This report summarises the results of the 2012 SLDC’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme Survey, conducted via a postal and online survey carried out between August and October 2012.
Context – Council Tax Benefit and SLDC Council Tax Reduction Scheme Survey 2012

The Government has announced that Council Tax Benefit, the current means of helping people on low incomes meet their Council Tax, will no longer exist from April 2013. Instead every council has to create its own local Council Tax Reduction Scheme by 1 April 2013.

Under the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme, the council generally receives 100% grant from the Government to cover the cost of payments made. However, under the new local scheme the council will only receive a maximum grant of 90%. South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) together with Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Police Authority will receive approximately £560,000 less grant for Council Tax support for the 2013/14 financial year.

The council intends to calculate reductions in Council Tax in the same way as the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme. The reduction in funding means the council now has to make some difficult decisions to cover the shortfall for 2013/14 and onwards. The Government has also said that pensioners must not be affected by the changes. Those who have reached the age for State Pension Credit will be assessed under a national scheme, which is likely to be very similar to the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme.

Council Tax discounts and exemptions

The Government has also announced further changes to the Council Tax system from April 2013. This means that councils will be able to change Council Tax discounts and exemptions given to certain properties. These changes mainly affect second homes and empty properties. The money raised by reducing these discounts can then be used to fund the financial gap. There will be no changes made to other Council Tax discounts such as Single Person Discount, and most exemptions, for example when the owner of an empty property is in residential care, will remain the same.

The council believes that by taking this opportunity to change some of our Council Tax discounts and exemptions, we will protect those currently receiving Council Tax Benefit from any additional financial burden.

Legislation will still allow the council to award discretionary discounts in exceptional circumstances such as properties affected by flooding and each request will continue to be given due care and consideration and assessed on its own merits.

SLDC’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme

SLDC proposes to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme in line with the Government’s Default Scheme. This is similar to the current national Council Tax Benefit Scheme and will maintain the premiums and personal allowances for 2012/13 for all claimants.

Our Council Tax Scheme must be agreed by 31 January 2013. If the scheme is not approved by this date, the default scheme will be imposed by the Government. All existing Council Tax Benefit claims will automatically be transferred to our Council Tax Reduction Scheme on 1 April 2013 so no-one will need to make a new application.
Main proposal of SLDC

Between 22 August 2012 and 31 October 2012 SLDC consulted on its preferred proposal that, instead of reducing council services or the level of Council Tax support to meet the shortfall in grant, the council will:

**Remove the Council Tax discount for second homes (currently 10%).**

By removing the Second Home Discount the council will be able to pay for the reduction in grant for Council Tax support in full.

**Also under consideration**

- Remove or reduce the Council Tax discount on properties which have been empty for less than six months (currently 100%).
- Remove or reduce the Council Tax discount on properties which have been empty for over six months up to two years (currently 50%).
- Charge an additional 50% Council Tax on properties which have been empty for over two years (total charge 150%).

These are not main proposals as they are not needed if our main proposal is accepted but are considered possible options in the future.

**Not under Consideration**

- Reduce the level of support to those of working age who receive Council Tax Benefit.

This change in Council Tax support would affect the most vulnerable and low income members of our community. These include carers, lone parents, and people with a disability, those who receive war pensions and families with children. The council would like to reduce the burden for these groups where possible.

- Reduce spending on other council services.

This would affect the greatest number of people and council services are already under budget pressures.

- Increase Council Tax to pay for the funding gap from the Government.

This would affect the greatest number of people and the council is committed to only raise Council Tax by the minimum amount possible.
**Method**

This report summarises the results of the 2012 SLDC’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme Survey, conducted via a self completion postal and online survey carried out between August and October 2012.

The target population for the survey was the adult population (17+) who received Council Tax Benefit from South Lakeland District Council; who own a second home in South Lakeland; who own an empty home in South Lakeland and who are Council Tax Payers in South Lakeland and across the UK.

South Lakeland District Council sent postal surveys (including pre-paid return envelopes) to all residents in South Lakeland who receive Council Tax Benefit; to all owners, who receive Council Tax discounts from SLDC, of second homes or empty homes in the district. In addition the council sent postal surveys, including links to the online service, via email to all Parish and Town Councils in South Lakeland. The survey was widely promoted through the council’s consultation pages of its website and press releases. A copy of the questionnaire is attached at the end of this report.

The methodology used in this survey followed the SLDC consultation guidelines and included one mailing.

Information in respect to the council’s community engagement strategy is available on the council’s website - [http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/services/community/community-engagement.aspx](http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/services/community/community-engagement.aspx)
In total, 3,483 usable completed questionnaires were returned or completed online. Respondents were asked to indicate who they were ‘responding as’. Of the returned responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you? Tick all that apply</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone who receives Council Tax Benefit</td>
<td>1,709</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Council Tax payer</td>
<td>1,594</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone with a second home</td>
<td>1,169</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone with an empty home</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A local voluntary or community sector organisation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows the number of respondents per category exceeds the 3,483 completed questionnaires. This is due to many respondents indicating that they were responding as more than just one of the correspondent groups. Respondents ticked up to two boxes, for example that they were responding both as a Council Tax Payer and as someone with a second home.

**Report Contents**

This report contains a written summary of the findings of the survey, highlighting those statistics required to be reported against the council’s preferred proposal that, instead of reducing council services or the level of Council Tax support to meet the shortfall in grant, the council will remove the Council Tax discount for second homes (currently 10%). The report also contains a written summary of the findings of the survey, highlighting statistics on the following:

- Remove or reduce the Council Tax discount on properties which have been empty for less than six months (currently 100%).
- Remove or reduce the Council Tax discount on properties which have been empty for over six months up to two years (currently 50%).
- Charge an additional 50% Council Tax on properties which have been empty for over two years (total charge 150%).

Instances where respondents answered ‘don’t know’ or simply did not answer the relevant question have been included in the reported statistics. Results have been presented rounded to 0 decimal places – this may mean that some totals exceed 100%. This also has implications regarding how summary percentages appear. For example, if 25.4% of respondents stated that they very strongly agree and 30.3% of respondents agree these figures are rounded down to 25% and 30% respectively. However, the sum of these two responses is 55.7%, which is rounded up to 56%, whereas the individual rounded responses suggest this total should be 55%. This explains any instances of where summary text does not match a graph or table it is referring to.

Comments and letters received as a consequence of the survey are attached as appendices at the end of this report. Separate data reports are available, containing cross tabulations by age, gender and locale.
Views
In the first section of the questionnaire respondents were asked to consider the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13
- Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped
- Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped
- Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped
- Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped, and
- An additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more.

The majority of all respondents (70%) either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13. Less than 1 in 10 (8%) of respondents either disagree or strongly agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13.

Council Tax Benefit Claimants
Overall, those respondents responding as someone who receives Council Tax Benefit (83%) either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13.

Council Tax Payer
63% of respondents responding as Council Tax Payers either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13. Just over 1 in 10 (11%) of respondents responding as Council Tax Payers either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13.
Someone with a second home
The majority (56%) of respondents responding as someone with a second home either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13. Just over 1 in 10 (12%) of respondents responding as someone with a second home either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13.

Someone with an empty home
The majority (57%) of respondents responding as someone with an empty home either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13. Less than 1 in 10 (9%) of respondents responding as someone with an empty home either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13.

Local Voluntary/Community Sector
The majority (63%) of local voluntary and community sector respondents either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13. No local voluntary and community sector respondents disagree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13. Almost 1 in 5 (19%) of local voluntary and community sector respondents neither agree/or nor disagree and 19% either don’t know or did not answer.

Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped

![Bar chart showing responses to the question: Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped.]

61% of all respondents either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. A third (33%) of all respondents either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped.

Council Tax Benefit Claimants
The majority (83%) of respondents responding as someone who receives Council Tax Benefit either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. Less than 1 in 10 (8%) of respondents responding as someone who receives Council Tax Benefit either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped.
**Council Tax Payer**
The majority (53%) of respondents responding as Council Tax Payers either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. 42% of respondents responding as Council Tax Payers either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped.

**Someone with a second home**
Over 1 in 5 (21%) of respondents responding as someone with a second home either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. The majority (74%) responding as someone with a second home either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped.

**Someone with an empty home**
The majority (53%) of respondents responding as someone with an empty home either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. Over a third (36%) of respondents responding as someone with an empty home either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. Of this the majority strongly disagree.

**Local Voluntary/ Community Sector**
71% of local voluntary and community sector respondents either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. Of this the majority strongly agree. A quarter (26%) of local voluntary and community sector respondents either disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. Of this the majority strongly disagree.
Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped

Almost half (49%) of all respondents strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped. Over a third (36%) of all respondents disagree or strongly agree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped. Around 1 in 10 (9%) of all respondents neither agree nor disagree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped. 5% either don’t know or did not answer.

**Council Tax Benefit Claimants**
68% of respondents responding as a Council Tax Benefit Claimant either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped.

**Council Tax Payer**
42% of respondents responding as Council Tax Payers either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped.

**Someone with a second home**
A third (33%) of respondents responding as someone with a second home either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped. The majority (51%) disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped.

**Someone with an empty home**
Only 6% of respondents responding as someone with an empty home either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped. Almost 9 in 10 (89%) of respondents with an empty home disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped.
Local Voluntary/ Community Sector
45% of local voluntary and community sector respondents either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped. 41% disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped.

Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR PROPERTIES WHICH HAVE BEEN EMPTY FOR MORE THAN SIX MONTHS AND UP TO TWO YEARS, CURRENTLY 50%, SHOULD BE STOPPED - ALL RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority (61%) of all respondents either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped. Over a quarter (26%) disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped.

Council Tax Benefit Claimants
Over three quarters (76%) of respondents responding as Council Tax Benefit Claimants either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped. 1 in 10 (10%) disagree or strongly disagree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped.

Council Tax Payer
The majority (52%) of Council Tax Payer respondents either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped. Just over a third (34%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Someone with a second home
Almost a half (49%) of second home respondents either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped. Over a third (35%) disagree or strongly disagree.
Someone with an empty home
One in 10 (10%) of respondents with an empty home either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped. The majority (83%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Local Voluntary/ Community Sector
The majority (52%) of local voluntary and community sector respondents either strongly agree or agree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped. A third (33%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped

The majority (71%) of all respondents strongly agree or agree Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped. Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) of all respondents disagree or strongly disagree. Less than 1 in 10 (7%) neither agree nor disagree.

Council Tax Benefit Claimants
The majority of Council Tax Benefit Claimant respondents strongly agree or agree Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped. Less than 1 in 10 (8%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Council Tax Payer
Two thirds (66%) of Council Tax Payer respondents strongly agree or agree Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped. A quarter of Council Tax Payer respondents (25%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Someone with a second home
About two thirds (64%) of respondents with a second home strongly agree or agree Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped. Almost a quarter (24%) disagree or strongly disagree.
Someone with an empty home
A quarter (26%) of respondents with an empty home strongly agree or agree Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped. Almost two thirds (65%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Local Voluntary/ Community Sector
Almost two thirds (63%) of local voluntary and community sector respondents strongly agree or agree Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped. Over a quarter (26%) disagree or strongly disagree.

An additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more

The majority (56%) of all respondents strongly agree or agree that an additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more. Over a quarter of respondents (27%) disagree or strongly disagree. 1 in 10 (10%) neither agree nor disagree.

Council Tax Benefit Claimants
The majority (71%) of Council Tax Benefit Claimant respondents strongly agree or agree that an additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more. One in eight (12%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Council Tax Payer
Almost half (48%) of Council Tax Payer respondents strongly agree or agree that an additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more. Just over a third (36%) disagree or strongly disagree.

Someone with a second home
40% of respondents with a second home strongly agree or agree that an additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more. 42% disagree or strongly disagree. Around 1 in 10 (11%) neither agree nor disagree.
**Someone with an empty home**
One in eight (13%) of respondents with an empty home strongly agree or agree that an additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more. The majority (83%) disagree or strongly disagree.

**Local Voluntary/ Community Sector**
The majority (56%) of local voluntary and community sector respondents strongly agree or agree that an additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more. A third (33%) disagree or strongly disagree.

**Further Analysis**
The results of the survey, in the main, confirm the assumptions regarding the various respondent groups. The results confirm that, on the whole, respondents with a second home disagree with proposals to stop Council Tax discounts for second homes. Also respondents with an empty home disagree with proposals to stop Council Tax discounts for empty properties.

It is assumed that respondents claiming Council Tax Benefit are unlikely to own a second home or own an empty property and as such results indicate that these respondents tend to agree with proposals to stop Council Tax discounts for second and empty homes. As a consequence, and when looking in absolute terms, the results are to be expected. The specific groups have on the whole responded as it can be assumed from their own particular stand-point.
In looking more closely at the results it is possible to identify areas of consensus between the five respondent groups.

The graph above shows the mean score for the five respondent groups when compared against each of the six consultation proposals where:

- **A** = Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13
- **B** = Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped
- **C** = Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped
- **D** = Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped
- **E** = Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped, and
- **F** = An additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more.

The vertical axis shows the mean score and measures the level of agreement against each of the six consultation proposals.
Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13

A majority in all of the respondent groups agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13. There is consensus across all the respondent groups.

Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped

When assessing the mean score of the five respondent groups, respondents with a second home disagree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. In assessing the mean score, the other four respondent groups agree that Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped. Overall Council Tax Payers and people with an empty home agree with this proposal.

Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped

Of the five respondent groups only respondents receiving Council Tax Benefit agree that Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped. All the other groups, including Council Tax Payers disagree. The common consensus indicates that on the whole respondents disagree with this proposal.

Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped

Overall, those responding as someone with an empty home disagree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped. All the other groups, in particular Council Tax Payers and second home owners agree. The common consensus indicates that on the whole respondents agree with this proposal.

Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped

As with the previous proposal those responding as someone with an empty home disagree that Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped. The common consensus indicates that on the whole respondents agree with this proposal.

An additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more

Essentially Council Tax Benefit Claimants, Council Tax Payers and the Voluntary/Community Sector agree that an additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more. Second home owners and empty home owners disagree. However the results show that on the whole Council Tax Payers in particular are less confident with this proposal when compared to the proposals to stop Council Tax discounts for empty properties. It can be inferred that on the whole all respondents are less comfortable with additional Council Tax charge proposals as opposed to proposals to stop current Council Tax discounts.
Essentially the results of the consultation show that, although there are many specific and particular concerns raised there is overall consensus with the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposal</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the second part of the survey respondents were asked to consider, and state where they did, any concerns they had with the council’s proposal to use income from second homes to fund the reduced grant from Central Government.

**The Council’s proposal to use income from second homes to fund the reduced grant from Central Government**

### DO YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS WITH OUR PROPOSAL TO USE INCOME FROM SECOND HOMES TO FUND THE REDUCED GRANT FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT? - ALL RESPONDENTS

- **Yes**: 32%
- **No**: 64%
- **Not Answered**: 4%

Nearly two thirds (64%) of all respondents do not have any concerns with the proposal to use income from second homes to fund the reduced grant from Central Government. A third (32%) stated that they did have concerns. Respondents were asked to state any concerns they had. These concerns are listed as an appendix to this report.

**Council Tax Benefit Claimants**
The majority (85%) of Council Tax Benefit Claimants do not have any concerns with the proposal.

**Council Tax Payer**
The majority (57%) of Council Tax Payer respondents do not have any concerns with the proposal.

**Someone with a second home**
Over two thirds (68%) of respondents with a second home do have concerns with the proposal.

**Someone with an empty home**
59% of respondents with an empty home do not have any concerns with the proposal. Over a third (35%) do have concerns.

**Local Voluntary/ Community Sector**
About two thirds (63%) of local voluntary and community sector respondents do not have any concerns with the proposal. A third (33%) do have concerns.
Final Assessment

SLDC consulted on its preferred proposal that, instead of reducing council services or the level of Council Tax support to meet the shortfall in grant, the council will remove the Council Tax discount for second homes (currently 10%). Overall all respondents agree with this proposal. Looking at the five respondents groups there is consensus across the groups with this proposal.

There are specific and important issues regarding this proposal, notably from second home owners. These issues, will be placed on the council’s website.

In particular Council Tax Payers, whether responding just as Council Tax Payers or as part of the other four respondent groups agree with the council’s proposal to remove the 10% Council Tax discount for second homes.

All of the respondent groups agree that Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13. There is consensus across all the respondent groups.

When considering the other three proposals relating to empty properties, namely:

- Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped
- Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped, and
- An additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more.
The graph above shows the mean score for all respondents when compared against each of the six proposals where:

A = Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13
B = Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped
C = Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped
D = Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped
E = Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped, and
F = An additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more.

Looking at the proposals as a whole, respondents feel more confident with removing Council Tax discounts as opposed to setting additional Council Tax charges. Overall respondents are more confident with removing Council Tax discounts on properties that are empty for a longer period of time. Respondents agree much more with the stopping of Council Tax discounts on properties which have been empty for two or more years than those that have been empty for more than six months and up to two years.

Overall respondents disagree with the proposal to stop the 10% Council Tax discount for properties that have been empty for less than six months.
Respondent Profile
Total Number of Respondents – 3,483

Age Profile of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>66-80</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 80</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Answered</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME - CONSULTATION
RESPONDENT AGE PROFILE
Do you have any concerns with our proposal to use income from second homes to fund the reduced grant from Central Government?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Answered</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-65</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-80</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 80</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you have any concerns with our proposal to use income from second homes to fund the reduced grant from Central Government?

**Female**
- Yes: 392 (24%)
- No: 1,152 (71%)
- Not Answered: 92 (5%)
- Total: 1,636 (100%)

**Male**
- Yes: 698 (39%)
- No: 1,038 (58%)
- Not Answered: 57 (3%)
- Total: 1,793 (100%)
Do you have any concerns with our proposal to use income from second homes to fund the reduced grant from Central Government?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Not Answered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>896</td>
<td>1,393</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,381</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4% 68% 28%
Have your say on our Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Council Tax Benefit is being abolished. Tell us what you think about our proposed scheme to replace it.

From 1 April 2013 we will be introducing our Council Tax Reduction Scheme to help people pay their Council Tax. We want to hear your views on the proposed scheme which will replace Council Tax Benefit.

All the details you need should be in this document. Please read through everything carefully before answering the consultation questions.

Background
The Government has announced that Council Tax Benefit, the current means of helping people on low incomes meet their Council Tax, will no longer exist from April 2013. Instead every council has to create its own local Council Tax Reduction Scheme by 1 April 2013.

Under the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme, the council generally receives 100% grant from the Government to cover the cost of payments made. However, under the new local scheme the Council will only receive a maximum grant of 90%. South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) together with Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Police Authority will receive approximately £560,000 less grant for Council Tax support for the 2013/14 financial year.

The Council intends to calculate reductions in Council Tax in the same way as the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme. The reduction in funding means the Council now has to make some difficult decisions to cover the shortfall for 2013/14 and onwards. The Government has also said that pensioners must not be affected by the changes. Those who have reached the age for State Pension Credit will be assessed under a national scheme, which is likely to be very similar to the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme.

Council Tax discounts and exemptions
The Government has also announced further changes to the Council Tax system from April 2013. This means that councils will be able to change Council Tax discounts and exemptions given to certain properties. These changes mainly affect second homes and empty properties. The money raised by reducing these discounts can then be used to fund the financial gap. There will be no changes made to other Council Tax discounts such as Single Person Discount, and most exemptions, for example when the owner of an empty property is in residential care, will remain the same.

The Council believes that by taking this opportunity to change some of our Council Tax discounts and exemptions, we will protect those currently receiving Council Tax Benefit from any additional financial burden.

Legislation will still allow the Council to award discretionary discounts in exceptional circumstances such as properties affected by flooding and each request will continue to be given due care and consideration and assessed on its own merits.

SLDC’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme
SLDC intends to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme in line with the Government’s Default Scheme. This is similar to the current national Council Tax Benefit Scheme and will maintain the premiums and personal allowances for 2012/13 for all claimants.

Our Council Tax Scheme must be agreed by 31 January 2013. If the scheme is not approved by this date, the default scheme will be imposed by the Government.

All existing Council Tax Benefit claims will automatically be transferred to our Council Tax Reduction Scheme on 1 April 2013 so no-one will need to make a new application.
Our main proposal
SLDC is consulting on its preferred proposal that, instead of reducing council services or the level of Council Tax support to meet the shortfall in grant, the Council will:

- **Remove the Council Tax discount for second homes (currently 10%).**
  Result - By removing the Second Home Discount the Council will be able to pay for the reduction in grant for Council Tax support in full.

Also under consideration
- Remove or reduce the Council Tax discount on properties which have been empty for less than six months (currently 100%).
- Remove or reduce the Council Tax discount on properties which have been empty for over six months up to two years (currently 50%).
- Charge an additional 50% Council Tax on properties which have been empty for over two years (total charge 150%).
  Reason for not considering - These are not main proposals as they are not needed if our main proposal is accepted but they are considered possible options in the future.

Not under Consideration
- Reduce the level of support to those of working age who receive Council Tax Benefit.
  Reason for not considering - This change in Council Tax support would affect the most vulnerable and low income members of our community. These include carers, lone parents, people with a disability, those who receive war pensions and families with children. The Council would like to reduce the burden for these groups where possible.
- Reduce spending on other council services.
  Reason for not considering - This would affect the greatest number of people and council services are already under budget pressures.
- Increase Council Tax to pay for the funding gap from the Government.
  Reason for not considering - This would affect the greatest number of people and the Council is committed to only raise council tax by the minimum amount possible.

Have your say
We welcome your views on the proposals. Please complete the questionnaire or complete this survey online at: [www.southlakeland.gov.uk/council-tax-reduction-scheme](http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/council-tax-reduction-scheme) which would be really helpful to us. Frequently Asked Questions and the guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government are also available on the website.

If you have any queries, would like to request additional copies or would like help taking part please contact SLDC on: 0845 0504434 or email counciltax@southlakeland.gov.uk

Please complete and return your questionnaire by:

**Wednesday 31 October 2012.**

Completed questionnaires can be:
- left with your local District Councillor,
- taken to SLDC council offices, or
- posted to the address on the back page.
Council Tax Reduction Scheme Questionnaire

Q1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Tick ONE on each line

a) Council Tax support should continue to be set at the same level as Council Tax Benefit in 2012/13
   - Strongly agree [ ]  Agree [ ]  Neither/Nor [ ]  Disagree [ ]  Strongly disagree [ ]  Don't know [ ]

b) Council Tax discounts for people who have a second home, currently 10%, should be stopped
   - Strongly agree [ ]  Agree [ ]  Neither/Nor [ ]  Disagree [ ]  Strongly disagree [ ]  Don't know [ ]

c) Council Tax discounts for properties that have been empty for less than six months, currently 100%, should be stopped
   - Strongly agree [ ]  Agree [ ]  Neither/Nor [ ]  Disagree [ ]  Strongly disagree [ ]  Don't know [ ]

d) Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for more than six months and up to two years, currently 50%, should be stopped
   - Strongly agree [ ]  Agree [ ]  Neither/Nor [ ]  Disagree [ ]  Strongly disagree [ ]  Don't know [ ]

e) Council Tax discounts for properties which have been empty for two or more years, currently 50%, should be stopped
   - Strongly agree [ ]  Agree [ ]  Neither/Nor [ ]  Disagree [ ]  Strongly disagree [ ]  Don't know [ ]

f) An additional Council Tax charge of up to 50% should be made for properties which have been empty for two years or more
   - Strongly agree [ ]  Agree [ ]  Neither/Nor [ ]  Disagree [ ]  Strongly disagree [ ]  Don't know [ ]

Q2 Do you have any concerns with our proposal to use income from second homes to fund the reduced grant from Central Government? Tick ONE only

   - Yes [ ]  No [ ]
   Please state reasons: 

Q3 Any other comments? Please give details below

About you

Q4 Are you responding as? Tick ALL that apply

   - Someone who receives Council Tax Benefit [ ]  Someone with a second home [ ]
   - A Council Tax payer [ ]  Someone with an empty home [ ]
   - A local voluntary or community sector organisation [ ]
   Please state which organisation: 

Wednesdays 31 October 2012.

Thank you for taking part, please return your questionnaire by

The results of the consultation will be published on the website.

The report is due to be published in December 2012.

The results of the consultation will be published on the website.

What will happen as a result of the consultation?

Contact details. Please write in below

Would you like to be kept informed of the consultation progress?

Do you have a long-standing disability or illness? Tick one only

Female

What was your age on your last birthday? Tick one only

What do you live?