

Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20 Consultation Feedback

Methodology

A consultation exercise was undertaken to gain the views of residents on the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2019/20 financial year.

The consultation, which was available in both hard copy and online, was promoted in a number of ways.

- A media release was circulated on 27 September 2018, announcing the proposals for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2019/20. The Scheme proposed to keep the main characteristics for 2019/20 the same as 2018/19, and introduce a new class for care leavers aged 18-21 years, providing up to 100% discount.
- The media release also provided residents with details of the consultation exercise being undertaken.
- A letter was forwarded to precepting Authorities on 27 September 2018, inviting them to give their views on the proposals for 2019/20; a copy of the response received from Lincolnshire County Council is attached at the end of this report.
- Social media; Facebook and Twitter were also used to inform residents that the consultation exercise was being undertaken.
- A homepage banner was placed on the Council's website to draw attention to the consultation.
- Questionnaires were made available in all East Lindsey District Council's Customer Access Points.
- An email was sent to groups that represent those individuals with the characteristics identified in the Equality Act.
- The questionnaire was also made available for people to complete on East Lindsey District Council's website.

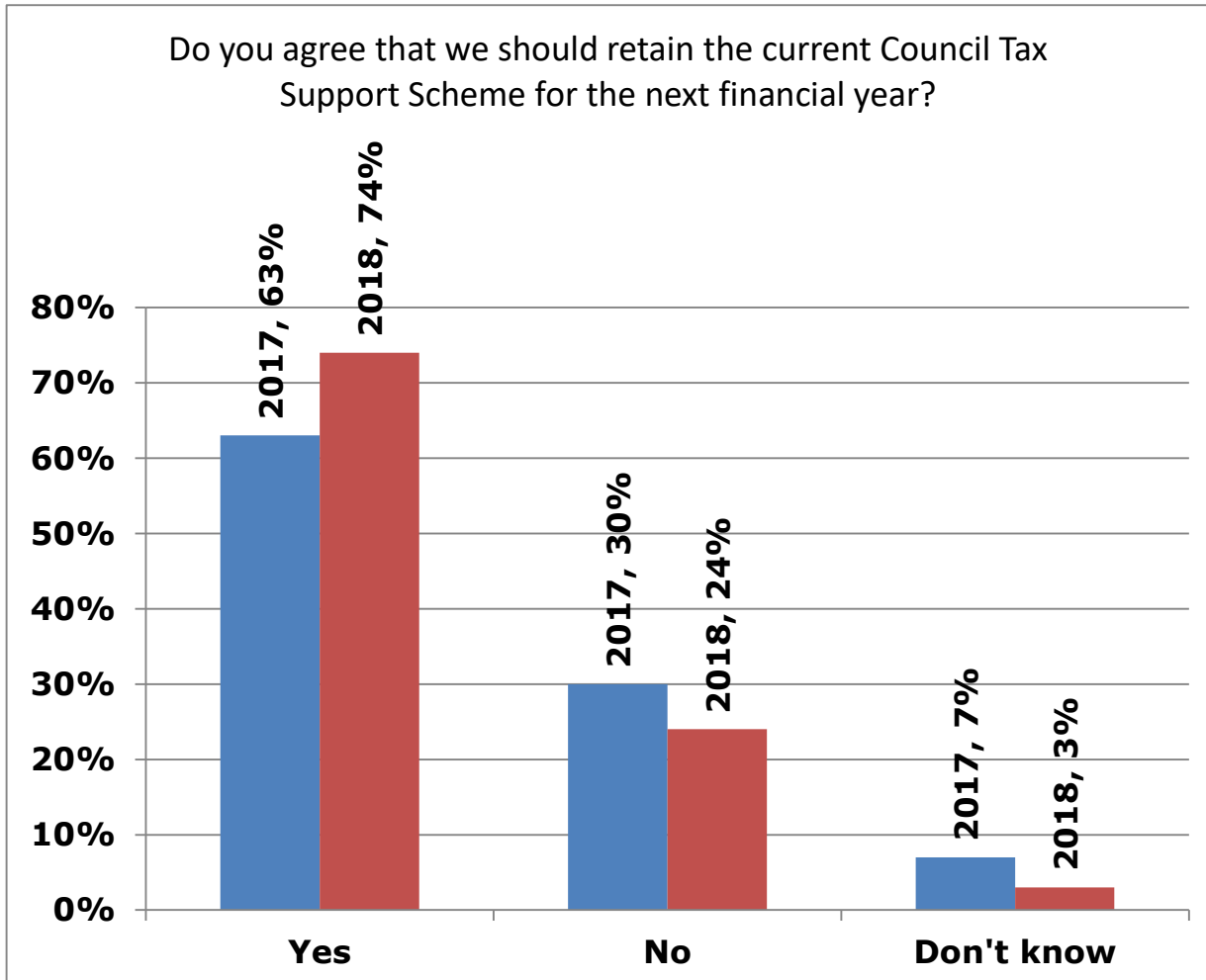
The consultation took place between 27 September 2018 and 24 October 2018.

33 electronic responses and 2 paper copies were received; a decline of 20 responses when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2017.

It should be noted that base data has been rounded to the nearest number (so may add up to between 99% and 101%)

1.0 Detailed Information

1.1. The comparison chart below shows that 74% of all respondents agreed that we should retain the current Council Tax Support Scheme for the next financial year; a slight increase of 11% when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2017.

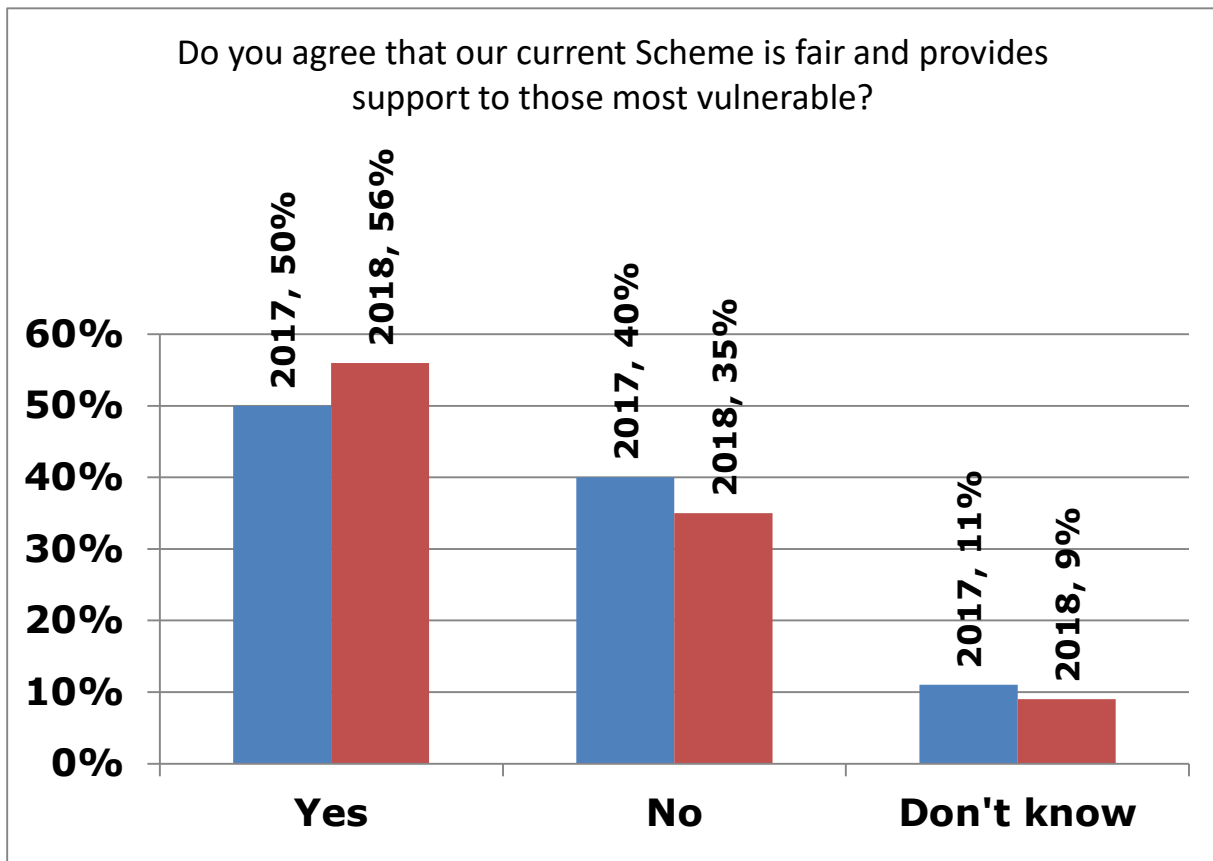


1.2. Those respondents that stated that they 'did not agree' at 1.1 above were asked why; the following reasons were given:

- I think everyone should have to pay at least 25% of Council Tax regardless of age.
- Parents with disabled child/ren should be helped further. I work on a zero hours contract averaging £2,000 a year and my husband works 16 hours on national minimum wage. I still pay over half my rent and Council Tax as our earnings take us well over the earnings limit. We are basically penalised for working, yet if we didn't work, we'd be better off.
- I think discount should be fair to all as it is a struggle paying the Council Tax
- Should simplify and introduce income banding to allow for fluctuating incomes due to Universal Credit. This will help residents understand their liability and reduce work load for the service.

- In this day and age many people are vulnerable and have no money. They have to choose food, water bill, heating and then Council Tax bill. So they do without heating and food.
- Everyone should be made to pay the same amount of Council Tax. By providing discounts to one group of people, the people paying are footing the bill for the others. Everyone should pay the same. In the hope this would reduce the amount for people who don't get a reduction.
- No, because those of us working have to foot the bill which is increasing yearly every year.

1.3. Respondents were asked if they agreed that our current Scheme was fair and provided support to those most vulnerable? (*Different groups such as families with children and people with disabilities are awarded 'premiums' in the calculation which means they can have more income and still get Council Tax Support*). The comparison chart below shows that 56% of respondents agreed that our current Scheme was fair and provided support to those most vulnerable; a slight increase of 6% when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2017.



1.4. 56% of all respondents 'agreed' with the proposal to introduce a new class providing up to 100% Council Tax Support for care leavers aged 18-21 years, 35% 'did not agree', with the remaining 9% stating that they 'did not know' if they agreed with the proposal.

- 1.5 In response to the question "are there any other people we should protect when considering changes to our Council Tax Support Scheme in the future?"
- 46% of respondents considered there were other people we should protect
 - 27% of respondents considered there were no other people we should protect
 - 27% of respondents stated that they did not know
- 1.6. Those respondents that considered there were other people we should protect when considering changes to our Council Tax Support Scheme in the future were asked who and to give their reasons. The most common suggestions were that we should protect people with disabilities and working people and families on low incomes. The full list of suggestions is detailed below:
- All Adult Carers aged over 18.
 - Working people on low incomes that are just above the benefits threshold.
 - Disabled households who claim dla/pip middle or high rate care/enhanced pip. They are already paying significantly for care and services that are not provided by authorities as there is no money to provide these services.
 - Elderly, unemployed, the vulnerable and those with disabilities
 - Disabled people on relevant benefits and working age people on the lowest incomes, i.e. basic JSA and UC should get the 100% discount, not capped at 75%. Otherwise we are setting people up to fail. 25% of Council Tax is not affordable to someone on £73.10 pw, and it is unlikely to be paid. In which case it costs a lot to enforce it, which is most likely not cost effective for the Council. It puts people into a cycle of debt, which has other knock-on effects, such as impinges on well-being, and this impact on other services, such as the NHS and Social services.
 - Those households on the lowest levels of means-tested benefit income (measured per head) should in principle be eligible for up to 100% relief. The reason for this is that even if eligible for 75% relief under the existing scheme, then households on say £73 pw will struggle to meet the 25% obligation - incurring work and costs for ELDC in chasing up arrears and bad debts while also increasing the pressure on the households in question who may then generate pressures elsewhere in the local system (homelessness, etc.).
 - That those who work full time and pay full Council Tax are not expected to pay their mortgages and Council Tax every mth in full and then have to live on less disposable income than those on benefits.
 - Pensioners are protected with 100% discount. Although this is national policy, given pensioners are now more affluent demographic consider low incomes of working households in the district.

- Should be means tested. Stop spending money on unnecessarily work like replacing pavements with tarmac when the roads are in bad repair. The pavement was ok.
- Families on low incomes should be protected.
- Low wage earner
- Single, unemployed and on sick as there doesn't seem to be appropriate boxes to tick on the form so therefore fail to be able to request the help.
- Students, forces personnel and ex forces shouldn't pay any Council Tax if they have served this country for 10 years plus.
- People receiving support in the esa because they are sick

1.7. Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions, alternative proposals or comments they would like us to consider. The most common responses to this question were:

- Working people on low incomes should be considered eligible for Council Tax Support
- Some Local Authorities award 90-100% Council Tax discount for people on means-tested benefits.

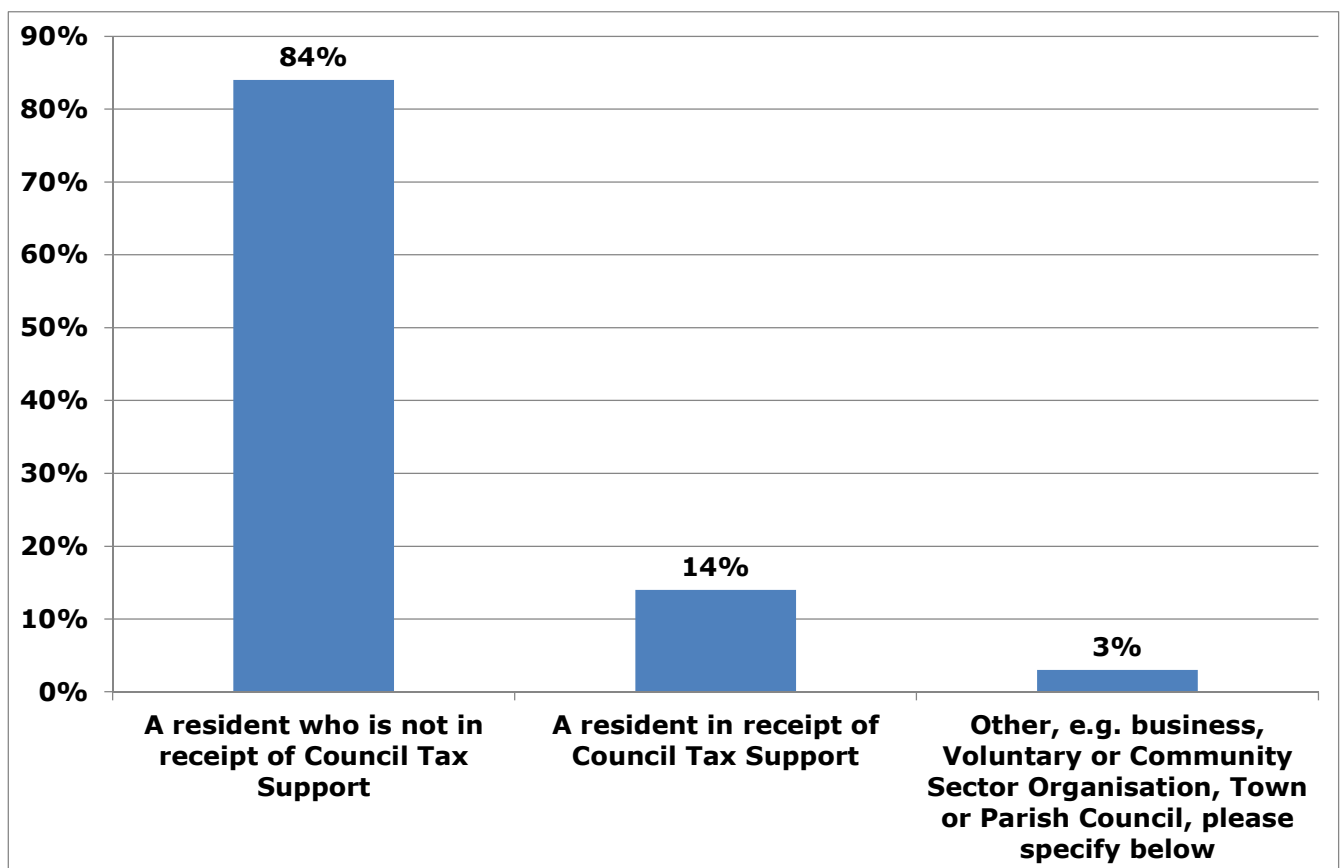
A full list of suggestions, alternative proposals and comments received are detailed below:

- Why restrict to just 18-21? Carers are unwaged and should not be liable for Council Tax even if they are unable to qualify for Council Tax Benefit due to capital, etc.
- Working people on low incomes but just above benefits threshold. Those that don't have enough income to take any more CT rises when they are already so high for us.
- Include disabled households
- There are many local authorities who award 100% Council Tax discount for people on such means-tested benefits and disabled people. Compared with other LAs 75% is very high, many have set their CTR limit at 90 and 100%.
- Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit should be awarded to all working or on less than a certain amount! As a full time worker, after paying rent and Council Tax, I have less to live on than a single mother on benefits
- Money Advice Trust's national 'Stop the Knock' campaign shows ELDC referrals to debt collection agencies has increased 16% between 2014/15 - 2016/17. The data shows that of 5,730 referrals to bailiffs, 5,198 of these were because of Council Tax Arrears. Suggest Council should consider policy to exempt CTS recipients from bailiff action. <https://www.stoptheknock.org/> .

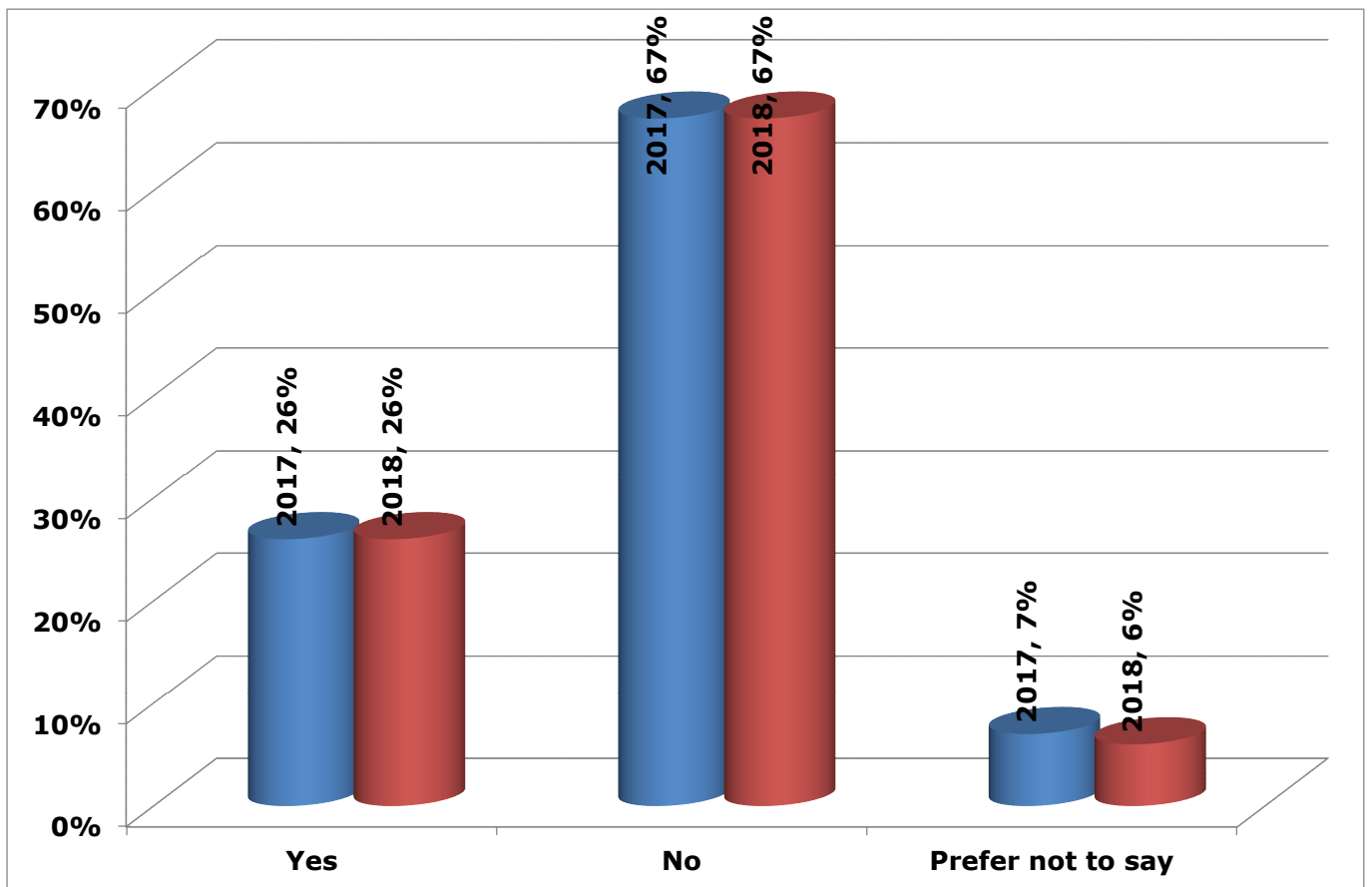
- Why should everyone else foot the bill to reduce a group of people? Everyone should be treated equally.
- Although you stated that pensioners will not be affected in this I do feel that the scheme is wrong as it stands. As a pensioner myself I pay full Council Tax of £1500 pa. I am considered not worthy of a discount as our pensions are just over the amount to claim pension credits. Therefore, being just over the amount for pension credits I have to not only pay full Council Tax. I also have to pay dentist, plus many more, whereas being on some kind of benefit gives you access to some service free. This makes us much worse off than the person getting pension credits. It's madness
 - It would be easier if the people on lowest means-tested benefit income were on 100% CTR discount. Do you think that could be achieved? A lot of LAs offer 90-100% CTR.

2.0. Respondent Profile

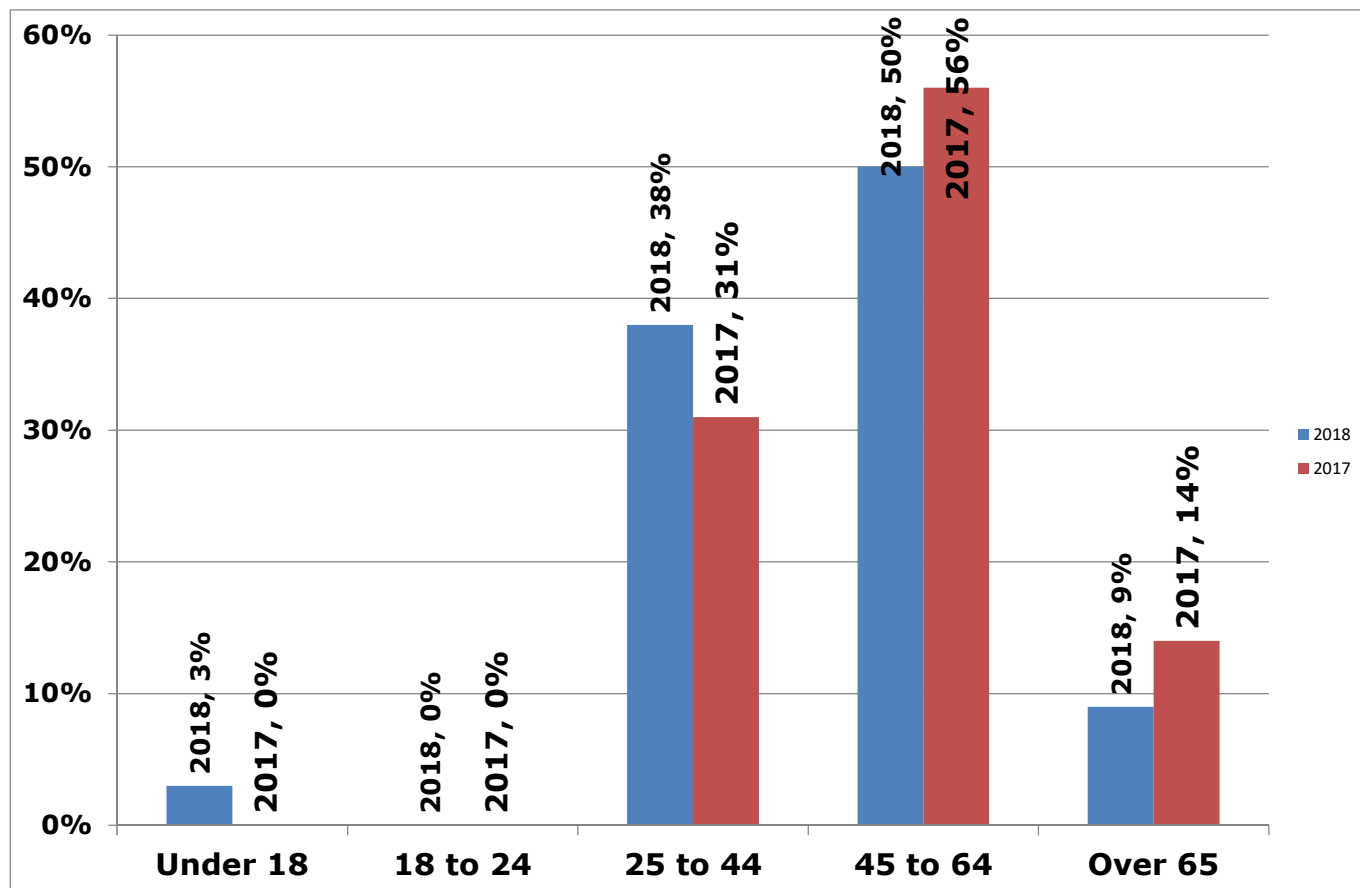
2.1 The chart below shows that 84% of those that responded were 'Residents who were not in receipt of Council Tax Support'. There has been a change in respondent profile since the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2017, when the majority of respondents were 'Residents in receipt of Council Tax Support'.



2.2. The comparison chart below shows that 67% of all respondents stated they 'did not have a disability', as was the case when the previous consultation exercise was undertaken in 2017.



2.3. The comparison chart below shows that the most popular age groups to respond to the consultation were the '25 to 44' and '45 to 64' age groups, as was the case when the previous consultation exercise was undertaken in 2017.



Response from Lincolnshire County Council

Thank you for your letter of 27th September consulting the County Council on your proposed local council tax support scheme for 2019/20. Please accept this e-mail as the formal response from the County Council in its capacity as the major precepting body.

The trend in expenditure on the scheme from its initiation in 2013/14 to date is noted as is the fact that the costs have been contained within the initial funding envelope given by Government. It is accepted that the combined impact of above inflation council tax increases and changes to the benefit regime will likely result in increased scheme costs going forward. This Council has previously supported schemes proposed for each year since inception and pleased to confirm it supports the scheme now proposed for 2019/20. That scheme essentially being a continuation of the current scheme supplemented by the granting of 100% discount to care leavers, a category of individual for which this authority has care responsibilities.

I hope this response is of value to your consultation.

Yours sincerely,

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