

# Cabinet



SOUTH  
KESTEVEN  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL



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Tuesday, 5 December 2023 at 2.00 pm  
Council Chamber - South Kesteven House, St. Peter's  
Hill, Grantham. NG31 6PZ

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## Agenda Supplement

5. **Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25**

(Pages 3 - 51)

This report reviews the responses to the public consultation of the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 and makes recommendations regarding the proposed Scheme for 2024/25 which will be subject to approval by Council on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

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## Cabinet

5<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Report of Councillor Ashley Baxter,  
Deputy Leader of the Council

## Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

### Report Author

Claire Moses, Head of Service (Revenues, Benefits, Customer and Community)



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### Purpose of Report

This report reviews the responses to the public consultation of the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 and makes recommendations regarding the proposed Scheme for 2024/25 which will be subject to approval by Council on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

### Recommendations

#### Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council:

1. **The introduction of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25 based on the same overarching criteria as the existing scheme and including the following:**
  - a. **Continuation of the War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Disregard for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support with effect from 1 April 2024 (as detailed in paragraph 3.4).**
  - b. **The alignment of the value of the capital tariff limit and disregard for working age claimants to the pension age claimant values with effect from 1 April 2024 (as detailed in paragraph 3.5).**

**c. The introduction of a second home premium of 100% with effect from 1 April 2025, following the required 12 months' notice to those ratepayers impacted by this change (as detailed in paragraph 3.7).**

<b>Decision Information</b>	
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Healthy and strong communities High performing Council
Which wards are impacted?	All wards

## **1. Implications**

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

### ***Finance***

- 1.1 The actual cost of the Council Tax Support Scheme for working age and pension age residents will not be known for certain until the end of the financial year and will be dependent on the actual caseload in year as well as the levels of Council Tax set by the District Council and the major precepting authorities.
- 1.2 The estimated cost of the scheme, based on current caseload, is taken into consideration when calculating the Council's tax base for the financial year and will impact on the estimated Council Tax yield for the year. Any difference in the actual cost of the discount scheme to that estimated in the tax base calculation will be accounted for within the Collection Fund and will be considered when future years surpluses or deficits are declared.
- 1.3 Should the Council wish to approve the continuation of core elements of the current scheme, plus approval of public consultation options 2, 4 and 5, the financial impact of this would be:
  - Continuation of the Care Leavers Exemption: This will be a cost of circa £13,000 (based on 15 eligible awards for 2023/24). This cost is shared between SKDC and the preceptors; and

- Continuation of the Council Tax Discount for Police Special Constables, this will be a direct cost to the General Fund of circa £10,000 for awards relating to 2023/24 (if all eligible Special Constables applied for the discount).

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.4 The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012, laid before Parliament on 22nd November 2012, set out the regulations for a default scheme and this was adopted by the Council subject to local policy needs in January 2013. The Secretary of State has issued amendment regulations setting out some changes that must be adopted by the Council for pensioners and the Council had also decided in 2013 to keep the schemes allowances and premiums in line with those for Housing Benefit for working age claimants. These are incorporated into amendments to the local scheme for approval by the Council.
- 1.5 The regulations for the scheme proposed to be adopted are to be collated and made available for Council in January 2024.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer

### ***Risk and Mitigation***

- 1.6 The Council, and other preceptors, bear the risk of the cost of the Council Tax Support scheme if an increase in caseload causes costs to increase beyond predictions.
- 1.7 Any revisions to the scheme must be approved by 31 January 2024.
- 1.8 The scheme cannot be changed mid-year and therefore it is vital the correct scheme is in place.

Completed by: Tracey Elliott, Governance and Risk Officer

## **2. Background to the Report**

- 2.1 The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2020-2023 to healthy and strong communities and being a high performing council. This report, and the support provided through the councils Localised Council Tax Support Scheme, is aimed at delivering these priorities.

2.2 The Council Tax Benefit system was abolished on 31 March 2013 and replaced by the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS). This scheme can be determined locally by the Billing Authority after due consultation with precepting authorities, key stakeholders, and residents.

2.3 There are currently 7,137 residents in receipt of Council Tax Support in South Kesteven. Of these, 4,020 people of working age and 3,117 of pension age are protected under the legislation and receive Council Tax support as prescribed by the Government (broadly similar to the level of Council Tax Benefit).

2.4 A breakdown of caseload is shown in the table below:

1 <sup>st</sup> of month	Working age	Pension age	Total
March 2022	4,388	3,164	7,552
June 2022	4,356	3,162	7,518
September 2022	4,209	3,157	7,366
December 2022	4,114	3,150	7,264
March 2023	4,094	3,141	7,235
June 2023	4,113	3,133	7,246
October 2023	4,023	3,129	7,152
November 2023*	4,020	3,117	7,137

\*Data as of 10 November 2023

2.5 The Council agreed to a LCTSS, which came into effect on 1 April 2013. The core scheme currently provides:

- 80% support for working age claimants
- 100% support for pension age claimants

2.6 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 requires any proposed scheme to go through certain steps before it can be adopted by the Council as a Billing Authority:-

*Before making a scheme, the authority must (in the following order): -*

- (a) *consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it;*
- (b) *publish a draft scheme in such a manner as it thinks fit; and*
- (c) *consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme*

2.7 There is uncertainty regarding the impact of remaining legacy benefit claimants moving to Universal Credit by the end of 2026, which resumed in May 2022. The transition date from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit has been pushed back on many occasions (nationally). In July 2023, a report to this committee advised the transfer date would be completed by 2024; this has since been postponed to 2026.

- 2.8 The restart follows a pause during the Covid pandemic when Department for Work and Pension (DWP) staff were focussed on supporting a surge of new claimants to Universal Credit.
- 2.9 The six benefits being replaced all have complex eligibility criteria and Universal Credit is designed to provide each claimant with individually tailored support to help them into employment. The rollout will be carefully managed by the DWP, and claimants will be asked to move to Universal Credit.
- 2.10 It is not yet known how many of the legacy customers will be moved over during the remaining months of 2023/24 and throughout 2024/25 and whether or not their entitlement to Council Tax Support will change.
- 2.11 Given the current operating context, it will be problematic to fundamentally re-assess any Council Tax scheme due to the volatility that is impacting on a number of the objectives listed above.

## **Financial cost of the current Council Tax Support Scheme (2023/24)**

- 2.12 Despite the scheme being a 'local' CTS scheme, due to the nature of protection provided to pensioners and vulnerable working age customers, the Council will always incur some costs over which it has no influence.
- 2.13 The current caseload can be broken down as follows and shows any changes implemented will only apply to 16.07% of the caseload (working age), as pensioners and vulnerable working age are protected. This is a reduction from the previous year of 4.72% (working age caseload was 20.79%):

<b>Caseload breakdown</b>	<b>Caseload</b>	<b>% of caseload</b>
Total caseload	7,137	100%
Pensioner (protected)	3,117	43.67%
Working age vulnerable (protected)	2,873	40.25%
Working age (local discretion)	1,147	16.07%

- 2.14 Based on caseload on 10 November 2023, the current cost of the scheme is £7,236,262 (increased by £179,289 from £7,056,973 at the same point in 2022) with South Kesteven's share being £651,264 (9%) increased by £16,136 from the previous year.
- 2.15 Due to the protections from changes (referenced in paragraph 2.13) to pensioners and vulnerable working age customers, any reduction in cost to the proposed scheme can only be applied to the 1,147 working customers, or 16.07% of the caseload. This means out of the Council's current share of the cost of £651,264, only £104,658 (16.07%) can be influenced by changes to the current scheme.

## **Current Local Council Tax Support Scheme – 2023/24**

2.16 The Council's local scheme has been subject to amendments since the introduction in April 2013 to maintain the link with Housing Benefit and the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme.

2.17 The current scheme has the following restrictions for working age customers:-

- Maximum entitlement capped to 80%.

2.18 The current scheme also has the following amendments to Council Tax technical restrictions for all Council Taxpayers: -

- Introduction of additional premiums to properties empty over 2 years, plus the original charge: -
  - 200% premium – empty between 2 and 5 years.
  - 300% premium – empty between 5 and 10 years.
  - 400% premium – empty over 10 years.
- Unoccupied discount of 100% for the first month.
- Care leavers' council tax exemption – 100% for those aged between 18 and 25; and
- Reduction for Special Constables who live in the district – 25% for each special constable resident in the household (up to 2 resident, equalling 50% reduction).

## **Council Tax Exemption for care leavers – 2023/24**

2.19 In 2019/20, a scheme was approved for a local discretionary Council Tax exemption of up to 100% for care leavers aged 18 to 21 years, with the exemption ending on each individual's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

2.20 The scheme was amended for 2021/22 and the age limit was increased to 24 years of age, with the discount ending on each individual's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **Special Constabulary Council Tax Discount Scheme – 2023/24**

2.21 This scheme was first introduced on 1 April 2022. The award of the discount is retrospective; therefore the discount was awarded for the financial year 2021/22.

2.22 In the financial year (2022/23), the discount has been awarded to only one Special Constable. The scheme has now closed for the financial year (2022/23).

2.23 If the scheme continues, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) will write to all eligible Special Constables who live in South Kesteven, by 30 April 2024, to confirm they have met the hours worked criteria, and will provide a link to the Council's website.

- 2.24 Each Special Constable wishing to take advantage of the discount scheme will be required to complete an online application form and upload the letter from the PCC.
- 2.25 The award of the discount will be referenced to service during 2023/24. As a result, the eligibility for the discount will be considered, and an award made no later than the 31 May 2024. This will be applied to the Council tax account for 2023/24.
- 2.26 In the response to the public consultation (Appendix Three), the PCC are supportive of the continuation of support for Special Constables but raised concerns regarding the extension of the scheme to police volunteers.

## **Consultation and communication – proposed 2024/25 scheme**

- 2.27 On 18 July 2023, Finance and Economy Overview and Scrutiny committee considered a number of options for public consultation and potential changes to the scheme from 1 April 2024. Details of these options are shown in Appendix One.
- 2.28 The recommendation of the Committee was to undertake consultation for the 2024/25 Localised Council Tax support scheme and to consider the outcome of the consultation findings prior to making a recommendation to Cabinet, who would make a final recommendation to Council in January 2024.
- 2.29 The public consultation took place between 1 September and 13 October 2023. Consultation was undertaken with major precepting authorities, stakeholders, and residents through a variety of methods, as follows:
  - Letters were issued to all 7,133 Council Tax Support recipients.
  - An online survey (paper surveys were issued upon request);
  - Members of the District Council (information by e-mail)
  - Parish Clerks (information by e-mail);
  - Partner organisations, including Citizens' Advice Bureau were advised of the proposed scheme
  - Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) via e-mail; and
  - Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) via e-mail.
- 2.30 Of the 7,133 letters issued, a total of 370 responses were received – this is equivalent to 5.20% of the current recipients.
- 2.31 The key findings of the consultation are detailed within Appendix One and a summary of the responses is detailed below:

	Agreed		Disagreed		Didn't Know	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agreed with the principles of the current scheme	302	81.6%	46	12.4%	22	6.0%
Thought the principles should continue for 2024/25	318	86.2%	32	8.4%	20	5.4%
Thought the Discretionary Council Tax Payment scheme should continue for 2024/25	340	91.9%	21	5.7%	9	2.4%
Thought the exemption for young people leaving the care system should continue	288	77.8%	52	14.1%	30	8.1%
Thought the Special Constable Discount scheme should continue	203	54.9%	121	32.7%	46	12.4%
Option 1: No change to current scheme	302	81.6%	46	12.4%	22	6.0%
Option 2: Continue with War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Disregard for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support	272	73.5%	65	17.6%	33	8.9%
Option 3: Regularity of changes to income to be reviewed	240	64.9%	38	10.2%	92	24.9%
Option 4 – Capital tariff limit and disregard for working age claimants to be aligned to pension age claimant values	231	62.4%	53	14.3%	86	23.3%
Option 5 – Introduction of a Second Home premium of 100%	318	85.9%	20	5.4%	32	8.7%
Option 6 – Introduction of a Volunteer Council Tax Discount Scheme	217	58.6%	115	31.1%	38	10.3%
Option 7 – Introduction of a Veterans' Council Tax Discount Scheme	260	70.3%	65	17.5%	45	12.2%

2.32 The Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) response to the consultation is detailed in Appendix Two. Their response is specifically focussed on Option 7 – the proposal to introduce a Veterans' Council Tax Discount Scheme. LCC has acknowledged there would be a significant increase in cost to the scheme which would reduce the council tax base and the amount of council tax collected locally. LCC have advised they would bear the vast majority of this cost, which could equate to several million pounds. The response goes on to state:

*This would reduce the level of resource available for Lincolnshire County Council and other preceptors, at a time when inflation and demand pressures has caused and continues to cause significant increases to the cost base. The proposal has the potential to adversely impact significantly more residents than the 8,500 the proposed change could potentially financially benefit, including vulnerable residents throughout Lincolnshire.*

*In addition, the proposal has the potential to mean that war veterans are treated significantly differently in South Kesteven in comparison to all other Lincolnshire districts. There are other relevant factors to consider, including:*

- *The term veteran could potentially apply after one day of service*
- *The existing scheme already provides targeted support to those most in need*
- *Being a veteran does not necessarily equate to financial hardship, which is a key value for money consideration*

*It must also be noted that financial modelling has not been made available, to demonstrate the potential financial impact of the changes proposed. This impacts the extent to which all stakeholders can understand the impact of the proposal and respond accordingly.*

*Taking all factors into account, the Council is not supportive of changing the council tax support scheme to incorporate an additional discount for war veterans.*

- 2.33 The Police and Crime Commissioners' (PCC) response to the consultation is detailed in Appendix Three. The PCC response focused on the Special Constable discount, as referenced in paragraph 2.21 to 2.26 of this report.
- 2.34 The impact of all options is detailed in Appendix One. This appendix provides a background of the option, impact of change if approved, including financial and impact or actions required if it is not approved.

### **3. Key Considerations**

- 3.1 It is proposed the current core elements of the 2023/24 scheme, as detailed in paragraphs 2.17 to 2.26 of this report are retained and continue for 2024/25.
- 3.2 Consideration needs to be given to all the options proposed and consulted on which are detailed in Appendix One.
- 3.3 It is proposed the following options **are included** within the Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 from **1 April 2024**:
  - 3.4.1 **Option 2: Continue with War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Disregard for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support – effective 1 April 2024**
- 3.4.1 This is at no additional cost to the current scheme as this would be a continuation of the existing scheme.

**3.5 Option 4: Capital tariff limit and capital disregard for working age claimants to be aligned to pension age claimant values – effective 1 April 2024**

- 3.5.1 Currently, working age customers with capital over £6,000, have £1 of “tariff income” added for every £250.00 of capital they have. This increases the income used within a Council Tax Support scheme assessment by £1 per week.
- 3.5.2 It was proposed for this to be aligned to the same limits as pensioners – these being a capital tariff of £1 for every £500, and a disregard of £10,000.
- 3.5.3 There would be an increased cost to implement this scheme of £2,323.

3.6 It is proposed the following option **is included** within the Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26 from **1 April 2025**:

**3.7 Option 5: Introduction of a Second Home premium of 100% – effective 1 April 2025**

- 3.7.1 This is a measure which is included in the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill to allow councils the ability to charge a council tax premium of up to 100% for any property left empty for more than 72 days a year.
- 3.7.2 The bill received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023, and was incorporated within the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023: [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 Stages - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)
- 3.7.3 The Council must give residents one year’s notice of our intention to charge the 100% premium; therefore, if this were to be effective from 1 April 2025, notice would need to be given prior to 1 April 2024.
- 3.7.4 The current discount of 10% is a total cost of £56,453. If the introduction of the premium is approved, the 10% discount will be removed and an additional 100% charge will be applied.
- 3.7.5 There are currently 353 Council Tax properties which would attract a premium. Such premiums would increase Council tax annual liability by £631,915 per annum. If this was paid in full, South Kesteven’s share of this additional income would be £56,872 (9%).

3.8 It is proposed the following options **are NOT included** within the Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 and can be considered for the 2025/26 scheme as part of the 2025/26 consultation process:

- 3.8.1 Option 3: Regularity (frequency) of changes to income to be reviewed – to be considered as part of 2025/26 scheme consultation.
- 3.8.2 Option 6: Introduction of a Volunteer Council Tax Discount Scheme – to be considered as part of 2025/26 scheme consultation
- 3.8.3 Option 7: Introduction of a Veterans’ Council Tax Discount Scheme – to be considered as part of 2025/26 scheme consultation

## **4. Other Options Considered**

4.1 The detailed options which were subject to consultation are detailed in **Appendix One** of this report.

## **5. Reasons for the Recommendations**

5.1 These are set out in the report.

## **6. Consultation**

6.1 Consultation regarding the administrative and financial impact of changes and additions to the Local Council Tax Support scheme is a legal requirement. The scheme must be reviewed, consulted upon, and approved on an annual basis.

6.2 The timetable to approve a no change or any change to the scheme is set out below and considers the existing calendar of meetings. The full Council as Billing Authority needs to approve the scheme after consultation as outlined in paragraph 2.6.

6.3 The timetable is as follows: -

- 25 January 2024: Council – decision required: approval of final 2024/25 scheme for implementation from 1 April 2024. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 requires a full review of the scheme by the Billing Authority. South Kesteven District Council will need to approve a new scheme after consultation by 31 January 2024.

## **7. Background Papers**

7.1 A full report was presented to Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 July 2022 (item 8) agreeing to recommendations for consultation. The report can be located here: [Agenda for Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 18th July, 2023, 10.30 am | South Kesteven District Council](#)

7.2 A full report was presented to Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2023 (item 11) agreeing to recommendations one and two as detailed within the report. The report can be located here: [Agenda for Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 28th November, 2023, 2.00 pm | South Kesteven District Council](#)

## **8. Appendices**

8.1 There are three appendices included within this report:

- Appendix 1: Analysis of public consultation and Council Tax Support Scheme Options for public consultation
- Appendix 2: Lincolnshire County Council consultation response
- Appendix 3: Police and Crime Commissioner consultation response

## Council Tax Support Consultation – 2024/25 Scheme Results

370 individuals responded to the annual Council Tax Support consultation.

### **The Council Tax Support Scheme:**

Central to SKDC's Council Tax Support Scheme are two principles. These are:

- A cap of 80% on entitlement for all applicants of working age. This means anyone of working age eligible for help paying their Council Tax will be entitled to claim for help with **up to but no more than** 80% of their bill.
- Pensioners and vulnerable persons eligible for help paying their Council Tax are protected by legislation.

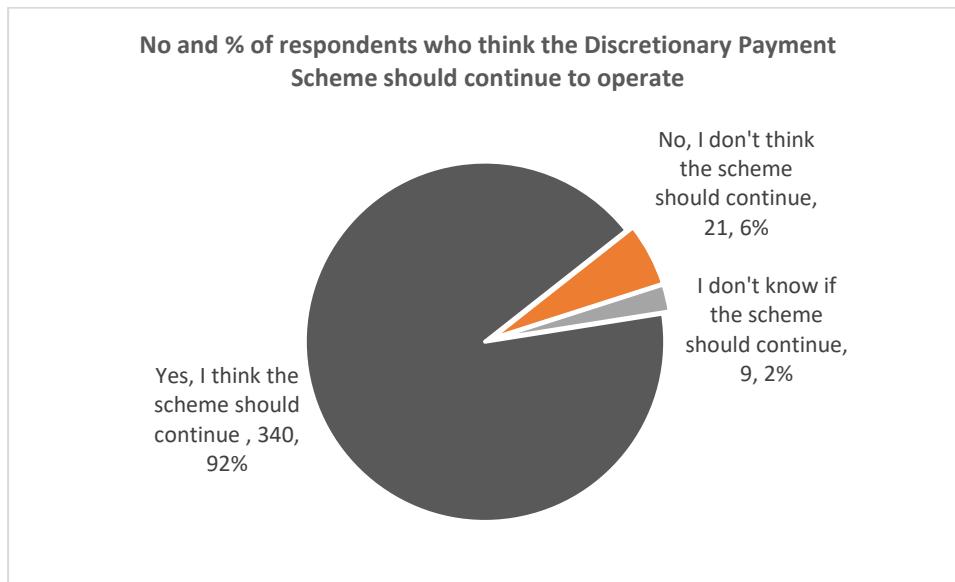
### **The Discretionary Payment Scheme:**

South Kesteven District Council also operates a Discretionary Payment Scheme. This scheme has been designed to offer additional support to those struggling to pay their Council Tax and offers limited short-term assistance to those in receipt of Council Tax Support who need further help.

The Council is proposing that this scheme should continue to operate.

**Question.** Respondents were asked if they thought the Discretionary Payment Scheme should continue to operate in 2024/25. The majority of respondents thought that it should, as shown here:

	No	%
<b>Yes, I think the scheme should continue</b>	340	91.9
<b>No, I don't think the scheme should continue</b>	21	5.7
<b>I don't know if the scheme should continue</b>	9	2.4
	370	100.0



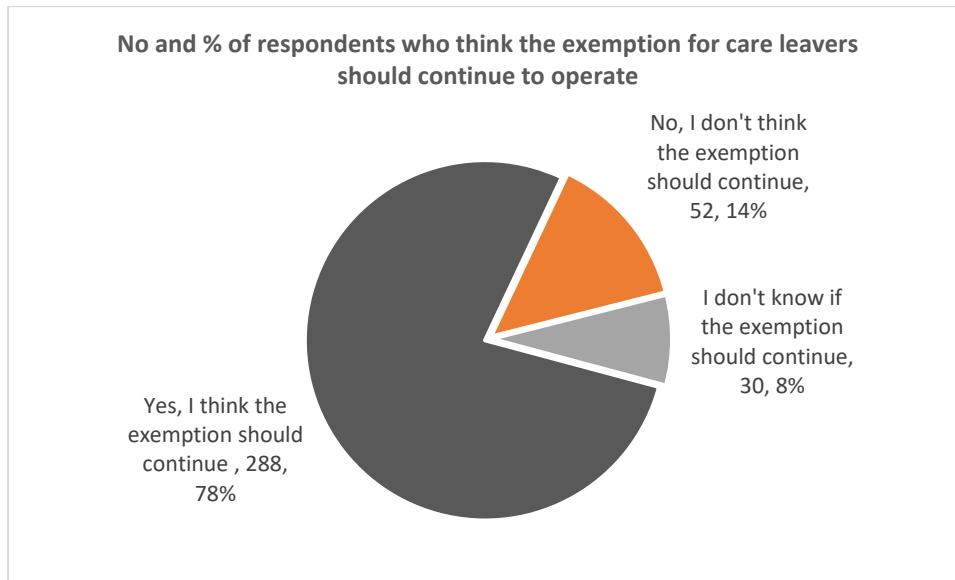
### **Exemption for young people leaving the care system:**

In South Kesteven all young people leaving the care system are currently exempt from paying Council Tax in properties they rent or own, until they are 25.

The Council is proposing to continue to apply this exemption.

**Question.** Respondents were asked if they thought all young people leaving the care system should continue to be exempt from paying Council Tax for owned or rented properties, until they are 25. Over three quarters of respondents thought this exemption should continue, as illustrated in the table below and pie chart overleaf:

	No	%
<b>Yes, I think the exemption should continue</b>	288	77.8
<b>No, I don't think the exemption should continue</b>	52	14.1
<b>I don't know if the exemption should continue</b>	30	8.1
	370	100.0

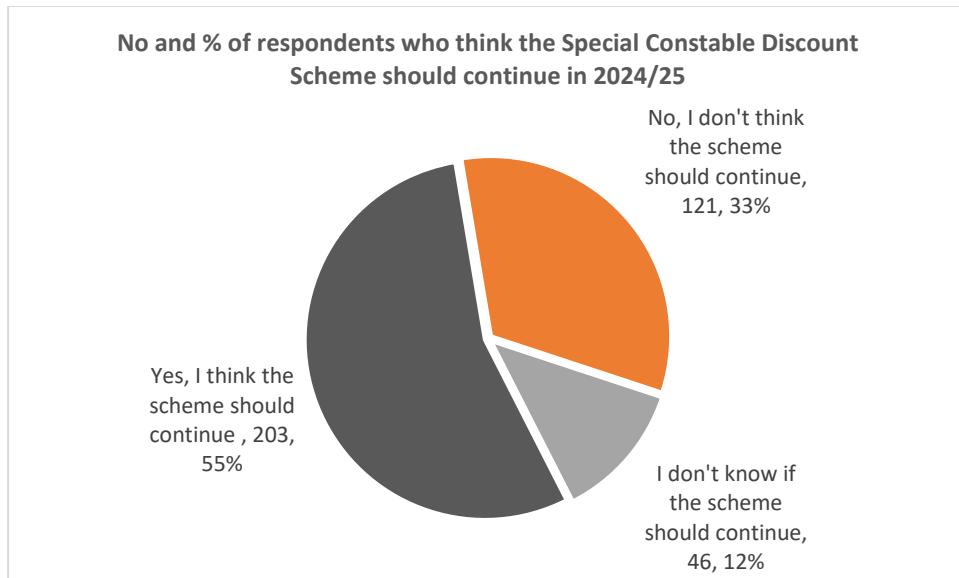


### Special Constable Discount Scheme:

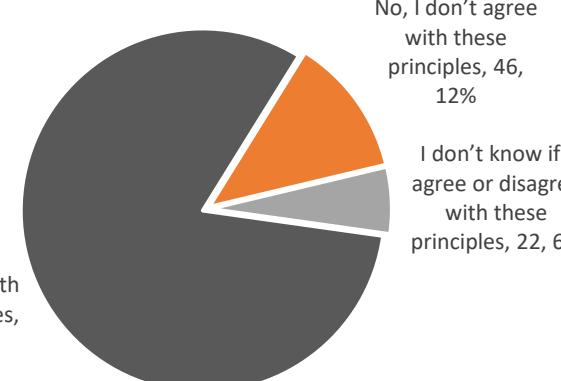
In South Kesteven, Special Constables can make an application for a 25% Council Tax discount.

**Question.** Respondents were asked if they thought the Special Constable Discount Scheme should continue to operate in 2024/25. Just over half of those responding thought it should, as illustrated below:

	No	%
<b>Yes, I think the scheme should continue</b>	203	54.9
<b>No, I don't think the scheme should continue</b>	121	32.7
<b>I don't know if the scheme should continue</b>	46	12.4
	370	100.0



### Option 1: No change to current scheme

<b>Background</b>	Background to the LCTS scheme is included in the main body of the report.															
<b>Proposal for consultation</b>	Current 2023/24 scheme to be retained with no changes made.															
<b>Consultation undertaken</b>	Yes – there is a statutory requirement to consult on the 2024/25 scheme, even where no changes are proposed.															
<b>Outcome of public consultation</b>	<p><b>Question:</b> Respondents were asked if they agreed with these principles. There was strong support for these principles, as illustrated in the table and pie chart below:</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th></th><th>No</th><th>%</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td><b>Yes, I agree with these principles</b></td><td>302</td><td>81.6</td></tr><tr><td><b>No, I don't agree with these principles</b></td><td>46</td><td>12.4</td></tr><tr><td><b>I don't know if I agree or disagree with these principles</b></td><td>22</td><td>6.0</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>370</td><td>100.0</td></tr></tbody></table> <p><b>No and % of respondents who agree with the principles</b></p>  <p>Yes, I agree with these principles, 302, 82%</p> <p>No, I don't agree with these principles, 46, 12%</p> <p>I don't know if I agree or disagree with these principles, 22, 6%</p>		No	%	<b>Yes, I agree with these principles</b>	302	81.6	<b>No, I don't agree with these principles</b>	46	12.4	<b>I don't know if I agree or disagree with these principles</b>	22	6.0		370	100.0
	No	%														
<b>Yes, I agree with these principles</b>	302	81.6														
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	370	100.0														

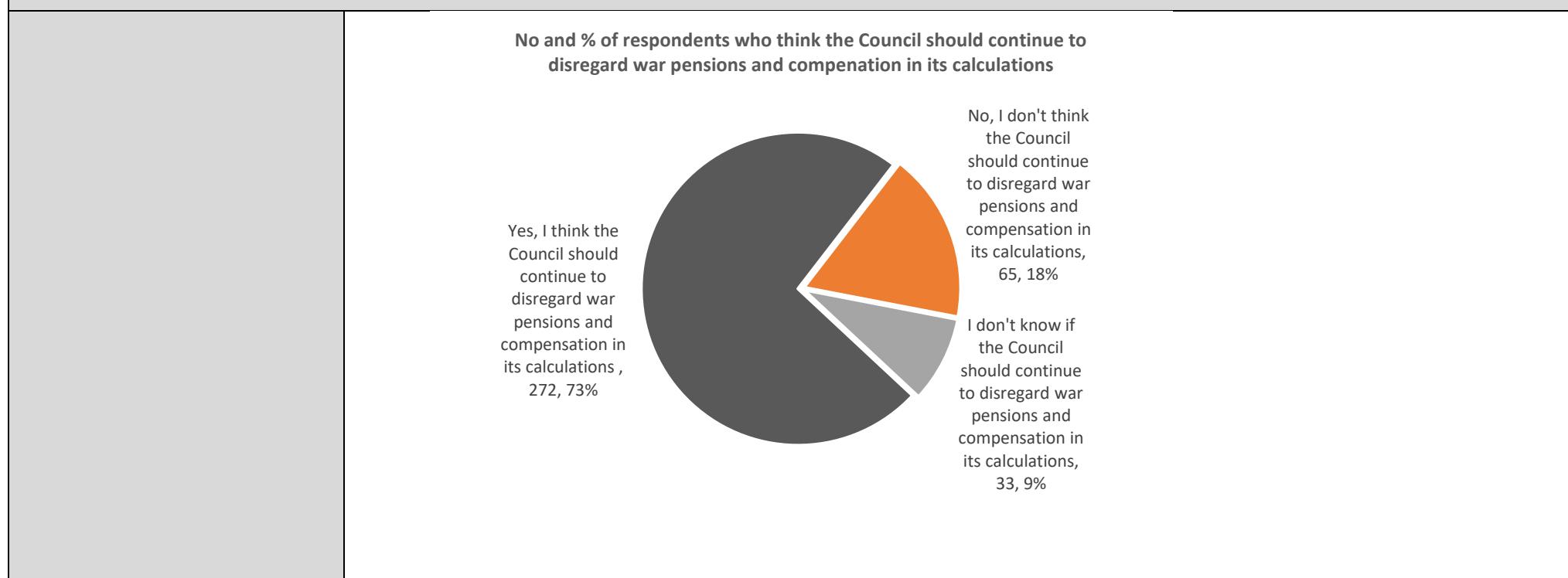
<u>Option 1: No change to current scheme</u>	
<b>Option 1: Impact of change if this is approved</b>	
<b>Number of CTS recipients impacted</b>	All recipients would be impacted = 7,152
<b>Administrative</b>	No administrative changes needed to LCTS scheme regulations.
<b>Financial value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A static position</li> <li>• The only impact would be the increase in Council tax once this has been set. This is the same impact as in all previous years of this scheme.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	Consistency as to how the scheme is applied and awards made, particularly where an award spans more than one financial year.
<b>Option 1: Impact or actions required if this is not approved</b>	
<b>Administrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes needed to LCTS scheme regulations.</li> <li>• Increase in administrative activities – the impact of this is dependent on the level of changes</li> <li>• Potential changes to the scheme are detailed in options 2 to 7</li> </ul>
<b>Financial value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not fully known</li> <li>• These are detailed individually in options 2 to 7</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistency as to how the scheme is applied and awards made, particularly where an award spans more than one financial year.</li> <li>• Lack of understanding of changes by claimants.</li> </ul>

## Option 2: Continue with War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Disregard for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support

<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Section 134 8(a) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992, allows local authorities to modify any part of the Housing Benefit scheme to provide for the disregarding of prescribed war disablement pensions or war widow's pensions.</li> <li>South Kesteven District Council has applied a disregard of 100% through Officer Delegated Decision.</li> <li>As a result of the 2021/22 Housing Benefit audit, a recommendation was taken forward for the Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Disregard to be included as part of this consultation and decision making process.</li> <li>The current scheme provides financial assistance for low-income households in the district and targets a group of individuals who are potentially vulnerable.</li> <li>Amending the percentage of the disregard to anything less than 100% would create a lack of consistency between the administration of Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS).</li> </ul>															
<b>Proposal for consultation</b>	To continue to disregard 100% of war disablement and war widow's pension.															
<b>Consultation undertaken</b>	Yes.															
<b>Outcome of public consultation</b>	<p><b>Question:</b> Respondents were asked if they thought the Council should continue to disregard War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation for both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support calculations. Just under three quarters thought that they should, as illustrated below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="624 906 1686 1097"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>No</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Yes, I think the scheme should continue</b></td> <td>272</td> <td>73.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>No, I don't think the scheme should continue</b></td> <td>65</td> <td>17.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>I don't know if the scheme should continue</b></td> <td>33</td> <td>8.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>370</td> <td>100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		No	%	<b>Yes, I think the scheme should continue</b>	272	73.5	<b>No, I don't think the scheme should continue</b>	65	17.6	<b>I don't know if the scheme should continue</b>	33	8.9		370	100.0
	No	%														
<b>Yes, I think the scheme should continue</b>	272	73.5														
<b>No, I don't think the scheme should continue</b>	65	17.6														
<b>I don't know if the scheme should continue</b>	33	8.9														
	370	100.0														

## Option 2: Continue with War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Disregard for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support

22



### **Option 2: Impact of change if this is approved**

<b>Number of CTS recipients impacted</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are currently 13 recipients of Council Tax Support in receipt of this disregard</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LCTS Scheme Regulations would be updated.</li> <li>Formalises the decision making process.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial (value)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None - this is already in place.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formalises the decision making process.</li> <li>Due to the nature of such payments, these are attributed to pension age recipients. Any working age recipients will have the war pension disregarded as part of their Universal Credit calculation and is therefore not included as part of the income for their claim for Council Tax Support.</li> </ul>

**Option 2: Continue with War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Disregard for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support**

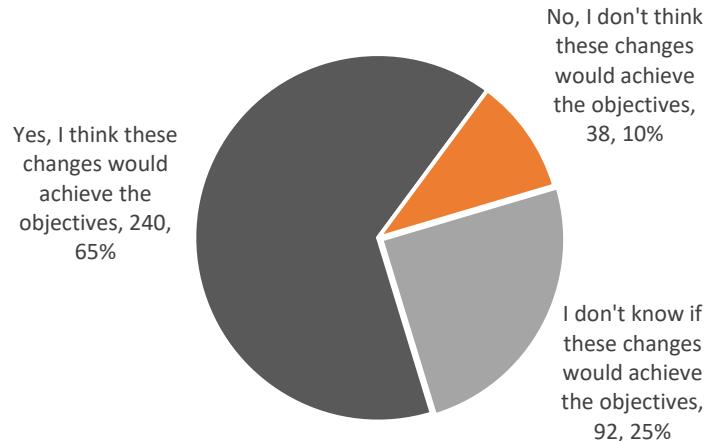
<b>Option 2: Impact if this is not approved</b>	
<b>Administrative</b>	None – this is already in place.
<b>Financial</b>	None.
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	Consistency as to how the scheme is applied and awards made, particularly where an award spans more than one financial year.

<u>Option 3: Regularity of changes to income to be reviewed</u>																
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large volumes of changes in Universal Credit are received on a daily basis via the Department of Work and Pensions data hub.</li> <li>Upon analysis, the number of changes received ranges from <b>12</b> changes per annum per customer to <b>28</b> changes per annum per customer. Often, not all changes are correct or must be actioned, but in all cases, the information must be considered by a Benefits Officer to establish whether action should be taken to align the information within the Council Tax Support assessment with the Universal Credit information.</li> <li>The sheer volume of changes means that approximately 40% of all Universal Credit customers require an amendment to their Council Tax Support assessment, which in turn, amends their Council Tax instalment. This could result in a Universal Credit recipient receiving an amended Council Tax bill every month.</li> <li>This is leading to confusion, lack of payments, an increase in administration costs and a reduction in collection.</li> </ul>															
<b>Proposal for consultation</b>	<p>To consider applying one for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set an “assessment period” during which, any changes to Universal Credit entitlement will not be actioned. The authority will need to decide what changes or exceptions (if any) would trigger a change, and also the period for this this would last.</li> <li>A tolerance to avoid multiple changes – such as a re-assessment is not undertaken if the change is within a certain financial limit.</li> </ul>															
<b>Consultation undertaken</b>	Yes.															
<b>Outcome of public consultation</b>	<p><b>Question:</b> Respondents were asked if changing the scheme in this way would achieve the objectives listed above. Just under two thirds of respondents thought these changes would achieve the objective of fewer council tax bills being issued.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>No</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Yes, I think these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td>240</td> <td>64.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>No, I don't think these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td>38</td> <td>10.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>I don't know if these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td>92</td> <td>24.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>370</td> <td>100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		No	%	<b>Yes, I think these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	240	64.9	<b>No, I don't think these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	38	10.2	<b>I don't know if these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	92	24.9		370	100.0
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### Option 3: Regularity of changes to income to be reviewed

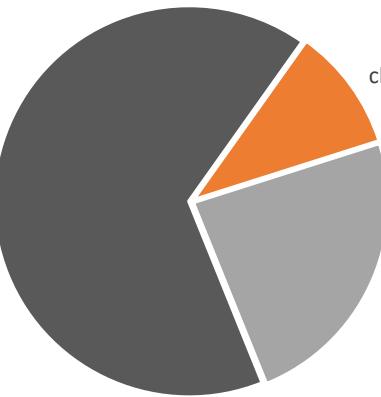
25

No and % of respondents who think changes would achieve objectives



**Question:** They were then asked if they supported this proposed change to the scheme for 2024/25. Two thirds of respondents supported the changes to the scheme as illustrated in the table below and chart overleaf

	No	%
<b>Yes, I support these changes to the scheme</b>	244	65.9
<b>No, I don't support these changes to the scheme</b>	38	10.3
<b>I don't know if I support these changes or not</b>	88	23.8
	370	100.0

<b><u>Option 3: Regularity of changes to income to be reviewed</u></b>													
	<p>No and % of respondents who support these changes to the scheme</p>  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes, I support these changes</td> <td>244</td> <td>66%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I don't know if I support these changes or not</td> <td>88</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No, I don't support these changes</td> <td>38</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Count	Percentage	Yes, I support these changes	244	66%	I don't know if I support these changes or not	88	24%	No, I don't support these changes	38	10%
Response	Count	Percentage											
Yes, I support these changes	244	66%											
I don't know if I support these changes or not	88	24%											
No, I don't support these changes	38	10%											
<b><u>Option 3: Impact of change if this is approved</u></b>													
<b>Number of CTS recipients impacted</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently unknown – additional modelling is required</li> </ul>												
<b>Administrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since July 2023, officers have reviewed the activities needed to implement this change and have determined that there is a significant piece of work needed prior to implementation. This involves the automation of processing the information received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Automation of this workload is common place amongst many councils and is encouraged by the DWP. Automation reduces processing times and potential human error.</li> <li>Once automation is in place, Officers will be able to model the impact of various tolerance levels for changes to income, which will provide a clearer understanding of the financial impact of the Council Tax Support Scheme</li> </ul>												

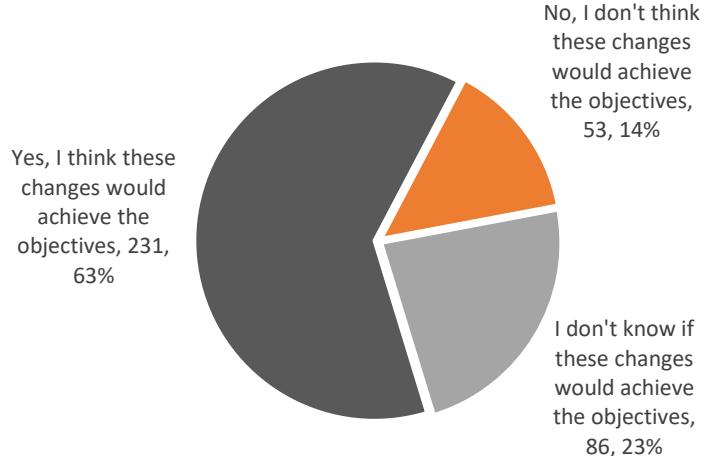
<b><u>Option 3: Regularity of changes to income to be reviewed</u></b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the complex nature of this work, any change to the scheme could not be implemented any earlier than 1 April 2025 and would therefore need to be considered for 2025/26</li> <li>• LCTS Scheme Regulations would be updated.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial (value)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not yet known</li> </ul>
<b>Financial comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The administration of fixed assessment periods can be complex.</li> <li>• This will be taken into consideration as part of scheme modelling once automation is in place.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<p>Reduction in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-assessment process.</li> <li>• Issuing of amended bills, reminders, and summons for non-payment.</li> <li>• Customer contact and confusion.</li> </ul> <p>There will be a positive effect on applicants where: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fixed assessment period is introduced, and the Universal credit income has increased (no reduction in CTS).</li> <li>• An increase in income occurs and is within the tolerance limit, there will be no change to the CTS award.</li> <li>• This will enable customers to set a budget and take advantage of an increase in income without an immediate change to Council Tax instalments.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Option 3: Impact if this is not approved</u></b>	
<b>Administrative</b>	The current position will remain.
<b>Financial</b>	The current position will remain.
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current position will remain.</li> <li>• The regularity of changes to LCTS awards does cause confusion for customers and can have a negative impact on customers budget.</li> </ul>

#### Option 4 – Capital tariff limit and disregard for working age claimants to be aligned to pension age claimant values

<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently, working age customers with capital over £6,000, have £1 of “tariff income” added for every £250.00 of capital they have. This increases the income used within a Council Tax Support scheme assessment by £1 per week.</li> <li>This could mean that someone with capital up to £16,000 would have the income level within their assessment increased by £40 per week (£16,000 less £6,000 = £10,000 / £250 = £40).</li> <li>It is proposed to bring this in line with the capital disregard and tariff limit for pensioners, which is £10,000 and £500 respectively. This would result in the income increasing by £12 per week (£16,000 less £10,000 = £6,000 / £500).</li> </ul>															
<b>Proposal for consultation</b>	To bring in line working age capital limit and tariff income with that for pensioners, which is £10,000 and £500.															
<b>Consultation undertaken</b>	Yes.															
<b>Outcome of public consultation</b>	<p><b>Question:</b> When asked if they thought changing the scheme in this way would achieve the objectives of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equality across both working age and pensionable age applicants</li> <li>Not penalising those applicants with a higher level of capital (as this would increase from £6,000 to £10,000 and from £250 to £500 respectively) just over three fifths of respondents agreed, as illustrated below:</li> </ul> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>No</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Yes, I think these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td>231</td> <td>62.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>No, I don't think these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td>53</td> <td>14.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>I don't know if these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td>86</td> <td>23.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>370</td> <td>100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		No	%	<b>Yes, I think these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	231	62.4	<b>No, I don't think these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	53	14.3	<b>I don't know if these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	86	23.3		370	100.0
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	370	100.0														

#### Option 4 – Capital tariff limit and disregard for working age claimants to be aligned to pension age claimant values

No and % of respondents who think changes would achieve objectives

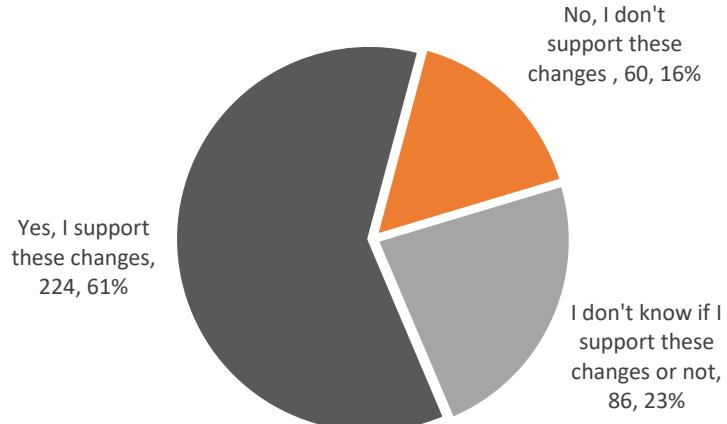


**Question:** They were then asked if they supported this proposed change to the scheme for 2024/25. Two thirds of respondents supported the changes to the scheme as illustrated in the table and chart here:

	No	%
<b>Yes, I support these changes to the scheme</b>	224	60.5
<b>No, I don't support these changes to the scheme</b>	60	16.2
<b>I don't know if I support these changes or not</b>	86	23.3
	370	100.0

#### Option 4 – Capital tariff limit and disregard for working age claimants to be aligned to pension age claimant values

No and % of respondents who support these changes



30

#### **Option 4: Impact of change if this is approved**

<b>Number of CTS recipients impacted</b>	82
<b>Administrative</b>	LCTS Scheme Regulations would be updated.
<b>Financial (value)</b>	An increase in the cost of the scheme of £2,323
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing the scheme in this way would ensure equality across both pension and working age applicants. Additionally, the scheme would not penalise those working age applicants with a higher level of capital.</li> <li>• Any claimants impacted would be re-assessed as part of the annual billing process in March 2024.</li> <li>• Positive impact – reduction in tariff income within assessment will result in increased LCTS award.</li> </ul>

#### **Option 4: Impact if this is not approved**

<b>Administrative</b>	The current position will remain.
<b>Financial</b>	The current position will remain.

#### Option 4 – Capital tariff limit and disregard for working age claimants to be aligned to pension age claimant values

<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The current position will remain.</li><li>• Other support would still be available for these residents – Cost of Living, Household Support Fund, and advice from support organisations such as Citizens Advice, Money and Pension Service etc</li></ul>
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<h3 style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 5 – Introduction of a Second Home premium of 100%</u></h3>																		
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a measure which is included in the Levelling Up &amp; Regeneration Bill to allow councils the ability to charge a council tax premium of up to 100% for any property left empty for more than 72 days a year.</li> <li>• The bill received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023, and was incorporated within the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023: <a href="#">Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 Stages - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament</a></li> <li>• The Council must give residents one year's notice of its intention to charge the 100% premium, therefore, if this were to be effective from 1 April 2025, notice would need to be given prior to 1 April 2024.</li> <li>• If approved, the Council must give residents one year's notice of our intention to charge the 100% premium, therefore, this would be affective from 1 April 2025.</li> </ul>																	
<b>Proposal for consultation</b>	To introduce a second home premium of 100% from 1 April 2025																	
<b>Consultation undertaken</b>	Yes																	
<b>Outcome of public consultation</b>	<p><b>Question:</b> When asked if they thought it would achieve the following objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring long term empty homes back into use</li> <li>• Increase the supply of affordable housing</li> </ul> <p>The majority of respondents thought it would, as shown here:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: black; color: white;"> <th style="text-align: left;"></th> <th style="text-align: center;">No</th> <th style="text-align: center;">%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;"><b>Yes, I think these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">318</td> <td style="text-align: center;">85.9</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;"><b>No, I don't think these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">20</td> <td style="text-align: center;">5.4</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;"><b>I don't know if these changes would achieve the objectives</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">32</td> <td style="text-align: center;">8.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">370</td> <td style="text-align: center;">100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				No	%	<b>Yes, I think these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	318	85.9	<b>No, I don't think these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	20	5.4	<b>I don't know if these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	32	8.7		370	100.0
	No	%																
<b>Yes, I think these changes would achieve the objectives</b>	318	85.9																
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	370	100.0																

## Option 5 – Introduction of a Second Home premium of 100%

No and % of respondents who think changes would achieve objectives

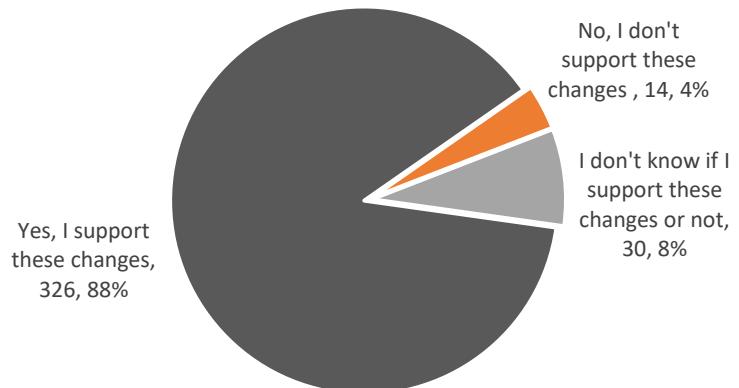


**Question:** They were then asked if they supported this proposed change to the scheme for 2024/25. Just under 90% of respondents supported the changes to the scheme as illustrated in the table and chart below:

	No	%
<b>Yes, I support these changes to the scheme</b>	326	88.1
<b>No, I don't support these changes to the scheme</b>	14	3.8
<b>I don't know if I support these changes or not</b>	30	8.1
	370	100.0

### Option 5 – Introduction of a Second Home premium of 100%

No and % of respondents who support changes



34

### **Option 5: Impact of change if this is approved**

<b>Number of Council Tax properties impacted</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>353 Council Tax properties currently have a 10% second home discount</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision can be made as part of the consultation and committee process to ensure that once the bill becomes law, it can be implemented (if approved by Council in January 2024).</li> <li>If approved by Council, and becomes law by 31 March 2024, the Council must give residents one year's notice of our intention to charge the 100% premium, therefore, this would be affective from 1 April 2025.</li> <li>Any liable person impacted would receive an adjusted Council Tax Bill as part of the annual billing process in March 2025.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial (value)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A premium would increase the Council tax charge by £631,915 per year.</li> <li>South Kesteven's share of this additional charge would be £56,872 (9%).</li> </ul>

<u>Option 5 – Introduction of a Second Home premium of 100%</u>	
<b>Financial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in income as a result of an increase in Council Tax charge (premium)</li> <li>• Currently South Kesteven have 353 properties with a second home 10% discount.</li> <li>• The current discount of 10% is at a cost of £56,453 (as of 10 November 2023)</li> <li>• If the introduction of the premium is approved, the 10% discount will be removed and an additional 100% charge of £631,915 will be applied to the 353 accounts.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	Potential hardship as a result of the council tax increase. However, the liable person would be given 12 months' notice of the change
<b>Option 5: Impact if this is not approved</b>	
<b>Administrative</b>	Potential complaints
<b>Financial</b>	Potential non-payment, of premium and original charge resulting in additional recovery activity
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	Currently, SKDC have 353 second homes which are furnished, and receive a 10% discount

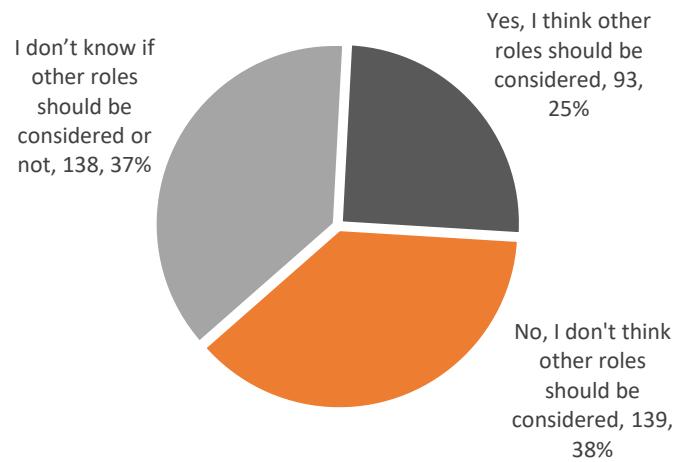
<h3 style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 6 – Introduction of a Volunteer Council Tax Discount Scheme</u></h3>																													
<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submission to the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Tuesday 22 November 2022 made by Councillor Richard Cleaver under paragraph 6.5 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules set out in part 4 of the Council's Constitution.</li> <li>In relation to Agenda Item 7 on page 20, would the committee please consider recommending that the Special Constabulary Council Tax Discount Scheme be extended to include volunteer (i.e. unpaid) PCSOs in anticipation of Lincolnshire Police possibly changing its current policy and recruiting such staff in future.</li> </ul>																												
<b>Proposal for consultation</b>	To consider the introduction of a volunteer council tax discount scheme.																												
<b>Consultation undertaken</b>	Yes																												
<b>Outcome of public consultation</b>	<p><b>Question:</b> When asked if they supported this proposal, just over half agreed as illustrated below:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><b>No</b></th> <th style="text-align: center;"><b>%</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Yes, I support this proposal</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">217</td> <td style="text-align: center;">58.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>No, I don't support this proposal</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">115</td> <td style="text-align: center;">31.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>I don't know if I support this proposal or not</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">38</td> <td style="text-align: center;">10.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">370</td> <td style="text-align: center;">100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>No and % of respondents who support proposal to include voluntary PCSOs</b></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>No</th> <th>%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes, I support this proposal</td> <td>217</td> <td>59%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No, I don't support this proposal</td> <td>115</td> <td>31%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I don't know if I support this proposal or not</td> <td>38</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Yes, I support this proposal</b>	217	58.6	<b>No, I don't support this proposal</b>	115	31.1	<b>I don't know if I support this proposal or not</b>	38	10.3		370	100.0	Response	No	%	Yes, I support this proposal	217	59%	No, I don't support this proposal	115	31%	I don't know if I support this proposal or not	38	10%
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## Option 6 – Introduction of a Volunteer Council Tax Discount Scheme

**Question:** When asked if they thought any other roles should be considered as being eligible for a discount on their Council Tax, around a quarter of respondents thought that there were. This is shown in the table and chart below:

	No	%
<b>Yes, I think other roles should be considered</b>	93	25.1
<b>No, I don't think other roles should be considered</b>	139	37.6
<b>I don't know if other roles should be considered or not</b>	138	37.3
<b>370</b>		<b>100.0</b>

No and % of respondents who think other roles should be considered for discount on Council Tax



<b><u>Option 6 – Introduction of a Volunteer Council Tax Discount Scheme</u></b>	
	<p>Other roles suggested by respondents included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armed Forces Reservists</li> <li>• Carers</li> <li>• Those working for the Emergency Services</li> <li>• Those working in the Voluntary Sector</li> </ul>
<b>Option 6: Impact of change if this is approved</b>	
<b>Number of households impacted</b>	Currently unknown – additional modelling is required
<b>Administrative</b>	<p><b>Rationale for support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of need would be required to be provided.</li> <li>• Further clarification and understanding would be required as to why this group of volunteers has been chosen.</li> <li>• It should not be assumed that volunteers have low income.</li> </ul> <p><b>Equality Impact Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full and detailed equality impact analysis needs to be completed and considered – as this proposal could open up challenge from volunteer groups who are not considered for this discount.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recognising eligible persons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of active volunteers within the District is not known (nor within which Wards the volunteers are resident) and as such, any discount offered could have a significant impact on the Council's finances, parish precepts and preceptors as a result of the reduced Council Tax liability.</li> <li>• Clarification would need to be sought as to the Council's definition of a volunteer and the number of volunteering hours, for the purpose of this scheme.</li> <li>• A decision would need to be taken as to whether receipt of any other discounts, exemptions and benefits would deem a person ineligible for this support.</li> </ul>

<b><u>Option 6 – Introduction of a Volunteer Council Tax Discount Scheme</u></b>	
	<p><b>Eligibility Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This would need to be determined – taking into account outcomes of the above activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Value of award</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of discount to be awarded would need to be modelled in line with the eligible persons and eligibility</li> </ul> <p><b>Application for the discount</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application process would need to be clearly set out and defined</li> <li>• This would need to include a bespoke online application form, with inclusion of all the above criteria and be able to capture supporting documentation (should that be required)</li> </ul> <p><b>Administration of the scheme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A decision would be needed as to the level of evidence to be provided (this would vary depending on where such volunteering would be taking place).</li> <li>• Consideration would need to be given as to any appeal or complaint process and handling of such activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Policy approval</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear policy (separate to the LCTS Scheme) would need to be produced and approved through the Committee process, setting out all the above.</li> <li>• The policy would need to be approved <b>prior</b> to the consultation of the scheme</li> <li>• The policy, along with the equality impact assessment would need to be reviewed on an annual basis.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consultation of the scheme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once all the above information is known, the options can be included within consultation for consideration of a future scheme.</li> <li>• This cannot be included within the 2024/25 scheme as consultation has already taken place.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial (value)</b>	<b>This cannot be modelled as eligibility of the proposed scheme is unknown</b>
<b>Financial</b>	<b>Unknown information</b>

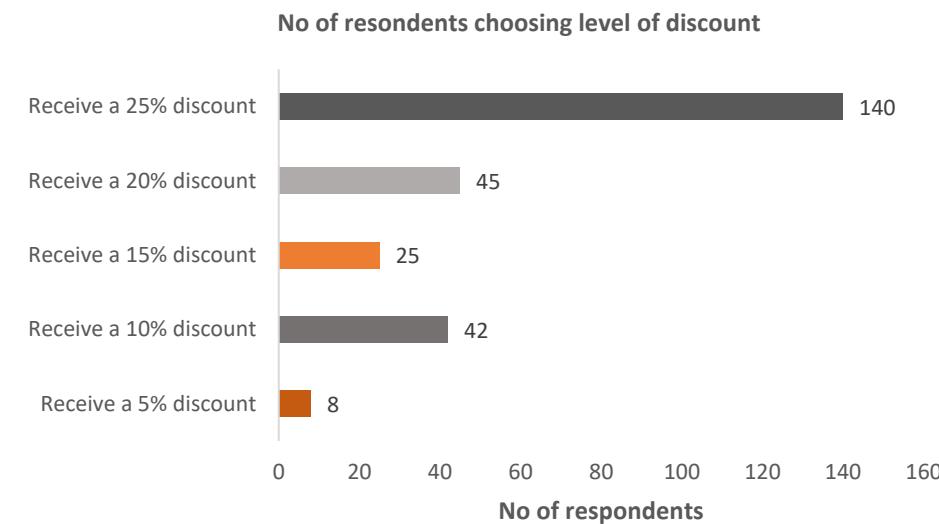
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<u>Option 6 – Introduction of a Volunteer Council Tax Discount Scheme</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently this is unknown as the eligibility and cohort have not yet been determined, making modelling of any such scheme impossible</li> <li>• The number of active volunteers within the District is unknown and as such, any discount offered could have a significant impact on the Council's finances as a result of the reduced Council Tax liability.</li> </ul> <p><b>Administrative resource (Revenues Council Tax Billing Team)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be the need to consider administrative resource</li> <li>• The cost of this would be dependent on the number of applications made (how many different volunteer types are eligible) and how complex the scheme is</li> <li>• Awards would need to be reviewed on an annual basis</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on other Council Tax payers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There could be an adverse impact on remaining council tax payers (current total households is 66,800) as they could see an increase in their council tax charge to compensate for the loss of income.</li> <li>• Those remaining and impacted would include vulnerable households.</li> <li>• The scheme could be perceived negatively by those who are not eligible – impacting on payment of their own council tax. This would result in additional recovery action, further impact on resource within the Revenues Enforcement Team</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	This is unknown at this time
<b>Option 6: Impact if this is not approved</b>	
<b>Administrative</b>	The current position would remain.
<b>Financial</b>	The current position would remain.
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current position will remain.</li> <li>• Other support would still be available for these residents – Cost of Living, Household Support Fund and advice from support organisations such as Citizens Advice, Money and Pension Service etc</li> </ul>

## Option 7 – Introduction of a Veterans’ Council Tax Discount Scheme

<b>Background</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Kesteven is home to almost 8,700 military Veterans’ (2021 Census), which makes up 7.37 per cent of the districts population.</li> <li>• During the Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on Tuesday 18 July 2023, a motion was put forward and carried, for South Kesteven District Council to consider a Veterans’ Council Tax Discount.</li> </ul>																																				
<b>Proposal for consultation</b>	To consider the introduction of a Veterans’ council tax discount scheme and to consider the % of council tax discount to be awarded.																																				
<b>Consultation undertaken</b>	Yes																																				
<b>Outcome of public consultation</b>	<p><b>Question:</b> When asked if they would support the introduction of a Council Tax discount for Veterans’, most respondents said that they did. This is illustrated in the table and chart below:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: black; color: white;"> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">No</th> <th style="text-align: center;">%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Yes, I support this proposal</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">260</td> <td style="text-align: center;">70.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>No, I don’t support this proposal</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">65</td> <td style="text-align: center;">17.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>I don’t know if I support this proposal or not</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">45</td> <td style="text-align: center;">12.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">370</td> <td style="text-align: center;">100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Question:</b> Respondents were then asked what level of discount they thought Veterans’ should be entitled to. The most popular choice was to receive a discount of 25%, as illustrated here:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: black; color: white;"> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">No</th> <th style="text-align: center;">%</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>Receive a 5% discount</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Receive a 10% discount</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">42</td> <td style="text-align: center;">16.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Receive a 15% discount</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">25</td> <td style="text-align: center;">9.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Receive a 20% discount</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">45</td> <td style="text-align: center;">17.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Receive a 25% discount</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">140</td> <td style="text-align: center;">53.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">260</td> <td style="text-align: center;">100.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		No	%	<b>Yes, I support this proposal</b>	260	70.3	<b>No, I don’t support this proposal</b>	65	17.5	<b>I don’t know if I support this proposal or not</b>	45	12.2		370	100.0		No	%	<b>Receive a 5% discount</b>	8	3.1	<b>Receive a 10% discount</b>	42	16.2	<b>Receive a 15% discount</b>	25	9.6	<b>Receive a 20% discount</b>	45	17.3	<b>Receive a 25% discount</b>	140	53.8		260	100.0
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### Option 7 – Introduction of a Veterans' Council Tax Discount Scheme



#### **Option 7: Impact of change if this is approved**

<b>Number of households impacted</b>	Currently unknown – additional modelling is required
<b>Administrative</b>	<p><b>Rationale for support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of need would be required to be provided.</li> <li>• Further clarification and understanding would be required as to why this group has been chosen.</li> <li>• It should not be assumed that a Veteran has a low income.</li> </ul> <p><b>Equality Impact Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A full and detailed equality impact analysis needs to be completed and considered. Whilst the status of Veteran is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, this proposal could open up challenge from other individuals who are not considered for a discount who must not be discriminated against under the law.</li> </ul>

## Option 7 – Introduction of a Veterans’ Council Tax Discount Scheme

### **Recognising eligible persons**

- Currently, the number of Veterans’ within South Kesteven are 8,693, according to the 2021 Census.
- Clarification would need to be sought as to the Council’s definition of a Veteran, for the purpose of this scheme.
- The Office for Veterans’ Affairs defines a Veteran as “anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty’s Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.
- Whilst the number of Veterans’ is known across the District is not known Wards the eligible Veterans’ are resident) and as such, any discount offered could have a significant impact on the Council’s finances, parish precepts and preceptors as a result of the reduced Council Tax liability.
- A decision would need to be taken as to whether receipt of any other discounts, exemptions and benefits would deem a person ineligible for this support.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

- This would need to be determined – taking into account outcomes of the above activities.
- If the decision is based on income, then it may be considered that any scheme is means tested. However, devising a complex scheme will result in additional administrative resource requirements.

### **Value of award**

- The level of discount to be awarded would need to be modelled in line with the eligible persons and eligibility

### **Application for the discount**

- The application process would need to be clearly set out and defined
- This would need to include a bespoke online application form, with inclusion of all the above criteria and be able to capture supporting documentation (should that be required)

## Option 7 – Introduction of a Veterans' Council Tax Discount Scheme

### **Administration of the scheme**

- A decision would be needed as to the level of evidence to be provided (this would be determined by the eligibility criteria). This would be inline with all other means tested benefits (Council Tax Support, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit etc), along with all current Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions.
- Consideration would need to be given as to any appeal or complaint process and handling of such activities.

### **Policy approval**

- A clear policy (separate to the LCTS Scheme) would need to be produced and approved through the Committee process, setting out all the above.
- The policy would need to be approved **prior** to the consultation of the scheme
- The policy, along with the equality impact assessment would need to be reviewed on an annual basis.

### **Consultation of the scheme**

- Once all the above information is known, the options can be included within consultation for consideration of a future scheme.
- This cannot be included within the 2024/25 scheme as consultation has already taken place.

### **Financial (value)**

- The financial impact has been modelled based on all circa 8,700 Veterans' being fully eligible for the scheme as eligibility criteria has not been agreed, nor do we have the data available.
- Modelling is based on the percentage of discount included within the public consultation – this being 5%, 10%, 15%, 20% and 25% of a Band D (£1,961.46) for all 8,700 Veterans'

<b>Cost of proposed scheme</b>						
	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>25%</b>	
<b>Band D</b>	£1,961.46	£98	£196	£294	£392	£490
<b>No. Veterans'</b>	8,700	£853,235	£1,706,470	£2,559,705	£3,412,940	£4,266,176
<b>Town &amp; parish</b>	1%	£8,532	£17,065	£25,597	£34,129	£42,662
<b>SKDC</b>	9%	£76,791	£153,582	£230,373	£307,165	£383,956

### Option 7 – Introduction of a Veterans' Council Tax Discount Scheme

<b>PCC</b>	15%	£127,985	£255,971	£383,9656	£511,941	£639,926
<b>LCC</b>	75%	£639,926	£1,279,853	£1,919,779	£2,559,705	£3,199,632

- It is not possible to model this along the taxbase i.e. break down into Council Tax Bands, as the identity and location of the Veterans' is unknown

#### **Financial (comments)**

##### **Unknown information**

- Currently this is unknown as the eligibility and cohort have not yet been determined, making modelling of any such scheme impossible
- The number of eligible Veterans' within the District is unknown and as such, any discount offered could have a significant impact on the Council's finances as a result of the reduced Council Tax liability.

##### **Administrative resource (Revenues Council Tax Billing Team)**

- There would be the need to consider administrative resource
- The cost of this would be dependent on the number of applications made and how complex the scheme is. The more complex the scheme, the more resource would be needed. However, the less complex the scheme, the higher the cost.
- Awards would need to be reviewed on an annual basis

##### **Impact on other Council Tax payers**

- There could be an adverse impact on remaining council tax payers of circa 58,200 – if all Veterans' were to be supported (current total households is 66,800) as they could see an increase in their council tax charge to compensate for the loss of income.
- Those 58,200 households impacted would include vulnerable households.
- South Kesteven and precepting authorities may need to consider a reduction other services, should there be a significant financial impact
- The scheme could be perceived negatively by those who are not eligible – impacting on payment of their own council tax. This would result in additional recovery action, further impact on resource within the Revenues Enforcement Team

<h3 style="text-align: center;"><u>Option 7 – Introduction of a Veterans' Council Tax Discount Scheme</u></h3>	
	<p><b>Impact on other services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Kesteven and precepting authorities may need to consider a reduction in other services, should there be a significant financial impact.</li> <li>• It is likely wider consultation would be needed for any such consideration. Given South Kesteven and precepting authorities are already in the process of budget setting for 2024/25, this would not be able to be considered until 2025/26 budget setting, at the earliest.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some Veterans' are less likely to identify themselves as such. This is particularly true for those who may have had a negative experience of service.</li> <li>• Female Veterans' may have had differing experiences during service and transition, so may be less likely to identify themselves. Veterans' from the LGBTQ+ community may also find engaging with services a challenge due to the historic ban around serving in the armed forces and its implications.</li> <li>• The Office for Veterans' Affairs suggested that policy-makers and service providers should consider capturing data on previous military experience alongside other demographic data. Additionally, there should be consideration of potentially differing experiences of female and LGBTQ+ Veterans', and ensure services are prepared to meet any arising needs.</li> <li>• If personal information is required such as household details, income, capital etc Veterans' may be discouraged from providing their information to support with any future modelling, in advance of any scheme being agreed.</li> </ul>
<b>Option 7: Impact if this is not approved</b>	
<b>Administrative</b>	The current position would remain.
<b>Financial</b>	The current position would remain.
<b>Effect on applicants / claim groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Kesteven District Council has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and is a Gold Award holder under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. As a result, we support the Armed Forces community.</li> <li>• The Armed Forces Act ensures that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged as a result of their service when accessing government and commercial services. Special consideration is also appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and bereaved.</li> </ul>

### Option 7 – Introduction of a Veterans’ Council Tax Discount Scheme

- As South Kesteven District Council has signed the Covenant, we have a legal duty to ensure that Veterans’ and their families are treated fairly. Demonstration of this would be Veterans’ and their families would be eligible to apply for the same existing support as other residents within the District – such as Single Person Discount, Council Tax Support, Universal Credit etc.
- South Kesteven District Council’s Community Engagement Team will be producing an Armed Forces Report and Action Plan, which will be presented to Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 December 2023. The action plan will detail all activities being undertaken by the Armed Forces Officer, as well as the support available for Veterans’ across the District.
- Other support would still be available for these residents – Cost of Living, Household Support Fund, and advice from support organisations such as Citizens Advice, Money and Pension Service etc
- The Council also have departmental Veterans’ champions who are able to support with any enquiries relating to Benefits, Housing and Revenues (Business Rates, Council Tax & Rent) relating to liabilities, arrears, eligibility to benefits and discounts and the impact of absence from the household the Veteran and / or their families.

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Andrew Crookham  
Deputy Chief Executive &  
Executive Director of Resources  
Lincolnshire County Council  
County Offices  
Newland  
Lincoln LN1 1YL

Email: [andrew.crookham@lincolnshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.crookham@lincolnshire.gov.uk)

Ref: AC/AH

3 October 2023

Dear Claire

### **South Kesteven DC: Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 - Consultation (LCC)**

Thank you for your email, received on the 1 September 2023, inviting Lincolnshire County Council to take part in the consultation of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme changes for 2024/25.

The response from Lincolnshire County Council is specifically focussed on the proposal to include all war veterans to the scheme of council tax support (option 7).

In respect of council tax income, Lincolnshire County Council is a major precepting authority which receives approximately 74.6% of council tax raised in South Kesteven (based on published 2023/24 data). The proposal to amend the council tax support scheme, which could make an additional 8,500 war veterans eligible for support, has the potential to significantly increase the cost of the scheme. This would reduce the council tax base and the amount of council tax collected locally. Lincolnshire County Council would bear the vast majority of this cost, which could equate to several million pounds.

This would reduce the level of resource available for Lincolnshire County Council and other preceptors, at a time when inflation and demand pressures has caused and continues to cause significant increases to the cost base. The proposal has the potential to adversely impact significantly more residents than the 8,500 the proposed change could potentially financially benefit, including vulnerable residents throughout Lincolnshire.

In addition, the proposal has the potential to mean that war veterans are treated significantly differently in South Kesteven in comparison to all other Lincolnshire districts. There are other relevant factors to consider, including:

- The term veteran could potentially apply after one day of service
- The existing scheme already provides targeted support to those most in need
- Being a veteran does not necessarily equate to financial hardship, which is a key value for money consideration

It must also be noted that financial modelling has not been made available, to demonstrate the potential financial impact of the changes proposed. This impacts the extent to which all stakeholders can understand the impact of the proposal and respond accordingly.

Taking all factors into account, the Council is not supportive of changing the council tax support scheme to incorporate an additional discount for war veterans.

Once again, thank you for inviting the Council to take part in the overall consultation. Should you require any further information or wish to discuss the contents of this letter further, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely

■

**Andrew Crookham**  
**Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Resources**



**Lincolnshire  
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER**  
SAFER TOGETHER

Deepdale Lane, Nettleham, Lincoln LN2 2LT  
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**Date:** 13th October 2023  
**Our Ref:** JF/ch/2023-1374

Mr Richard Wyles  
Chief Finance Officer & Interim Deputy Chief Executive  
South Kesteven District Council  
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By email only to: [richard.wyles@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:richard.wyles@southkesteven.gov.uk)

Dear Richard

**Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25**

Thank you for your letter of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 in which you invite comment on South Kesteven District Council's proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25.

The Police & Crime Commissioner is supportive of proposals that ensure consistency of the approach both within the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) and between the LCTSS and the Housing Benefit Scheme. Consistency of approach is beneficial to the recipients of LCTS and is also more efficient. For similar reasons, the proposal to limit the regularity of reviews as a result of income changes is supported.

The Special Constabulary Council Tax Discount Scheme was created to recognise the unique role of Special Constable in carrying the warranted powers that place them in harms way in servicing our communities. Whilst not unsupportive of the Council wishing similarly to recognise VPCSOs, who provide a valuable service to our communities, this was not in the original scope of the Special Constabulary Council Tax Discount Scheme. As such, extension of the Scheme may raise concerns for other Councils regarding 'mission creep' and therefore discourage adoption of the Scheme for Specials.

Yours sincerely

**Julie Flint**  
Chief Finance Officer

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