



# Rother District Council

## Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation

### Have Your Say on Changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

It is important to read the background information on the scheme and our ten proposals on our website or leaflet. Please read that information before completing this questionnaire. Go to [www.rother.gov.uk/CTRS18](http://www.rother.gov.uk/CTRS18) **DEADLINE 9 am 17 SEPT 2018**

1. Have you read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and ten proposals?    Yes        No

#### **Proposal One: Income Bands**

We propose to introduce income bands. As long as the applicant's income stays between the top and bottom figure the discount to Council Tax will not change. By introducing income bands we will not need to change the applicant's discount unless their weekly income goes up or down substantially. This means fewer changes for the applicant. The grid on our website at [www.rother.gov.uk/CTRS2018](http://www.rother.gov.uk/CTRS2018) shows how we would work out the discount.

2. Do you agree or disagree with introducing income bands?  
 Agree     Disagree     Don't know

3. Income grid: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

#### **Proposal Two: No additional discounts for families with more than two children**

The income bands in proposal one has additional discounts for parents/carers with one child or dependent and for two or more children or dependents. We propose there is no additional discount if there are three or more children. This is the same for Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Tax Credits and the CTR scheme for pensioners. This does mean that applicants with three or more children (dependents) may have to pay more of their Council Tax bill. This will affect about 300 families.

4. Do you agree or disagree with no additional discounts for families with more than two children?  
 Agree     Disagree     Don't know

5. No more discount for larger families: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

#### **Proposal Three: Not Take into Account Other Adults Living in Household**

Under the present scheme other adults in the household such as adult sons or daughters are taken into consideration when calculating Council Tax Reduction (CTR). This means less CTR is awarded as the other adults in the household are expected to pay towards the

bill. We want to remove this rule making the scheme simpler to administer. Affected applicants will receive more CTR and will not have to collect money from the other adults in the household or ask questions concerning their finances. The drawback is there may be an overall cost to the scheme as more CTR will be awarded. We don't know how much that will be at this time.

6. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal that we do not take into account the income of other adults living in the household, other than partners?

Agree       Disagree       Don't know

7. Other Adults: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

#### **Proposal Four: Automate Reductions for Universal Credit Applicants**

Currently residents in receipt of Universal Credit have to apply separately for a reduction in their Council Tax. We already get information about people on Universal Credit and how much money they get. We want to automatically apply this information to give a reduction in the Council Tax bill. This will stop delays in people on Universal Credit getting a Council Tax Reduction and will ensure those who are eligible automatically receive the reduction they are entitled to. An automatic claim is simpler for us to process.

8. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to automate Council Tax reductions for Universal Credit applicants?

Agree       Disagree       Don't know

9. Automate Universal Credit: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

#### **Proposal Five: Not Count First £25 of Earnings over 16 Hours**

Currently, we have several different ways of disregarding earnings all depending on the applicants' circumstances, like how many people in their household, how many hours worked and childcare costs. This proposal is more generous for some and makes it easier to administer. Those who benefit the most are single people and couples with no children. The drawback is larger families with high child care costs may get less of a reduction on their bill. Those applicants might have to apply to the Exceptional Hardship Scheme for more support.

10. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to not count the first £25 a week of earnings for applicants (or partners) working over 16 hours?

Agree       Disagree       Don't know

11. Disregard first £25: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

### **Proposal Six: Carer's Allowance**

We feel it is fairer to disregard all of the Carer's Allowance. It makes it easier and faster for us to work out the discount. Applicants who get Carer's Allowance may get a reduction or a bigger reduction on their Council Tax than before. The drawback is there may be a small increase in the costs of the scheme to the council. We estimate the amount to be very small.

12. Do you agree or disagree that we do not include Carer's Allowance as income when working out the Council Tax discount?

Agree       Disagree       Don't know

13. Carer's Allowance: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

### **Proposal Seven: Allow Students to Apply**

Most students don't have to pay Council Tax. If a student does have to pay Council Tax getting a reduction is complicated unless they get certain benefits like Income Support ('passport' benefits). We want to remove some of the complicated eligibility rules for low income students. We will take into account their grants, bursaries and loans just as we do in the current scheme. This proposal will allow more students to get a reduction in their Council Tax. The drawback is a few more people can claim, which may increase the cost of the scheme.

14. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to allow more low income students to apply for a Council Tax reduction?

Agree       Disagree       Don't know

15. Students: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

### **Proposal Eight: To Stop the Extension for People Coming off Benefits and into Work**

Currently applicants who are getting benefits such as Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance are given a four week extension to their Council Tax reduction when their benefits end and they go to work. All these benefits are going to be replaced with Universal Credit and there will be no four week extension for people on Universal Credit. Stopping this extension will mean everyone is treated fairly and in the same way.

16. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to stop the four week extension of reducing Council Tax to people who are come off benefits and start work?

Agree       Disagree       Don't know

17. Stop extension: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

### **Proposal Nine: Work out Reduction from the Date Circumstances Change**

18. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to work out changes to Council Tax reduction from the date that circumstances change (rather than the week)?

- Agree       Disagree       Don't know

19. Reduction from date: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

### **Proposal Ten: Protecting Households with Disabled People**

To include an additional income disregard equivalent to the premium received under the existing scheme where an applicant is disabled, they have a disabled child or receive the Support component of Employment and Support Allowance.

The current scheme provides additional support to applicants, their partner (if they have one) or disabled children within the family by awarding premiums or components when certain benefits are in payment. With a move to an income banded scheme, to ensure these people will not be negatively affected, a similar amount needs to be disregarded from their income.

20. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal on discounting some income for disabled people?

- Agree       Disagree       Don't know

21. Income for disabled: why do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

### **Change or Keep?**

The proposals set out in this consultation will deliver administrative savings. If the Council keeps the current scheme, does not make changes, it will cost taxpayers more. If this happens we may need to find savings or find the money somewhere else.

22. Should the Council keep the current scheme as it is or change the current Council Tax reduction scheme?

- Keep current scheme       Change the scheme       Don't know

### **Alternatives**

Do you think we should choose any of these other options rather than adopt the proposals to change the Council Tax reduction scheme?

23. Should the Council increase the level of Council Tax to cover the additional administration costs of the Council Tax reduction scheme?

- Yes, increase Council Tax       No, do not increase Council Tax       Don't know

24. Should the Council reduce funding for other services to cover the additional administration costs of the Council Tax reduction scheme?  
 Yes, cut other services     No, do not cut other services     Don't know

25. Should the Council use its reserves (savings) to pay for additional administration costs of the Council Tax reduction scheme?  
 Yes, use reserves     No, do not use reserves     Don't know

26. If the Council were to choose other ways to pay for the additional administration costs, what is your order of preference? Mark your answers 1 for top preference, 2 for second preference or 3 for least preferred.

Increase Council Tax \_\_\_\_\_

Reduce funding for other Council services \_\_\_\_\_

Use Council reserves (savings) \_\_\_\_\_

27. Please tell us any other comments you want to make on the Council Tax reduction scheme?

28. Please tell us about any other option you want us to consider about reducing costs or keeping the Council Tax reduction scheme as it is?

## About You

We ask the questions in this section:

1. To find out if different groups of people in the Council's population have been able to take part in the consultation and to identify if any groups have been excluded. This means it is not about you as an individual but to find out if people with similar characteristics have had their say.
2. To find out if different groups of people feel differently about the proposals in comparison to each other and all respondents. This means it is not about you as an individual but to find out if people with similar characteristics have answered in the same way or not.

This information is completely confidential and anonymous. Your personal information will not be passed on to anyone and your personal details will not be reported alongside your responses. This information cannot be used to identify you.

29. Are you, or someone in your household, getting a Council Tax reduction at this time?
- Yes, I/we get a Council Tax reduction under this scheme
- No, I/we do not get a Council Tax reduction
- Don't know/not sure
30. Are you male or female?
- Male  Female  Prefer not to say
31. What is your age group?
- 18 to 24  25 to 34  35 to 44  45 to 54  55 to 64
- 65 to 74  65 to 74  75 to 84  85 and older  Prefer not to say
32. Disability: Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?
- Yes  No  Prefer not to say
33. Ethnic origin: What is your ethnic group?  
(Examples: White British, White Irish, Black Caribbean, Chinese, Mixed Heritage White and Asian, Bangladeshi)
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## Thank you for taking part in this consultation.

This questionnaire must be returned by **9am 17 September 2018** to:

Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation

Programme Office and Policy

Rother District Council

Town Hall

Bexhill on Sea

TN39 3JX

Or drop off the questionnaire at the Community Help Points in Bexhill Town Hall, Battle, Market Square or Rye Library.

Read more information, progress updates or complete this survey online at

**[www.rother.gov.uk/CTRS18](http://www.rother.gov.uk/CTRS18)** Final results will be published on the same website.

Do you like taking part and having your say about what Rother District Council is doing?

We are recruiting now to the Rother Citizens Panel. This group of residents are registered with the Council and take part in consultations and customer research about our services.

Read more about the Citizens Panel at **[www.rother.gov.uk/RotherCitizensPanel](http://www.rother.gov.uk/RotherCitizensPanel)**