Summary Council Tax Reduction Scheme Survey Results

687 paper forms and 260 e-surveys were submitted, the questions and responses received are summarised below.

1. Changing the savings limit a person can have before a reduction can be given.

In the current scheme, a person is not entitled to Council Tax Benefit when their savings are more than £16,000 and any savings their partner may have are also taken into account. The Council is proposing a limit of £6,000 savings as the current limit is too high. Do you agree with the Council that the savings limit should be £6.000?

No – 45% Yes - 46% Don't know – 9% If No, do you think the savings limit should be: Higher - 88% or Lower - 12%

2. Removing Second Adult Rebate

In the current scheme Second Adult Rebate is awarded to people who are not entitled to Council Tax Benefit based on their own income, but receive a rebate of up to 25% of their bill because they have other adults living with them who are on a low income. The Council takes the view that we should end access to a reduction in this way as it is very poorly taken up but also because it does not take into account, in any way, the income or savings of the person who is liable to pay the Council Tax for the household. Do you agree with the Council that Second Adult Rebate should be removed?

Yes - 39% No - 39% Don't know – 22%

3. Increasing contributions from other adult members of the household.

In the current scheme other adults (called non-dependants), living in a household where the council tax payer (and their partner) claims Council Tax Benefit, are expected to contribute towards the Council Tax bill and the amount of the contribution varies according to those non-dependants circumstances. However, the Council is proposing that for each non-dependant, as a minimum, a simple flat-rate contribution of £5 per week is expected. Do you agree with this?

| Yes | _ | 56% |
|-----|---|-------|
| 163 | _ | JD 70 |

Don't know – 21%

No – 22% If no, what level of contribution do you think should be expected?

| £7.50 per week | 36% |
|------------------------|-----|
| £10 per week | 39% |
| £12.50 per week | 3% |
| £15 per week | 7% |
| More than £15 per week | 15% |

4. Back-dating of claims

In the current scheme claimants can apply to have their Council Tax Benefit backdated (where their financial circumstances have been the same for that period) for up to 6 months provided they can show "good cause" (e.g. a period of illness). For pensioners this is currently 3 months and no "good cause" is required to be shown. The Council thinks the backdate limit should be the same for Working Age people as it is for pensioners. Do you agree? Yes – 68% No – 22% Don't know – 10%

5. Do you think that "good cause" should have to be shown ONLY for working age claimants? (A claimant would still have to show that their finances were the same for the period of the backdate request)

Yes – 45% No – 34% Don't know – 21%

6. Extended payments

At the moment, if a person is not in work (e.g only receiving Income Support) and is claiming Council Tax Benefit and then starts work, we continue to pay their Council Tax Benefit for a further 4 weeks. This is a "back to work" incentive designed to help people who will usually get paid in arrears for the work they have done.

It may be that a better work incentive, and one that supports people to want to stay in work, is that we extend such payments for more than 4 weeks. The Government has stated that any new Council Tax reduction scheme should include work incentives. What length of time do you consider would be a reasonable incentive for those returning to work to receive extended payments?

4 weeks - 27% 6 weeks - 15% 8 weeks - 34% 10 weeks - 3% 12 weeks - 21%

7. Should the Council create a Hardship Fund to support people suffering genuine
hardship because of the above possible future changes to Council Tax Support?Yes - 78%No - 11%Don't know - 11%

8. Do you have any general comments that you wish to make about the changes we are considering?

Many comments were made but there were no common themes or sufficient numbers to justify making adjustments to the scheme.