception of any payments intended for:

- Food
- Ordinary clothing or footwear
- Household fuel
- Water charges
- Rent
- Council Tax

7.9.2 In these circumstances, the whole amount will be taken into account and an amount of £20 per week will be disregarded.

7.9.3 Where a payment from access funds is made to bridge the period until a student loan is received, the whole amount will be disregarded.

7.10 Student income treated as capital

7.10.1 The following amounts paid to students will be treated as capital:

- A refund of tax deducted from a student's covenant income.
- An amount paid from access funds as a single lump sum, whatever the purpose of the payment.

7.11 Notional income

7.11.1 A claimant will be treated as possessing income of which they or their partner have deliberately deprived themselves of, to qualify for Council Tax Support.

7.12 Tariff income from capital

7.12.1 Where the claimant and their partner have capital in excess of £6,000 (but less than £16,000), a tariff income of £1 per week will be taken into account for every £250, or part of £250, over £6,000.

7.13 Other income

7.13.1 Any other income of the claimant or partner will be taken fully into account, with the exception of 'income disregarded' below.

7.13.2 Where deductions are being made from income in the recovery of overpayments or taxes, by public bodies, the gross income amount will be taken into account.

7.14 Income disregarded

7.14.1 The following income paid to the claimant or partner will be disregarded in full, unless otherwise stated:

- Any payment of expenses for participation in 'work for your benefit' schemes.
- Any payment of expenses for attending mandatory work activity, employment, skills or enterprise schemes.
- Any payment of expenses for a person who is a volunteer for a charitable or voluntary organisation.
- Any payment of expenses for a person who participates in a service user group.
- Certain state benefits and pensions:
 - Attendance Allowance.
 - Child Benefit.
 - Disability Living Allowance.
 - Discretionary Housing Payments.

- Education Maintenance Allowance.
- Guardian's Allowance.
- Housing Benefit.
- Income Support.
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance.
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Mobility supplements.
- Personal Independence Payments.
- War Disablement Pension.
- War Widow's Pension
- War Widower's Pension.
- Widowed Mother's Allowance.
- Widowed Parent's Allowance.
- Any payment made to a person as a holder of the Victoria Cross or George Cross.
- Charitable or voluntary payments.
- Any income from capital.
- Any payments received from dependants or non-dependants.
- The first £20 per week of any rental payments from a person, other than a non-dependant, who occupies the claimant's home.
- The first £20 per week, and then 50% of any income over £20 per week, of any rental payments from a boarder, other than a non-dependant, who occupies the claimant's home.
- Any payment in kind made by a charity.
- Any income payable outside the United Kingdom where there is a prohibition against the transfer to the United Kingdom of that income.
- Any payment made for adoption, fostering, guardianship support or supported lodgings.
- Any payment made for a person who is not normally a member of the claimant's household, but is temporarily in their care.
- Any payment made by a Local Authority under section 17 of the Children's Act 1989.
- Any payment received under an insurance policy taken out to insure against the risk of being unable to maintain repayments of a loan.
- Any income treated as capital.
- Social Fund payments or its equivalent.
- Any payment for banking charges or commission, to convert a payment of income to sterling.
- Any payment made under the Eileen Trust, the Independent Living Fund, the Skipton Funds, the London Bombing Relief Charitable Fund, or the Variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease Trust.
- Any payment of expenses for jurors, witnesses or prison visitors.
- Any refund of Council Tax.
- Child maintenance.
- The first £15 per week of any maintenance, other than child maintenance.
- Personal injury payments from a trust.
- Sports awards.

7.15 Capital

- 7.15.1 The capital of the claimant and their partner will be added together, for the purpose of calculating entitlement to Council Tax Support.
- 7.15.2 All capital of the claimant or partner will be taken fully into account, with the exception of 'capital disregarded' below.
- 7.15.3 Where capital is jointly held by the claimant or partner and one or more other persons, the Council will apportion the capital to decide what share is held by the claimant or partner.
- 7.15.4 Where the value of the capital item is not known, the Council will calculate the value of the capital item using the information available to provide the most accurate estimate, including:
- The current market or surrender value of the capital item.
 - Less any costs for selling the capital item.
 - Less any debt or charge secured against the capital item

7.16 Income treated as capital

- 7.16.1 The following payments will be treated as capital:
- Holiday pay, paid 4 weeks or more after termination of employment.
 - Tax refunds.
 - Lump sum charitable or subsistence payments.
 - Arrears of Tax Credits.

7.17 Notional capital

- 7.17.1 A claimant will be treated as possessing capital of which they or their partner have deliberately deprived themselves of, to qualify for Council Tax Support.

7.18 Capital disregarded

- 7.18.1 The following capital held by the claimant or partner will be disregarded in full, unless otherwise stated:
- The dwelling normally occupied by the claimant as their home.
 - Any property which is actively being sold.
 - Any property acquired by the claimant which they intend to occupy as their home, whilst they are preparing for occupation.
 - Any property acquired by the claimant, which they intend to occupy as their home, which is undergoing essential repairs or alterations.
 - The proceeds of sale of any property formerly occupied by the claimant as their home, which is to be used for the purchase of another property intended for occupation.
 - Any property occupied by a partner or relative of the claimant or any member of their family, where that person is a pensioner or disabled.

- Any property occupied by the former partner of the claimant as their home, where the former partner is a lone parent, or where the property is actively being sold.
- The capital of a person in receipt of Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance or Income Related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Any future interest in property, other than land or premises where the claimant has granted a lease or tenancy.
- The assets of any business owned by the claimant for the purpose of their self-employment.
- Any arrears of state pensions, benefits or tax credits.
- Any amount paid to the claimant, or acquired by the claimant as a loan, as a result of damage or loss of the home or personal possessions and intended for its repair or replacement.
- Any amount deposited with a Registered Provider, which is to be used for the purchase of another property intended for occupation.
- Any personal possessions.
- The value of the right to receive any income under an annuity or the surrender value of an annuity.
- Where the funds of a trust resulted from a payment for a personal injury to the claimant of their partner, the value of the trust fund and the right to receive any payment under that trust.
- The value of the right to receive any income under a life interest or from a life rent.
- The value of the right to receive any income payable in a country outside the United Kingdom where there is a prohibition against the transfer to the United Kingdom of that income.
- The surrender value of any life insurance policy.
- Where payments of capital are made by instalments, the value of the right to receive any outstanding instalments.
- Any payment made by a local authority under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.
- Any payment made for adoption, fostering, guardianship support or supported lodgings.
- Any social fund payment or its equivalent.
- Any refund of tax deducted on a payment of loan interest for the purpose of acquiring a home or carrying out repairs or improvement to the home.
- Where a payment of capital is made in a currency other than sterling, any banking charge or commission payable in converting that payment into sterling.
- Any payment made under the Eileen Trust, the Independent Living Fund, the Skipton Funds, the London Bombing Relief Charitable Fund, or the Variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease Trust.
- The value of the right to receive any rent.
- Any payment in kind made by a charity.
- Any refund of Council Tax.
- Any payment made by a local authority to the claimant, to be used to purchase a property for occupation as their home, or to carry out repairs or alterations to the home.

- Any payments for:
 - travel expenses for hospital visits
 - medical supplies and vouchers
 - health in pregnancy grants
- Home Office payments for prison visits.
- Any payment made to assist a disabled person to obtain or retain their employment.
- Any payment made by a local authority under the Blind Homeworkers' Scheme.
- Any capital administered on behalf of a person by the High Court, County Court, or the Court of Protection.
- Any payment to the claimant as a holder of the Victoria Cross or George Cross.
- Any payment made to assist a person under the self-employment route.
- Any payment of a sports award.
- Any payment of an education maintenance allowance.
- Any payment made by a contractor for a person participating in an employment zone programme.
- Any arrears of subsistence allowance.
- Any payment made by a local authority for a service which is provided to develop or sustain the capacity of the claimant or their partner to live independently in their accommodation, including personal budgets.

8 Calculation of entitlement

8.1 Maximum Council Tax Support

- 8.1.1 The amount of a person's maximum Council Tax Support for a day which they are liable to pay Council Tax will be 80%.
- 8.1.2 The amount of Council Tax Support will be calculated as A divided by B and multiplied by 80% where:
- A is the amount of Council Tax set for the financial year for the dwelling the person resides in and for which they are liable, less any discount which applies
 - B is the number of days in that financial year
 - Less any non-dependant deductions.
- 8.1.3 Where a person is jointly and severally liable for Council Tax, which they are liable with one or more other persons, the maximum amount of Council Tax Support will be the amount in A divided by the number of people who are jointly and severally liable. This will not apply if the only person they are jointly and severally liable with is their partner.

8.2 Council Tax Support taper

- 8.2.1 The percentage of excess income over the living allowance which will be deducted from the weekly maximum Council Tax Support will be 20%.

8.3 Non-dependant deductions

- 8.3.1 A deduction from a person's maximum Council Tax Support will be made for non-dependants, as follows:
- A non-dependant aged 18 or over in remunerative work where their normal weekly gross income is:
 - Less than £183.00, the deduction will be £3.30 per week.
 - Between £183.00 and £315.99, the deduction will be £6.55 per week.
 - Between £316.00 and £393.99, the deduction will be £8.25 per week.
 - £394.00 or over, the deduction will be £9.90 per week.
 - A non-dependant aged 18 or over not in remunerative work, the deduction will be £3.30 per week.
- 8.3.2 The amounts above relate to non-dependant deductions in Council Tax Benefit for 2012/2013 and will be uprated for Council Tax Support for 2013/2014 in line with the prescribed scheme for pensioners and other income related benefits.
- 8.3.3 In calculating the gross income of a non-dependant, any amounts which would normally be disregarded for a Council Tax Support claimant, will also be disregarded for a non-dependant.
- 8.3.4 Only one non-dependant deduction will be made for a couple, and the amount deducted will be based on their joint income, calculated as above.

8.3.5 Where a person is jointly and severally liable for Council Tax for a dwelling they reside in, which they are liable with one or more other persons, the amount of the non-dependant deduction will be apportioned equally between those liable persons.

8.3.6 Non-dependant deductions will not be made in the following circumstances:
Where the claimant or their partner is blind

- Where the claimant or their partner receives Attendance Allowance or the care component of Disability Living Allowance
- Where the non-dependant normally resides elsewhere
- Where the non-dependant receives a training allowance
- Where the non-dependant is a full-time student
- Where the non-dependant is not residing with the claimant because they have been an in-patient for more than 52 weeks (without any break exceeding 28 days)
- Where the non-dependant receives Income Support, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, or Pension Credit
- Where the non-dependant is aged under 18.

8.3.7 Where the income of the non-dependant is not known or has not been provided, the Council will assume that the maximum deduction will apply.

8.4 Date on which a claim is made and entitlement begins

8.4.1 Entitlement to Council Tax Support will begin on the Monday following the date the claim is received by the Council, unless the claim is treated as being made from a different date. Schedule 8, Part 2, paragraph 5 of the regulations sets out the rules for the date on which a claim is made. These state:

- Where an award of income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, or universal credit has been made to the claimant or their partner; and the claim for Council Tax Support is made within one month of the date of the claim for one of those benefits; the date of claim will be the first day of entitlement to those benefits.
- Where the claimant or their partner is on income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, income-related employment and support allowance, or universal credit; and they become liable for Council Tax for the first time; and the claim for Council Tax Support is made within one month of the date of the change; the date of claim will be the date on which the change takes place.
- Where the claimant is the former partner of a person who was entitled to Council Tax Support before the date of death or separation; and the claimant makes a claim for Council Tax Support within one month of the date of death or separation; the date of claim will be the date of death or separation.
- Where the claim for Council Tax Support is made within one month of a request to claim Council Tax Support, the date of claim will be the date on which the request was made.

- In all other cases, the date of claim for Council Tax Support will be the date the claim form is received by the Council.

8.4.2 Council Tax Support will be paid for an earlier period, up to a maximum of one month before the claim is made, where:

- Council Tax liability starts within one month before the claim is made.
- The claimant requests the claim is paid earlier than the claim is made.
- Providing that the claimant has supplied sufficient information and evidence for the Council to calculate entitlement to Council Tax Support for the earlier period.

8.5 Duration of award and reviews

8.5.1 Council Tax Support will be awarded for an indefinite period, until:

- Council Tax liability ends.
- A change in the claimant or partner's circumstances results in Council Tax Support ending.
- The claimant fails to respond to a request for information and evidence in connection with their claim or an award.

8.5.2 The Council may review a person's entitlement to Council Tax Support at any time.

8.6 Extended payments

8.6.1 A person who is entitled to Council Tax Support will be entitled to an extended payment where:

- The claimant or their partner were entitled to a qualifying benefit or any combination of those benefits for a continuous period of 26 weeks of either;
- Income Support, or
- Jobseekers Allowance (income based or contributory), or
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related or contributory), or
- Incapacity Benefit, or
- Severe Disablement Allowance.
- Entitlement to a qualifying benefit ceased because the claimant or their partner;
- Commenced employment as an employed or self-employed earner, or
- Increased their earnings from their employment. or
- Increased the number of hours in their employment.

8.6.2 Providing that the claimant remains liable for Council Tax at the dwelling in which they reside during the extended payment period.

8.6.3 The extended payment period will start on the day after Council Tax Support would normally have ended after the qualifying benefit has ceased and will last for 4 weeks or up to the day Council Tax liability at the dwelling in which they reside ends, if this is earlier.

8.6.4 The amount of the extended payment will be the higher of:

- The amount of Council Tax Support which the claimant was entitled to before the qualifying benefit ceased, or
- The amount of Council Tax Support which the claimant is entitled to after the qualifying benefit ceased.

8.7 Extended payments – movers into Darlington

8.7.1 The rules covering people who move into Darlington who are in receipt of an extended payment is set out in Schedule 8, Part 1 of the regulations. These state:

- Where a claim for Council Tax Support is made and the claimant or their partner is in receipt of an extended payment from another authority, the Council must reduce any entitlement to Council Tax Support by the amount of that extended payment.

9 Decision making and notifications

9.1 Decisions and notification

- 9.1.1 The rules by which the Council must make and notify decisions for Council Tax Support are set out in Schedule 8, Part 3 of the regulations. These state:
- The Council must make a decision on a Council Tax Support claim within 14 days of receiving all the information and evidence for that claim, or as soon as possible after that date.
 - The Council must notify the claimant in writing of any decision relating to a Council Tax Support claim within 14 days of making the decision, or as soon as possible after that date.
 - The decision notice must include a statement informing the claimant of their duty to notify changes of circumstances, explaining the consequences of failing to comply with that duty, and setting out the changes which may affect entitlement to Council Tax Support.
 - The decision notice must include the procedure by which an appeal may be made.
 - The claimant may request a statement of reasons about the notification, within one month of the date of the notification. The statement of reasons must then be sent to the claimant within 14 days of the request, or as soon as possible after that date.

9.2 Payment of Council Tax Support

- 9.2.1 The rules for the payment of Council Tax Support are set out in Schedule 8, Part 4 of the regulations. These state:
- Payment of Council Tax Support will be made to the person entitled to the reduction of their Council Tax liability.
 - Where a person is jointly and severally liable for Council Tax, payment of Council Tax Support will be paid to the person entitled to the reduction of an appropriate amount of their Council Tax liability.

9.3 Electronic communications

- 9.3.1 The rules by which the Council can undertake electronic communications is set out in Schedule 7, Part 4 of the regulations. These state:
- The Council must meet certain conditions to allow electronic communication in relation to its Council Tax Support scheme.
 - The Council may use intermediaries in connection with electronic communication in relation to its Council Tax Support scheme.
 - Any information delivered by the Council by electronic means must meet all the other conditions relating to its Council Tax Support scheme.
 - Proof of identity of the sender or recipient of information will need to be verified where information is sent or received by electronic means.
 - The Council will need to establish procedures to establish proof of delivery of information by electronic means.

10 Changes in decisions

10.1 Duty to notify changes of circumstances

10.1.1 The duty to notify changes of circumstances is set out in Schedule 8, Part 2, paragraph 9 of the regulations. These state:

- The claimant must notify the Council of any changes of circumstances which they might reasonably be expected to know may affect their entitlement to Council Tax Support.
- Notification of a change of circumstances may be made in writing or by telephone and within 21 days of the change occurring, or as soon as possible after that date.

10.2 Date on which a change of circumstances will affect Council Tax Support

10.2.1 The Council will review the amount of Council Tax Support, following a change of circumstances, as follows:

- Where entitlement to Council Tax Support continues after the change, Council Tax Support will change on the Monday following the date the change occurred.
- Where entitlement to Council Tax Support ends after the change, Council Tax Support will end on the Sunday of the week in which the change occurred.
- Where Council Tax liability changes or ends, Council Tax Support will be changed or ended on the same day.
- Where the claimant has delayed notifying the Council of a change in their circumstances, which results in more Council Tax Support being awarded, the change will be treated as occurring on the date the Council was notified of the change. A delay is counted as being more than one month after the change occurred.

10.3 Ending Council Tax Support

10.3.1 Council Tax Support will end in the following circumstances:

- Council Tax liability ends.
- A Council Tax exemption applies.
- A change of circumstances occurs, which ends entitlement to Council Tax Support.
- A change of circumstances occurs, but there is insufficient information or evidence to decide if entitlement to Council Tax Support will continue.
- The claimant fails to provide, when requested, sufficient information or evidence to decide if entitlement to Council Tax Support will continue.

10.4 Revisions and changes

10.4.1 An original decision relating to a claim for Council Tax Support may be revised by the Council at any time.

10.4.2 The claimant can ask the Council to revise a decision about their Council Tax Support within one month of the date the original decision was notified.

10.4.3 If a request to revise a decision about Council Tax Support is received, the Council will reconsider the original decision and decide whether or not the decision should be changed.

10.4.4 The claimant will be notified of the result of a request for revision, in writing. The notification will include the reasons for the decision and details of any rights of appeal against the decision.

10.5 Appeals

10.5.1 The rules by which a person may make an appeal against certain decisions of the authority is set out in Schedule 7, Part 2 of the regulations. These state:

- A person who disagrees with a decision in relation to their Council Tax Support claim may appeal, stating their grounds for appeal.
- The Council must consider the appeal and notify the person in writing of the outcome of their appeal and the reasons for the decision, within 2 months of the appeal being received.
- If the person is still aggrieved, they may appeal to a valuation tribunal under section 16 of the 1992 Act.

10.6 Discretionary reductions

10.6.1 The rules for an application for a discretionary reduction is set out in Schedule 7, Part 3 of the regulations. These state:

- An application for a reduction under section 13A(1)(c)(a) of the 1992 Act may be made in writing, by telephone, or by electronic means.
- A claim for Council Tax Support may also be treated as an application for a reduction under section 13A(1)(c) of the 1992 Act.

11 Overpayments

11.1 Meaning of overpayment

11.1.1 Overpayment means any amount which has been paid as Council Tax Support and to which there is no entitlement.

11.2 Recovery of overpayments

11.2.1 All overpayments of Council Tax Support, however they were caused, will be recoverable.

11.2.2 Overpaid Council Tax Support will be recovered by an addition being made to the liable person's Council Tax account.

11.2.3 The Council will have the discretion not to recover an overpayment of Council Tax Support.