



Uttlesford District Council October 2024

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)

A summary report of the survey about the proposed Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme for Uttlesford for the financial year 2025/2026.

In April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. The government required councils to protect pensioners so that they would receive the same level of support as they did under Council Tax Benefit.

The proposed scheme

Uttlesford District Council has been consulting local residents on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Uttlesford since 2012 during which time the scheme has undergone various changes. For the financial year 2025/2026 the council has proposed that the scheme is set on the same basis as that for 2024/2025, namely to:

- freeze the contribution rate so that the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
- continue to protect pensioners, the vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

Consultation

As in previous consultations, respondents were asked to consider the proposals and provide their views in an 'open text box'.



The survey also invited (but did not require) participants to provide their name and a contact email address so that they could be kept up to date with the results and the final decision on the proposed scheme. Participants were also asked to state if their response was on behalf of an organisation (such as a town or parish council).

The survey was run online through the Uttlesford District Council website. This could be accessed via the main council website home page or from direct links sent out in various promotions, publicity and newsletters. A paper copy of the survey was also available on request.

Promotion

The survey ran from Monday 16 September to Monday 28 October 2024.

At the start of the consultation period emails inviting participation in the survey were sent directly to:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority
- Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex - Policing and Community Safety
- all town and parish councils in the district

The survey was widely publicised to the citizens of Uttlesford who were encouraged to take part.

A press release was distributed to all local media and newspapers on 16 September. It was included in *Parish Briefing* e-newsletters and social media promotions via Facebook and Instagram throughout the consultation period reaching some 4,186 people.

Those people who do not use digital services were offered the option of asking for a paper copy of the survey and proposals to be sent to them by post (details were provided on the website, in the press releases and in publicity).



Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Uttlesford 2025-26



We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

www.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts



Uttlesford Local Council Tax Support - have your say!

We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) which is designed to help the most vulnerable.

The 2025/26 scheme

We know that it is a difficult time for everyone right now as the rising cost of everything is making it hard to make ends meet. The cost of living is going up and as things become more expensive we know that some households will be struggling.

That's why we want to help to protect the most vulnerable people in our district. For 2025/26, we are proposing to maintain our LCTS scheme on the same basis as this year.

This means that we are proposing to:

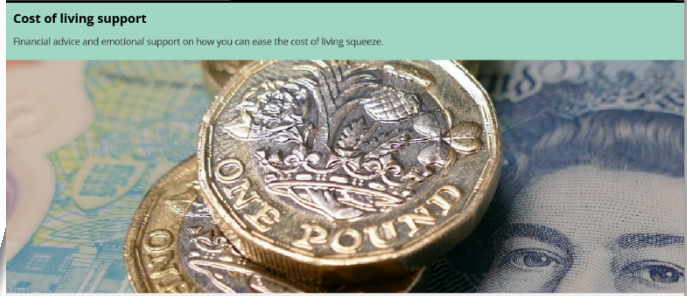
- freeze the contribution rate so that the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
- continue to protect pensioners, vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

How to have your say

You can now give your views on the proposals using this form or online at: www.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-consultation

Looking after your data

All the information you provide in this questionnaire will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018/679. Your contact details will be used solely for the purpose of contacting you about your feedback. You should refer to our Corporate consultation privacy notice on www.uttlesford.gov.uk/privacy for an explanation of what we do with your personal information, how long we keep it and your right to withdraw your consent at any time you choose.



Cost of living support

Financial advice and emotional support on how you can ease the cost of living squeeze.

Have your say on Council Tax support scheme for 2025/26

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How to have your say

You can now give your views on the proposals online, by email or by post.

The consultation closes at 5pm on Monday 28 October 2024.

Online

Tell us what you think by using our online response form.

[Comment now >](#)



Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2025/26

We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

We won't share your views with anyone else; we'll only use them to help us to decide on the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme for 2025/26.

How we handle your information

Information you provide will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Your contact details will be used solely for the purpose of contacting you about your feedback. You should refer to our Corporate consultation privacy notice on www.uttlesford.gov.uk/privacy for an explanation of what we do with your personal information, how long we keep it and your right to withdraw your consent at any time you choose.

* Required

Your comments

Your views on the proposals for the 2025/26 scheme

*



Results: overall submission rate

The overall response rate for the survey including online and postal consultation forms.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2024 (percentage)
Total number of paper forms returned	0
Total number of web forms / direct emails submitted	34 (100% of total responses)
Total number of comments received	34



Results: submitted comments summary

Of the submitted comments, 21 (or 61.8% of all the comments received) either directly supported the proposals for 2025/2026 or could clearly be interpreted as such. This is a 1% decrease on the support registered for the 2024/2025 scheme in the 2023 survey.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2024 (percentage)
Fully or partly support the proposed scheme	22 (64.7%)
Do not support the proposed scheme	9 (26.5%)
Comments received on other related matters including suggesting additional support/widening the scheme	3 (8.8%)
Total	34 (100%)

Notable this year are the number of references to government's removal of the Winter Fuel Payment for all but the most vulnerable pensioners, suggestions for providing additional support to a wider range of people in the district and comments on hardships suffered by those not on benefits.

Preceptors and identified local organisations

Debden Parish Council and Great Chesterford Parish Council made comments. Uttlesford Citizens Advice also provided a detailed statement of position.



Comments received

Comments generally in favour of the proposed scheme

1. Keep it as it is now.
2. Keep it as it is
3. I agree
4. With the Government taking away the winter fuel allowance people on pensions will have less to spend all round. Those of us who can afford to pay more council tax should do so to support people who have served their country all their lives.
5. Keep it the same as last year
6. Should be maintained at same level as before.
7. Yes
8. Keeping it at the same rate is a good idea.
9. Keep it as it is happy with the proposals
10. Please keep the LCTS as it is.
11. I support the current level of support should continue at 12.5%.
12. Agree with the support package
13. I'm happy with the proposals
14. If the burden on regular taxpayers is not too onerous. The council needs to be mindful that many pensioners have lost their winter fuel allowance, whilst having to struggle with higher fuel, in particular oil costs used for heating many homes in our district.
15. Debden Parish Council gives its full support to the scheme which provides support for those in the district requiring assistance.
16. Will this benefit be cut in the budget? The Labour government seems hell bent on persecuting pensioners and those on low incomes. This is antithetical to the ethos of the Labour movement. Local government should object in the strongest terms. Protecting the most vulnerable in society is a sign of civilization.
17. I agree
18. I agree with the proposals.
19. I agree with the proposals, and on a personal note as someone who receives disability benefits, I am grateful for the LCTS scheme



20. Agree, keep the same as last year.

21. Thank you for giving Great Chesterford Parish Council the opportunity to provide feedback on the above proposed scheme. The PC met on Wednesday 9 October and agreed to convey that it was supportive of the UDC proposals for 25/26.

22. Uttlesford Citizens Advice (UCA) broadly agree with principles of the Uttlesford scheme but suggest the minimum contribution be reduced to 0% to reflect the “more rural nature of this area”. UCA further note that “the minimum contribution requirement causes additional stress on tight household budgets, and collection and recovery is likely to impose disproportionate costs”. Full text of the UCA response in Appendix 1.



Comments generally not supporting the proposed scheme

Comments opposing the proposals for 2025-2026 or making suggestions for amendments to the scheme.

1. I think 12.5% is too low as I have no confidence in your ability to differentiate scammers from the genuinely vulnerable
2. The level should be raised to 20 or 25% in line with other councils. Council tax for everyone else in Uttlesford is extortionate, benefits have increased and therefore the low rate of council tax should be increased accordingly.
3. We don't need another benefit, we need a lower bills!
4. No additional support
5. Help those that actually need the support the people that get given brand new houses through housing and then sit and smoke drugs all day... if they have cash spare to by drugs (around their kids) they shouldn't get the support.

Pensioners are suffering, a local man I know 86yrs young worked all his life, fought in the army now retired. His pension amount is at the higher threshold and he just received a £300 tax bill !!!! Where is his support. My Nan had £150 tax bill and warm home support stopped.... where is her support. My husband and I work full time pay nearly 2k a month just on mortgage/rent barely making ends meet and we earn too much to get any help !?! We struggle to pay 222 per month for council tax yet there isn't any relief for us .

6. I don't think it should be a blanket one size fits all approach. There are some people who are vulnerable but there are many households who could pay more.
7. Local council tax support should be set at 25% as in other areas.
8. 25% discount should remain for single person households. The cost of living is extremely high right now and to add an extra expense is unfair
9. Scheme does not seem fair; vulnerable people, disabled people, and their carers, should be eligible. However, pensioners should be means-tested. Their inability to plan effectively for later life should not become a burden on tax-payers who are already under financial pressure.

Comments received making general points

Comments on the government's removal of the Winter Fuel Payment for all but the most vulnerable pensioners,



suggestions for providing additional support and proposals for different schemes.

1. Taxes should be levied based on ability to pay. The whole local tax scheme needs to be replaced by one that is income based.
2. Why is Uttlesford and the tax payers of the district having to fill the gap that the Labour Government has made by taking away the basic right of pensioners to heat their home and stay warm over the winter. We have paid our taxes all our life and now when we should be able to relax and enjoy a last few years all that is happening is to make things more difficult with costs going up everywhere. Any help should be given across the whole country and to everyone as a right when the government can spend more and more on vanity projects and pay rises to themselves we all have to suffer.
3. Where is the money coming from to provide this support? Will it mean I'll have to pay even more tax next year to make up for those who can't pay their bill? What cuts are you making in spending to support this? Whilst this is admirable, at what point do we have MORE people on discounts vs full payers? To afford this I'd like to see a break down on where tax payers' money has been spent in the last year?