

Appendix 2

SUMMARY OF RESULTS – CTSS 2014/15 MAIN CONSULTATION

- a) Percentage figures from online survey
- b) Written responses

a) Percentage figures from online survey – Sample size (Base): 238

- 83% (192) of respondents stated that they currently receive Council Tax Support, 16% (38) stated they do not.
- 78% (163) of respondents stated that they receive other benefits, 19% (39) stated they do not.
- Results are based on all respondents taking part, unless otherwise stated.
- Figures have been rounded up/down to the nearest full percentage point.
- Please note: Where figures do not add up to 100%, this could be the result of computer rounding, multiple answers, or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated.

Q: Which proposal do you prefer?

Seven out of ten 72% (166) stated that they preferred 80% support to low income households of working age.

Three out of ten 28% (65) stated that they preferred 75% support to low income households of working age.

Q: What would these changes mean for your household?

	2013
Reduce household spending on essential items such as food + heating	76%
Reduce household spending on non-essential items eg leisure activities	46%
Need to borrow money to meet this additional cost	33%
Able to meet this additional cost	7%
Would not have any additional costs as result of this proposed scheme	16%

- Three out of four respondents (76%) stated that as a result of the changes they would have to reduce household spending on essential items such as food and heating. Almost one in two (46%) stated they would have to reduce spending on non-essential items such as leisure activities.
- One in three (33%) stated that they would need to borrow money to meet the additional cost.
- Less than one in ten (7%) stated that they were able meet the additional costs.

Comments provided relating to the 'other' category (Base: 47)

Over 40 comments related to the **affordability** of the scheme. A number of respondents said they were already struggling or would struggle if they had to find more money for council tax; others said they could not afford the additional costs, would go into debt or would have to go without essentials such as food, heating, things for their children's education etc. Several

respondents mentioned increased worry or stress about how they would pay – affecting their health. Some felt that having to pay extra would reduce their quality of life by restricting movement or removing (small) luxuries such as leisure activities.

“I already have to borrow and have no money for any type of leisure activities at all. Paying more out means I would have to dramatically cut my already low budget for food and heating and still may not have enough to pay”.

“I’m a single woman on benefits, out of £71 a week when I have paid 14 pound spare room tax, and 2 pound council tax this leaves me with 55 to pay bills and eat. How are we expected to keep finding more money from 71 pound?”

Only one respondent felt that **they were willing to pay something** and that they would just have to accept the increased amount, although others commented that the proposed changes are at a time of other changes and uncertainties resulting from welfare reform.

Q: Do you have any other comments about how it may affect you and your household (Base: 152)

There were 152 free text responses to this question. The comments mirror the themes already highlighted, for example 47 comments related to people having to cut back on essentials like food or heating, in order to pay the additional cost and 29 comments related to how people are already struggling to pay bills, with a further 26 saying they could not afford an increase, and others saying that an increase would cause hardship.

b) Written responses

A written response was received from the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Scrap the Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign group. See Appendix One:

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Consultation appendix 1:

Written response from Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Scrap The Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign is writing to you regarding the proposed local Council Tax Schemes for 2014 and regarding your consultation.

Scrap the Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign condemns the Con-Dem government's cuts to Council Tax support Funding.

Aim of the campaign relating to Council Tax Benefit

To oppose the abolition of Council Tax Benefit and its replacement by local Council Tax Schemes; to campaign for councils to refuse to pass on the cuts to its local community; to support those who are unable to pay their council tax due to the proposed changes; to call on councils not to pursue those who are unable to pay their Council Tax due to the council's changes

The government has abolished the national, centrally funded Council Tax Benefit scheme and made all councils in England bring in their own schemes from April 2013. This was with less funding, aiming to save around £410 million in England, approximately 10% of current costs. In Nottingham and Nottinghamshire the cut was around £13.29 million. For NCC the shortfall was closer to 15% of what NCC previously paid out in Council Tax Benefit.

For 2013 Nottingham City Council received a grant from Central Government because they set 8.5% (up from 100%) as the maximum proportion of Council tax that low income households would have to pay. For 2014 the City Council are consulting on low income households having to pay 25% of their Council Tax, or 20% and face cuts of £1 million to other council services.

The government wants councils to cut benefits as part of the attack on the welfare state to make the 99% pay for the bankers' and the system's crisis. The government wants to make benefits so awful that people will work for as little as employers want to pay. Hardly surprising, some in the government want to get rid of the National Minimum Wage.

A report in the Guardian newspaper (Tuesday 16 October 2012) based on Freedom of Information requests by "False Economy" reported that councils were resigned to seeing residents refusing to pay their council tax. NCC's proposals mean that many people will not be able to afford to pay their council tax.

- **Scrap the Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign calls on the council to commit to not pursuing people who cannot afford their council tax.**

The BBC has reported that the Tory, Patrick now Lord Jenkin, who designed what became known as the "poll tax" in the 1980s has warned that Council Tax Benefit cuts risk creating a "poll tax Mark 2".

Despite NCC saying it will campaign for changes to the government's proposals, it has implemented them and is now proposing an even more savage attack on low income households.

NCC is proposing:

- With some similarity to the disastrous poll tax, that all working age people would have to pay at least 20% or at least 25% of their Council Tax bill. The councils own consultation document provides examples of the increased payments the council would expect which will be unaffordable for many Council Tax Benefit recipients and would mean a choice between paying a Council Tax Bill or putting towards necessities such as food or ever rising utility bills

The number of Council Tax Summons issued and Liability Orders granted since the introduction of Nottingham City's first local Council Tax Support Scheme has increased significantly since the 8.5% cut and will increase even further with the new proposals causing debt, poverty and homelessness. (e.g. Council Tax liability orders August 2012, August 2013 respectively: 1241, 1596 an increase of 28.6%)

Scrap the Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign

- **opposes all changes to previous Council Tax Benefit that are a detriment including the 2014 proposals that all working age people would have to pay at least 20% or 25% of their Council tax;**
-
- **calls on the local authority to make clear that it will not pursue those on low incomes including those at work because it would not be cost effective**

Protecting pensioners

Currently, the government has exempted pensioners (approximately 1/3 of Council Tax Benefit recipients) but we believe that if this government is successful in continuing with the Council Tax Support Schemes due to a lack of fight by local authorities, they will look to make further cuts in the funding available and will consider removing the safeguard for pensioners.

Scrap the Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign question whether the local authority has effectively implements its scheme to prevent any detriment to pensioners.

Do local authority systems automatically pick up that a Council Tax Scheme recipient is not of working age and that person should not suffer a detriment by the local authority proposals?

Do the local authority systems automatically pick up that a Council Tax Scheme recipient has a birthday during the year and is no longer of working age and that person should not suffer a detriment by the local authority proposals?

What will be the situation in households where there are two adults who are jointly and severally liable if one of the adults is not of working age?

Any increased demand for Council Tax Benefit e.g. due to job losses or reduced income such as from short time working, has to come from the pot of money already allocated by the government.

- Greater need means less is available for each recipient year on year, if NCC does not fight, it will be re-assessing claimants income and expected need and looking how to make the savings (e.g. cuts in benefits/increased charges).
- If the Con-Dem proposals are not stopped, if NCC does not build a campaign to prevent these attacks on its local population, there will be further cuts in the money allocated by the government each year and NCC will be faced with making even more draconian cuts in entitlements.

NCC (and all other councils) should do everything in their power to refuse to pass on central government cuts on and NCC should stand firm to pay Nottingham residents according to their benefit needs based on the old system.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Scrap the Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign would want to campaign with the Labour Council if it was truly willing to lead a serious fight to fund Council Tax Support according to the old system and if it refuses to pass the cuts on either by increased charges and/or cuts in benefit entitlement.

NCC has £133m in reserves. They should use these to cover any shortfall and to buy time to build a mass campaign for properly funded councils and the return of monies lost due to reductions in central government funding.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Scrap the Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign will support those unable to pay their council tax.

The local authority should be leading a campaign, fighting for proper funding from the government.

It is clear that some households will need more support than others based on their needs and paid in accordance with the existing Council Tax Benefit system, but this should not be used to separate groups into “deserving” and “non-deserving”.

The present system provides benefit to people with a wide range of needs and different circumstances. None of these groups should be excluded, and neither should there be an “across the board” cut for any or all groups. The previous system, based on the needs of the people of Nottingham, should be returned and support should not be cut by an arbitrary figure made by central government.

Equality Impact Assessment

NCC has a duty to ensure its proposals have been Equality Impact Assessed and should seek to ensure that no person affected shall suffer a detriment either directly or indirectly as a result of their ‘protected characteristics’.

Has the local authority carried out an Equality Impact Assessment of its 2014 proposals and when is it to be published and made readily available?

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Scrap the Bedroom Tax, Defend Council Tax Benefits Campaign

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