

**CHICHESTER DISTRICT COUNCIL
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM**

**COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME
SURVEY 2018/19**

CONSULTATION ANALYSIS REPORT

OCTOBER 2017

Introduction

From 1 April 2013 councils have been able to create their own local Council Tax Reduction schemes (CTR) (formerly council tax benefit). Every year since then Chichester District Council (CDC) has consulted the public on the Council Tax Reduction scheme for the financial year ahead.

This year the gradual roll out of Universal Credit (UC) has the potential to create uncertainty for claimants and increase administration costs consequently an additional banded scheme for claimants in receipt of UC has been proposed for the financial year 2018/2019.

Executive Summary

- **71 responses** were received over the 7 week consultation period
- **50.7%** of respondents pay council tax to CDC but do not receive CTR and **38%** do receive CTR. Several respondents mentioned that they are retired and living in single person households and a similar number mentioned ill-health in their household
- Overall respondents preferred the **banded scheme**, however, further analysis revealed that those who receive CTR consistently preferred the option to make no changes to the existing scheme
- **8 in 10** respondents agree with the idea of a discretionary hardship fund (if the banded scheme were to be implemented)
- The most frequent general comments were expressing concern about the **unfairness** of the new system for those in certain circumstances (low income, disability etc.) and questions of how the new system would work for people whose monthly income fluctuates.

Methodology

An electronic survey was available online through the CDC website and notification of consultation advertised on the news section of the front page. The survey was available from Friday 4th August until Monday 25th September 2017 – a period of over 7 weeks. Paper copies were made available on request.

The survey was promoted via CDC's social media channels, including Facebook and Twitter, throughout the consultation period. A Twitter poll was also pinned to the top of the Council's Twitter feed. A full breakdown of engagement is included in Appendix A.

The Revenues and Benefits Team sent out leaflets promoting the survey with all Council Tax correspondence and email acknowledgements contained notification that the consultation was live. Posters and leaflets were displayed in CDC's reception.

A total of **71 responses** were received. The level of response is typical of previous Council Tax consultations and much higher than the 2016 survey which received 48 responses.

This report presents and analyses the results of each survey question. Where percentages do not add up to 100% this is because respondents could select more than one answer. Agreement and disagreement figures quoted include all those who indicated they 'agreed/strongly agreed' or 'disagreed/strongly disagreed' with a particular proposal.

Respondent Profile

The survey asked respondents about their current situation concerning Council Tax. The table below details the responses.

Which of the following statements describe your current Council Tax situation?		
Council Tax Circumstance	% respondents	No. of responses
Do not pay Council Tax to CDC	9.9%	7
Pay Council Tax to CDC and receive CTR	38%	27
Pay Council Tax to CDC and do not receive CTR	50.7%	36
Landlord of property/properties in Chichester District	1.4%	1
Owner of an empty property in Chichester District	1.4%	1

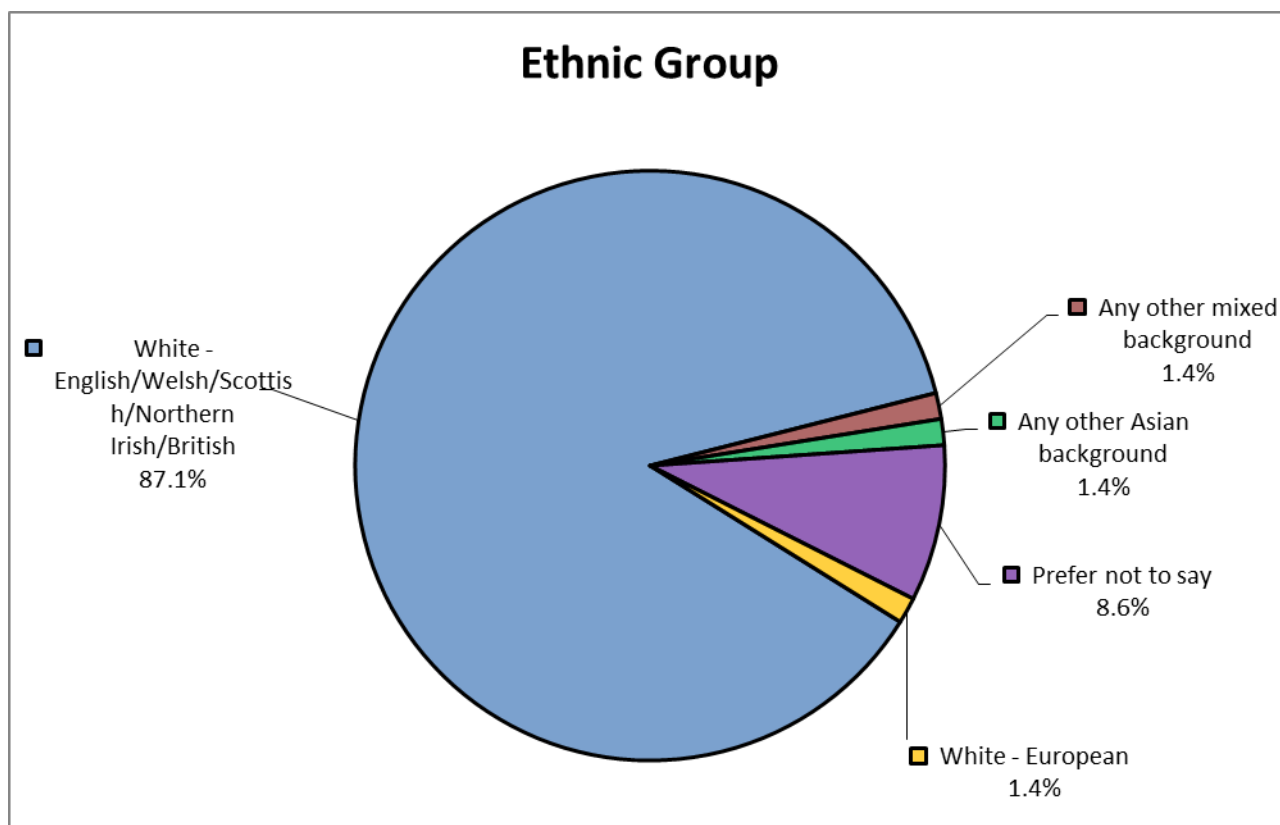
Two respondents said they represent a local or community sector organisation in Chichester District (SelseyWorks and Citizens Advice).

57 respondents provided their postcodes which have been mapped in Appendix B.

Age Group	% Respondents (Counts)	Age Group	% Respondents (Counts)
Under 16	0.0% (0)	45 – 54	24.3% (17)
16 – 24	1.4% (1)	55 – 64	15.7% (11)
25 - 34	12.9% (9)	65+	20% (14)
35 - 44	21.4% (15)	Prefer not to say	4.3% (3)

Just under a quarter of respondents were aged between 45 and 54 which is similar to the 2016 CTR consultation results.

The male / female split of respondents was heavily skewed towards females this year with **72.1%** (42) of respondents being female. A quarter (**25%** or 17) were male and 2.9% (2) did not wish to disclose this information.



The majority of respondents (**87.1%** or 61) were White – English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British and one respondent (**1.4%**) categorised themselves as White – European. According to the 2011 Census, 93% of the District's population is 'White – English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British'. Compared to the 2016 results there were fewer respondents who did not wish to disclose their ethnic group (13% in 2016).

Just under half of respondents (**47.1%** or 32) said their religion is Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations), **35.3%** (24) said they have no religion and **14.7%** (10) did not wish to disclose this information.

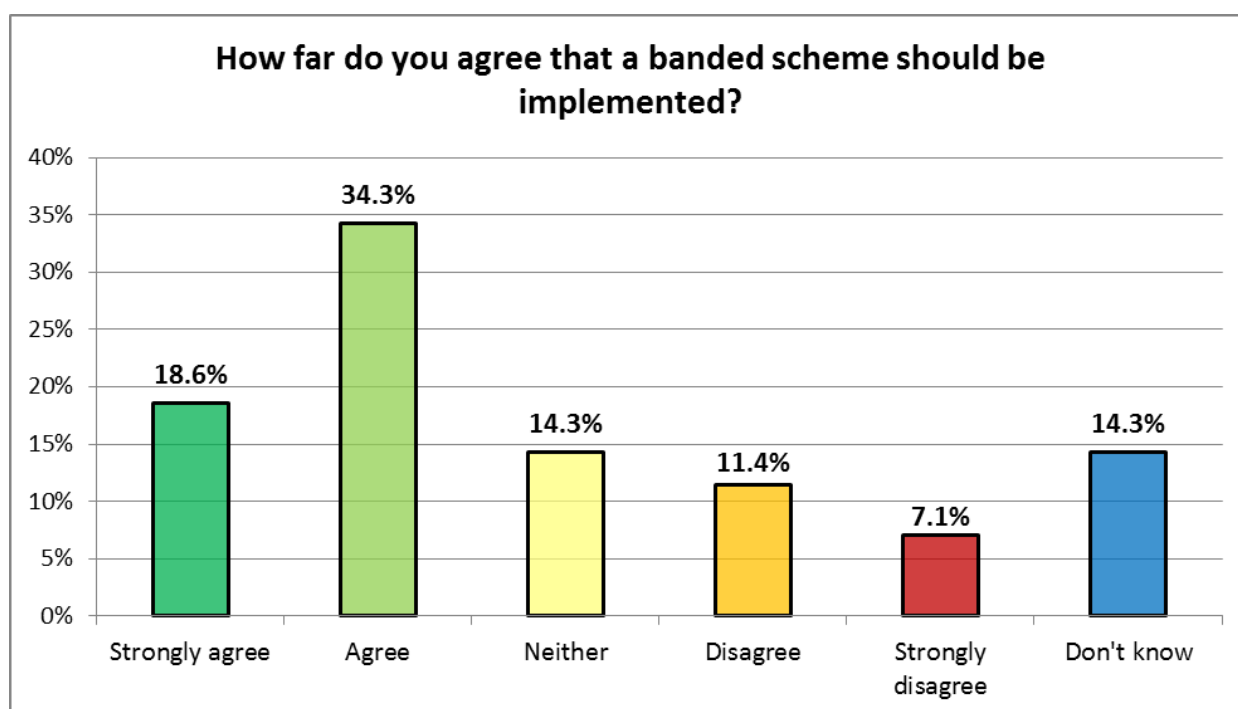
14.5% (10) of respondents have a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities, 7 in 10 (**71%**) do not and a further 14.5% did not wish to disclose their health status.

Respondents were asked if there was anything else about their personal circumstances that would help to better understand their answers. Quite a few respondents said they were retired in a single person household and others mentioned ill-health in their household. To read these comments verbatim please refer to Appendix C.

Survey Results

Respondents were given some background information about the proposed banded Council Tax scheme and given an example of how it could work. They were then asked how far they agreed that a banded scheme, like the one shown, should be implemented.

	Single Household Income Band		Couple Household Income Band		1 Child Household Income Band		2 or more Children Income Band	
Reduction	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To
100%	£0.00	£100.00	£0.00	£150.00	£0.00	£200.00	£0.00	£250.00
80%	£100.01	£120.00	£150.01	£170.00	£200.01	£220.00	£250.01	£270.00
60%	£120.01	£140.00	£170.01	£190.00	£220.01	£240.00	£270.01	£290.00
40%	£140.01	£160.00	£190.01	£210.00	£240.01	£260.00	£290.01	£310.00
20%	£160.01	£180.00	£210.01	£230.00	£260.01	£280.00	£310.01	£330.00
0%	£180.01	+	£230.01	+	£280.01	+	£330.01	+



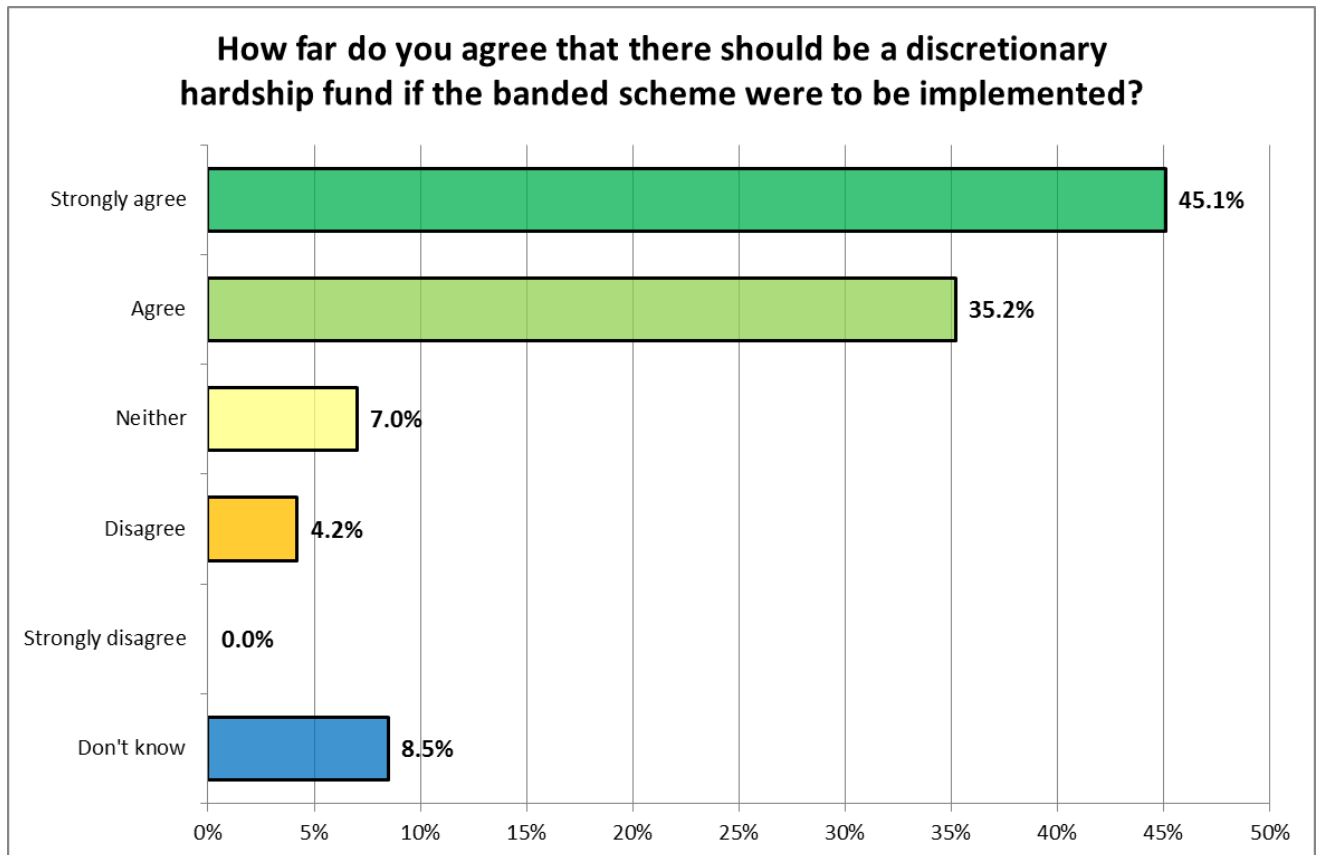
52.9% (37) of respondents agreed that a banded scheme should be implemented, **28.6%** (20) were uncertain or felt strongly neither way and **18.5%** (13) disagreed with a banded scheme.

Those who do not receive CTR were the most likely to agree with the banded scheme and those who do receive CTR were the least likely to agree with this option. Although, there were comments to suggest that respondents would not want to agree to a banded scheme without knowing the final figures that would be used.

Respondents aged 65 and over were the most likely to disagree with the implementation of a banded scheme, which may be related to the comments of retired individuals in single person households seen in the respondent profile.

If the banded scheme were to be adopted there is a risk that the scheme will not protect those in vulnerable circumstances. A solution to this could be to set up a discretionary hardship fund which is more flexible to those in difficult circumstances.

Respondents were asked how far they agree that this fund should be implemented if the banded scheme was adopted.

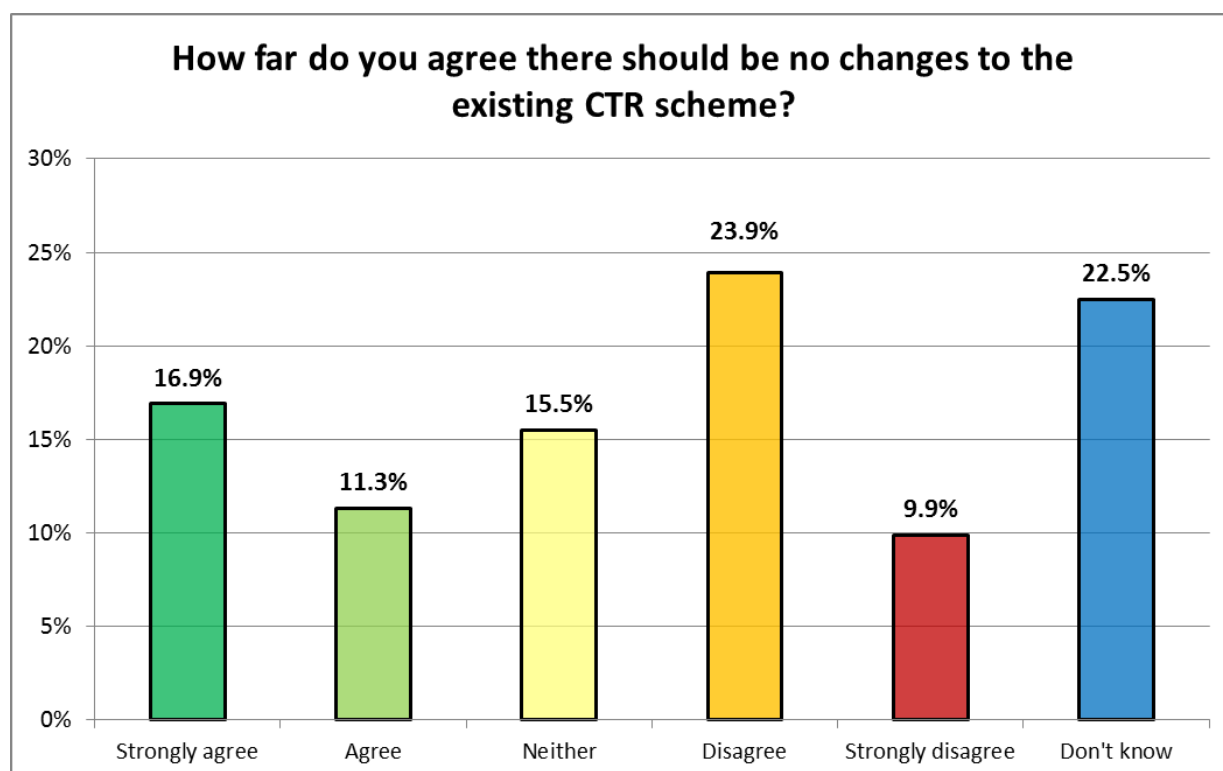


8 in 10 respondents (**80.3%**) agreed that a discretionary hardship fund should be put into place if the banded scheme was adopted. **15.5%** were uncertain or did not feel strongly either way and only **4.2%** actively disagreed.

Respondents who do not receive CTR were more likely to agree with the idea of a discretionary hardship fund than those who do receive CTR. 35-44 year olds and 55-64 year olds were the most likely to agree and 45-54 year olds were the least likely.

The alternative to implementing a banded scheme would be to keep the CTR scheme as it is. Respondents were asked how far they agreed with making no changes to the current scheme.

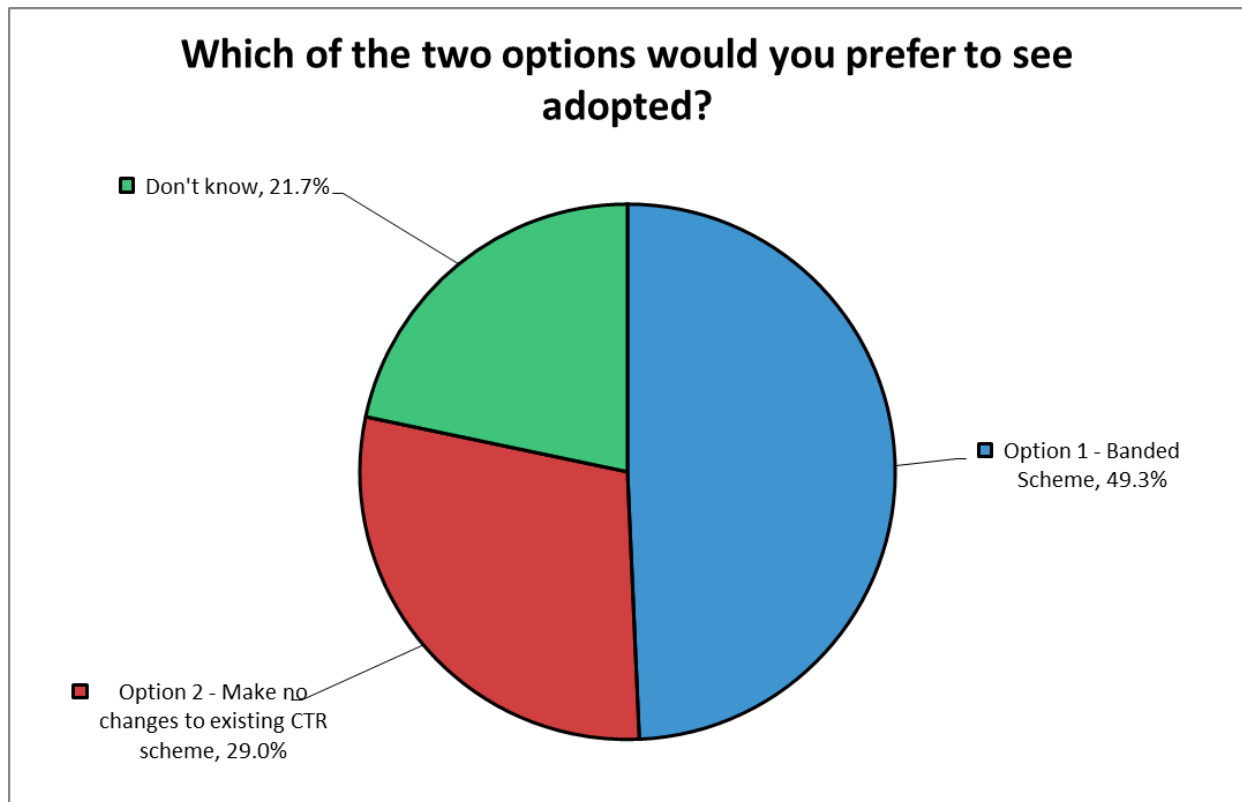
The responses to this question were far more mixed than the questions about the banded scheme. **38%** (27) were uncertain or had no strong feelings either way and a third of respondents (**33.8%** or 24) did not feel that the existing CTR scheme should be kept the same. Only **28.2%** (20) of respondents agreed that the current scheme should remain unchanged. The chart below details the breakdown of responses.



Respondents who receive CTR were more likely to agree that there should be no changes to the existing CTR scheme and those who do not receive CTR were far more likely to disagree.

Respondents between the ages of 45 and 54 were the most likely to agree that the current CTR scheme should remain the same while 25-34 year olds were the most likely to disagree.

Respondents were asked which of the two options they would prefer to see adopted and overall, **Option 1** (the banded scheme) was preferred with almost half (**49.3%**) of respondents selecting this option. **29%** preferred Option 2 (no changes to existing CTR scheme) and the remaining respondents (**21.7%**) were uncertain.



Again it seems that respondents who receive CTR are keen for the scheme to remain as it is whereas those who do not receive a reduction would like to see the banded scheme implemented.

Respondents were then asked if there was anything they felt had not been considered about the options for the CTR scheme for 2018/19. These comments have been summarised below. The number to the left of the comment represents the number of respondents who said this.

CDC has provided a response for each of the comments in the table below – these responses are marked with the Council's logo.

8

impact on people with a low income, disabled claimants or single households who do not claim benefit and still have low income and a high cost of living needs to be considered



Customers on a low income are encouraged to make a claim for CTR. Entitlement will be assessed in accordance with the scheme rules.

2

how would the new Universal Credit system work for people who earn seasonally or get paid different amounts monthly?



The purpose of the banded scheme is to minimise changes in entitlement resulting from fluctuations in earnings making it easier for customers to understand and budget.

1

on street parking in residential areas could help put money back in the pot



This will be considered as part of the Council's wider strategy.

The comments continue onto the next page.

1

the banded system could lead people staying in low paid jobs



The banded scheme is designed for new UC claimants. UC is designed to make work pay. It has been introduced to help ensure people are not deterred from going into work because they lose extra money they earn from the withdrawal of benefits and additional taxes.

1

a banded system makes perfect sense as everyone knows where they stand



The aim of the banded scheme is to provide customers with an improved level of certainty which should assist them with budgeting

1

the notification of changes and credit should be simplified as confusing for some people



A project to improve and simplify our CTR notification letters will be carried out in the 2018-19 financial year.

1

if the council tax reduction scheme is to be banded against income then council tax itself should be banded in the same way



Our scheme effectively provides this because it does not cap liability. For example two claimants entitled to CTR with exactly the same personal circumstances one living in a Band A property and one living in a Band D property would pay the same amount of Council Tax despite the difference in their liability.

The most frequent comment was that the new system is unfair on people in certain situations (low income, disability etc.) who have a high cost of living. Questions of how the new scheme would work for people who work seasonally or whose monthly pay fluctuates was also raised as an issue.

Conclusions

- 52.9% of respondents agree that a banded scheme for claimants in receipt of UC should be implemented. There was a higher level of uncertainty / no strong feelings than active disagreement with this option
- Respondents aged 65 and over were the most likely to disagree with the adoption of a banded scheme which may be linked to the comments of retired individuals living in single person households seen in the respondent profile
- The discretionary hardship fund received the most support with 8 in 10 (80.3%) respondents agreeing with the idea (which would be considered if the banded scheme were to be adopted)
- There was a mixed response to making no changes to the existing CTR scheme with 38% being unsure or having no strong feelings either way. Over a third disagreed with keeping the current scheme the same
- Younger respondents (25-34) were more likely to disagree with Option 2 (make no changes to existing scheme)
- The most frequent comment was about the unfairness of the new system on certain groups of people (e.g. those on a low income/with disabilities/ill-health etc.) and a couple of respondents questioned how the new system would work for seasonal workers and those whose monthly income changes month to month
- Overall respondents preferred Option 1 (the banded scheme) however, further analysis revealed that respondents who receive CTR were consistently more likely to prefer Option 2 (make no changes to the existing scheme)

For more information on this report or full listings of comments please contact the
Community Engagement Team on 01243 521261 or email
community@chichester.gov.uk

Appendix A – Social Media Engagement

Length of campaign: 43 days

Total number of posts: 19

- Facebook: x8 (42%)
- Twitter: x11 (58%)

Total number of clicks: 114

- Facebook: 45 (39%)
- Twitter: 69 (61%)

Total reach: 94,700 people:

- Facebook: 12,100 people (13%)
- Twitter: 82,600 (87%)

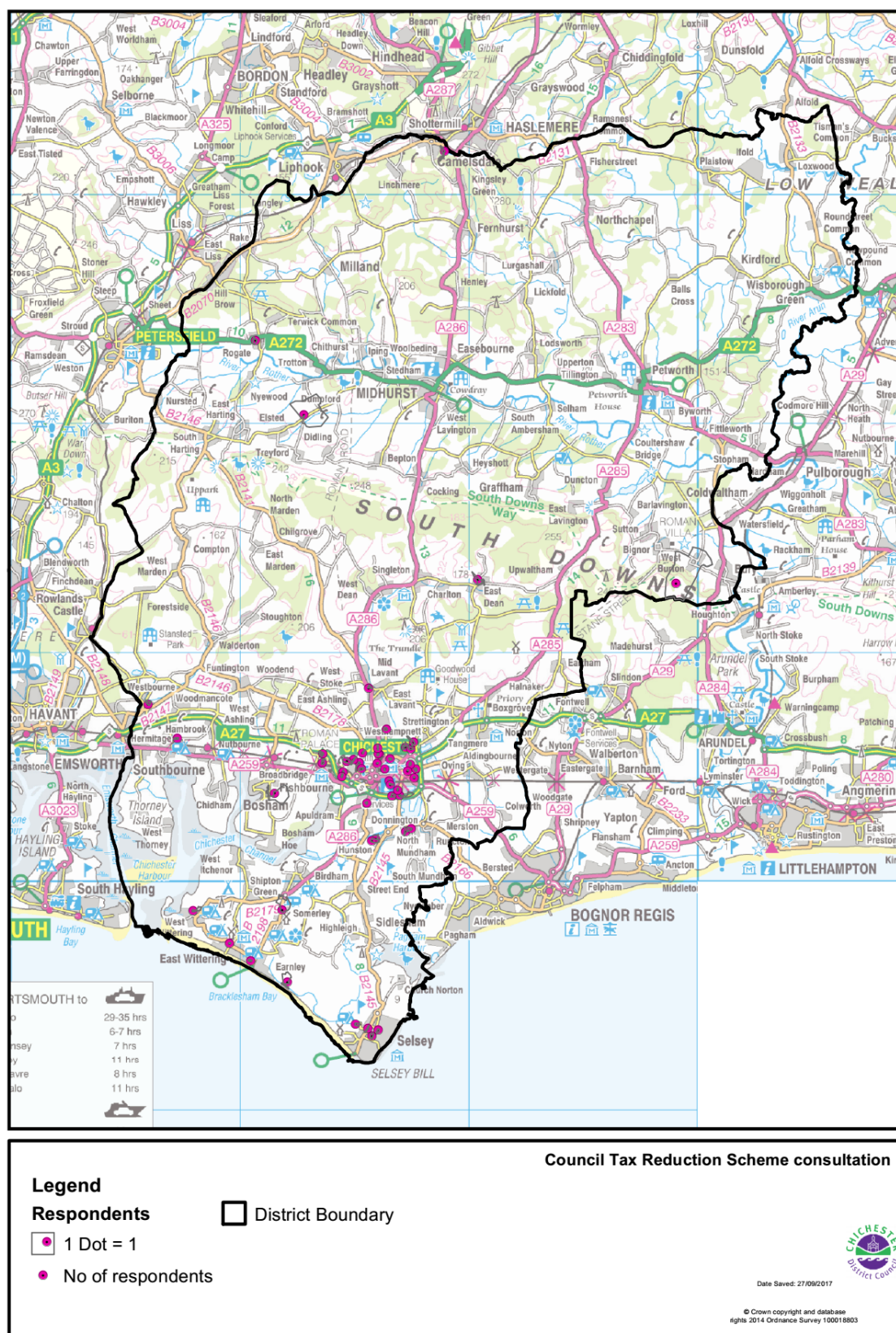
Activity spikes: 15 August; 18 August; 30 August; 8 September; 21, 22 and 23 September.

Retweets / shares: x19

Likes: x5



Appendix B – Postcode Map



Appendix C – Open Comments

Fed up with consultation after consultation and nothing being done, living in a street that is used daily from 7am-5pm with the same cars parked all day for free - this wouldn't happen in other cities.

Hubby is a terminal cancer patient, we have ended up in social housing after having to sell out house. Housing benefit didn't help us keep it, so we are now a burden on the state with no hope of ever being anything else. Stuff the Tories. Hate them, including the ones who run CDC

My husband has disability and I am his carer,

You would be better off and save your 20% of housing benefits payments by having a compulsory register from estate agents of all there landlords .and when somebody applies for housing benefit the council will retrieve the landlords bank statements to reveal the exact rent they get then pay that amount so here's the math Rent £700 agents fee £120 .Landlord only receives £580 WHY IS CHICHESTER COUNCIL PAYING AGENTS FEES ?

Single pensioner with limited income.

Do not have any particular political allegences, but support efficiency savings to leave the maximum resources to help the end user.

3 related adults sharing a home, all earning minimum wage. One of us under 25. It is hard to make ends meet.

my husband who recieves housing and tax benefits has many conditions and its up to me to sort things out. at the moment we are happy with the way things are. but even so sometimes paperwork can be confusing

Im on a low income, live alone, and find it a struggle financially at times, just worried that changes will make things worse financially.

I and my husband have had mental health teams involved in our lives often, I see this as helpful. It being classed as a disibilty is correct as stigma effects the ability to get good jobs that earn good money. But it does not mean we cant work. But ir limits are income. People like us need more support to keep us in our homes and environments to avoid being further unsettled. E.g. support in private rental, keeping home life as it is. Support to families is needed to keep them in there area of choice, so they don't have to change schools etc. Basically we are a young family in private rent in appropriate size house, and have mental health stigma we are faced with. So wee keep working and budget tight. As home and are local area means loads to us. To have to be forced to move would make matters far worse. Basically much mor private rent support is needed this would help people on low income, help families and would help people involved with mental health teams.... we cannot afford to buy and private rent where we are is long term and secure. It should be supported more.

I am in a very privileged position, retired and owning my own home and have no need for CTR now or in the future. However I want to ensure Chichester has a mix of all sections of society. Being poor should not be a disadvantage to being able to live in Chichester. CTR will help ensure this.

Single retired age 76

Not really as I try to carry on best I can with my life with my illnesses