

## **Chelmsford LCTS consultation 2021/22**

The consultation was available online on the Chelmsford City Council website between 3 December 2020 and 18 January 2021. The opening of the consultation was published via a press release, Twitter and Facebook. As has been the case with previous consultations, very few responses have been received – only 11 at the close.

The consultation asked a specific question regarding the one proposed change to the current scheme and some general questions regarding the current design aspects of the scheme. The full questionnaire and responses are reproduced below.

With respect to the active proposal to amend the scheme to allow changes mid-year in specific circumstances, 6 people responded positively. Of the 2 'No' answers, one suggested that the proposal be widened to allow changes to the scheme at any point in the year for any reason. Such a course of action would not be legal. The Council has to conduct a meaningful consultation setting out the proposed advantages and disadvantages of specified changes before coming to a decision in advance of the forthcoming financial year.

With respect to the current scheme provisions, there are mixed views regarding funding the scheme with a slight majority in favour of using the Council's reserves to fund any shortfall between the cost of the LCTS scheme and Government grants received. Increasing the level of Council Tax or cutting services were not popular. There was general agreement regarding the basic principle that working-age households should pay something towards their Council Tax, but mixed views as to the level of that contribution. This is to be expected and any future proposals regarding changing any existing aspects of the scheme should be the subject of a much longer and more detailed consultation than has been carried out this time.

### **Consultation questions and responses**

1. The Council is very keen that you have all the information you need to provide informed answers. The background to the consultation and information about the Council Tax Support scheme is available on the Council's website at: <http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/consultations> This explains the scheme itself and also how the scheme is currently funded. Please confirm that you have reviewed this information: **I have reviewed the background information about the Council Tax Support scheme.**

**Outcome: Yes: 11      No: 0**

**2. Do you agree with the Council making a change to the existing scheme by adding the wording below:**

*In the event of unexpected changes to Government welfare benefit regulations which are intended to:*

*increase the income of benefit recipients; and,*

*which are introduced during a financial year;*

*Chelmsford City Council reserves the right to amend the provisions of its Local Council Tax Support Scheme to ensure that those changes do not negatively impact the entitlements of*

*working age recipients of Council Tax Support.*

**Outcome: Yes: 6 No: 2 Don't know/No answer: 3**

**Comment from a 'No' answer:**

Regarding the proposed change I recommend that the words 'to ensure.....' be deleted from the proposal. This would allow for subsequent amendments to be made without further submissions.

**3.** The original basis of the current Council Tax Support scheme was that it is 'self-funding', so it costs the same as the amount of Government grant that the Council and other bodies receive. However, ongoing reductions to Government grants have meant that the 2021/22 scheme costs more than the grant we receive. As the amount of Council Tax collected each year and the arrears still being collected in respect of previous years has remained high, Chelmsford decided in 2020 that it would not reduce the amount of help that the scheme gives. Making the scheme self-funding in 2021/22 would have meant that every working age household would have to pay at least two thirds of their Council Tax, rather than the 23% that they currently pay. A completely 'self-funding' scheme would mean that nobody of working age would receive any help towards their Council Tax. From 2017/18 onwards, Chelmsford will begin to subsidise the Council Tax Support scheme for pensioners as well. As the Government sets the rules for the pensioner scheme, Chelmsford has no choice in this matter. **Do you think that the Council should design a scheme which is self-funding? Please select one answer only**

**Outcome: Yes: 7 No: 1 Don't Know: 3**

**4.** If the Council does not design a self-funding scheme and still provides the current level of support, it will need to find additional funding from other sources. Paying for this could mean a Council Tax increase of up to 4%; a reduction in services equivalent to 14 staff; using reserves (Savings); or, a combination of these three things. **Do you think we should adopt any of the following options to help fund the scheme? Please select one answer for each source of funding**

	Yes	No	Don't know
Increase the level of Council Tax	3	8	0
Use the Council's reserves	5	5	1
Reduce funding available for other Council Services	3	8	0

**5. If the Council continues to partly or fully fund the scheme how do you think it should pay for it? Please choose one of the following options (strongly agree/agree/disagree/strongly disagree):**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Increase the level of Council Tax	3	0	1	7

Use the Council's reserves	2	4	5	0
Reduce funding available for other Council Services	1	2	3	5

**5. Please use the space below to make any other comments you may have about how the council should fund the scheme:**

Using savings is not a long-term solution The funds will run out, then what will happen.

Rich people should pay more to help the poorer members of society (I say this as a rich person!)

Make schemes the council support pay for themselves, this would include any events the council run.

Given the current climate and following on from 10 years of austerity I am strongly of the opinion that those of us who can pay more should do so to relieve the financial hardship that some of our fellow residents are experiencing.

**6. Do you agree with the principle of every working age person having to make a minimum payment? (One answer only)**

**Outcome: Yes: 8 No: 2 Don't Know: 1**

**7. If you do agree, what level of minimum payment do you think should be applied?**

25%	3
30%	
35%	1
More than 35%	4
Don't know/No response	3
Other % please specify	

**8. Do you think we should reduce the minimum payment?**

Yes	2
No	5
Don't know	4

**9. Do you have any other comments?**

What do you class as "every working age person" a student aged 19 in uni accommodation? A 15 year old with a Saturday job? A person who works for the council on a zero hours contract who has

not received furlough or wages for 10 months?

Whether or not a working age person should contribute rather depends upon the individual circumstances. Say, for example, I am disabled with absolutely no possibility of finding paid employment, I should not be required to contribute merely on the basis of date of birth. On a general basis I agree that people of working age should contribute but not on a broad brush basis. There must be caveats.

### **10. What is your postcode?**

**4 x CM1, 6 x CM2, 1 unanswered**

### **11. Do you receive a Council Tax bill for your property?**

Yes	11
No	0

### **12. Are you in receipt of council tax support?**

Yes	1
No	10

### **13. Are you...?**

Male	4
Female	6
Prefer not to say	1

### **14. Age**

18 - 24	
25 - 34	1
35 - 44	1
45 - 54	2
55 - 64	5
65 - 74	1
75 - 84	

85+	1
Prefer not to say	

**15. Marital Status and Nationality:**

Married	8
Single	1
Widowed	1
Divorced/separated	1
Other, please state	

White British	9
White Irish	1
Prefer not to say	1

**16. Do you consider yourself to have a physical impairment?**

Yes	2
No	8
Prefer not to say	0

**17. Do you consider yourself to have a sensory impairment?**

Yes	1
No	10

**18. Do you consider yourself to have a learning difficulty or disability?**

Yes	0
No	10
Prefer not to say	1

**19. Do you consider yourself to have any mental health needs?**

Yes	2
No	9