

**Council Tax Support Scheme 2020/21
Consultation Report
Published 10 February 2020**

“You Said, We Listened”



Introduction to this consultation

1. In 2019 the Council introduced a 'You Said, We Listened' approach to consider feedback received through public engagement activities. This report contains the responses we received for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2020/21 consultation between 19th December 2019 and 29th January 2020 and our responses to this feedback.
2. The exercise was performed to gain the views of residents on the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2020/21 financial year.

Methodology

3. The consultation, which was available in both hard copy and online, was promoted in a number of ways.
 - A media release was circulated announcing the proposals for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2020/21. The media release also provided residents with details of the consultation exercise being undertaken.
 - A letter was forwarded to precepting Authorities on 19th December 2019, inviting them to give their views on the proposals for 2020/21. A copy of the response received from the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner supporting the proposals for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2020/21 is attached at the end of this report. An email was received from Lincolnshire County Council stating they had completed the online questionnaire and that they supported the proposals.
 - 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.
4. It should be noted that base data has been rounded to the nearest number (so may add up to between 99% and 101%). Where available this report details comparisons with the previous consultation.

Response Rate

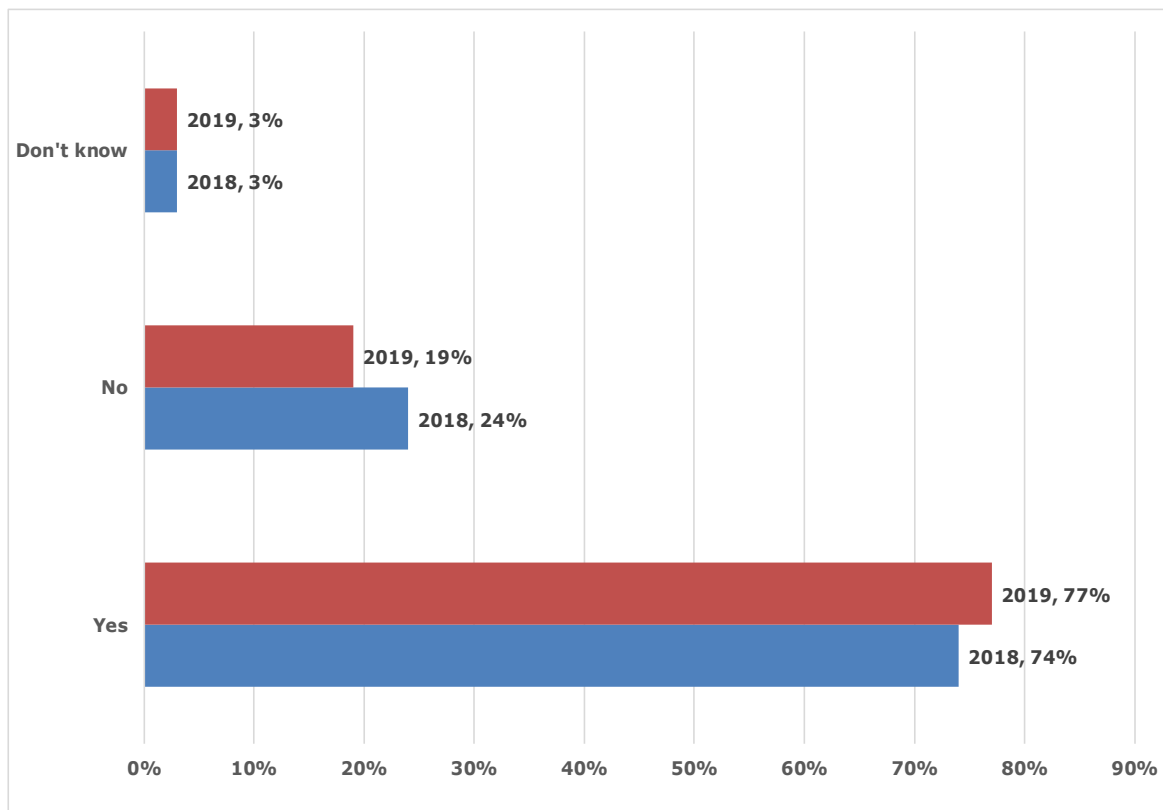
5. A total of 26 responses were received; 23 electronic and 3 paper copies; a decline of 9 responses when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2018. The response rate has continued to decline since 2016, as shown in the table below:

Year	Number of Responses
2018	35
2017	55
2016	103

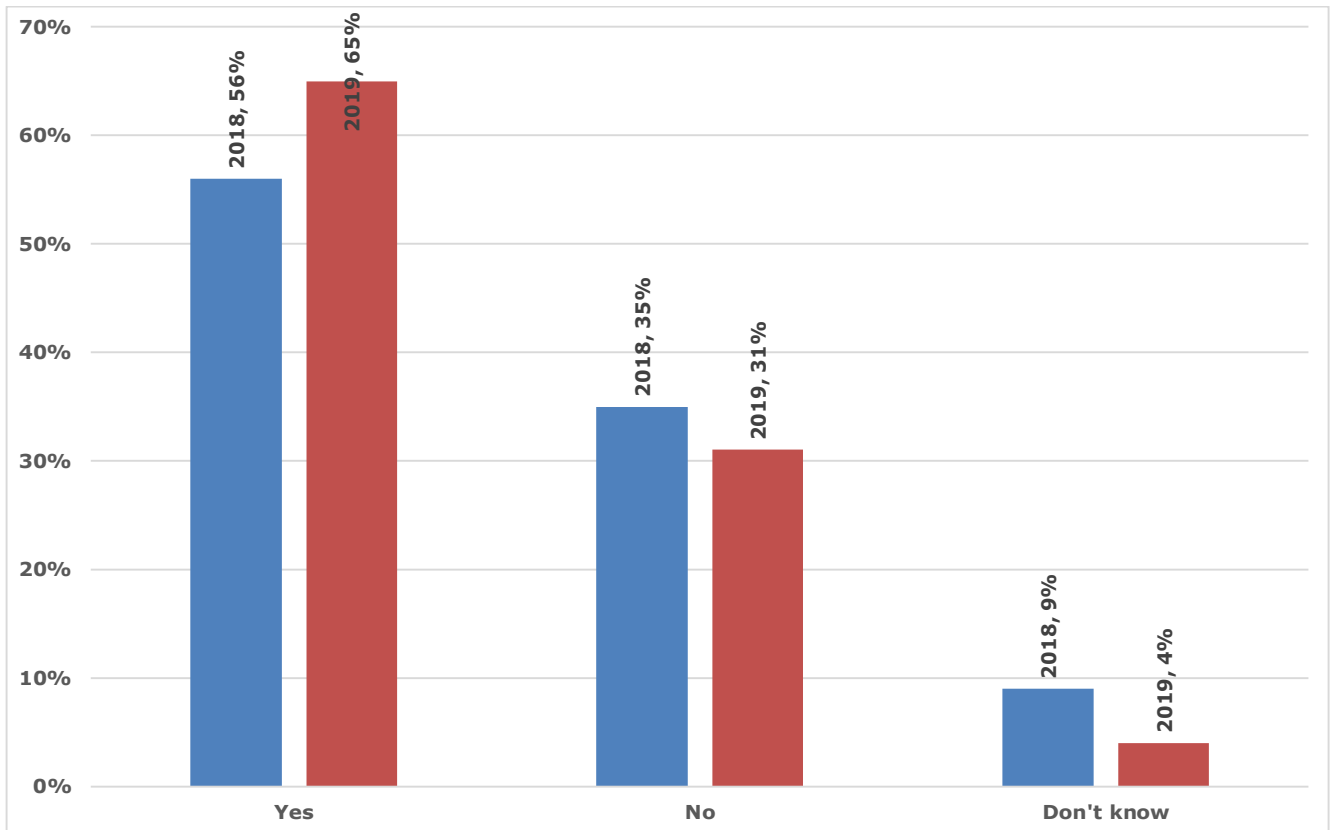
Results and Analysis

Main characteristics of the Scheme

6. Respondents were provided with details of the main characteristics of Council Tax Support Scheme and were asked if these should continue into 2020/21. The comparison chart below shows that 77% of all respondents 'agreed' that the Council should keep the main characteristics of the current Council Tax Support Scheme for the next financial year to provide continuity; a slight increase of 3% when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2018.



7. Respondents were asked if they considered the Scheme was fair and provided support to the most vulnerable. The comparison chart below shows that 65% of all respondents agreed that the Council’s current Scheme was fair and provided support to those most vulnerable; an increase of 9% when compared with the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2018.



Protecting other groups

8. 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?”
- 27% of respondents considered there were other people we should protect
 - 39% of respondents considered there were no other people we should protect
 - 35% of respondents stated that they did not know
9. 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 should be protected and to give their reasons. All responses to this question are listed below:
- I feel that 25% contribution is too high and consideration should be given to why people live in high Council Tax areas - could it be because there is such

limited/no availability of big houses for people claiming benefit but who need a big house?

- Homeless veterans who often become homeless because when leaving the forces they reside with single occupants who do not want to declare an additional person residing with them, which will make them eligible for full Council Tax payments. If a resident decides to accommodate someone who would otherwise be homeless they should have a period of time in which CT is waived.
- I believe that anyone that receives carers allowance should not have to pay Council Tax and should get 100% discount; carers get a minimal amount of payment and most have to give up paid employment to care for someone and only get £66.15. They don't get given the credit they deserve so how can they afford to pay Council Tax when they are saving the government lots of money by being a carer.
- Single occupants should be getting more than 25% off their bill, it should be at least 50%.
- People on low pay, as some get as little as a pound or so too much to entitle them to a deduction therefore ending up in poverty, plus why should people go to work and pay full whack yet people sit at home and do nothing and get a rebate, as well as free prescriptions, free eye tests, free dental care, etc.
- Caravan owners.
- Lincolnshire County Council, a major preceptor, considered that the Council should support Care Leavers to the age of 25, in line with local authority social care responsibilities.

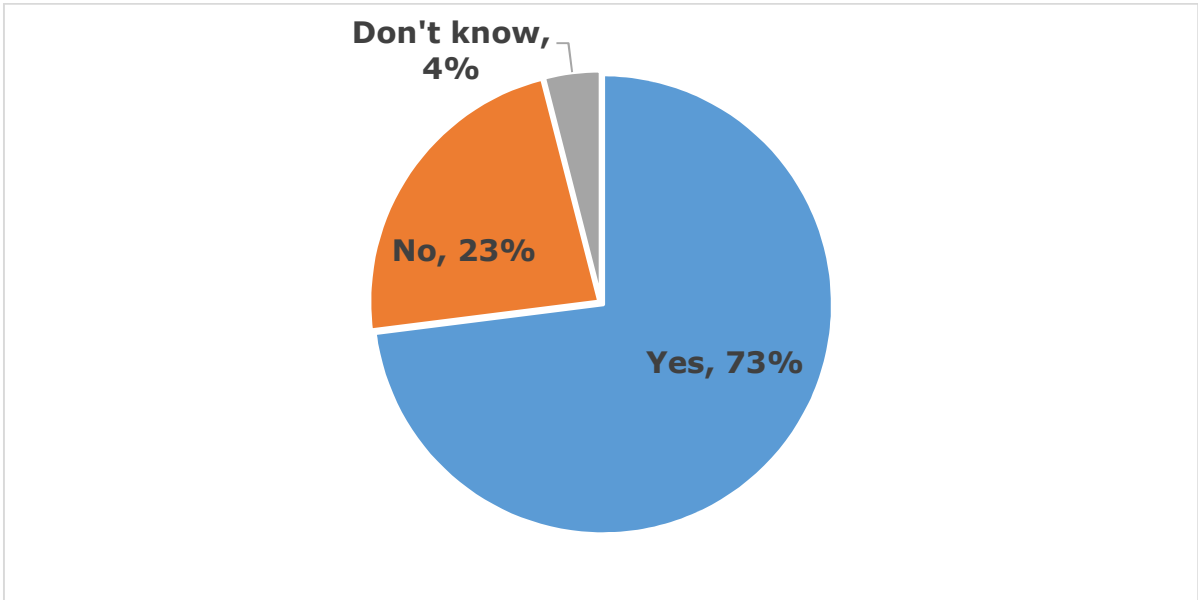
Amending the Scheme to reflect DWP annual adjustments

10. All respondents were informed that each year the Government reviews and generally increases the amount people need to live on for the calculation of welfare benefit. By applying the same changes to the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme it would ensure that the Scheme remained up to date with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) allowances and premiums each year. All respondents were asked if they agreed with the proposal to increase the Council's Scheme in line with the Department for Works and Pensions provisions for Housing Benefit for 2020/21 and future years. Just over three quarters (77%) of all respondents stated that they 'agreed' with the proposal, with the remaining 23% stating that they 'did not agree' with the proposal to increase the Council's scheme in line with the Department for Works and Pensions provisions for Housing Benefits for 2020/21 and future years.

Linking the Council Tax Support Scheme and Universal Credit application processes

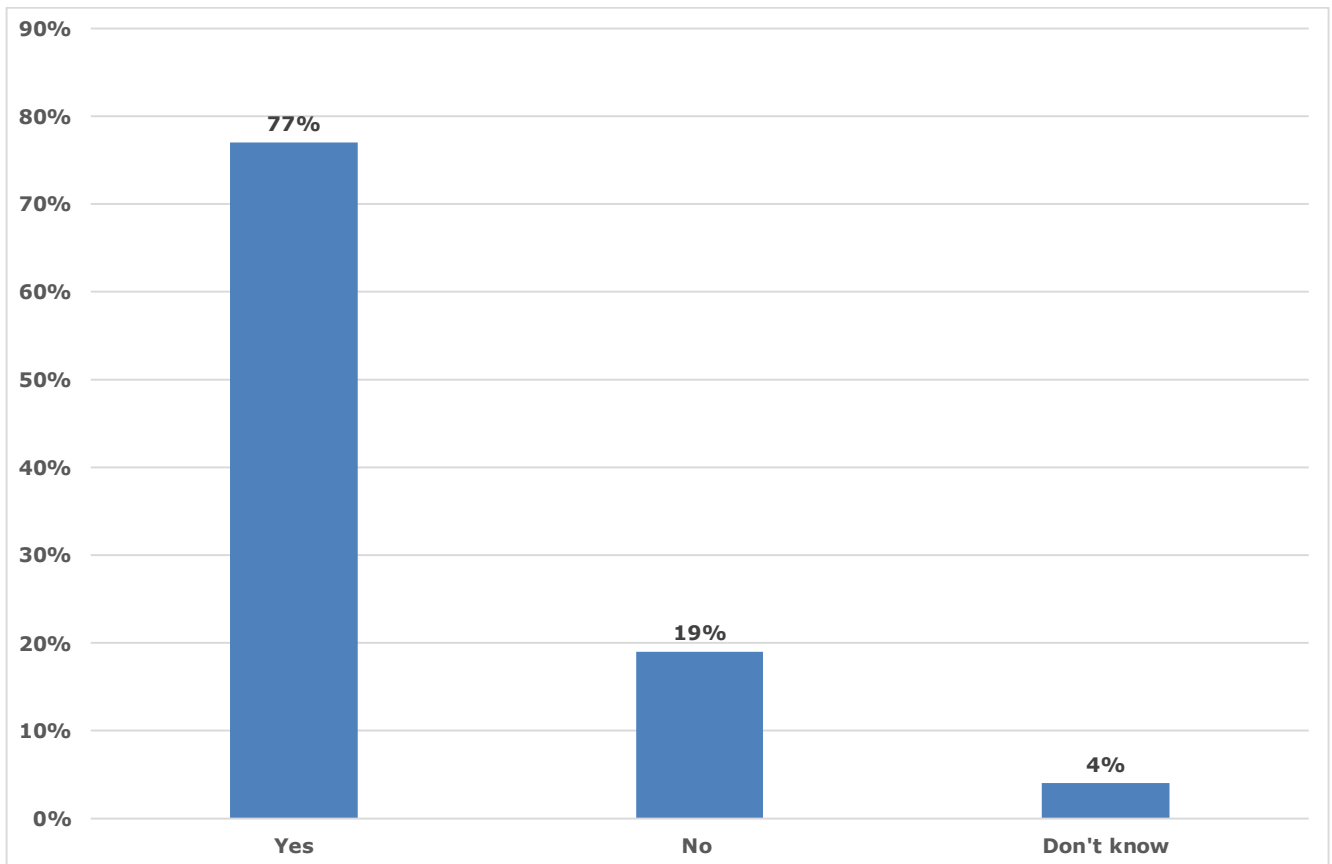
11. All respondents were advised that, at the moment, Universal Credit claimants needed to make a separate application for Council Tax Support to the Council. By introducing a link to the award of Universal Credit, it would make it easier for those applying for Universal Credit to apply for Council Tax Support as well, at the same time, removing the need to make a separate application. All respondents were

asked if they agreed with the proposal to introduce a link to the award of Universal Credit, removing the need for a separate application. The pie chart below shows that nearly three quarters (73%) of all respondents 'agreed' with the proposal, 23% 'did not agree', with the remaining 4% stating that they 'did not know.'



Introducing a tolerance level to simplify what happens to Council Tax Support when Universal Credit earnings change by a small amount

12. All respondents were informed that Universal Credit was paid monthly, calculated on the customer's circumstances including earnings. The Council recognises that customer's circumstances, especially earnings, fluctuated. Under the Council's existing scheme rules, the Council is required to recalculate the amount of Council Tax Support whenever a customer's Universal Credit changes, generating a revised Council Tax bill and updated payment arrangements. This could increase the customer's uncertainty about the amount of Council Tax they need to pay. Under the proposals, any earnings change within a new tolerance level would have the effect of 'freezing' a customer's Council Tax Support, and therefore no revised correspondence would be issued to the customer and there would be no amendment to Council Tax repayments. Where a customer's circumstance noticeably changes, for example employments ceases, the tolerance rule would not apply and this would trigger an immediate adjustment to Council Tax Support to provide extra benefit.
13. All respondents were asked if they agreed that the Council should simplify what happens to Council Tax Support when Universal Credit earnings change by small amounts, by introducing a tolerance level. The chart below shows that 77% of all respondents 'agreed' that the Council should simplify what happens to Council Tax Support when Universal Credit earnings change by small amounts, by introducing a tolerance level, 19% 'did not agree', with the remaining 4% stating that they 'did not know' if they agreed.

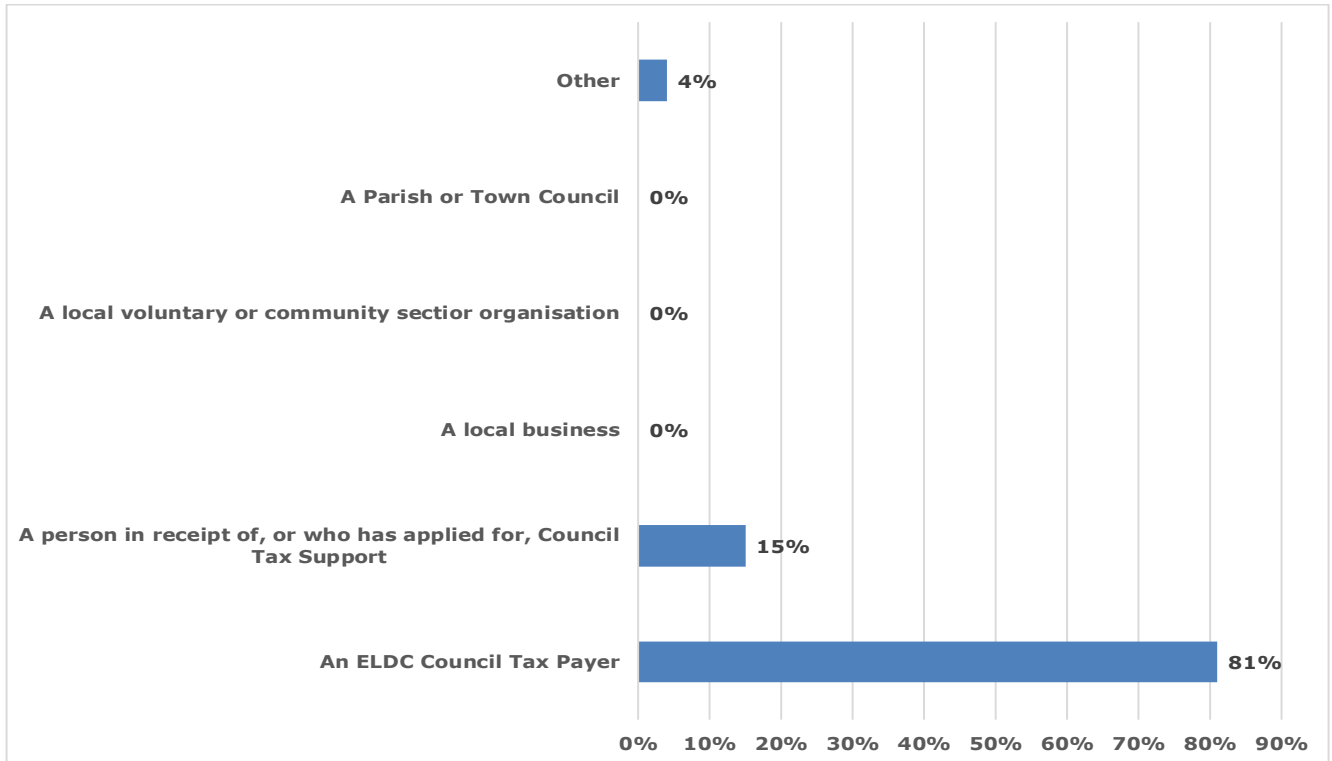


14. In response to the question “what do you feel the earnings tolerance level should be set at?” (£15 per week is approximately 2 hours at national minimum wage rate)

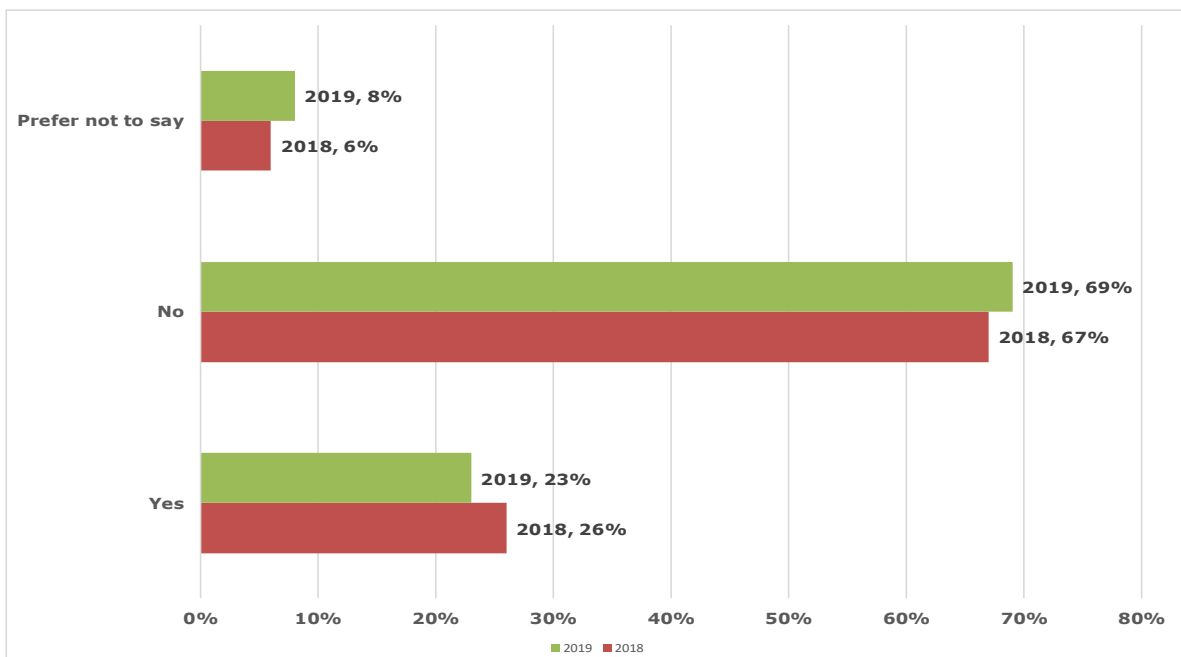
- 38% of all respondents considered the earnings tolerance level should be set at £20 per week (£87 per month). Lincolnshire County Council considered the earnings tolerance level should be set at this level.
- 19% considered it should be set at £25 per week (£108 per month)
- 19% considered it should be set at £10 per week (£43 per month)
- 13% considered it should be set at £15 per month (£65 per month)
- 13% stated that they did not know.

Respondent Analysis

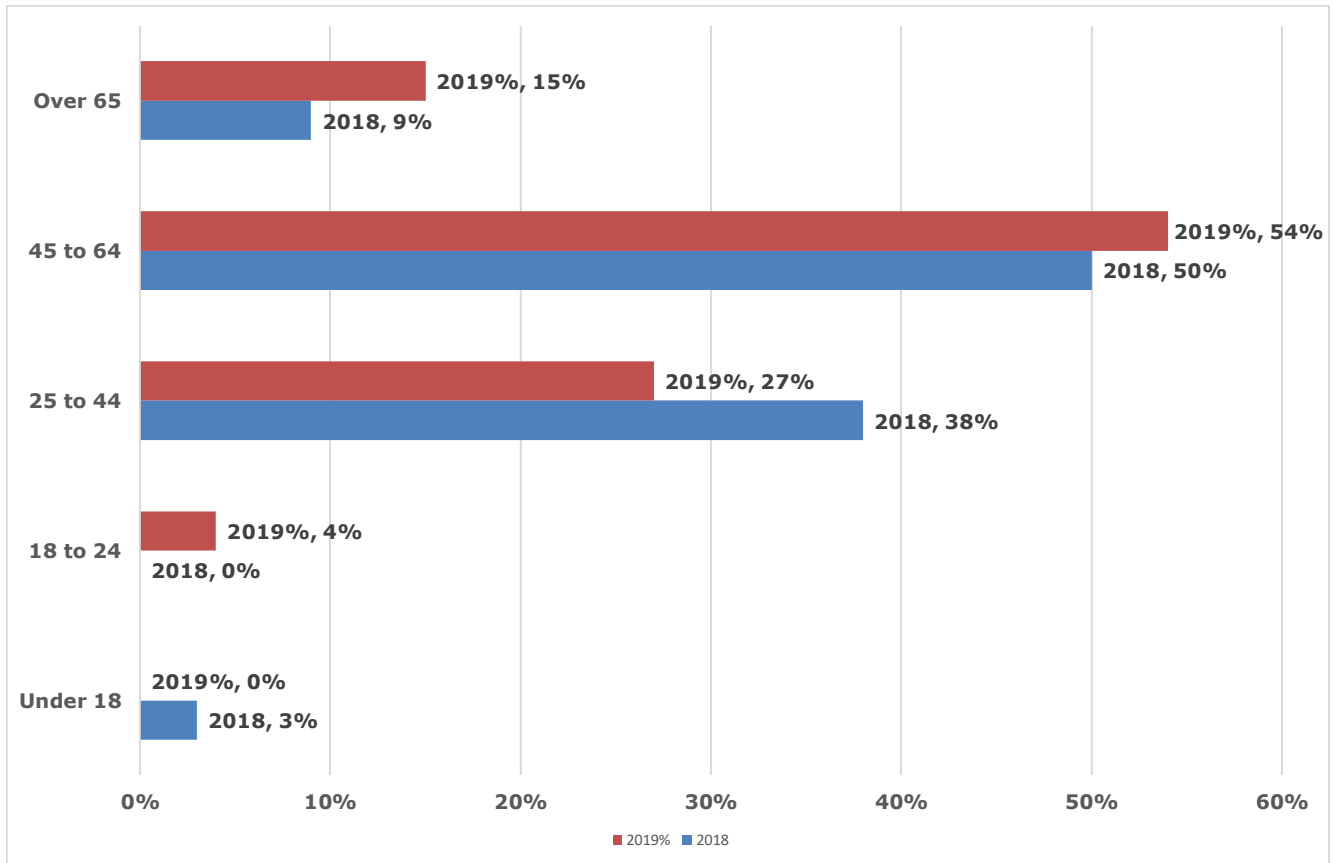
15. The chart below shows that 81% of those that responded were 'An ELDC Council Tax Payer'. Only one respondent answered 'Other'; this was Lincolnshire County Council, major preceptor.



16. The comparison chart below shows that 69% of all respondents considered they 'did not have a disability'; a slight increase of 2% when compared to the previous consultation exercise undertaken in 2018.



17. The comparison chart below shows that the most popular age groups to respond to the consultation were the '45 to 64' and '25 to 44' age groups, as was the case when the previous consultation exercise was undertaken in 2018.



Customer Satisfaction Feedback

You Said	We Listened

We Listened - Management response

Thank you to everyone that took the time to complete this survey. The xxxx is committed to offering the most up to date and customer driven approach in providing the service. Your feedback helps us to continue to develop and improve the service.

We will also be reviewing each area of the service to try and increase customer satisfaction levels even further.

Contact:

For more information relating to this report contact:

- Jackie Todd, Consultation Officer at policy&performance@e-lindsey.gov.uk or 01507 601111



**Lincolnshire
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER**

SAFER TOGETHER

Deepdale Lane, Nettleham, Lincoln LN2 2LT
Telephone (01522) 947192 Fax (01522) 558739
E-Mail: lincolnshire-pcc@lincs.pnn.police.uk Website: www.lincolnshire-pcc.gov.uk

Date: 28th January 2020
Our Ref: JF/ch/2019-1364

Consultation Officer
East Lindsey District Council
Tedder Hall
Manby Park
LOUTH
Lincs
LN11 8UP

Dear

Re: Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Thank you for your letter of 20th December 2019 in which you seek the Police and Crime Commissioner's view on your Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) comments are focussed on the aggregate impact of the scheme from the perspective of the police precept. The PCC has no desire to make additional service reductions or propose additional increases in his council tax to fund potential shortfalls arising from Local Council Tax Support Schemes. As a result, the PCC supports proposals for Council Tax Support Schemes which eliminate, or at least minimise, consequent funding reductions. In addition, the PCC supports proposals to increase income through the discretions for Council Tax exemptions.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

Chief Finance Officer