

Frequently Asked Questions

What is changing?

From April 2013, the Government intends to abolish Council Tax Benefit. Every council will have to replace it with a new local scheme. We call this new scheme Council Tax Support. The Government is giving councils less money to pay for their new schemes. The cut will be 10% of the current expenditure and will not be increased if the number of people claiming or the council tax charge goes up.

Why does the council have to save £1 million in 2013/14?

When the Government hands over the funding for the Council Tax Support scheme, it will be reduced, meaning we will have to save approximately £1 million to be able to fund the new scheme next year.

To calculate the expected savings above we have looked at the number of people currently claiming Council Tax Benefit and reduced the funding we receive by 10%.

Who will these changes affect?

All current working age Council Tax Benefit claimants will be affected by these changes and might see their benefit change. Although pensioners will move onto the new benefit, they will be protected and will not have their benefit reduced under the new scheme.

For further information please read our [consultation booklet](#).

Are your consultation documents available in a format that is easier to understand?

Please telephone (01954) 713465 if you require the documents in a different format.

What is Council Tax?

Council Tax is a local tax on domestic properties. It is set by the Council based on a property's valuation band. Each home is placed in one of eight valuation bands based on its value at 1st April 1991. The District Council is responsible for collecting Council Tax and this money funds about 10% of local public services, including refuse collection, planning and environmental health. Most of the money collected is passed to other authorities to help fund police, fire, education and public transport services.

Who has to pay Council Tax?

Council tax is a charge which is usually paid by the occupants of the property. The full tax assumes that there are at least two adults living in the property. If there is only one person living in the home, they may be eligible for a discount. The tax is

also paid by the property owner where the property is unoccupied and no relief is applicable.

What is Council Tax Benefit?

Council Tax Benefit is a means tested benefit that helps people on a low or no income to pay their Council Tax. It is administered by local councils using rules set nationally by the government. No money is paid to the claimant. Instead, their Council Tax bill is reduced by the amount of their benefit.

Who can get Council Tax Benefit currently?

Anyone who is liable for Council Tax may apply. In the case of couples, a joint claim should be made. The amount of benefit they can receive is based on the makeup of their household, the amount of money they have coming in and their Council Tax charge.

Are other discounts and exemptions affected?

Existing Council Tax discounts and exemptions, such as the 25% single person's discount and the exemption for people who are severely mentally impaired and live on their own have not changed and are not part of this consultation. See the full list at <http://www.scams.gov.uk/CouncilTaxAndBenefits/HousingAndCouncilTaxBenefits/default.htm>

Who will be able to get the new Council Tax Support?

Anyone who currently receives Council Tax Benefit will be assessed for the new Council Tax Support. It is likely that most people who qualify for Council Tax Benefit will get some Council Tax Support. Anyone liable for Council Tax may apply for Council Tax Support and will be assessed in the same way as current claimants moving from Council Tax Benefit.

How much will I have to pay?

Depending on how the new scheme is designed, it is likely that most working age people who qualify for Council Tax Support will have to pay more than they do now or they would have done under Council Tax Benefit. The outcome of this consultation will help to determine how much more people in different groups will have to pay. Pensioners will not have to pay more than they do now.

Will I have to re-apply?

If you currently receive Council Tax Benefit you will not have to re-apply under the new scheme. You will automatically be re-assessed using the new rules. Your award may be reviewed once you have moved across to the new benefit.