

1. Reason for consultation

- 1.1 At the 2010 Spending Review, the Government announced that it would localise support for council tax (CTS) from 2013 and that expenditure allocated to CTS would be reduced by 10% compared to council tax benefit expenditure.
- 1.2 As part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the national Council Tax Benefit scheme (CTB) will be abolished from April 2013. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) under the Local Government Finance Act have proposed local schemes to support residents with their council tax to be administered by local authorities.
- 1.3 The Local Government Finance Act also enables the technical Council Tax Reforms allowing billing authorities to vary the level of certain discounts and exemptions.
- 1.4 Schedule 4 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 requires local authorities to consult on their local Council Tax Support scheme. The purpose of the consultation is to:
 - Ensure all our residents and other interested parties have the opportunity to have their say on these important changes
 - Consult on the Council's proposals for the Council Tax Technical Reforms and the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.
 - Take account of residents' and representatives' views in the development of the final scheme.
 - Gather suggestions and identify issues that need to be addressed in the new scheme.

2. Consultation process

- 2.1 The individuals, groups and organisations consulted included:
 - Councillors
 - Council Tax payers
 - Benefit recipients
 - General public
 - Greater London Authority
 - Advice providers
 - Community groups
 - Customers at the PASC
 - Social rented sector landlords

- Private sector landlords
- Staff, including former staff

3. Consultation Methodology and Details of the Consultation Process

- Advised GLA of options and consultation methodology
- All consultation documents and related information were available on the Council's website
- An online questionnaire was on the Council's website
- All consultation documents and related information (including posters and paper copies of the questionnaires) were available from main customer access points, including:
 - All libraries
 - MyPlace Community Centre
 - Homes In Havering
 - Central Park Leisure Centre
 - Briar Road Information Shop
 - Public Advice and Service Centre
 - Romford Town Hall
 - Havering Visitor Centre
 - Queens Hospital
 - Hornchurch Leisure Centre
 - Registration Services
 - Fairkytes Art Centre
 - Queens Theatre
 - Medical Centre
 - Rainham Health Centre
- Focus groups with members of the public, advice providers and community groups, Revenues and Benefits and Customer Services staff, social rented sector landlords and private sector landlords
- The home page of Havering's website included a banner link to the online survey
- An article and a link to the online survey in Inside Havering
- Information and a link to the online survey in two editions of the internal global email
- Information and a link to the online survey in an email to 3,000 residents
- A message and a link to the online survey included on payslips to existing staff (including schools and academies) and to Havering pensioners
- Paper copies of the survey and information about the proposed changes were included with Council Tax bills and Council Tax Benefit notification letters

4. Summary of Outcomes

The number of responses received after four weeks totalled more than 220. Responses showed an overwhelming support (77%) for the proposed scheme with the exception of one survey question. This was with regard to removal of

the major repairs/structural alteration exemption where just over 50% of respondents were in favour of removing it.

The results following the consultation will be finalised and analysed including all responses for Cabinet in December 2012.

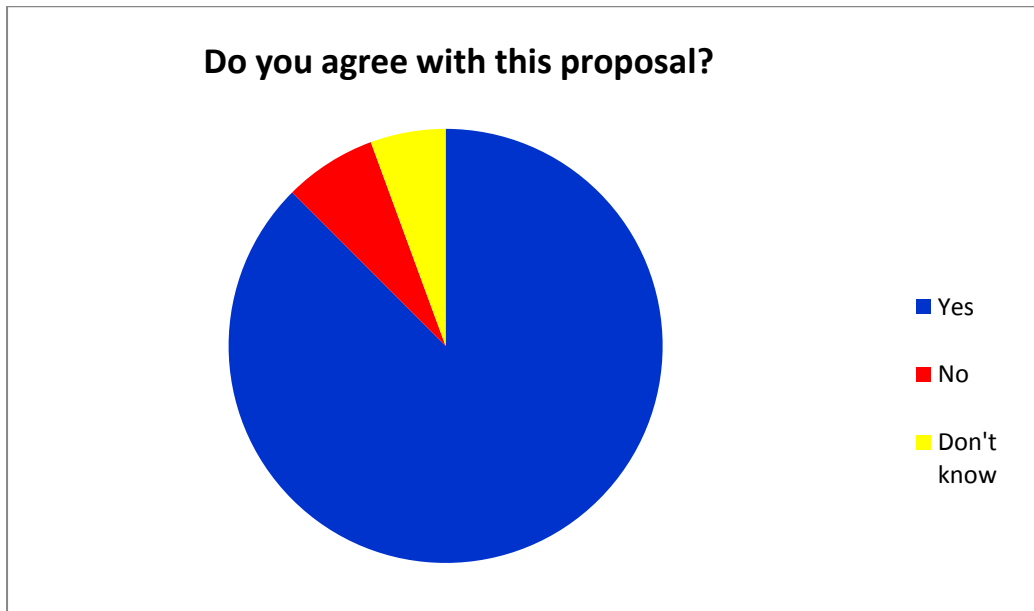
Table of comments to be included here.

5. Responses to each Question (will be updated when consultation period closes)

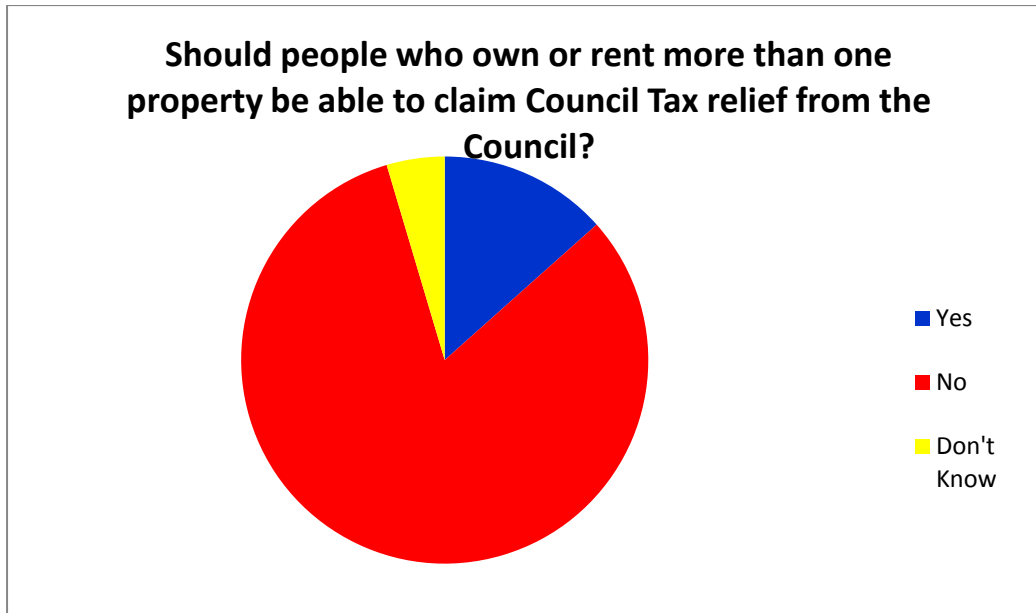
Principle: Local authorities will be expected to manage the 10% reduction in subsidised expenditure.

Question 1. The Council needs to make up a shortfall of £1.9million to meet Government changes to the way it funds council tax. This could be done by reviewing current exemptions from Council tax that currently apply and by changing some of the rules about who qualifies for Council Tax Benefit.

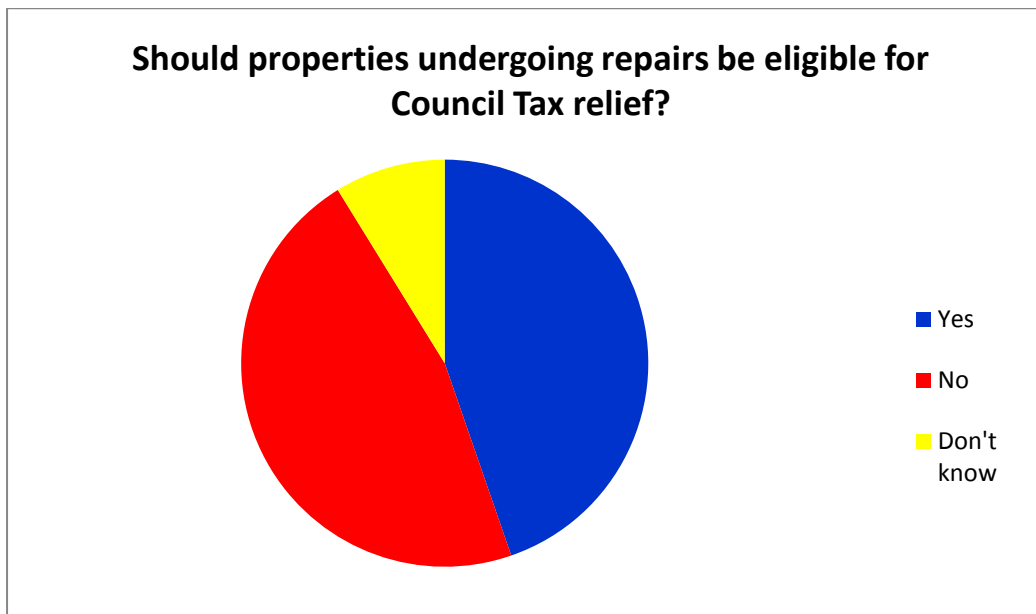
Currently some second homes are exempt from Council tax, this could be used to fund most of the proposed shortfall rather than by raising the Council Tax on all properties across the borough.



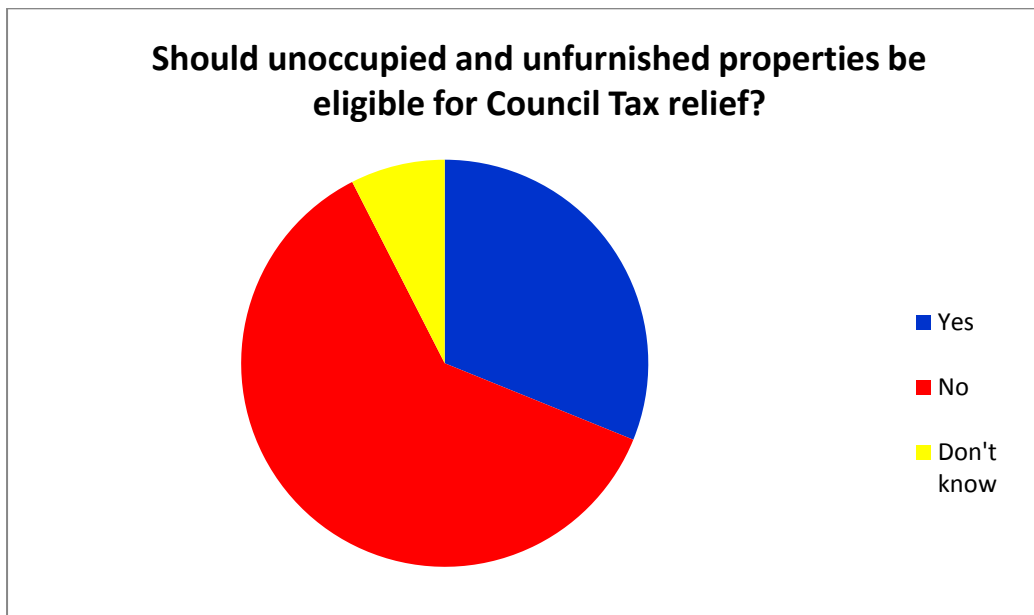
Question 2. Should people who own or rent more than one property be able to claim Council Tax relief from the council?



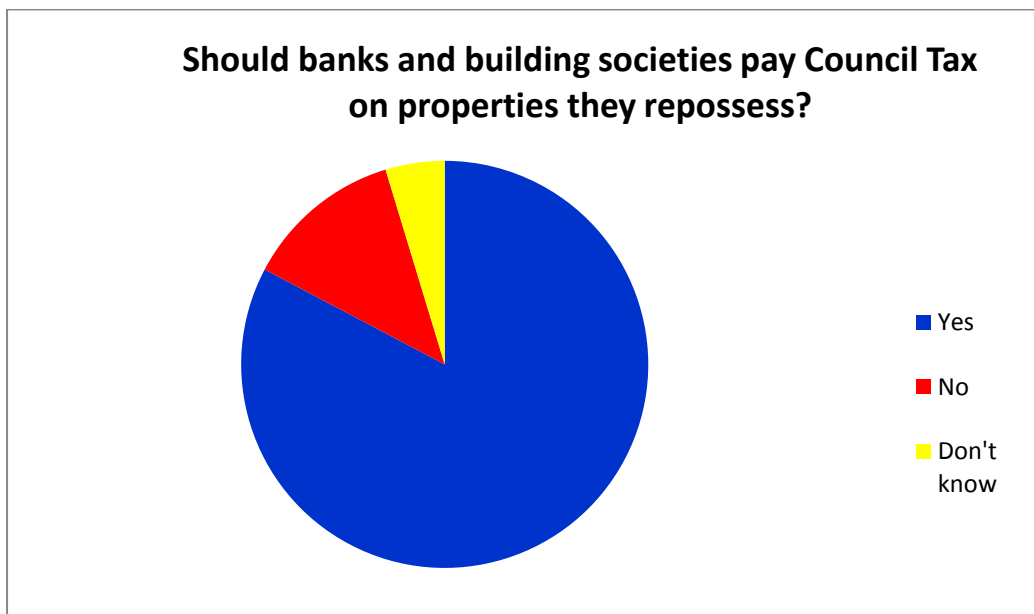
Question 3. Should properties undergoing repairs be eligible for Council Tax relief?



Question 4. Should unoccupied and unfurnished properties be eligible for council tax relief?

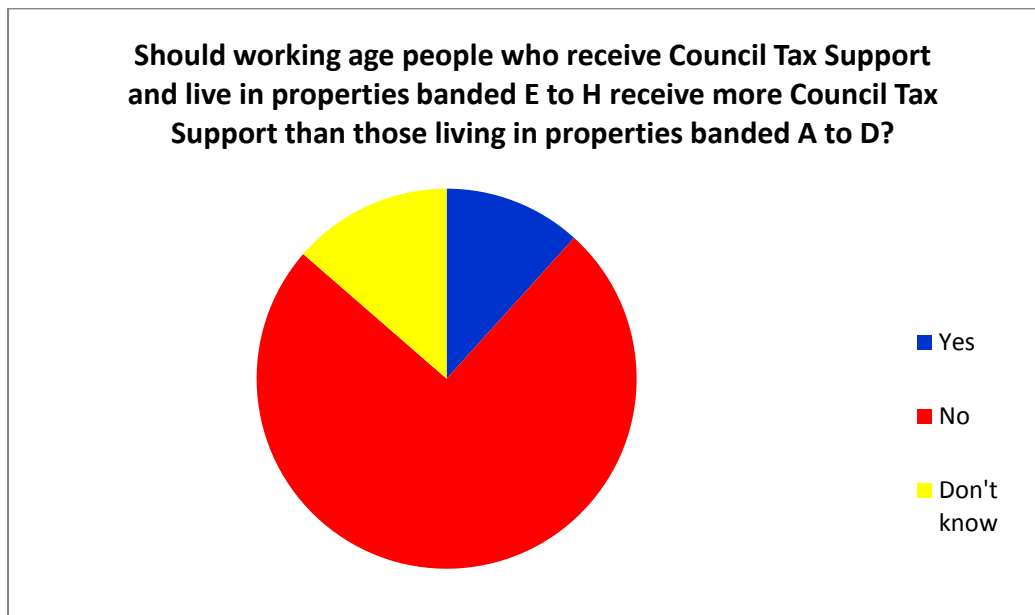


Question 5 Should banks and building societies pay Council Tax on properties they repossess?



Principle: In developing schemes, local authorities should consider incentivising claimants into work.

Question 6. Should working age people who receive Council Tax Support and live in properties banded E to H receive more Council Tax Support than those living in properties banded A to D?



Question 7. Under the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme, other adults such as an adult son, daughter, other relative or friend who lives in the claimant's home are expected to contribute to household bills such as Council Tax.

Should these other adults who are working and living in a household where the council tax payer claims Council Tax Support contribute more towards the Council Tax bill than they do now?

