

# Local Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation

Your chance to tell us your views



**Stockton-on-Tees**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Introduction

The Government is abolishing the current Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme and all Councils in England and Wales must replace this with a new 'Local Council Tax Support Scheme' (LCTS) by April 2013.

In addition to the move from a national to a local scheme the budget to fund the scheme has been cut by at least 10%. This cut in funding means that the Council has to make some difficult decisions about who will get financial support to help pay their Council Tax bill.

The Council has developed some ideas about how it can do this best and has developed a draft LCTS. However before the Council makes any final decisions it is asking everyone who is either interested in or likely to be affected by the new system to let us know what they think about those ideas. The Council will then consider these views when agreeing the final scheme.

## About this document

This document:

- **Summarises** our ideas for a new LCTS in Stockton-on-Tees.
- **Outlines** where you can get more information on the proposed LCTS and how you can get involved in the consultation about it in Stockton-on-Tees.
- **Gives you an opportunity to tell us what you think** about the proposed changes (by filling in the questionnaire).
- **Sets out** what happens next.



# Proposals

Each Council must develop its own LCTS scheme from 1st April 2013 to replace the current national Council tax benefit system. The government has stated that pensioners must be protected under the new system and so **all pensioners will continue to receive the same levels of Council tax support as before under a set of national rules, administered by local Councils.**

Councils are free to design their own LCTS schemes for people of working age.

The current Council Tax Benefit Scheme (CTBS) is fully funded by central government. The replacement LCTS will have funding fixed at a level at least 10% (£1.4m) less than the amount currently paid out. If numbers of people claiming support go up, the Council has to fully fund the additional cost. Around half of the amount paid out in Council Tax Benefit goes to pensioners. As this amount cannot be reduced under the new scheme, this means that the reduction in funding for the scheme for working age people amounts to around 20% (one fifth) of that currently paid in Council tax Benefit.

The Council is already facing significant budget pressures and will need to plan for more reductions over the next few years, given this the Council considers that it is fairest for all residents for the new LCTS scheme to reflect this £1.4m reduction in funding.

In developing a draft of the new scheme the following principles have been followed:-

## **Principle 1 - All people of working age should pay some Council Tax**

The scheme proposes that all working age claimants of Local Council Tax support will be required to pay at least a minimum contribution to their Council Tax – in the draft scheme this is set at 20% of the full Council Tax bill. This would mean a minimum payment of £152 per year for a single person and £203 for a couple in a Band A property.

## **Principle 2 - Council Tax support should be targeted at those who need it most**

Council Tax support will continue to be calculated based on comparing income to a “Living Allowance” which reflects the circumstances of individual households. The proposed LCTS continues to offer support for those with additional costs relating to special circumstances by allowing for these additional costs in the Living Allowance or ignoring income relating to these special circumstances in the calculation. In this way the proposed LCTS would continue to provide additional support to those caring for others, living with a disability, bringing up a family, to war widow(ers) and for those living with disablement from war. Full details of these special allowances is provided in the Draft LCTS.

## **Principle 3 - Council Tax support should be targeted at people on low incomes**

Under the current scheme support is provided to single householders, regardless of their income and capital, where another adult in their home has a low income – this is known as the “second adult rebate”. It is proposed that this support is not included in the new LCTS scheme, and that support should be made available only to those people with low incomes.

#### **Principle 4 - Every working age adult in the household should be expected to contribute to Council Tax payments**

Under the current scheme Council Tax support is reduced to reflect income from other adults living in the claimant's house – these are known as “non-dependants” and include people such as adult sons and daughters, a mother, father or friend of the claimant living in the house on a non-commercial basis. These people are assumed to be giving the claimant some money towards their Council Tax regardless of whether or not they actually do. The draft LCTS scheme proposes continuing this principle so that the income of all adults in the household are taken into account.

#### **Principle 5 - The new LCTS should help encourage working age people to work**

The proposed scheme will continue to include some key incentives to encourage working age people to work. These include:

- Ignoring the first £10 of a single claimant's earnings, £15 of a couple's earnings and £30 of a single parent's earnings for the purpose of calculating their weekly income for benefit purposes.
- Making an allowance for at least part of the cost of childcare for people who work
- Payment of benefit for the first 4 weeks when a claimant (or partner) moves from benefits into work
- A “rapid reclaim” process for anyone claiming benefit again after a break of 12 weeks or less.

#### **Principle 6 - The new LCTS scheme should be based on the key features of the present housing benefit scheme**

This will reduce the risks and costs to the Council in introducing a brand new scheme, and will mean that people can apply for housing benefit and LCTS on the same form, and that both can be calculated at the same time, with similar rules of entitlement.

#### **Principle 7 - Benefit should not be paid to those with relatively large capital or savings**

The proposed LCTS scheme retains the capital “cut off” of £16,000, in order to ensure that people with significant savings cannot claim support, whilst continuing to encourage saving for the future.



# Questionnaire

Please complete this questionnaire to let us know your views on our proposals and any suggestions you may have. Please tick all boxes which apply to you and provide brief comments as appropriate in the spaces provided. Your answers to this survey and any other comments you make are confidential and will be used only to inform the outcome of this Review.

Please return your completed questionnaire to us by **Friday 19th October 2012.**

This questionnaire will help us understand what people think about the proposals we are making for a new Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme.

**1. To what extent would you agree with the seven key principles of the proposed scheme?  
Please consider the list below and choose one answer in each row.**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>Principle 1</b> - All people of working age should pay some Council Tax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Principle 2</b> - Council Tax support should be targeted at those who need it most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Principle 3</b> - Council Tax support should be targeted people on low incomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Principle 4</b> - Every working age adult in the household should be expected to contribute to Council Tax payments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Principle 5</b> - The new scheme should help encourage working age people to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Principle 6</b> - The new scheme should be based on the key features of the present housing benefit scheme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Principle 7</b> - Benefit should not be paid to those with relatively large capital or savings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. In the space below, please briefly tell us why you have answered the above question as you have.

3. In the space below, please provide brief details of any other comments or suggestions you would like to make about the proposed principles.

**Please put a tick in this box to confirm that this is your one and only response to this questionnaire, and that the answers you have provided are your own.** The Council's consultation data quality management rights can be found at [www.stockton.gov.uk/yourCouncil/consult/howweconsult](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/yourCouncil/consult/howweconsult)

# About you

To help us understand what different people think about the proposed LCTS scheme for Stockton-on-Tees, please provide us with the following information.

## Your age

Please state which of the following age groups you fall into:

- 0 – 19 years     20 – 29 years     30 – 39 years     40 – 49 years     50 – 59 years   
60 – 69 years     70 – 79 years     80 – 84 years     85+ years     Prefer not to say

## Your ethnic origin

Please tick the most appropriate box below:

### White

- English/Welsh/Scottish/  
Northern Irish/British  
 Irish  
 Gypsy or Irish Traveller  
Any other White background,  
please specify:  
.....

### Black/Black British

- Caribbean  
 African  
Any other Black background,  
please specify:  
.....

### Asian/Asian British:

- Indian  
 Pakistani  
 Bangladeshi  
 Chinese  
Any other Asian background,  
please specify:  
.....

### Other ethnic groups:

- Arab  
Any other ethnic background,  
please specify:  
.....

## Mixed /multiple ethnic groups:

- White and Black  
Caribbean  
 White and Black African  
 White and Asian  
Any other mixed/multiple  
ethnic background, please  
specify:  
.....  
 Prefer not to say

## Your country of birth

Please state (or, leave blank if  
you would prefer not to say):  
.....

## Your nationality

Please state (or, leave blank if  
you would prefer not to say):  
.....

## Your gender

- Please tick the most  
appropriate box below:  
 Male  
 Female  
 Prefer not to say

## Your marital status

- Please tick the most  
appropriate box below:  
 Single  
 Married  
 Civil Partnership

- Living with partner  
 Separated  
 Divorced  
 Widow  
 Widower  
 Civil widow  
 Civil widower  
 Prefer not to say

## Disability

Do you consider yourself to be  
a person with a disability as  
described by the Equality Act  
2010? Please tick the most  
appropriate box below:

- Yes  
 No  
 Prefer not to say

## UK Armed Forces (including Territorial Army (TA))

Do you currently serve in the  
UK Armed Forces (including  
Territorial Army) or have you  
done so previously? Please  
tick the most appropriate box  
below:

- I am currently serving in  
the UK Armed Forces  
(including Territorial Army)  
 I previously served in the  
UK Armed Forces  
(including Territorial Army)  
 Prefer not to say

## Results of the consultation

If you would like to receive a copy of the results of the consultation please let us know your name and contact details. We would also like to know if you are interested in providing your views in future as we seek to develop services further. If you would be interested in this please indicate by ticking this box .

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....Postcode: .....

Email address: .....

### Data Protection Statement

By completing this questionnaire you are giving Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council the authority to retain the enclosed information for research purposes and the information you give will be used to inform the development of a new Council Tax Benefit system for the Borough. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is the Data Controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act. If you want to know more about the way the Authority will use this information, please contact the Director of Law and Democracy, c/o David Bond, Stockton Council, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 1LD.

Thank you for taking the time to let us know your views.

Please return your completed questionnaire to us at the following address by **Friday 19th October 2012**. **You don't need to use a stamp:**

Freepost - NEA5980  
LCTS Consultation  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council  
PO Box 117  
Municipal Buildings  
Church Road  
Stockton on Tees  
TS18 1BR



# Getting involved in the consultation and where to get more information

**The consultation on a new Council Tax Support Scheme in Stockton-on-Tees will last 10 weeks - from 13th August to 19th October 2012.** During this time we are keen to hear your views. There are lots of ways to let us know what you think about these proposals:

- You can fill in the questionnaire online at: [www.stockton.gov.uk/welfarereform](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/welfarereform) or the centre pages of this document, returning it to us using the freepost address. The deadline for questionnaire responses is **19th October 2012**.
- You can come to one of the drop-in sessions (see below).
- You can use one of the consultation points across the Borough (see below).

## Drop-in sessions

A number of consultation 'drop-in' sessions have been planned (please see details in the table below). At these sessions there will be a chance to ask further questions, give us your views on the proposals and put forward any alternative suggestions you may have.

Venue	Date	Time
Yarm Youth & Community Centre	Monday 3rd September	11am – 1pm
New Life Family Centre	Wednesday 12th September	11am – 1pm
Stockton Central Library	Wednesday 19th September	4pm – 6pm
Thornaby Pavilion	Wednesday 26th September	11am – 1pm
Beckfields Community Centre	Monday 1st October	4pm – 6pm

## Consultation points

Consultation points will have copies of the questionnaire, information displays and a box to post your completed questionnaire in. They will be open throughout the consultation period at the following places across the Borough:

### Venue

[Stockton Central Library/Customer Service Centre](#)

[Billingham Roseberry Library](#)

[Thornaby Central Library/Customer Service Centre](#)

[Ingleby Barwick Library](#)

[Yarm Library](#)

## Where to get more information

You can get more information on the Council website at [www.stockton.gov.uk/welfarereform](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/welfarereform) where you will find a copy of the proposed LCTS scheme, a link to the current national CTB scheme and other useful information.

If you would like to speak to someone about the proposals you can also call **01642 393829**.

## Next Steps

We will consider the views of everyone who responds to this questionnaire. The Council's Cabinet will then meet on **29th November 2012** to review the consultation results and make final recommendations about a new local Council Tax Benefit system in Stockton.

On **23rd January 2013**, a full meeting of the Council will approve the way forward and the system will be in place from **1st April 2013** onwards.

Once final decisions have been taken by Council in January 2013, we will let people know about the new system.





If you would like this information in any other language or format for example **large print** or audio please contact 'Diversity Team' on 01642 528830.

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطبعة الكبيرة أو بالشريط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال 'بدايفرستي تيم' [Diversity Team] على هاتف رقم 01642 528830

ARABIC

欲要這份資訊的其它語言版或其它版式例如大字體印刷/錄音帶，請致電 01642 528830 接洽 '多元化隊' (Diversity Team)

MANDARIN

اگر شما این اطلاعات را به زبان یا شکل دیگری مثلا چاپ بزرگ یا بصورت صدا میخواهید لطفا با تیم دایورسیتی (گوناگونی) [Diversity Team] با شما ره 01642 528830 به تماس شوید

FARSI

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ces informations dans d'autres langues ou sous un autre format, par exemple, en gros caractères / version audio, veuillez contacter l'équipe "Diversity" au n° 016 42 52 88 30

FRENCH

ئەگەر حەزەت لێ ئەم زانیاریە بە دەستت بکەویت بە زمانەکانی تر یان بە شیوەیەکی تر بۆ نمونە چاپی گەورە/یان بە تیپی تۆمارکراو تکایە پەیوەندی بکە بە 'تیمی دایفیرستی' [Diversity Team] لە سەر ژمارەى تەلەفۆن 01642 528830

KURDISH

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਬਣਤਰ ਜਾਂ ਬੋਲੀ ਵਿੱਚ, ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਟੇਪ/ਸੀ ਡੀ 'ਤੇ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 'Diversity Team' ਨੂੰ 01642 528830 ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

PUNJABI

اگر آپ ان معلومات کو کسی بھی اور زبان یا انداز، مثلاً بڑے پرنٹ/آڈیو ٹیپ وغیرہ میں حاصل کرنا چاہیں، تو 'ڈایورسٹی ٹیم' (Diversity Team) کو اس نمبر پر فون کیجئے 01642 528830

URDU



**Stockton-on-Tees**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Local Council Tax Support  
Scheme Consultation**

Your chance to tell us your views