



# Local Council Tax Support Scheme – Consultation Results

We received **409** survey responses to the consultation on the Council Tax Support Scheme for the new North Northamptonshire Council for the year 2021-22. The consultation ran for 8 weeks from 5 October 2020 to 30 November 2020. 406 responses were received via online survey and 3 via letter or email.

This report illustrates

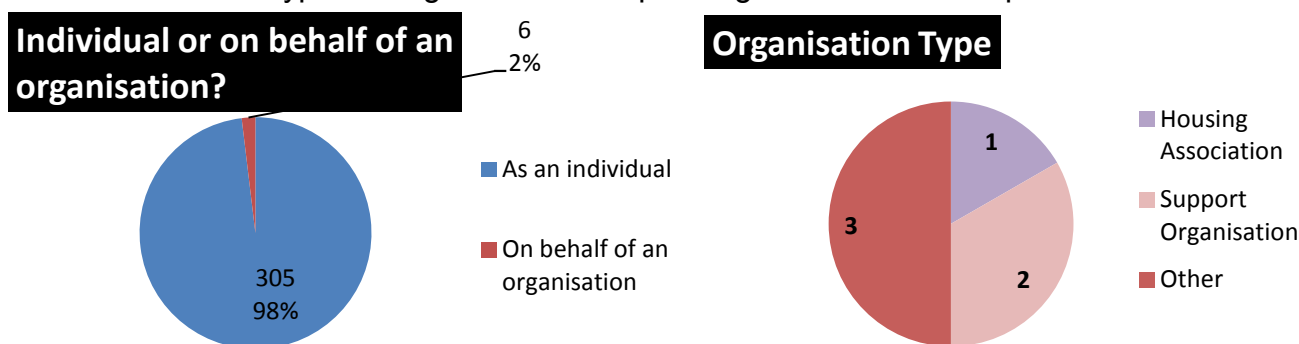
- The demography of the respondents
- The levels of support for each proposal
- The relationship between responses and demography (e.g. whether gender or age affected the level of support for each proposal)
- A summary of comments received as part of the consultation for each proposal.

Appendix A contains further details of comments received.

## Demography

These charts illustrate the different groups of survey participants. It should be noted that a number of respondents abandoned the survey before the end. The software system used still records the information that was submitted and it has been included in the analysis. However, the demographic questions were not answered by all respondents. Respondents were also given the opportunity to “Prefer not to say” when responding to questions asking for personal data.

305 of the survey responses were from individuals and six were from organisations. This breakdown and the types of organisations responding are shown in the pie charts below:



The organisations which responded were:

- F.T.O.C.
- One response on behalf of both The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Policing and Northamptonshire commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority
- Thorpe Malsor Parish Council
- Central Tenants and Residents Association
- An unnamed housing association

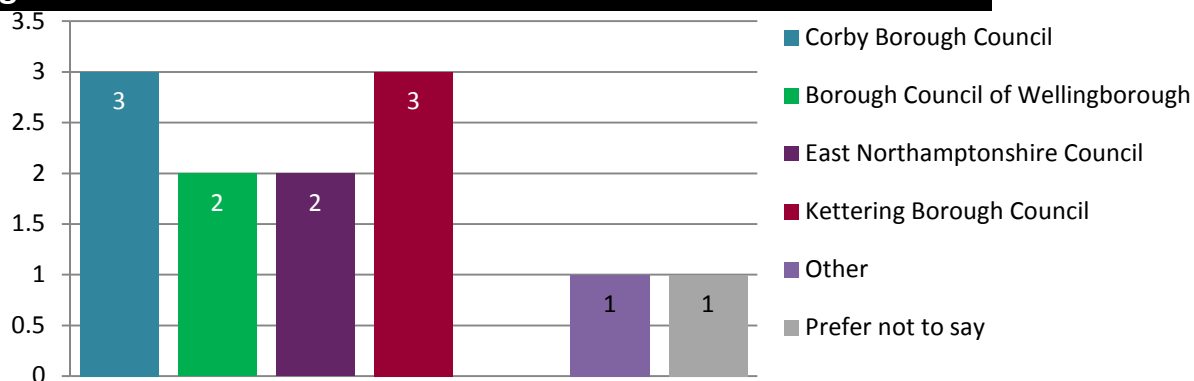
- An unnamed support organisation

There were a further two organisations who responded by letter:

- The Corby & East Northamptonshire Constituency Labour Party, Women’s Forum (by letter)
- Labour Group, North Northamptonshire Unitary Council (by letter)

Respondents answering the survey on behalf of an organisation were asked in which area the organisation works and the breakdown is shown in the pie chart below. The two organisations who submitted responses by letter were not able to be included in the question statistics; their responses have been incorporated into the comments section of the report.

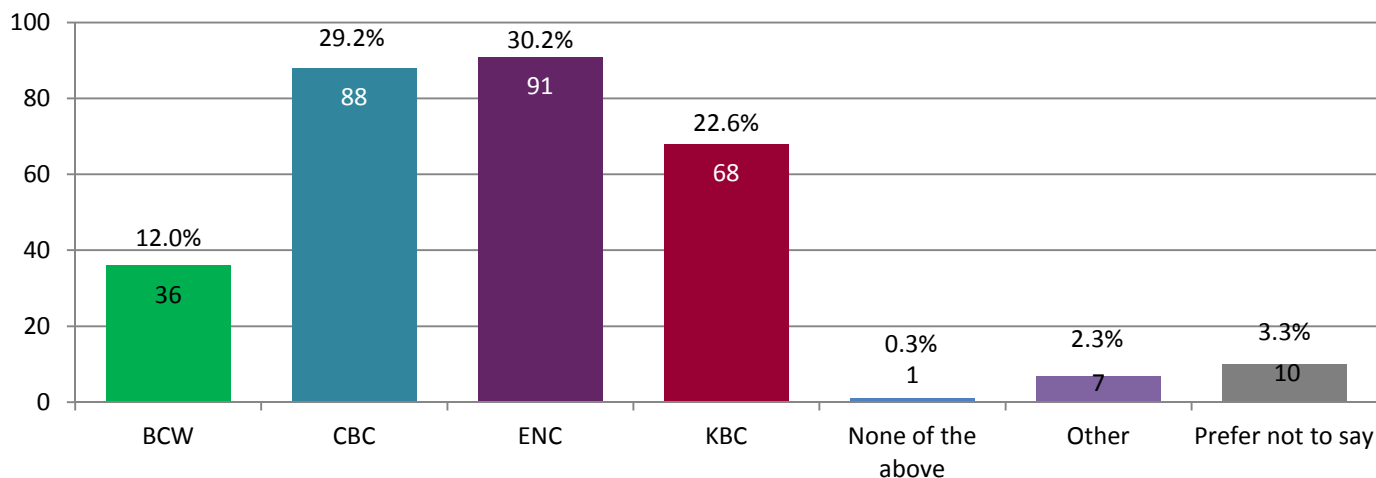
### Which Local Authority area of North Northamptonshire does your organisation work in?



Responses have been received from organisations from all areas of North Northamptonshire. Some organisations operate in more than one area. Organisations did not answer the other demographic questions which follow.

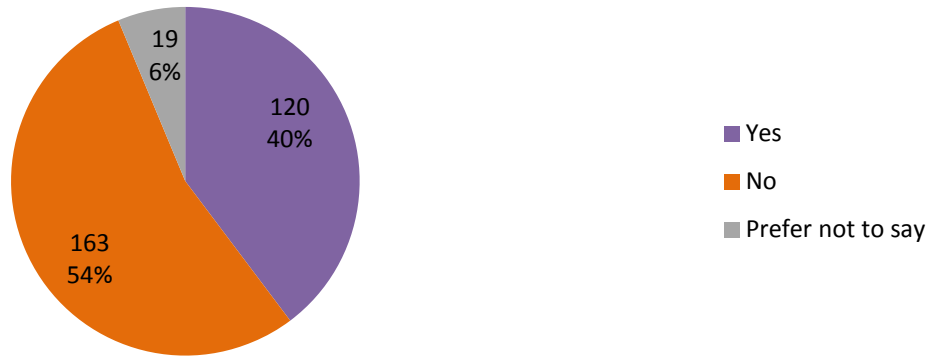
Respondents answering as an individual were asked which areas they live in, whether they currently receive Council Tax Support, their gender, age and whether they have a disability. Respondents were given the option to select ‘prefer not to say’, however some respondents did not answer these questions at all.

### Which Local Authority area do you currently live in?



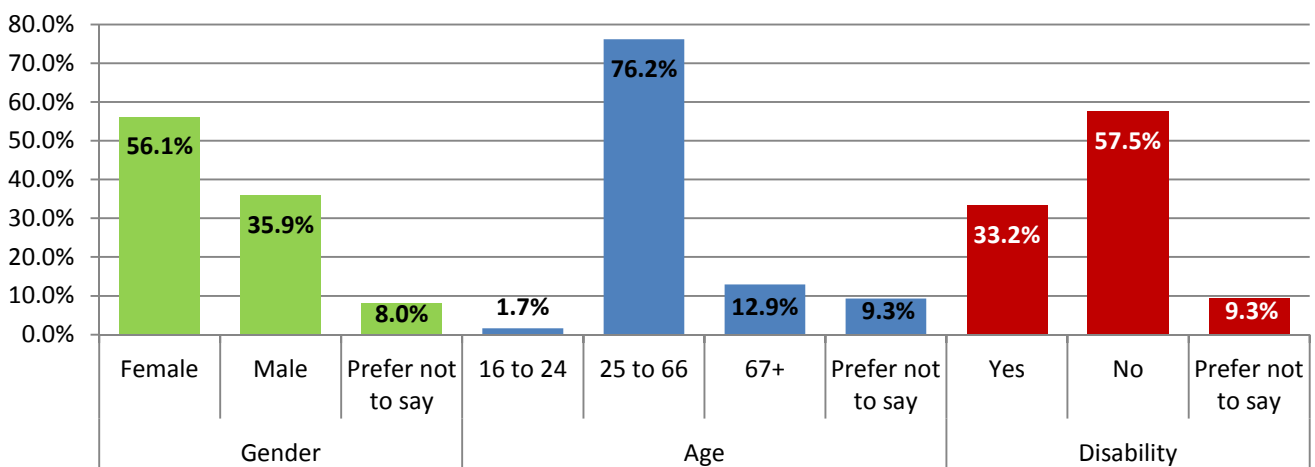
East Northamptonshire (ENC) and Corby (CBC) areas received the most responses from individuals at around 30% of the total responses each. 22% of the responses came from Kettering (KBC) and only 12% from Wellingborough (BCW) residents. In addition to this there was one response received by letter from a Wellingborough resident.

## Are you currently in receipt of any Council Tax Support?



40% of the respondents are currently in receipt of Council Tax support compared to 54% who are not. 6% stated that they would prefer not to disclose this.

## Demographic Overview of respondents



There were more female respondents to the consultation than male (169 compared to 108). 24 respondents chose not to state their gender.

As you might expect being the largest age bracket, the majority of respondents were aged 25 to 66 (230), with 39 over 67s, 27 choosing not to say, and only 5 respondents aged between 16 and 24.

The proportion of respondents stating that they have a disability is higher than the average proportion of disabled people nationally and for our area. One hundred respondents have a disability compared to 173 who do not. Again there were 27 who chose not to answer this.

## Support for the Proposals

Seven separate proposals were outlined in the consultation. Respondents were asked for each proposal whether they;

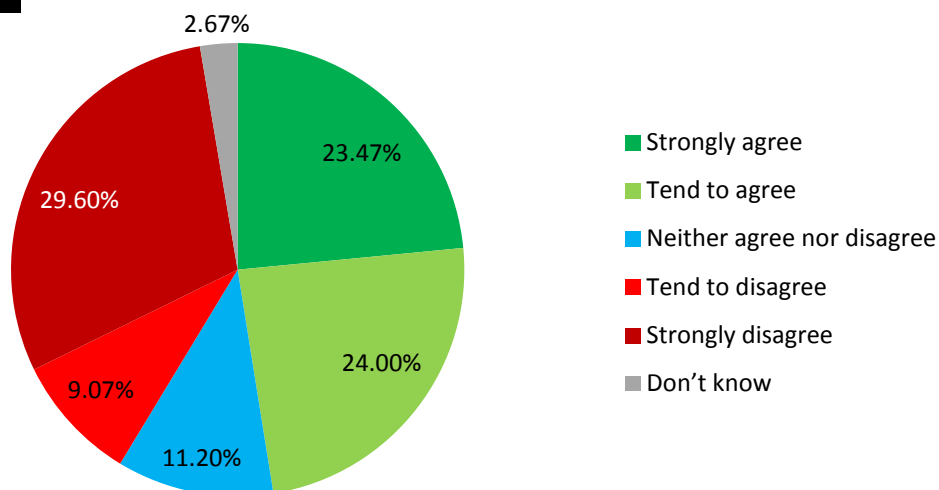
- strongly agree,
- tend to agree,
- neither agree nor disagree,
- tend to disagree or
- strongly disagree

They were also given the option 'don't know'.

In the pie charts below 'Strongly agree' and 'agree' are both coloured shades of green to easily indicate positive support for a proposal. 'Disagree' and 'strongly disagree' are both coloured shades of red to indicate opposition to a proposal.

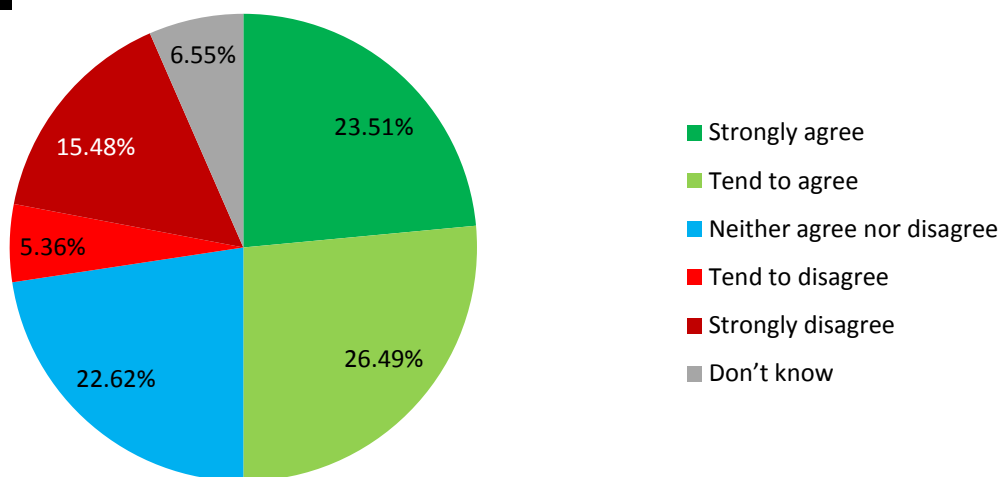
All 406 respondents gave their opinion on all proposals and one response by letter has also been included, making the total respondents on these 407.

### Proposal 1



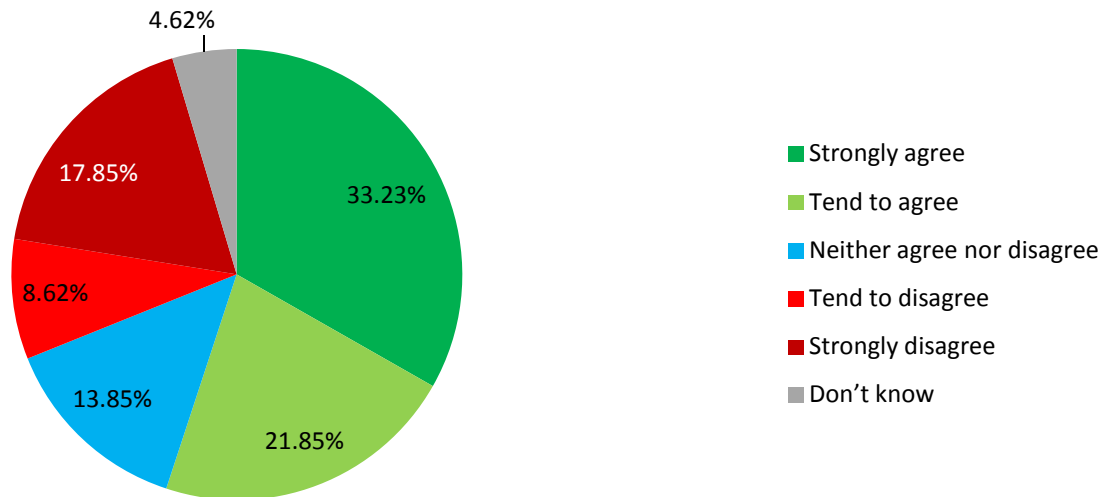
**Proposal 1:** Almost half of the respondents agreed with the proposal *to harmonise the minimum Council Tax contribution to 25% of Council Tax liability for working age people*. 39% disagreed and 11% did not have an opinion.

### Proposal 2



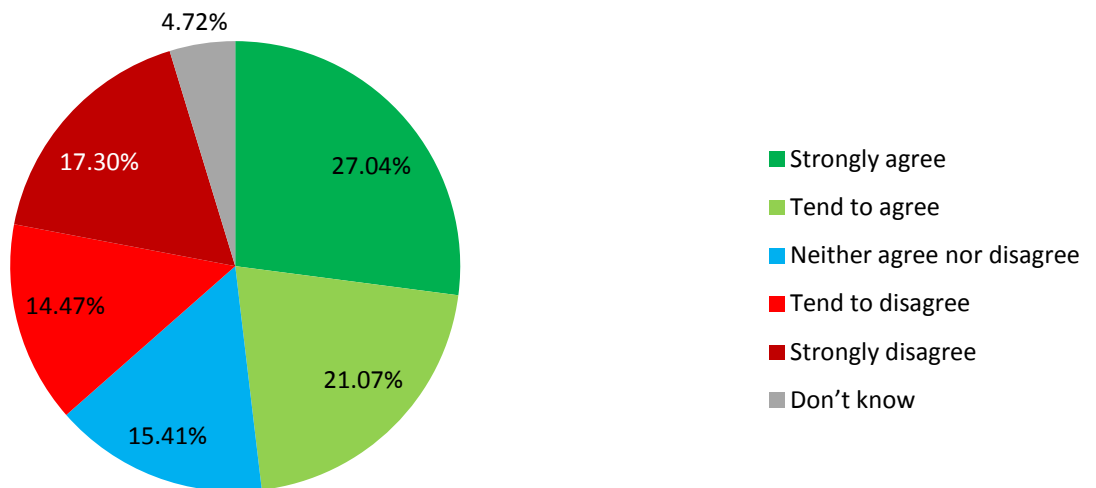
**Proposal 2:** Exactly half of the respondents agreed with the proposal *to remove the award of a family premium when assessing new claims for LCTS*. 21% disagreed and 23% did not have an opinion.

### Proposal 3



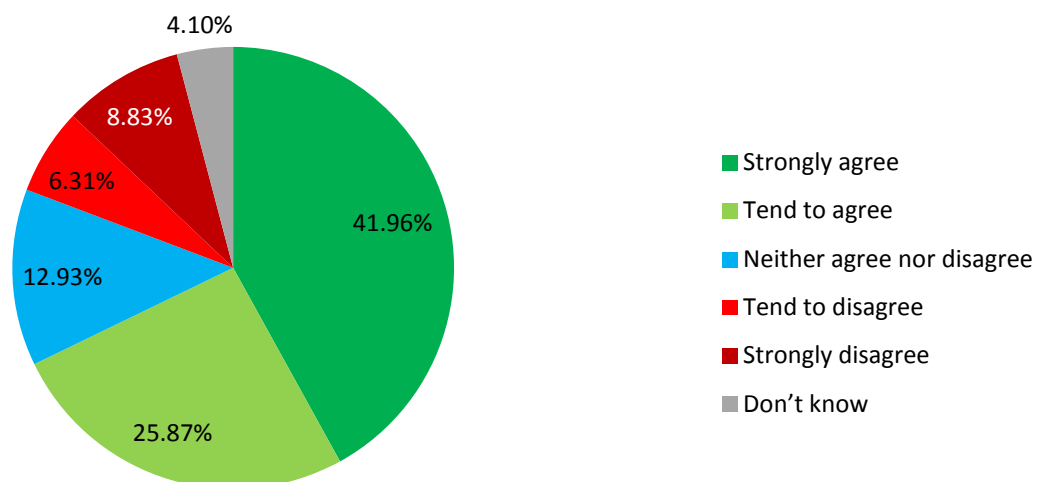
**Proposal 3:** More than half of the respondents agreed with the proposal *to limit the child allowance to two children*. Just over a quarter disagreed and 14% did not have an opinion.

### Proposal 4



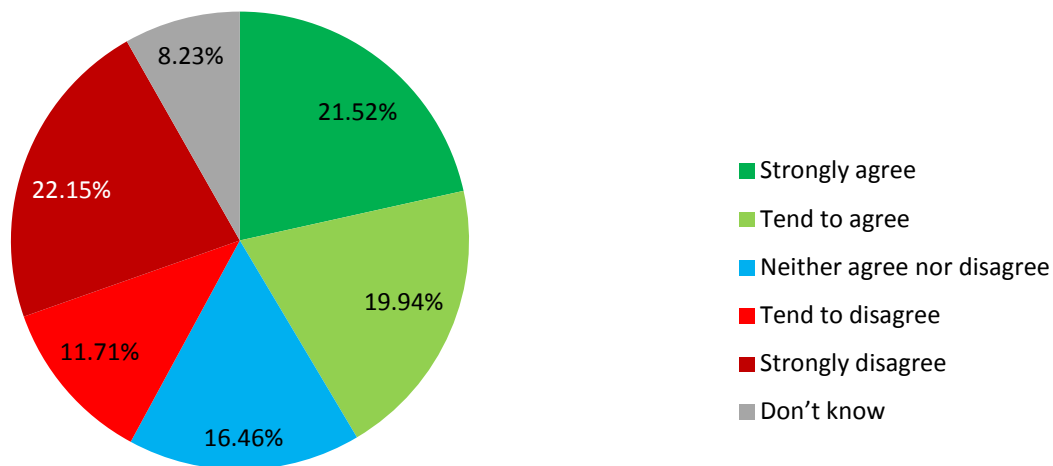
**Proposal 4:** Just under half of the respondents agreed with the proposal *to restrict backdating to 1 calendar month*. 32% disagreed and 15% did not have an opinion.

### Proposal 5



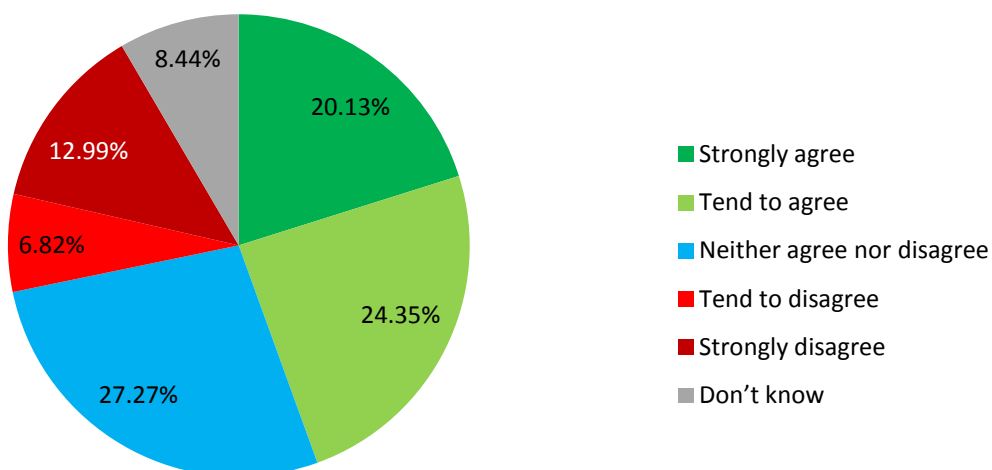
**Proposal 5:** 68% of the respondents agreed with the proposal *to restrict temporary absence outside of the UK to 4 weeks*. 15% disagreed and 13% did not have an opinion.

### Proposal 6



**Proposal 6:** 41% of the respondents agreed with the proposal *to remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium (SDP) where a person is paid Universal Credit (Carer's Element) to look after them*. 34% disagreed and 16% did not have an opinion.

### Proposal 7



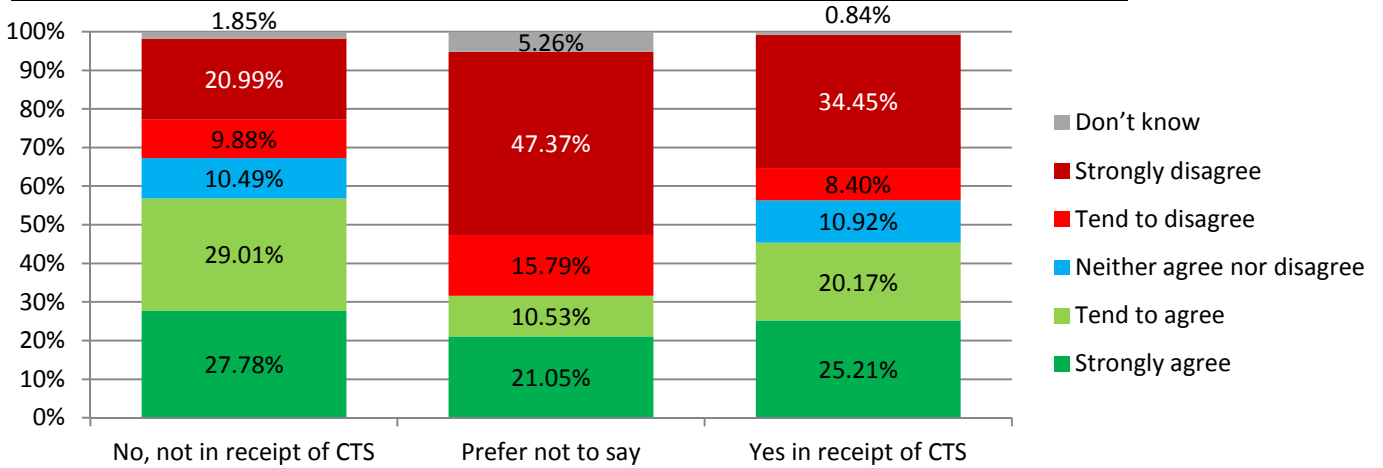
**Proposal 7:** 44% of the respondents agreed with the proposal *to remove the WRAC for new Employment and Support Allowance claimants*. 20% disagreed and 27% did not have an opinion.

There were more respondents who agreed than disagreed with every proposal. Proposal 6 was the most split where only 41% agreed and 34% disagreed.

# Relationship between responses and demography - Proposal 1: To harmonise the minimum Council Tax contribution to 25% of Council Tax liability for working age people.

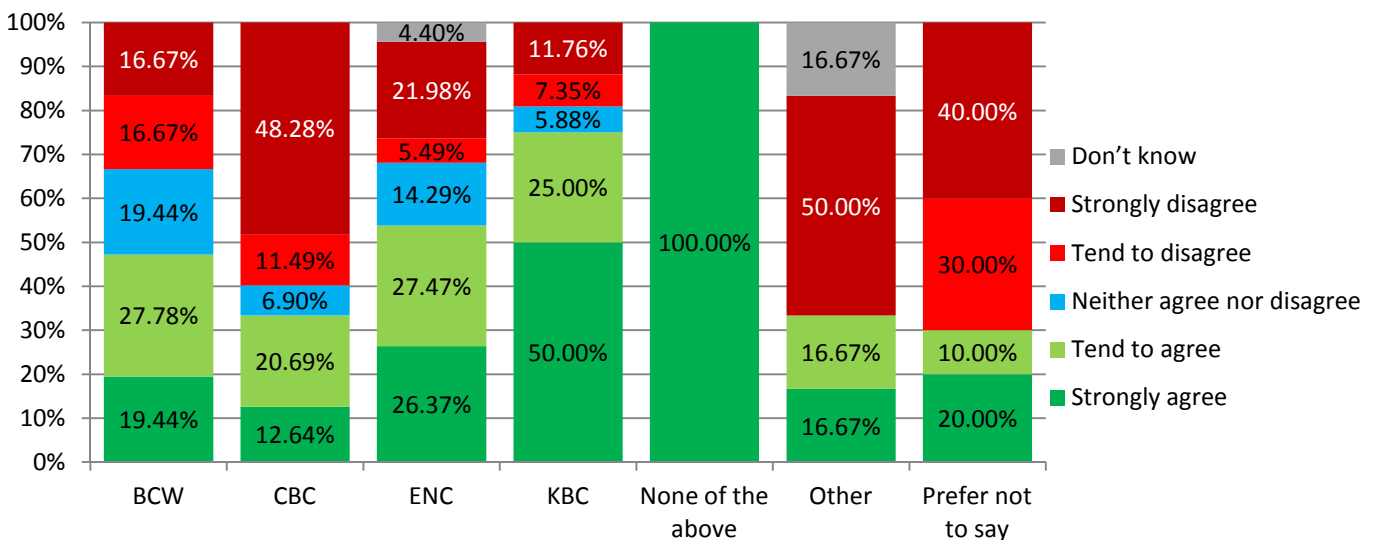
Approximately 75% of respondents answered the demographic questions. We will explore the demographic trends below in relation to agreement with proposal 1.

## In receipt of Council Tax Support / Extent of agreement with Proposal 1



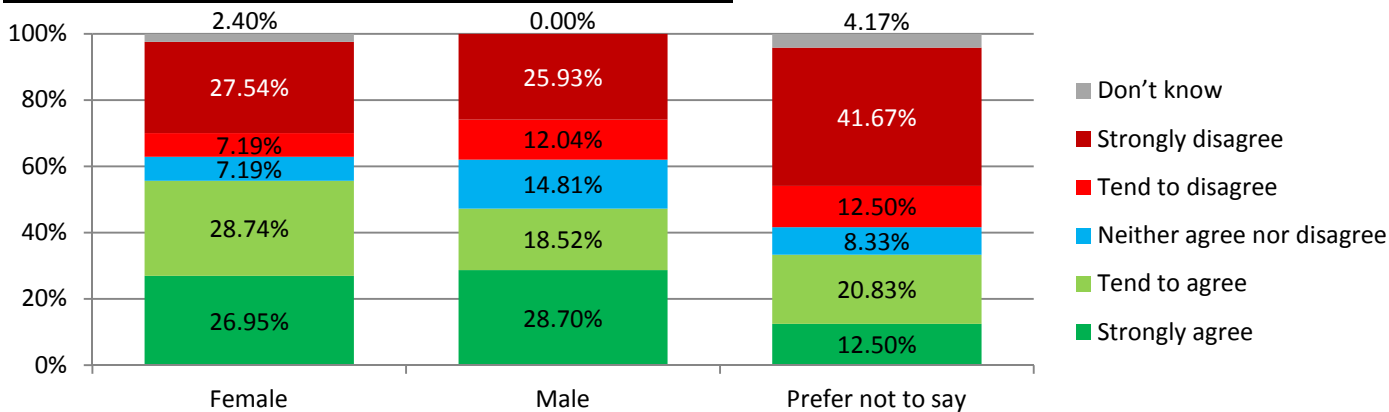
Those who are in receipt of council tax support disagreed with the proposal by 11% more than those who are not in receipt of council tax support. The results for the 40% of respondents receiving Council Tax Support were rather equally split; with just a few more respondents agreeing with the proposal than disagreeing. A larger portion (63%) of those who did not indicate whether or not they received Council Tax Support disagreed with the proposal, however this middle bar on the chart only represents 6% of all respondents.

## Area you live in / Extent of agreement with Proposal 1



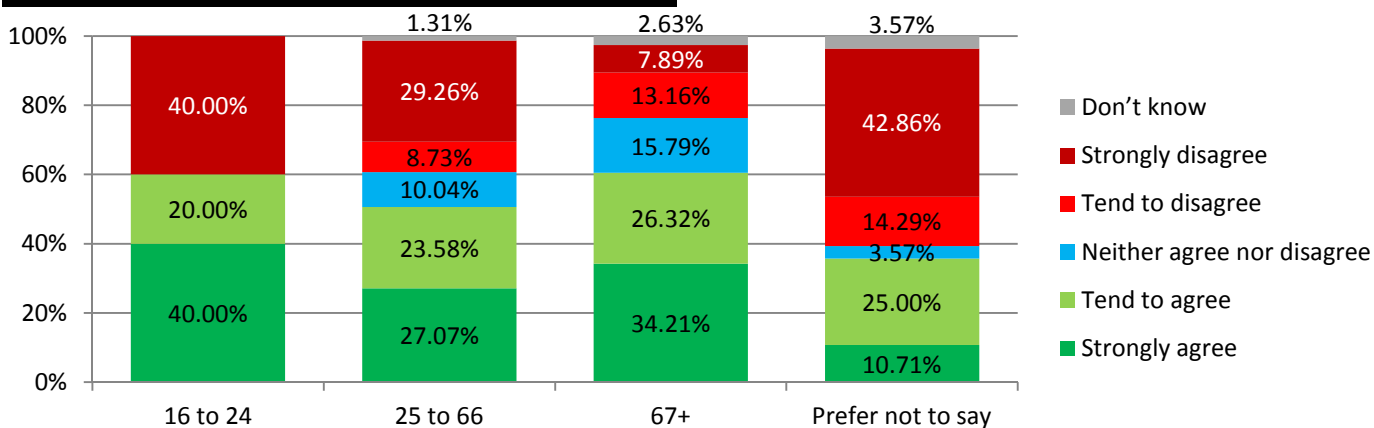
Residents of Corby were in most disagreement with proposal 1, being the only area where more respondents disagreed than agreed. There were also more respondents who disagreed within the group who chose not to say in which area they lived.

### Gender / Extent of agreement with Proposal 1



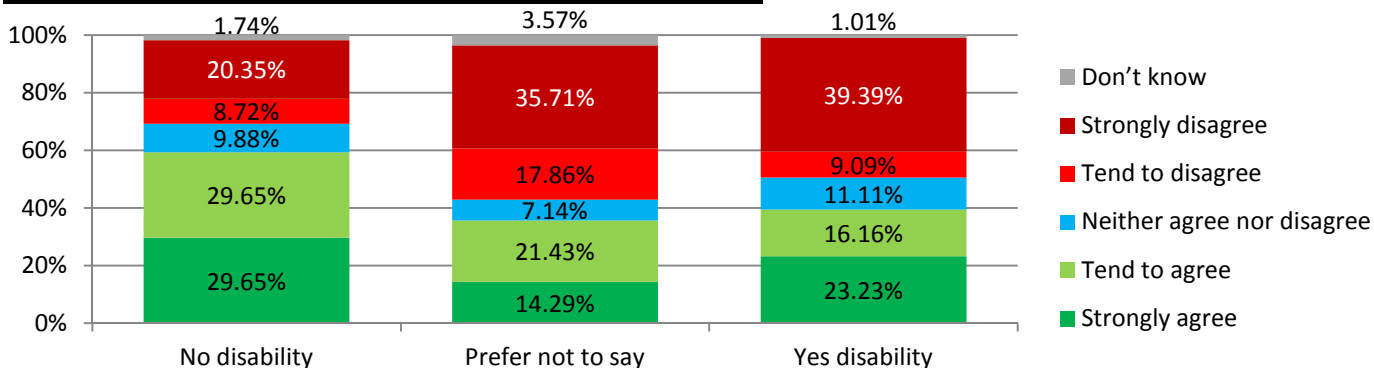
There is no real difference in whether male or female respondents agreed more or less with proposal 1. There were slightly more female respondents who agreed where males had no opinion either way.

### Age / Extent of agreement with Proposal 1



The results show that respondents of pensionable age were more likely to agree with the proposal than respondents of working age. This is likely because they are not affected by the proposed change. More 16-24 year olds agreed than disagreed, however only 1.7% (5 respondents) represent this group. Of those who chose not to state their age, there were more in disagreement than agreement.

### Disability / Extent of agreement with Proposal 1



The chart above indicates that a larger proportion of those who answered 'yes' to having a disability disagreed with proposal 1, while those who answered 'no' to having a disability were more likely to agree with the proposal.



## **Summary of comments - Proposal 1:**

### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 1**

47% strongly agreed or tended to agree with proposal 1. The reasons for respondents strongly agreeing was because they feel they could be or already are paying more.

### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 1**

47% strongly agreed or tended to agree with proposal 1. Those respondents who selected that they 'tend to agree' understand the need to harmonise it across North Northamptonshire but do slightly worry that it will be too much for some especially in the current climate and that there needs to be exceptions. The Police and Fire commissioners recommend that this is reviewed at appropriate times to assist with pressures from the COVID pandemic.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 1**

Respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing were unsure how it affected working age people on long term sickness / disability benefits, and believe that council tax calculations should depend on circumstances including what services each residents regularly uses.

### **Tend to Disagree with Proposal 1**

39% strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with proposal 1. A quarter of respondents who selected that they 'tend to disagree', disagreed because they thought it should be 25% or higher. Half of respondents thought it should be lower than 25%, and the remaining quarter made other comments about how it seems unfair to suddenly harmonise with massive jumps in payments for some and think payments should be subsidised more.

### **Strongly Disagree with Proposal 1**

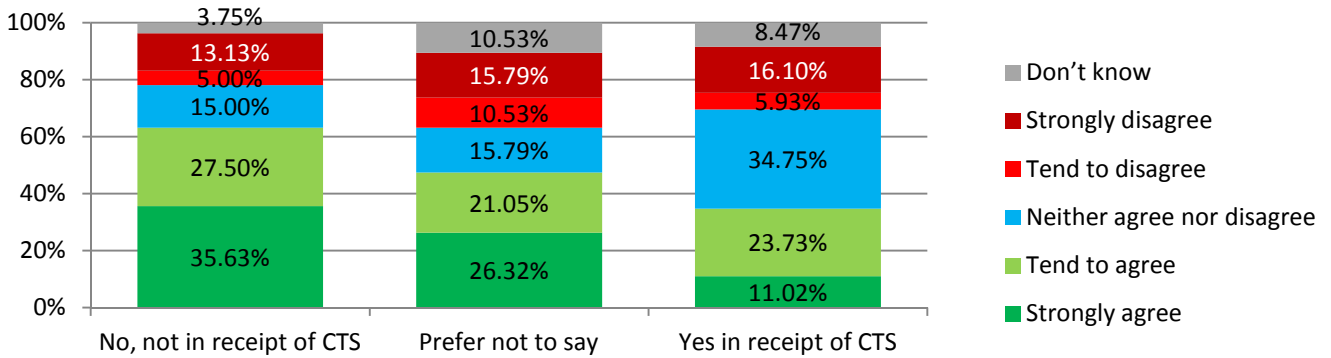
39% strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with proposal 1. A quarter of respondents who strongly disagree with proposal 1 disagree because they think it should be 25% or higher. A quarter disagree because they think it should be lower than 25%, some suggesting bringing it in line over a 2 year period or that only people in work should pay, and asking about exceptions for the disabled and for unpaid carers. There are also references to the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer as council tax will be reducing in more wealthy areas and increased in more deprived areas of North Northamptonshire. The other half made other comments such as that it should be harmonised over a 3 year period, that children shouldn't be included in decisions, that the current rates should be looked at and the most generous one applied to those who need it. It looks like there will be an enormous difference between rural and urban areas and that it will be harder for lower income people to get by.

*Further details of comments can be found in Appendix A.*

## Relationship between responses and demography - Proposal 2: To remove the award of a family premium when assessing new claims for LCTS.

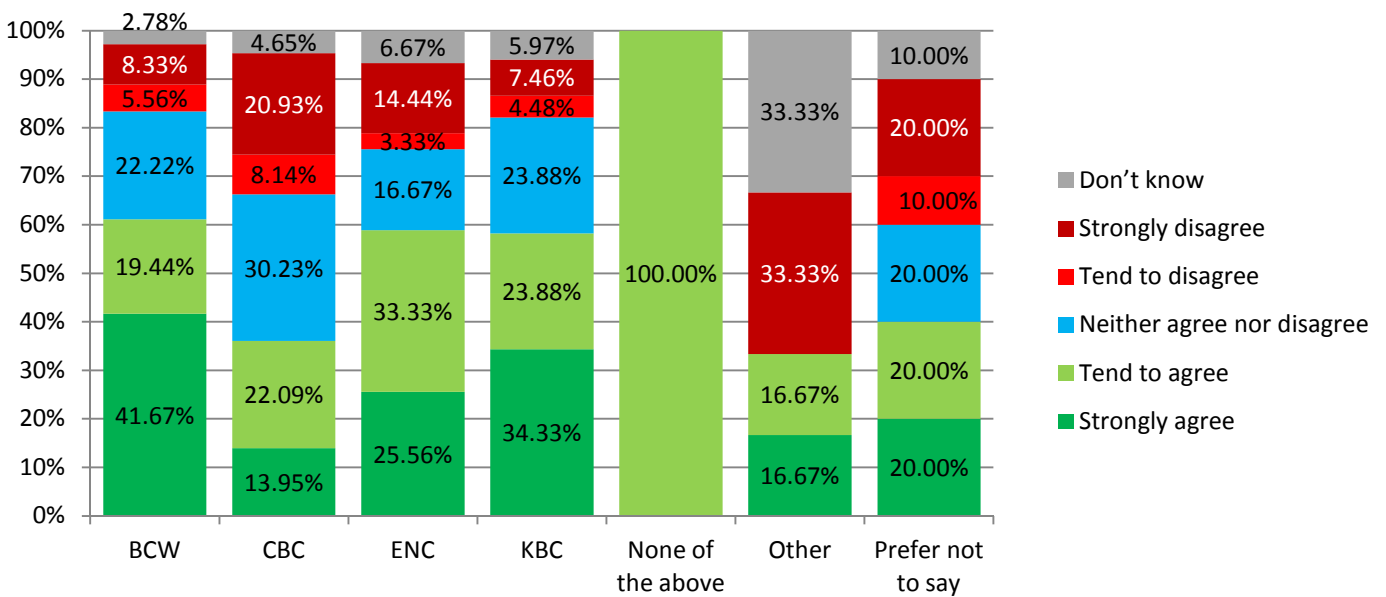
As stated earlier, please note that approximately 75% of respondents answered the demographic questions. We will now explore the demographic trends below in relation to agreement with proposal 2.

### In receipt of CTS / Extent of agreement with Proposal 2



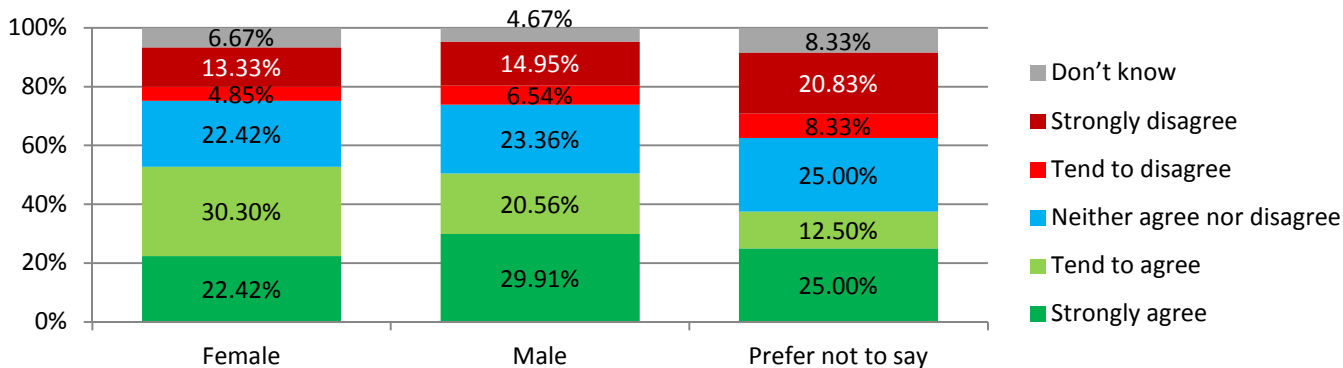
Those who are in receipt of council tax support disagreed with proposal 2 a little more than those who are not in receipt of council tax support, however more respondents agreed than disagreed regardless of whether they receive council tax support or not.

### Area you live in / Extent of agreement with Proposal 2



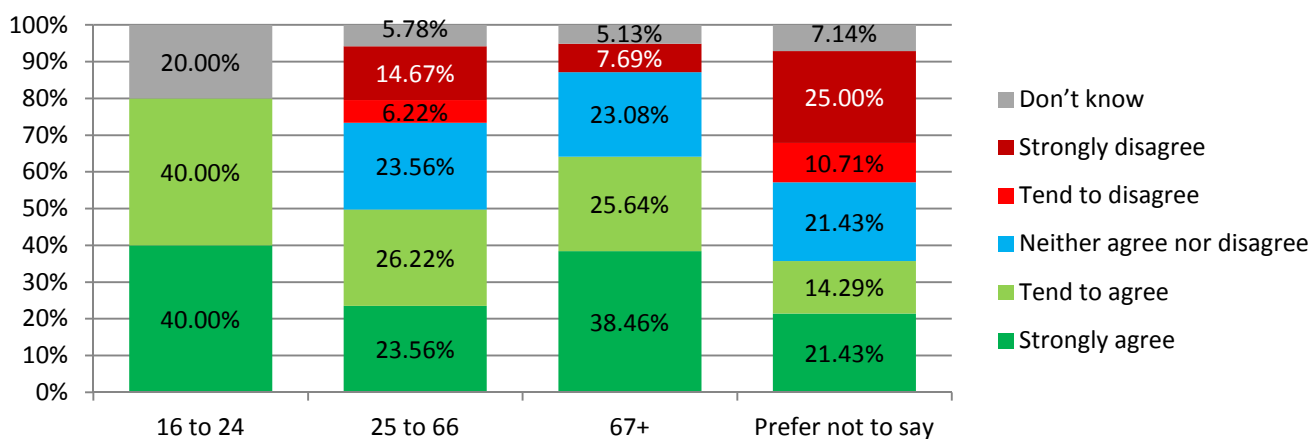
Of those who stated where they live, residents responding from Corby were in most disagreement with proposal 2. However all areas agreed more than disagreed. The group here with most respondents disagreeing are those who selected they lived in an 'other' area, or who chose not to say in which area they lived.

### Gender / Extent of agreement with Proposal 2



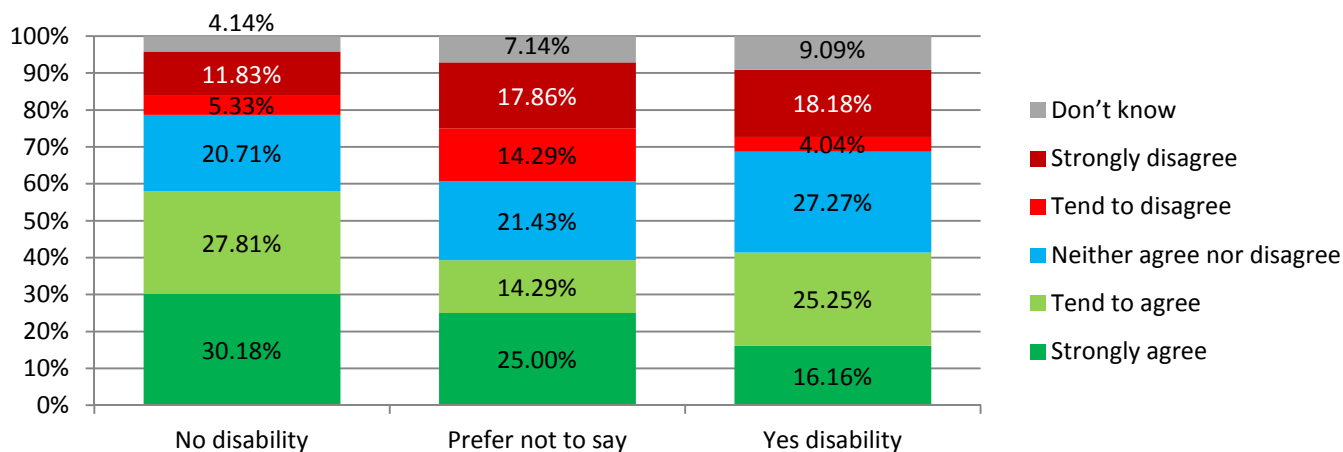
There is no real difference in whether male or female respondents agreed more or less with proposal 2. Those who chose not to say seemed to disagree a little more.

### Age / Extent of agreement with Proposal 2



The results show that respondents of pensionable age were more likely to agree with the proposal than respondents aged 25 to 66. This is likely because they are not affected by the proposed change. None of the 16-24 year olds responding disagreed with this proposal, however only 1.7% (5 respondents) represent this group. Of those who chose not to state their age, there was an equal amount in agreement as in disagreement.

### Disability / Extent of agreement with Proposal 2



The chart above indicates that a larger proportion of those who answered 'yes' to having a disability disagreed with proposal 2, while those who answered 'no' to having a disability were more likely to agree with the proposal.

## **Summary of comments - Proposal 2:**

### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 2**

50% strongly agree or tended to agree with proposal 2. There was only one comment from a respondent who strongly agreed with proposal 2, who lives in Corby and said they already has this in place.

### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 2**

50% strongly agree or tend to agree with proposal 2. There were two respondents who left comments where they tend to agree with proposal 2. One questioning how a 'family' is defined and worrying about this support being abused, and the other saying how it makes sense to not use it in the calculations to allow them to get that extra bit.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 2**

There were two comments received, one who did not know what was meant by family premium and one expressing their disagreement with penalising larger families.

### **Tend to Disagree with Proposal 2**

21% strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with proposal 2. Comments suggesting that it should be a gradual transition and saying that it will affect the lowest earners and the impact will depend on where they currently live. There was mention of the larger struggle that families and carers have and that it shouldn't be removed if it's something that families had before.

### **Strongly Disagree with Proposal 2**

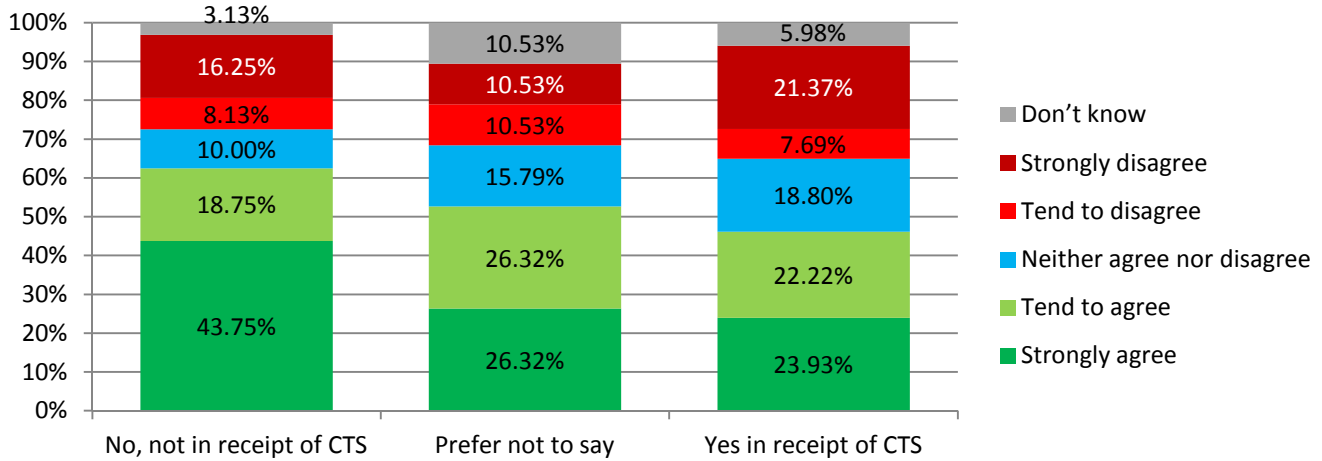
21% strongly disagreed or tended to disagree with proposal 2. Comments mentioned about families being penalised and it hitting the poorest the hardest and that different areas will be affected differently. There were also comments about the current struggle this year and this not being the time for change, asking the reason for the change. Others commented that the council is wasting money and that the family premium should be kept and the most generous current support on offer should be given to all.

*Further details of comments can be found in Appendix A.*

## Relationship between responses and demography - Proposal 3: to limit the child allowance to two children.

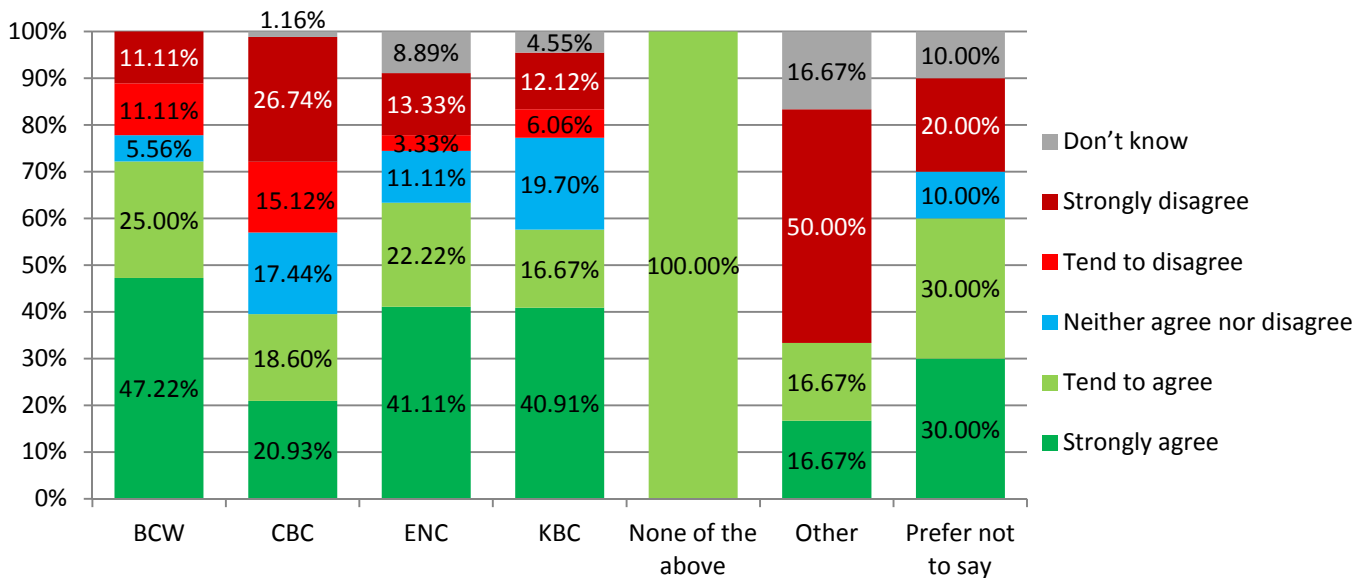
As stated earlier, please note that approximately 75% of respondents answered the demographic questions. We will now explore the demographic trends below in relation to agreement with proposal 3.

### In receipt of CTS / Extent of agreement with Proposal 3



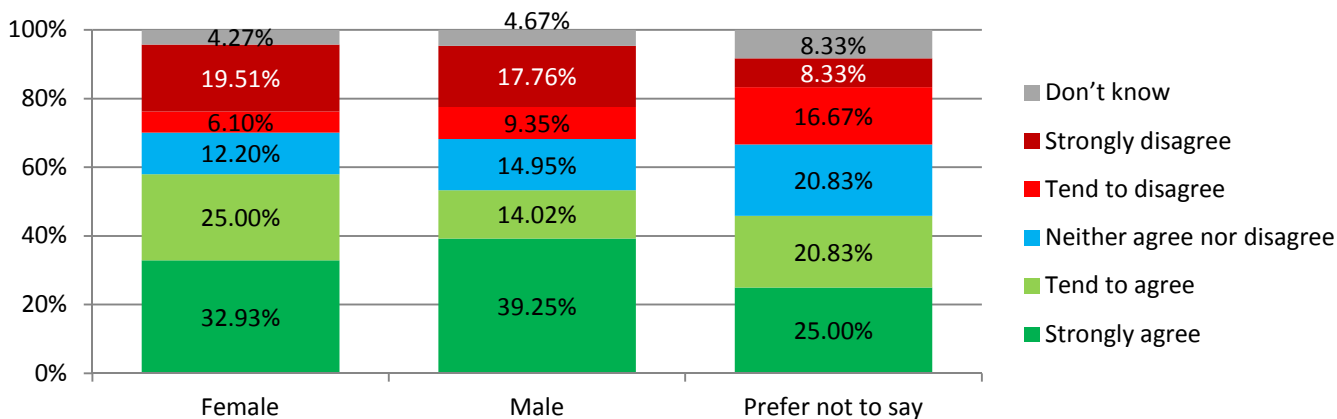
There were more residents in receipt of council tax support that disagreed with proposal 3 than those who are not in receipt of council tax support, however across all groups more respondents agreed than disagreed regardless of whether they receive council tax support or not.

### Area you live in / Extent of agreement with Proposal 3



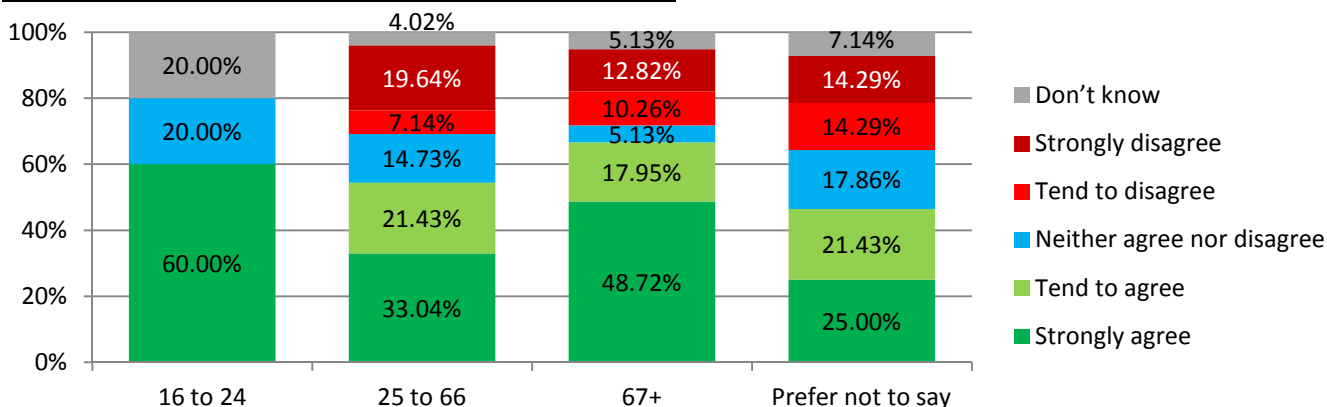
Compared to other areas, Corby had the most respondents in disagreement with proposal 3, and is the only area which had more respondents disagree with this proposal than agree, although it was a rather equal split. Those who selected that they live in an 'other' area were the only other group shown on this chart where respondents disagreed (50%) more than agreed (33%).

### Gender / Extent of agreement with Proposal 3



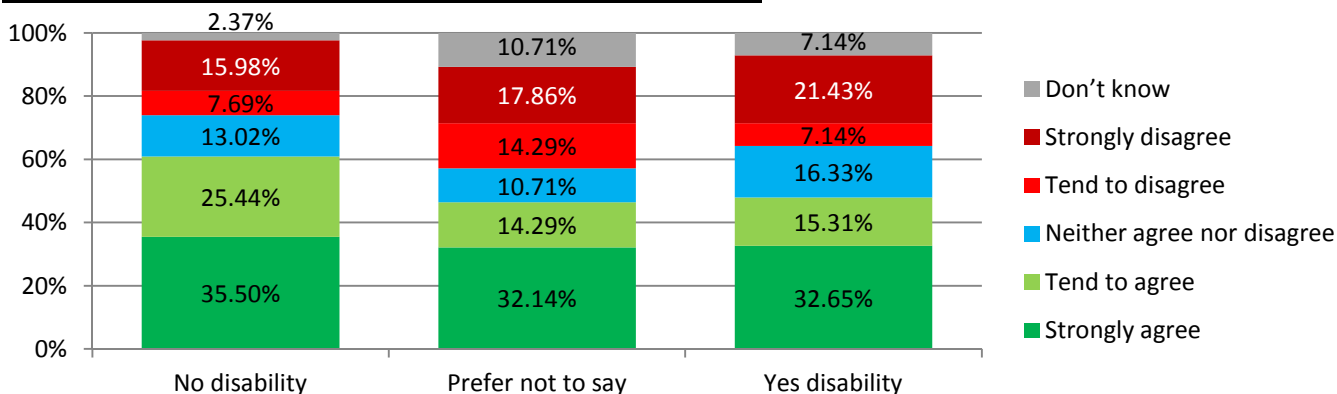
There is no real difference in whether male or female respondents agreed more or less with proposal 3. A few percent more female respondents agreed where males neither agreed nor disagreed.

### Age / Extent of agreement with Proposal 3



The results show that respondents of pensionable age were more likely to agree with the proposal than respondents aged 25 to 66. This is likely because they are not affected by the proposed change. None of the 16-24 year olds responding disagreed with this proposal, however 40% neither agreed nor disagreed or said they didn't know, and it is important to note that only 1.7% (5 respondents) represent this group.

### Disability / Extent of agreement with Proposal 3



The chart above indicates that a larger proportion of those who answered 'yes' to having a disability disagreed with proposal 3, while those who answered 'no' to having a disability were more likely to agree with the proposal.

## **Summary of comments - Proposal 3:**

### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 3**

Over 55% strongly agreed or tended to agree with proposal 3. It is felt that for those that work and struggle with bills this seems fair as those that have more children to get more help benefit more than those that work and so maybe a 1 child policy would be welcomed. Some council's have this proposal in place already. However there are also thoughts that the children should not be penalised in this process with regards to the household not getting help where more children are present as the children ultimately will suffer if the household is worse off.

### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 3**

Over 55% strongly agreed or tended to agree with proposal 3. It is felt that families that have more children than others should not get more help as that is their choice to have more children and therefore this policy should be limited to 1 or 2 children per household. More people in the house equals more costs usually so families who have more children may have to consider the economical aspects their decision has on national finances and the benefits system in particular.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 3**

It was stated that without seeing the potential impact on individuals and specific groups of individuals, it is difficult to determine a view. This information is needed to be able to form a view, as is information as to what mitigations will be put into effect to minimise the impact on those affected by the proposals.

### **Tend to Disagree with Proposal 3**

Just over 25% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed with proposal 3. Concerns around the welfare of children were raised as the principle is ok, but needs tapered reductions to ease hardship for those families affected including phased integration e.g. amount adjusted monthly over a year to allow them to re-budget. It is also felt that 4 children should be the minimum and these families require the most help. This decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society and respondents felt it is discrimination against larger families. Respondents stated that if harmonisation must happen, then the initial decisions should consider the financial impacts on all. It was suggested that perhaps the limit could be 3 children as Child Tax credits is also limited 3 children. Also could there be a common policy for Northamptonshire as a whole as it is believed alignment of support is the best option.

### **Strongly Disagree with Proposal 3**

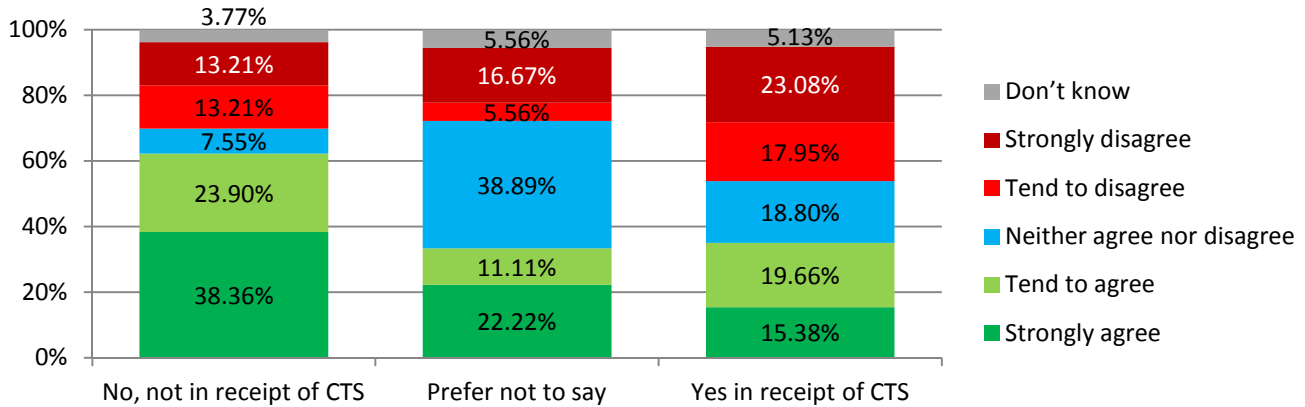
Just over 25% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed with proposal 3. Respondents felt that all allowances (i.e. child allowance) should be taken into account to calculate income, before applying for additional help. Several suggestions were to list what is currently on offer from each of the four Borough / District Councils, and then apply the most generous option (even if this increases council tax for all), as people are already in difficult circumstances usually through no real fault of their own. It was felt very strongly that this will further discriminate against larger families and increase levels of poverty even further for some of the poorest households in the county and seems to be a cost saving measure which was strongly disagreed with. Where there are families living in deprivation with both parents working it will be the children who suffer. Questions were raised on why only 2 children, where has this figure come from and why a blanket policy, particularly for those who had more children prior to benefit caps and have been impacted by the government's decisions in response to Covid-19. It was suggested that for existing families it should continue to be that there are no limits to number of children as it could push vulnerable families below the poverty line but for new claimants this is fair enough.

*Further details of comments can be found in Appendix A.*

## Relationship between responses and demography - Proposal 4: to restrict backdating to 1 calendar month.

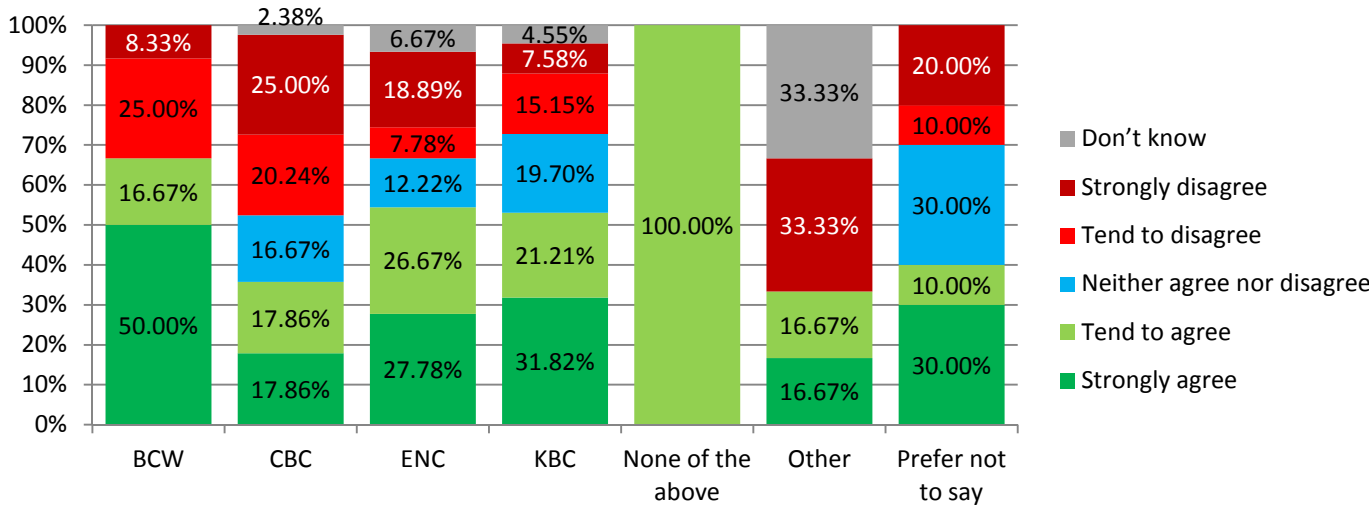
As stated earlier, please note that approximately 75% of respondents answered the demographic questions. We will now explore the demographic trends below in relation to agreement with proposal 4.

### In receipt of CTS / Extent of agreement with Proposal 4



Residents in receipt of council tax support disagreed with proposal 4 more than agreed (difference of 6%), which is contrary to those not in receipt of council tax who had a more than double the amount of respondents in agreement than in disagreement.

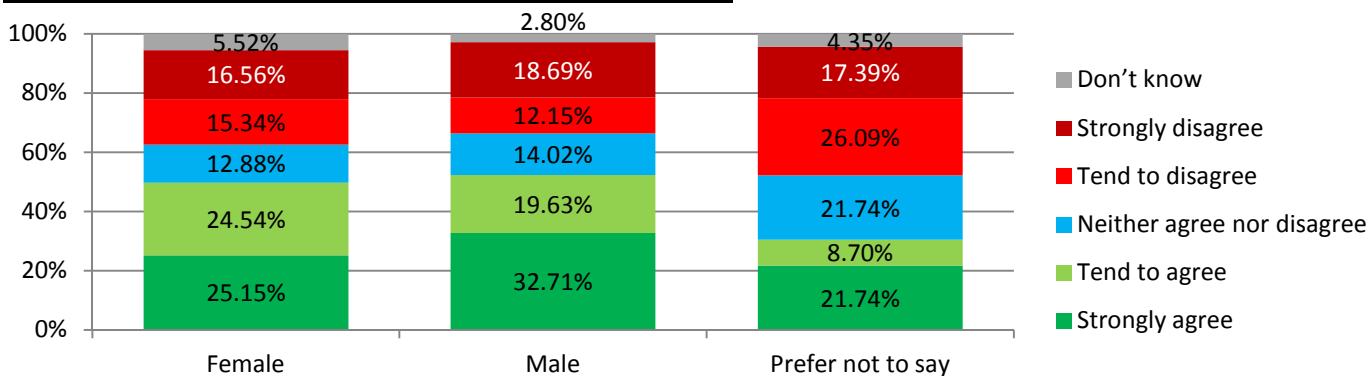
### Area you live in / Extent of agreement with Proposal 4



Compared to other areas, Corby had the most respondents in disagreement with proposal 4, and is the only area which had more respondents disagree with this proposal than agree. All other areas had between 20% and 30% in disagreement and more than 50% in agreement, (apart from those who selected they live in an 'other' area or 'prefer not to say', where around a third agreed, a third disagreed and a third neither agreed nor disagreed or didn't know).

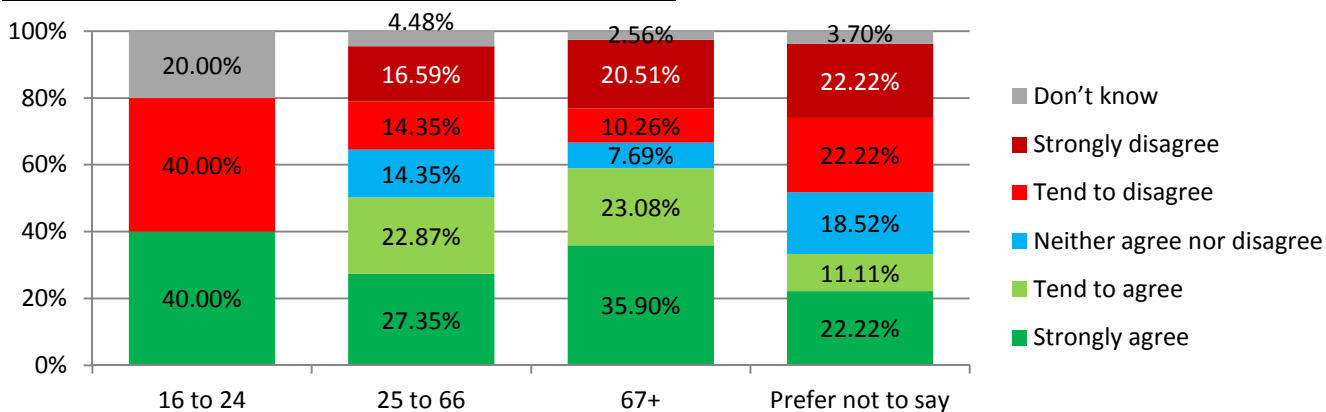


### Gender / Extent of agreement with Proposal 4



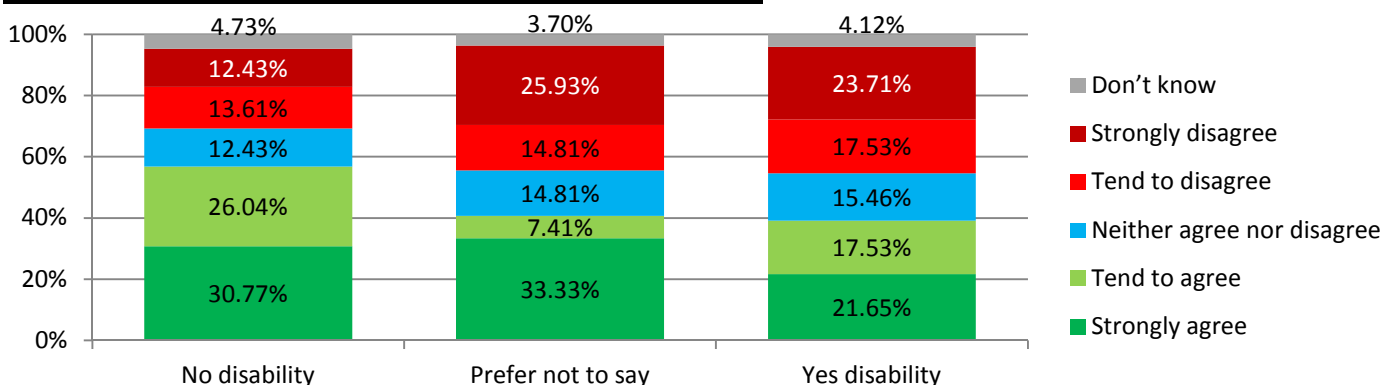
There is no real difference in whether male or female respondents agreed more or less with proposal 4. A few percent more male respondents agreed where females disagreed.

### Age / Extent of agreement with Proposal 4



Both 25-66 and 67+ groups had more in agreement than disagreement with proposal 4, however respondents of pensionable age agreed with the proposal in a few more cases where respondents aged 25 to 66 neither agreed nor disagreed. The 16-24 year olds were equally split between whether or not they agreed and it is important to note that only 1.7% (5 respondents) represent this youngest age group.

### Disability / Extent of agreement with Proposal 4



The chart above indicates that a larger proportion of those who answered 'yes' to having a disability disagreed with proposal 4, while those who answered 'no' to having a disability were more likely to agree with the proposal.

## **Summary of comments - Proposal 4:**

### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 4**

48% of respondents strongly or tended to agree with proposal 4. It was mentioned again that the letter from KBC states this would not affect us here as they already have this in place.

### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 4**

48% of respondents strongly or tended to agree with proposal 4. Comments included that it would make sense to align it with the majority on the backdating if only one council backdates. Also noted was that finding work can often take longer than some would like and the council must be seen to support a person's circumstance not penalise if they change suddenly.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 4**

If this is in relation to collecting late payments back dated for 6 months respondents disagreed as this will put families in hardship. If someone has been eligible and has missed the boat as they have not been informed, the council is to blame for not keeping them informed of what they could get. Better communication is required to explain what families can claim for when council tax bills are sent out. Others stated they trust it will still be the case that if someone can show good cause for backdating outside this period it will still be permitted.

### **Tend to Disagree with Proposal 4**

38% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed with proposal 4. It was suggested that if residents are entitled to a benefit from a certain date it is not fair only allowing a 4 week back date. It was noted that there should be a compromise especially if the council are responsible for the requirement for backdating, and again phased integrations should take place. One month is not enough to get letters, proof from HM revenue, your employer, bank statements and does not take into account universal credit delays, literacy skills, bereavement, mental health issues and relationship breakdowns. Therefore it was felt there should be mitigating circumstances and should be case by case. It was also noted that information is hard to process and not always clear. Respondents asked for competency and compassion as people may not understand what help they are entitled to and so should not be disadvantaged by that.

### **Strongly Disagree with Proposal 4**

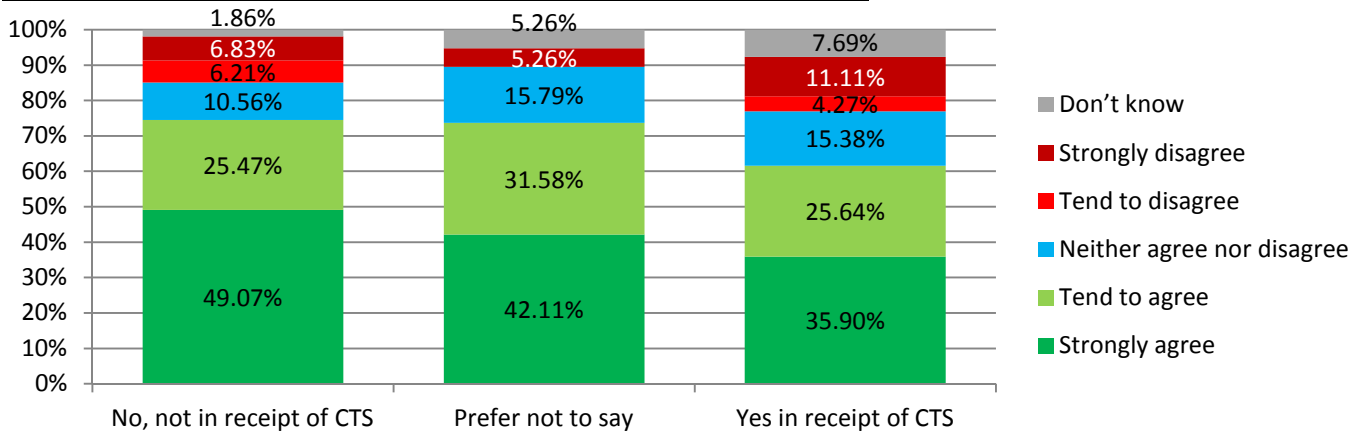
38% tended to disagree or strongly disagreed with proposal 4. The main suggestion was that 1 month is not enough time to back date, 3-6 months (or even unlimited) would be a more appropriate safety net and claimants should receive all that is due to them. It was felt that the scheme should be flexible as there is no one size fits all. A further suggestion that backdating should not take place and if it has to then money should be backdated for however long the claim takes to process not just 4 weeks. Plus the council is not limited in the time it can take to reclaim what it owes. It was proposed again that the uniformity between then councils should favour the processes from the authority paying the most support and that serious consideration should also be given to how the proposed changes will impact the most vulnerable. Respondents stated that there are many vulnerable individuals who have not been able to access support with regard to benefit advice (digitally excluded; closure of support services; degree of vulnerability) and this unfairly discriminates against them. Respondents acknowledge that backdating is often necessary due to clerical error, ignorance of entitlement or other errors, but often saves families from severe debt. They felt that with claimants having to wait five weeks for the Universal Credit process to come through there is a disparity on timings and that the support scheme should reflect the claimants needs and safeguarding of vulnerable and elderly residents.

*Further details of comments can be found in Appendix A.*

## Relationship between responses and demography - Proposal 5: to restrict temporary absence outside of the UK to 4 weeks.

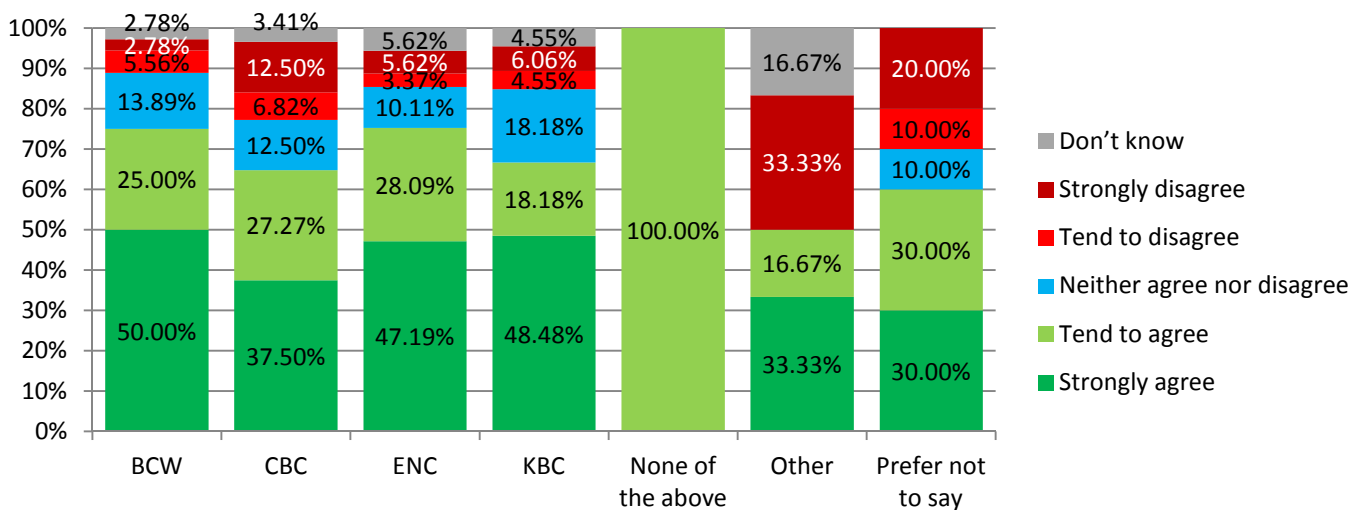
As stated earlier, please note that approximately 75% of respondents answered the demographic questions. We will now explore the demographic trends below in relation to agreement with proposal 5.

### In receipt of CTS / Extent of agreement with Proposal 5



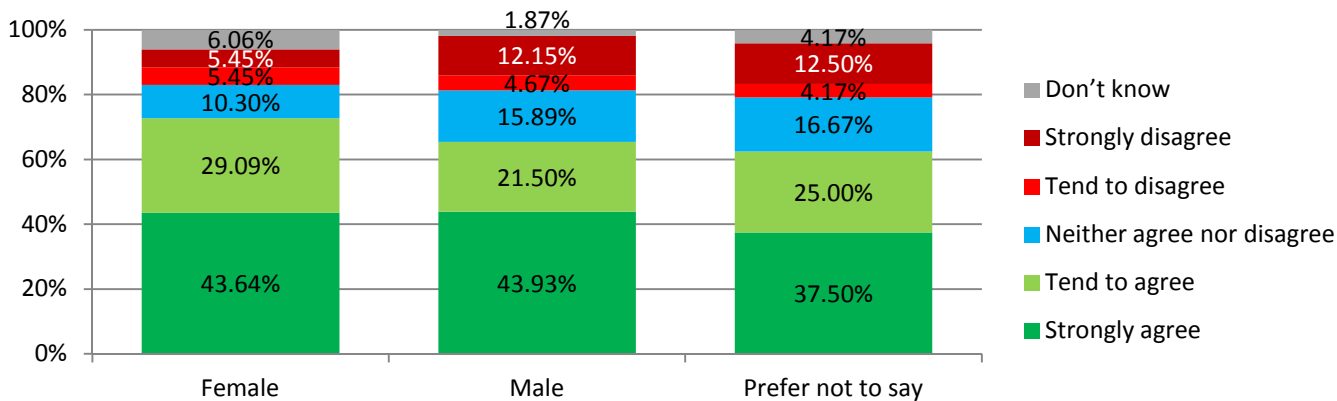
Those who are in receipt of council tax support disagreed with proposal 5 a little more than those who are not in receipt of council tax support, however more respondents agreed than disagreed regardless of whether they receive council tax support or not.

### Area you live in / Extent of agreement with Proposal 5



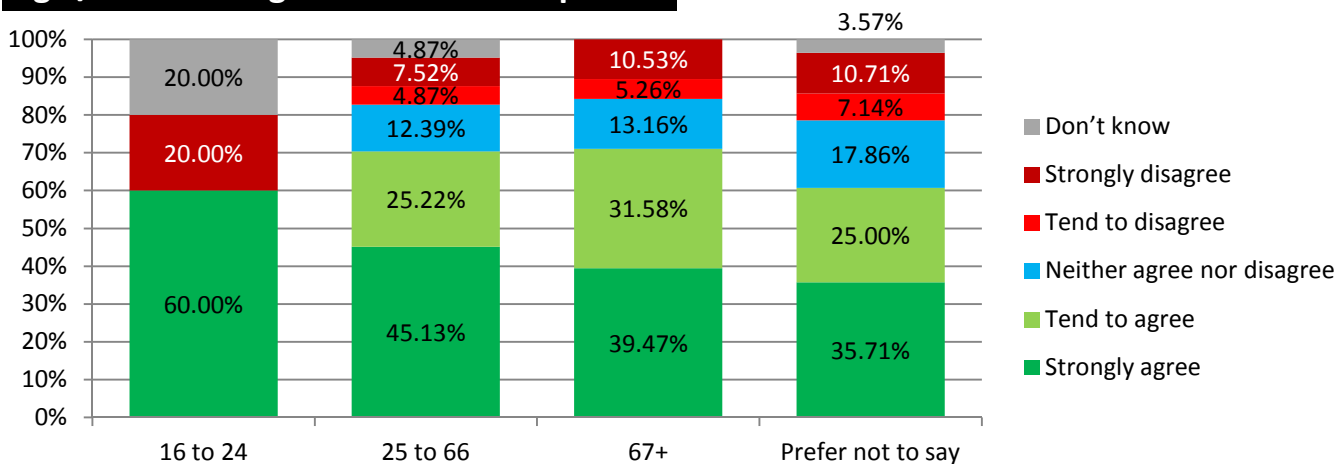
Compared to other areas, Corby had about double the amount of respondents in disagreement with proposal 5 (19% compared to approximately 8-10% in Wellingborough, East Northamptonshire and Kettering). The results show though that the majority response across all areas is that residents are in agreement with proposal 5.

### Gender / Extent of agreement with Proposal 5



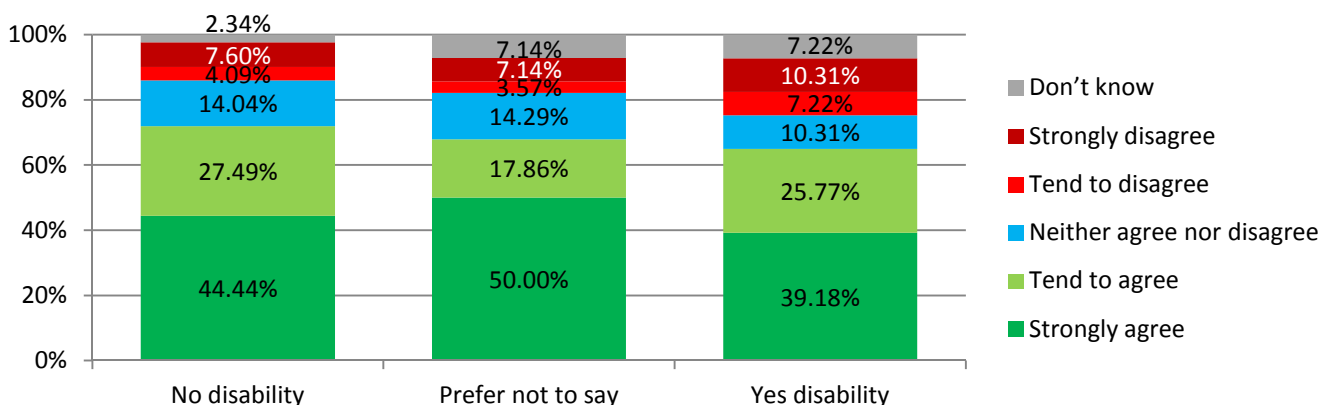
There is no real difference in whether male or female respondents agreed more or less with proposal 5. A few percent more female respondents agreed where males disagreed.

### Age / Extent of agreement with Proposal 5



There seems to be no noticeable trend as to whether age affected residents views on proposal 5.

### Disability / Extent of agreement with Proposal 5



The chart above indicates no particular difference in responses to proposal 5 between those who have a disability and those who do not. A slightly larger proportion of those who answered 'yes' to having a disability disagreed with the proposal 5, however a larger amount of respondents in both groups agreed than disagreed.

## **Summary of comments - Proposal 5:**

### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 5**

68% of respondents strongly or tend to agree with proposal 5. Responses suggested that the elderly may like to go abroad in winter so we should be mindful of this but then why should someone receive help when they are not in the country especially if they can afford to go away. It has been noted that individual circumstances should be considered here though.

### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 5**

68% of respondents strongly or tend to agree with proposal 5. Responses note that the Borough Council of Wellingborough have already made this change and 12 weeks would suit the over 65 population.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 5**

There should be consideration for illness abroad or where the claimant has no control over their situation. It was also mentioned again how this decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society and also how it is difficult to form a view without the data to determine the potential impact on individuals or groups of individuals.

### **Tend to Disagree with Proposal 5**

15 % of respondents tend to or strongly disagree with proposal 5. Responses suggest the limitation be reduced from 4 weeks to 2 weeks or less to limit claims by those who fund periods away from home through relatives and third parties. Phased integration has been mentioned throughout the comments received and issues round personal illness or relatives illness abroad which could affect individual cases. If people can afford to go away they should not be entitled, especially when deployment in the forces only meant a 25% reduction was available to a resident in Corby. Therefore strong disagreement is felt with any reduction due to absence from the UK as all anyone with foreign links would have to do is move to each others houses each month to fraudulently avoid paying it each month.

### **Strongly Disagree with Proposal 5**

15 % of respondents tend to or strongly disagree with proposal 5. Respondents question why the tax payer should pay someone's council tax, if they can afford to travel outside of the UK for more than 4 weeks (maybe 2 weeks should be the maximum). Maybe a fresh application should be enforced on return to the UK, otherwise this feels like a tax payer funded holiday. The suggestion to go with the council that offers the most generous support was mentioned again. If this has an effect on the backdating in proposal 5 then 8-13 weeks would be a better time frame and multicultural families and those required to work abroad need to be considered here as they may need to visit other countries regularly. Cultural and ethnic discrimination and prejudice must be considered here too. It is also mentioned that this proposal seems authoritarian in its approach.

### **Don't know**

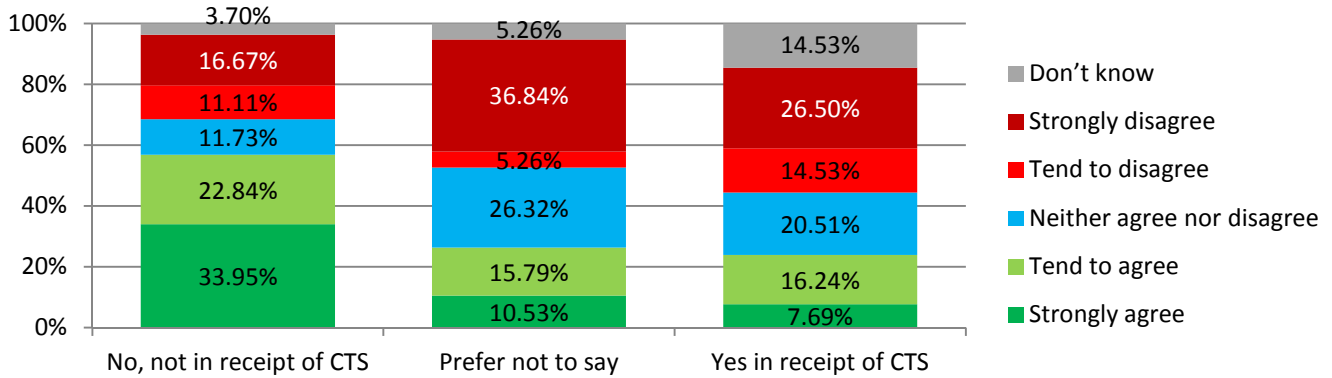
Comments received include asking why anyone entitled to this benefit should be able to spend four weeks outside the UK - it would be a bit like having your cake and eating it. Unification of theft could be a good idea.

*Further details of comments can be found in Appendix A.*

## Relationship between responses and demography - Proposal 6: to remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium (SDP) where a person is paid Universal Credit (Carer's Element) to look after them.

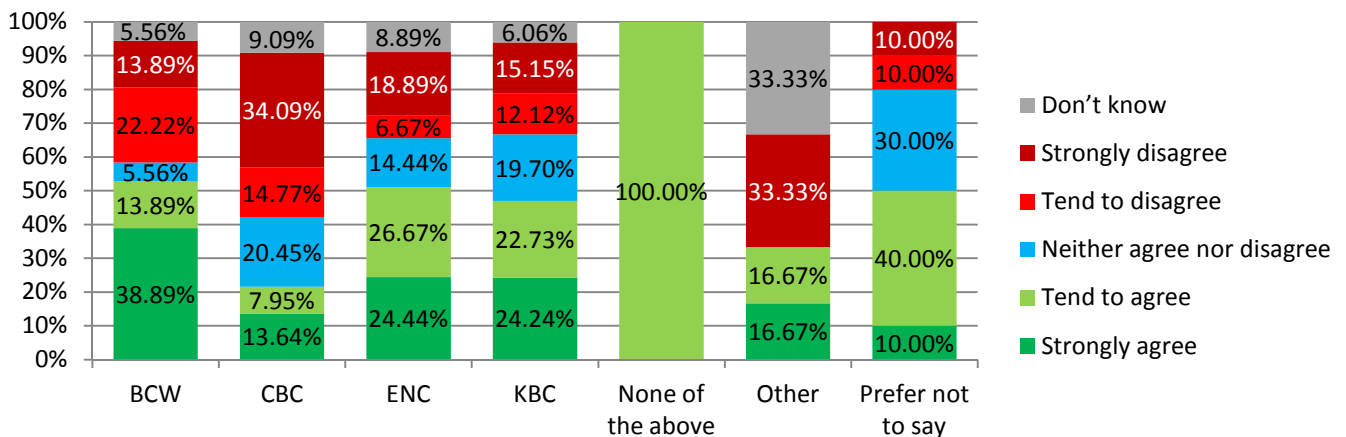
As stated earlier, please note that approximately 75% of respondents answered the demographic questions. We will now explore the demographic trends below in relation to agreement with proposal 6.

### In receipt of CTS / Extent of agreement with Proposal 6



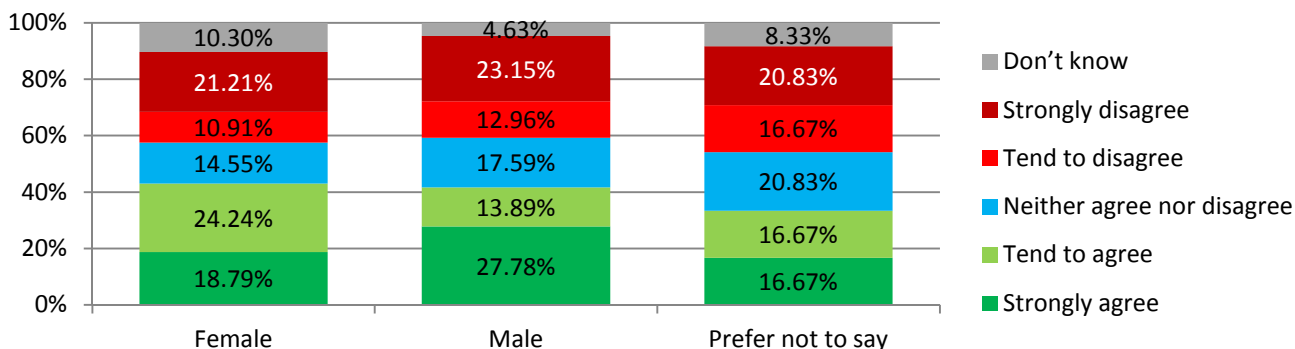
Residents in receipt of council tax support disagreed with proposal 6 more than agreed (difference of 17%), which is contrary to those not in receipt of council tax who had a more than double the amount of respondents in agreement than in disagreement.

### Area you live in / Extent of agreement with Proposal 6



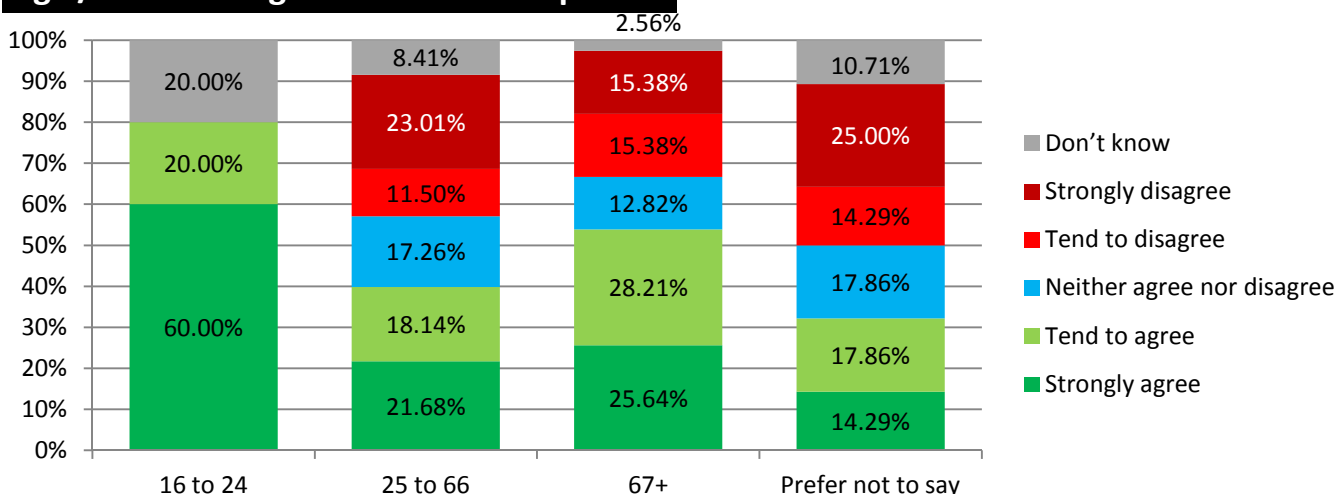
Residents of Corby were in most disagreement with proposal 6, being the only area where more respondents disagreed than agreed. All other areas had more respondents agree than disagree with the proposal.

### Gender / Extent of agreement with Proposal 6



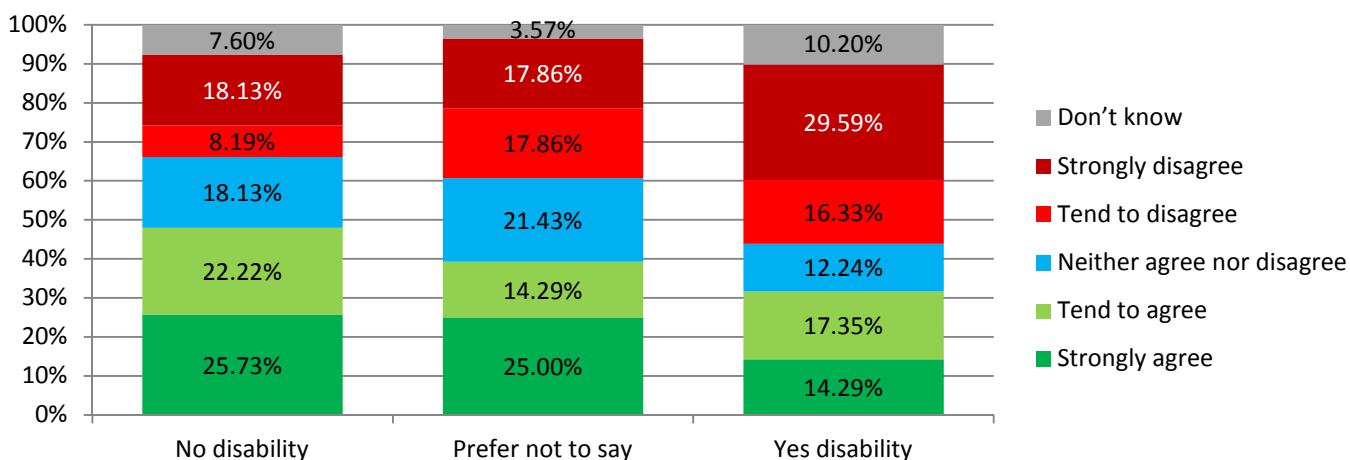
There is no real difference in whether male or female respondents agreed more or less with proposal 6. A few percent more female respondents agreed or selected 'don't know' in cases where males disagreed.

### Age / Extent of agreement with Proposal 6



There seems to be no trend as to whether age massively affected residents views on proposal 6. More pensioners agreed with the proposal where 25 to 66 year olds felt more unsure.

### Disability / Extent of agreement with Proposal 6



The chart above indicates that a larger proportion of those who answered 'yes' to having a disability disagreed with proposal 6, while those who answered 'no' to having a disability were more likely to agree with the proposal.

## **Summary of comments - Proposal 6:**

### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 6**

Just over 41% of respondents tend to or strongly agree with proposal 6. The suggestions received are around leaving the disabled and the carers out of the equation and if needs be just using a blanket discount of 25%, otherwise this will cause untold hardship to a lot of people who really struggle to survive day today as it is. It was also mentioned that the letter from Kettering Borough Council states that this would not affect the residents in the Kettering Borough.

### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 6**

Just over 41% of respondents tend to or strongly agree with proposal 6. Although respondents tend to agree with the principle, the absence of data to determine impact makes this difficult to determine on individuals or groups or whether additional mitigations are required.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 6**

There was a lack of understanding of proposal 6 but generally the suggestion was that the new council should be looking to harmonise outcomes for population at or near the current best provision, not seeking the lowest provision for residents. With regards to the level of disability being severe, this would need to be looked at individually as the person may be the owner of the property or maybe the carer has responsibility.

### **Tend to Disagree with Proposal 6**

34% of respondents tend to or strongly disagree with proposal 6. It was felt that the severely disabled have enough to worry about and therefore the SDP should be kept in and they should not be affected and be protected. The potential affect on carers would cause hardship and they have enough to deal with too and they may rethink their role. It was also suggested it would cost the authority more to deliver what the carers do for free. It is also seen as discrimination and the quality of life is of utmost importance to the community and therefore alignment of support would be the best option.

### **Strongly Disagree with Proposal 6**

34% of respondents tend to or strongly disagree with proposal 6. The strongest feeling was that people with disabilities and their carers frequently have additional financial needs and frequently end up below the poverty line because of this. There were views that no entitlements should be removed; if anything these should be increased, and that this can be a lifeline for carers and it would be removing essential income and we have to consider the most vulnerable in society. It was also suggested that the carers allowance is too low at minimum wage despite this and it affects those who do not have the capacity to work. These are the families that need the most support. It was noted that carers save authorities so much money and that the new authority needs to look after disabled residents and carers unlike the DWP.

### **Don't know**

The statement was perceived as confusing and some respondents were unclear as to whether this would have a positive or negative impact on residents.

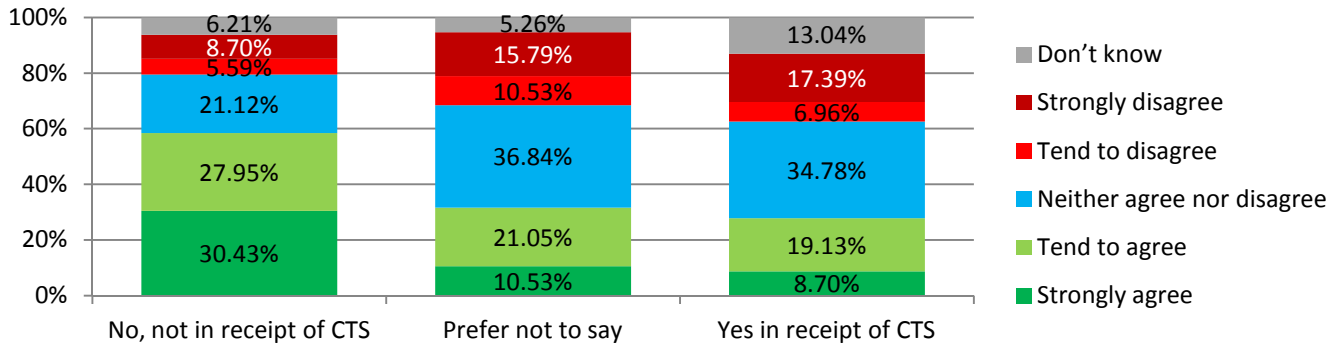
*Further details of comments can be found in Appendix A.*



## Relationship between responses and demography - Proposal 7: to remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium (SDP) where a person is paid Universal Credit (Carer's Element) to look after them.

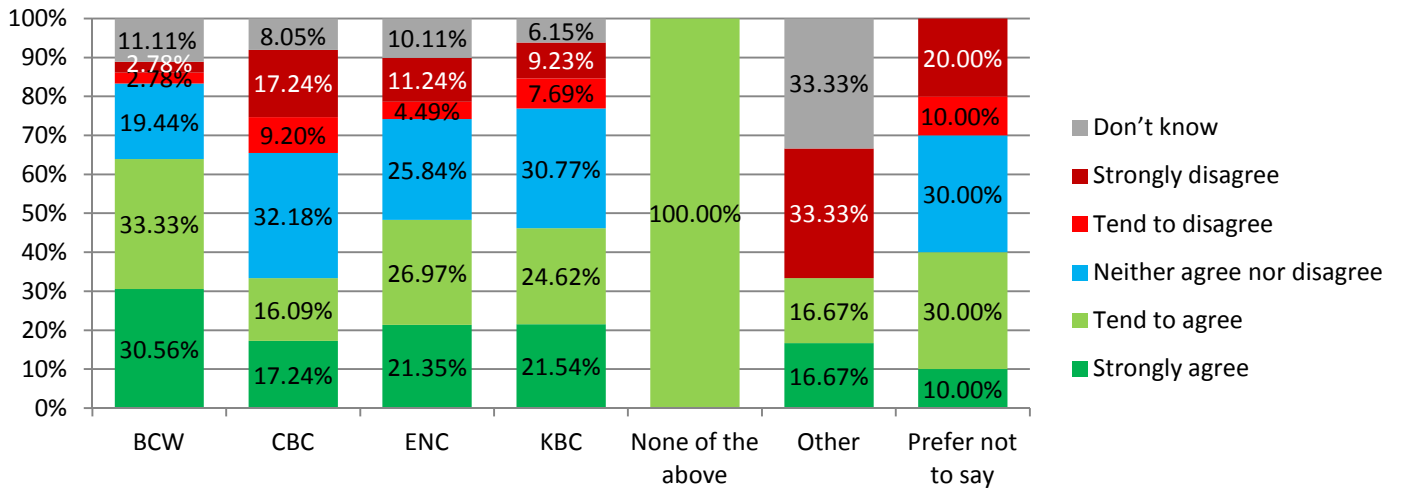
As stated earlier, please note that approximately 75% of respondents answered the demographic questions. We will now explore the demographic trends below in relation to agreement with proposal 7.

### In receipt of CTS / Extent of agreement with Proposal 7



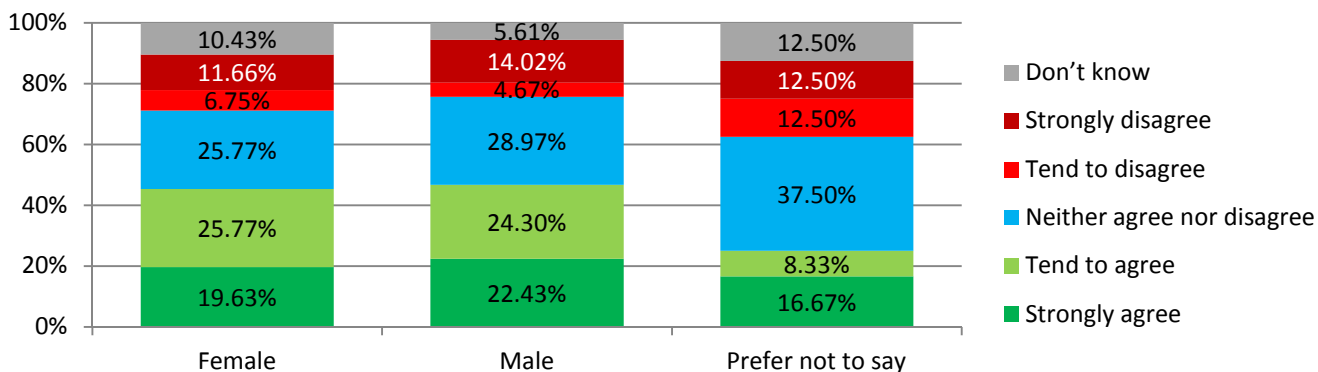
Many more respondents who do not receive council tax support agreed with proposal 7 than disagreed, whereas although more respondents in receipt of council tax support agreed than disagreed, the difference was rather equal, with a large proportion neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

### Area you live in / Extent of agreement with Proposal 7



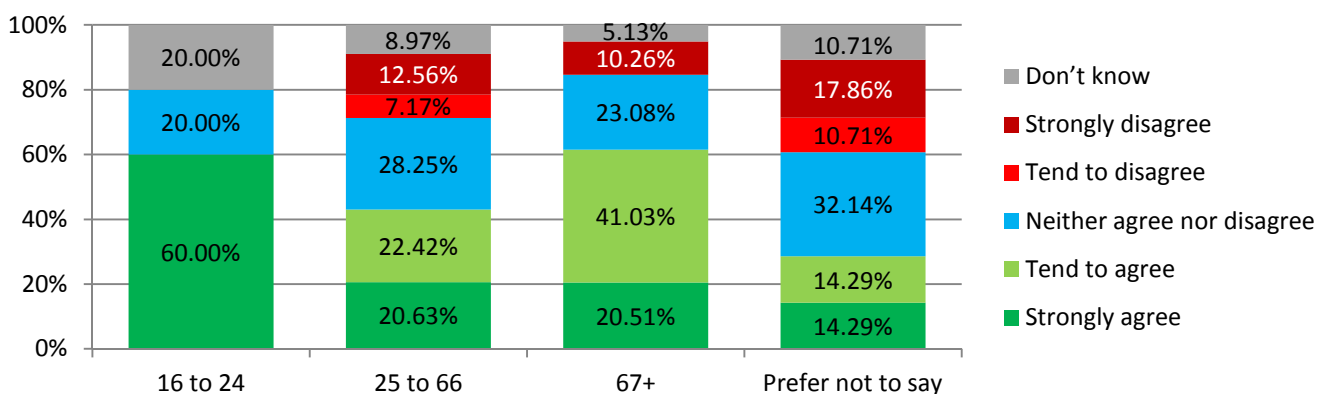
Of those who stated where they live, residents responding from Corby were in most disagreement with proposal 7. However all areas agreed more than disagreed. The group shown here with most respondents disagreeing are those who selected they lived in an 'other' area, or who chose not to say in which area they lived.

### Gender / Extent of agreement with Proposal 7



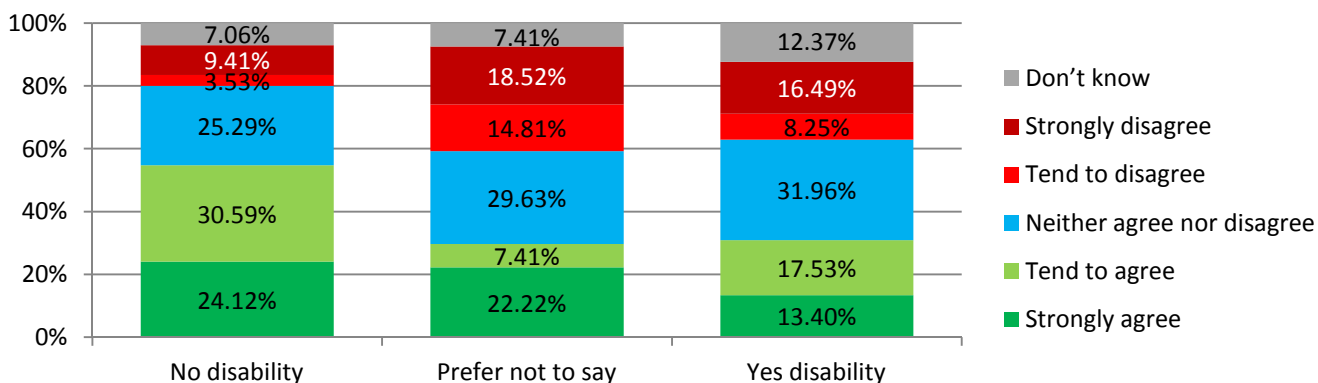
There is no real difference in whether male or female respondents agreed more or less with proposal 7.

### Age / Extent of agreement with Proposal 7



The results show that respondents of pensionable age, were more likely to agree with proposal 7 than respondents of working age, however throughout all age groups residents agreed by more than double the amount who disagreed. No respondents aged 16-24 disagreed, however only 1.7% (5 respondents) represent this group. Of those who chose not to state their age, there was a rather equal split between agreement and disagreement.

### Disability / Extent of agreement with Proposal 7



Those without a disability were more likely to agree with the proposal than those with a disability. However both groups had more respondents in agreement than in disagreement.

## **Summary of comments - Proposal 7:**

### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 7**

44% tend to or strongly agree with proposal 7. It was felt that this option could be removed but also that this is seen as greed from Councils.

### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 7**

There were no comments left by respondents who tended to agree with proposal 7.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 7**

There was confusion with proposal 7 and the impact of this proposal on residents (nearly 28% neither agreed nor disagreed). It was said that the majority of employed people are on this because of the government civic restrictions strongly disagree with this option.

### **Tend to Disagree with Proposal 7**

20% tend to or strongly disagree with proposal 7. It was noted that the disabled and ill still need support in this area and it was picking on them again. Also there was the suggestion that it could be used as incentive to get back into work but support for meals, travel and clothes etc. would be needed to help people back into work and so support should be given to the poorest members of the community to encourage them to be part of the community. The system was referenced as disgrace with a bare minimum attitude to people's welfare. It was stated that consideration should also be given to those who have lost a salary and could be left in poverty as a result.

### **Strongly Disagree with Proposal 7**

20% tend to or strongly disagree with proposal 7. It was said that all claims should be calculated according to the individual and support should be given to those in receipt of ESA to return to work and the WRAC should remain. It was proposed that the harmonisation should favour the most generous option for residents. Respondents said that allowances should be made for the process that is already undertaken for WRAC criteria and the individuals involved who have been assessed as having vulnerability and how this affects them further. It was mentioned that the questions are too difficult to understand and should be clearer. It was felt that this is negatively affecting the disabled, poor and disadvantaged again and are just to save the council money not about harmonisation. A respondent stated that the rationale on this is that if three councils have used this in their schemes that this is the way to go and believes it should be about which is the best scheme to support our most vulnerable people who cannot help their circumstances.

### **Don't know**

Proposal 7 seems to have caused lots of confusion and was not clear but the suggestions raised were as to why carers would pay more, why would we remove anything that could assist people in need and why this cannot be a phased process of harmonising all councils.

*Further details of comments can be found in Appendix A.*

## **Comments not linked to a specific proposal**

### **Other comments:**

Other comments received via letter from organisations and so not linked with a specific proposal included a suggestion to move to a flat rate of 20% rather than 25%, and for this transition to be made over a period of 3 years. There was also a comment about whether a child poverty needs assessment was completed and outcomes from it included within the proposals. There is questioning of why North Northamptonshire are not having a special dispensation for people in receipt of a war widows pension as part of their armed forces covenant commitment like West Northamptonshire are, and why the discretionary power to reduce Council Tax liability in cases of real hardship are not being used. There was also a requesting that these proposals are reviewed to ensure the statutory duty has been met to make this scheme fair and affordable for the residents.

A further comment via email was received about why single occupants only get 25% discount instead of 50% when the council tax bill is based on two people sharing a house.

Another email was received showing dissatisfaction with the Equality Impact Assessment carried out for this work.

*Please see Appendix A for further details of comments.*

## Appendix A – Further details of comments on the Council Tax Support Consultation

**Analysis.** Comments are split by proposal and by to what extent the respondents agreed with each proposal. Extra comments received via email or letter are detailed at the end.

### **Comments Received for Proposal 1 - to harmonise the minimum Council Tax contribution to 25% of Council Tax liability for working age people.**

#### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 1**

I agree with proposal 1 because its only 25% when we could be paying a lot more and I don't think people should stress at this as to me seems like the best proposal

I would agree as I'm sure that KBC are in the higher percentage tier. So it would theoretically lower the bill, however the concern is how much the council tax will be going up to compensate for all of this new council being set up.

I am a single working parent who earns £555 per month. My council tax is £150 a month! I struggle to pay it and often go without heating and food and other essentials because of this

#### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 1**

As a new authority it is right that so far as is possible and fair council tax relief should apply across the board for all residence of the authority.

Although, I tend to agree, I worry that 25% will be too high a cost for some families.

How will those who currently require more financial support be helped? With COVID impacting more and more heavily on everyone's finances, more support is needed for the less well off.

If you are already in a position of not being able to afford your Council Tax, the more we ask them to pay themselves, the less likely they will be to improve their situation. I'd prefer a maximum of 20% but less if possible.

Any increase in taxation would be the straw that broke the camels back at the moment.

I agree with the proposal in principal but you must accept their are exceptions in society where not everyone can afford this & you must offer more help to the most vulnerable in our society based on their income. You can't make people pay what they simply can't afford. It's o.k. to sit in offices & decide these things but get off your backsides & go out onto the streets & talk to people face to face to see the human aspect of this decision.

The Police Fire and commissioner for Policing and the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority supports a broadly cost neutral proposal. Given the current environment it is difficult to establish whether the scheme will continue to be cost-neutral whilst the COVID pandemic continues, therefore, if possible, it is recommended that this is reviewed at an appropriate time to do so.

#### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 1**

Unsure how this will affect working age people on long term sickness/disability benefits

In order to be in a neutral position, I consider it necessary to implement some calculation policies, including the reduction by 100% of the council tax of the inhabitants depending on their circumstances. Social cases (people with disabilities who have a job should be exempted from paying the tax) or other disadvantaged categories.

I strongly believe that individuals who pay council tax should be paying for what they actually access within the community. For example, I live alone and can just about afford my council tax; however, when reading into what I pay for, I very rarely use any of the services which the money goes towards. Except bin collection of course.

**Tend to Disagree with Proposal 1 - (some of these comments have been combined due to the large quantity)**

**The amount of Council tax paid should be 25% or higher – 7 comments combined**

Should be higher than 25%. 30 to 50% would be appropriate and fairer to those who pay 100%. People should pay at least 50% of their council tax as a minimum. To discover I've been paying 45% to someone else's 8% is unjust!

The people who paid the lower amounts should pay more for as long as it takes to redress the balance and those paying 45% pay 8% for the same period then all pay 25%. This change will be unsustainable for those in financial difficulties.

**The amount of Council Tax paid should be lower than 25% - 14 comments combined**

I expect my Council to take care of the weakest of its residents.

If the contribution for those on very low incomes is limited to 15% the Council will have greater potential to be collect the debt without incurring extra debt via the debt recovery process and this would therefore be cost neutral for the Council. An increase will make living harder for working age disabled and pensioners and put them further into poverty.

Having to pay nothing toward Council Tax initially, but it has steadily increased to 20% will mean a further 5% will be almost impossible. It should be based on how much you earn and what you can afford. Those working shorter hours are already struggling especially considering the detrimental impact of COVID-19 & furlough. This is especially important now when central Government has indicated that it will allow Council Tax to rise further and even more people are forecast to become unemployed.

The current levels of support are clearly there for locally determined reasons and to now introduce additional levels of financial burden during a time of already increased hardship due to covid 19 would be wrong and this proposal should reflect current financial difficulties or be postponed.

**Other suggestions – 7 comments combined**

Should put a sum from reserves (to be protected from use to pay off NCC's debt) against a phased implementation to the proposed 25% level. Can't increase council tax massively for one local council to compensate for another, residents aren't used to this massive jump in payments to pay for the same service. Keep it near the same as it is for each area even in a unitary council, or compensate the higher paid areas so they fall to a lower percentage.

There are more areas to cover in one local council over another. Just because moving to a unitary, the resident population shouldn't have to suffer. Bring the council tax lower for higher paid areas and subsidise more to bring in line with other areas.

We understand that you need to have one scheme and appreciate how difficult bringing five schemes together into something that suits everyone can be. Out of all your proposals we feel this is the most contentious in the sense that those who have been on the lower end of the relief spectrum will be hit hard at the 25% bracket. Clearly those who have been subjected to a limited contribution in the past will be positively impacted but we wonder if 25% is just too much a leap, could the agreed amount be lower or introduced on a sliding scale over coming years?

While I appreciate you have assessed the potential of a banded scheme I feel this should be revisited. With the introduction of universal credit this has the potential for a new assessment each month with a new UC change which can cause confusion for the end user.

*Several comments also mentioned a lack of understanding of Proposal 1.*

**Strongly Disagree with Proposal 1- (some of these comments have been combined due to the large quantity)**

**The amount of Council tax paid should be 25% or higher – 6 comments combined**

It is a tax on people who work. How does this incentivise people to work? The contribution to make

should be 45% with a 55% discount. This makes it fairer to those who pay in full.

This isn't fair that it will be rising and people get more help when they don't work and we work and long hours just to pay our bills so looks like one off us will have to get another job somehow. However if couples like our selves could prove what we earned and we could get some help would help us a little more. Even £10 a month would help. I wish they would re look at the threshold earnings and take every case or all cases if was over a certain amount then not entitled etc.

Too many people on low income will be affected. Keep to allowing 45%. The discount is too high. Because it seems a much fairer system and does not incur additional monies from government funds.

**The amount of Council Tax paid should be lower than 25% - 58 comments combined**

25 % is a significant amount of money to find for people who are living on the breadline and it creates more debt within the local authority area. During the current pandemic this seems even harsher. The consequences of these changes to residents are not acceptable. Could a process be put in place that where the residents who will be hit the most with these changes see a gradual change over a period of 2 years to bring into line.

The figure should be set at 15%. Surely the cost implications in collecting 25% of the charges would be difficult as customers would find it difficult to pay; This would involve extra costs for the council and extra stress for customers. This decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society.

If harmonisation must happen, due to the inept financial management of the Conservative run County Council, then the initial decisions should consider the financial impact on residents and staff. This is better for Kettering residents but still way too high for those least able to pay. If Kettering wasn't so out of kilter with the rest the "average" would be way lower. The top percentage should be no more than 10%.

I disagree with the minimum contribution amount, if you wanted it fair you'd set a limit for either way. A whole council rate. Say 20% maximum rate for everyone. None of this 45% paying total rubbish.

You can't ask people who're unemployed to pay 25% of their council tax, only people who work should pay.

Will there be a safety net for those who cannot afford the increase or will big brother take over and start evicting people who cannot pay the huge increases mentioned here?

Those who are PIP/DLA then getting SDA should not have to pay any extra to top up on the council tax but those on jsa or working tax credit can pay 25% towards it.

Only residents of Kettering borough have a decrease, so unfair to 75% of borough. As a citizen out of work during the pandemic, cashflow is tight enough even with UC support leaving me in deficit. This is the case for so many and now would not be the time to decrease the maximum discount.

I am in receipt of ESA and have learning difficulties/ disabilities and don't think I should have to pay anything. My situation is I look after a very disabled husband 24 hours a day 365/6 days of the year and he needs heat or food if we look at it as 2 weeks food shopping or 1 months heating and I would have to choose between that and the increase in my Council Tax.

Proposal 1 is extremely unfair to what are referred to as "unpaid" carers. Getting only Care Allowance and a small amount of Income Support. But save the public purse around £1.3 billion a year.

In reality we the "unpaid" carers do not get a comprehensive rise each year. As one benefit increases the other goes down. Effectively my increase in April 2020 was about 50 pence.

We get paid a lower rate than Job Seekers and we commit to full time work. But we do not even get the legal minimum wage.

As a provider of benefits advice, and related budget advice, I have encountered far too many individuals on means tested benefits for whom the Council Tax charge was prohibitive, even with the discount. The aggressive manner in which councils pursue debt, i.e. via bailiff services, causes the debt to spiral out of control, and also costs the authority to engage these companies. By granting a higher award, even to zero, the need for these hostile (believe me, I have spoken with many!) organisations would be reduced substantially, focusing instead of those who WON'T pay rather than those who

CAN'T pay. If a person/family is purely on means tested benefits, I believe their award should be 100%.

As a single person living alone in benefits I strongly disagree with your proposal to change the "working age" contribution from 20% to 25%.

Since I became disabled in 2010, the account of rent and council tax that I've become liable for has risen exponentially, but the rate of increase in benefits has not. I've found myself worse off than I was in 2010/11.

Unemployed people have a certain amount of money issued by the government what is the minimum to live on. If people have to pay at least 25% council tax then it means the amount to live on goes under what is required by law.

Alongside the CT Harmonisation scheme (this years CT will go up by 5% and also adding the Police Crime and Fire Commissioners uplift of £15) therefore vulnerable families in North Northamptonshire (Corby) could see their contribution to this years Council Tax Bill rise to 30.05% + the PCCs uplift: That is not fair and not affordable. Plus the Government has put £500 million into a pot for extra help for LCTSS.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage

compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.

Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved. The West has said they will be keeping to guidelines surrounding the Armed forces covenant why is the North not honouring this?

Because most people who pay this are struggling to feed themselves let alone pay extra tax, perhaps increase tax on the richest who can easily afford to pay more. Sadly this won't happen and more and more people will be plunged into debt and food banks. What makes me smile is why you are bothering to ask my opinion when you and I both know you are going to raise it anyway!

I disagree with this because this is the usual trend of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The villages in North Northamptonshire pay a higher percentage which will be coming down, leaving them better off with more money, where as in Corby the percentage will be going up by more than triple leaving them wondering how they can afford it and leaving them with a lot less money.

This is definitely not a FAIR system as you say it is. Just because the county council made massive mistakes why should the people of Northamptonshire be punished.

#### Other suggestions – 30 comments combined

Phased harmonisation across 3 years. The splitting of Northamptonshire into two unitaries and amalgamation of 5 authorities is supposed to accrue financial benefits. Some of those benefits should be ploughed back into improved outcomes for the people of N. Northamptonshire.

25% is lazy and merely 'splitting the difference'.

Whilst it is understood that there is a need to harmonise services and maximise income, you have already made the decision to ensure that the Council Tax harmonisation is modelled in such a way that it brings in another £9 million as well as an increase of 5% this year and another amount as the police precept.

The solution is simple - list what is currently on offer from each of the four Borough / District Councils, and then apply the option that is perceived to be the most generous to people already in difficult circumstances usually through no real fault of their own.



Stop wasting so much money in the first place we all need some reductions. Leave things alone, why should Corby be bailing out other councils, let them all run independently. Residents are being penalised for the problems other Local councils are going through budget wise.

We need a local council not a unitary council. Fully understand the need to bring council tax in line across North Northants but not at expense of households in Corby. Need to ensure there are funds available to support families and individuals.

Any change in the reduction should be proportionate to the differing reductions already in place. You cannot and should not expect a one fits all approach. More than one option should be consulted on to give residents a broader choice and understanding of what could be put in place.

It seems that council tax increases year on year do not bring the paying citizen any increased benefits. A change in policy to review increases would be a good start rather than place legal obligations to pay, then charge us more and more only for this policy to say I am contributing less. The council are charging more and more, that is the problem, and my few pounds only ever go so far and income increases are not so easy for some.

I don't think children should come into the family element it shouldn't matter how many children you have!

In your statement which i received on the 9/11/20 I see you say the consultation runs from the 5th Oct 2020 to the 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2020 therefore it would have more beneficial to have received this at an earlier date to allow me to understand this more as i now only have 21 days! Why not look at who or what Council offers the best help to its Community and use this as your start to the new Councils Programme of Assisting the people in your community rather than a rise in costs. Surely this will show all you do care for them that need it the most within our community, rather than every year we lose more of the little help we do get in assistance.

In the 4 councils there are 10,412 Support claimants, 7339 of which will see an rise from maximum discount 91.5 % - 80.0 %, Only the 3073 in Kettering will save money . Each one of the 7339 will have to find more money to pay for this service, in turn these customers will try for more benefits from the government which means every tax payer will pay more not just in Northants.

It looks and reads like you're trying to make it harder for lower income people to get by, removing help in various avenues from backdating if someone's had no income to taking away carers help (your wording of things is very convoluted)

There are enormous differences between the rural and urban areas. You are looking to bring in equality in a fundamentally unfair way. Different geographical areas within the boundaries of the new Authority have varying levels of economic depravity and thus this must be taken into account when dealing with the poorest households.

This really doesn't seem right and is another example of how seniors in this country are not treated fairly. I know you're busy but could you give this matter some consideration or, if not, pass it on to someone who could?

## **Comments Received for Proposal 2 - to remove the award of a family premium when assessing new claims for LCTS.**

### **Strongly Agree with Proposal 2**

As my letter from KBC states this would not affect us here as they already have this in place.

### **Tend to Agree with Proposal 2**

I agree to an extent but you would have to clearly outline what you mean by family. There are so many variants of what family means these days I can see this being abused. How would you define what a family is to people? I live with just my partner & I class us as a family. My neighbour lives with just her Son & she classes them as a family. My other neighbour are a married man & woman & they class themselves as a family. Then there is a married man & woman with 2 Sons & a Daughter & they class themselves as a family. What about people with step children & gay couples etc? What is a family to you in this generation? You have to be very clear on this.

It makes sense to help them get that bit extra by not using it in the calculations for their benefits. Assuming I read that right.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 2**

Penalizing larger families is not the way to go

I don't understand what 'family premium' is so I cannot comment on P2.

### **Tend to Disagree with Proposal 2**

This will affect the lowest paid the hardest as usual

It would depend on which local authority area would be most affected. If it is a deprived area we would be making the poorest pay more.

Same a previous answer a gradual change for residents over a period of 2 years.

I believe that the alignment of support is the best option.

If you are a carer then you should get some deduction

A family with children will always need more help. Their money if both on benefits has to go further. Making their budgets a lot tighter. With this in mind the family premium assessment should stay.

It is hard for families - and it is temporary as children grow up. Perhaps it could be based on children under school age.

I do not know what the family premium is so can not make an informed decision

Why remove it? Provide for all councils instead

How can you remove something that someone was entitled to before

Families are expensive. I think a family premium should remain in place.

### **Strongly Disagree with Proposal 2 -(these comments have been categorised due to the large quantity)**

#### **Families penalised:**

As previous comment re affordability whilst on means tested benefits. Families are already penalised from so many directions, and this is just another way to incur financial hardship on them.

Families on benefits are already stretched to the max. Don't take away any support. We all know that the DWP already like to impose draconian measures on benefits claimants per se

I don't think families should be penalised for having more than 2 children universal credit already have the two child limit which has put many families into poverty and hardship I think making extra charges etc will put us further into hardship many single parents struggle already which is why the help is out there... I also believe with this virus a lot of the towns are struggling as a community and on lower incomes due to furlough which again will put extra stress which is not needed
Discrimination against families
Because it would make a big family feel like they are a target
family premium is not being taken into consideration at source (DWP) as part of longer term welfare reforms, this is a double whammy for families who are already struggling to feed their children through food bank usage and is contributing to the impact of child poverty in the unity area. You need to make the scheme affordable and ensure there is a safety net in place for people in real hardship.
Why should larger families be penalised? Their household bills are already higher and we are risking children living closer to the poverty line
This is unfair to low income households where there are young children and parents have to juggle jobs between them whilst also fulfilling childcare responsibilities. A reduction of £17 per week comes up to £820 approx. per annum which is quite a large amount for already struggling families.
Not a family friendly approach
<b>It will harm poorest the most (5 comments):</b>
This decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society. If harmonisation must happen, due to the inept financial management of the Conservative run County Council, then the initial decisions should consider the financial impact on residents and staff. As an alternative I would propose that the other members of the new Unitary Authority, consider managing their finances in such a way that they can all afford to pay the benefits as Corby currently does!
Hits the poor and disadvantaged AGAIN.
This will penalise the poorest citizens
Targeting the poor
It again hits the poor and children.
<b>Different areas will be affected differently (2 comments):</b>
Again insufficient or no consideration is being given to the vast differences between geographical areas within the boundary of the new Authority.
Not all areas of Northants are as affluent as others. A one size fits all is a good idea in theory but in practical terms it will sound the death knell for the poorest people in the county.
<b>The current struggle (2 comments):</b>
Taking away a benefit at a time that families are struggling and unemployment rising.
People are struggling now, this will make matters worse.
<b>The most generous current support on offer should be given (2 comments):</b>
The solution is simple - list what is currently on offer from each of the four Borough / District Councils, and then apply the option that is perceived to be the most generous to people already in difficult circumstances usually through no real fault of their own. This would almost certainly see a rise in Council Tax to cover the nett increase in costs, but the principle of the notion of "community" is "He ain't heavy, he's my brother". There are plenty of fat cats in the county for whom Council Tax is chicken feed, and who can easily help to support those in less fortunate circumstances.
I think we should be aligning with the authority paying the most support, particularly at this time. I appreciate that this costs money to do so, but the financial impact on those relying on LCTSS will be immense particularly at this current time during the pandemic. This may seem like a small part of the benefit system, but support such as this plays an important part in life chances of the recipient.

<b>Keep family premium (2 comments):</b>
A lot of families are going to be struggling now and for the foreseeable future. The family premium will make a small difference to those families, especially if their contributions are going to rise. I think the family premium should be kept and offered to all those who meet the criteria to claim it.
The family premium should be kept in the scheme for new claimants. (Existing claimants entitlement should also not be changed.). The family premium would help many families who are struggling financially. The councils should be working together to help prevent this and ease the burden of these worries for people, not add to them.
<b>Why change? (2 comments):</b>
Again why do we have to change when it works in current format.
Who is to say the the one area needs to change? Who is to say that help, support and understand should be reversed. There is no evidence to suggest that punishment and exclusion encourages people to strive for better.
<b>Wasting money:</b>
This would appear to be another money grabbing exercise from a council who barely cater for their communities as it is. Stop wasting money
<b>Other comments:</b>
At the end of the day, if people are unemployed then you can't ask for even more money of them.
I don't agree with charging extra to people who work full time to pay more. The people claiming benefits get out of paying taxes where the ones who earn there money have to pay more.
Corby just gets screwed over with everything with this new unitary, why should Corby pay for Northamptonshire's mistakes. Going after people who are poor, disabled and those on universal credit, knowing its a crap system that doesn't work it disgraceful. This is why Corby voted against this shitshow, I fully support an independent Corby.
To often corporate bodies will take the highest amount they can, this was an opportunity to look at ways a scheme can be put together that is affordable and fair, this scheme removes all the possible benefits and hikes council tax support up to levels that people will really struggle to pay.
Child poverty is prevalent.
I prefer Proposal 1 (to harmonize minimum CT contribution to 25%) as this is the only proposal that will affect me.
the family premuim should not be included in any new changes for new claims as should be one which is in place now
Nothing is fair. The fact council tax is worked out by the value of your house but houses aren't revalued makes the whole scheme unfair anyway
HB regulations were set for HB alone to bring down the HB bill, the LCTSS is different in that it has always been a locally determined rate to ensure that after the effects of welfare reform there was still an incentive for work, what is the effect of this decision on the affordability of the scheme, who is not to say the other councils have got this wrong? needs review in light of this.
The council tax rebate needs to be local circumstances not DSS
You haven't given us an example of what the new affordable and fair scheme will be in detail.
If the tax payer is making a payment to someone in need, then this should be taken into account when more help is requested. This is how tax works on my income.

## **Comments Received for Proposal 3 - to limit the child allowance to two children.**

### **Strongly agree with proposal 3**

I do agree with this decision. Most families I see and they admit they have more children because of the extra help they get while I have once child and work full time and struggle with bills. Think this will be most welcomed.

Hopefully this will make people think about having an excess of children.

As my letter from KBC states this would not affect us here as they already have this in place.

I agree with this one to stop families purely on benefits churning out children for money and bigger housing.

I would suggest a 1 child only policy for child support as well as taxes.

I'm the eldest of six. My dad went bankrupt. We relied on benefits. Children don't chose to come in to this world if the community can assist them to have a better start in life, they should.

### **Tend to agree with Proposal 3**

But transitional support should be available for those existing recipients if it is not applicable to new applicants only.

Nobody should have more than 2 children

I agree that it should be limited to 2 children.

We cant keep on giving discounts to people while they continue to have loads of children.

I do not have a young family to support so cannot really comment on how this would affect me. More people = more costs usually so families who have more children may have to consider the economical aspects their decision has on national finances and the benefits system in particular.

should be just one child. start doing your bit for over population.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 3**

Without seeing the potential impact on individuals and specific groups of individuals, it is difficult to determine a view. This information is needed to be able to form a view, as is information as to what mitigations will be put into effect to minimise the impact on those affected by the proposals.

### **Tend to disagree with Proposal 3**

You state that two authorities do not follow your proposal. The welfare of children may suffer here with aligning down Ward. I'm starting to note that you are tending to remove all benefits if others do not have them.

I would ask you to consider taking all children in the household into account.

Principle OK, but needs tapered reductions to ease hardship for those families affected

Phased integration should take place

Only support for 2 children is insufficient . 4 would be the minimum as this tends to be the type of family in terms of requiring the most help.

For families with more than two children, changes must be introduced gradually e.g. amount adjusted monthly over a year to allow them to re-budget

People with young children will be hit the hardest

I suggest a common policy for Northamptonshire, families formed by couples or single parent with at least 2 children, I consider that it is not a criterion to limit the initiative formulated by you, I suggest you analyse the benefits according to the number of children, there is the possibility of progress future due to the state's current investment in exempting payments that will be capitalized by providing programs for families with more than two children.

<p>This decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society. If harmonisation must happen, due to the inept financial management of the Conservative run County Council, then the initial decisions should consider the financial impact on residents and staff. As an alternative I would propose that the other members of the new Unitary Authority, consider managing their finances in such a way that they can all afford to pay the benefits as Corby currently does!</p>
<p>Child tax credits is limited to three - I think this should be the same.</p>
<p>all children should be considered when assessing</p>
<p>Discrimination against larger families...</p>
<p>I believe that the alignment of support is the best option.</p>
<p>Unfair on parents of multiples</p>

Strongly disagree with Proposal 3
<p>Child allowance is paid for by the tax payer. All allowances should be used to calculate income, before applying for additional help.</p>
<p>This discriminates against larger and more vulnerable families and is just wrong.</p>
<p>For existing families it should continue to be that there are no limits to number of children as it could push people below the poverty line. For new claimants this is fair enough</p>
<p>The solution is simple - list what is currently on offer from each of the four Borough / District Councils, and then apply the option that is perceived to be the most generous to people already in difficult circumstances usually through no real fault of their own. This would almost certainly see a rise in Council Tax to cover the nett increase in costs, but the principle of the notion of "community" is "He isn't heavy, he's my brother". There are plenty of fat cats in the county for whom Council Tax is chicken feed, and who can easily help to support those in less fortunate circumstances.</p>
<p>I think we should be aligning with the authorities paying the most support, particularly at this time. I appreciate that this costs money to do so, but the financial impact on those relying on LCTSS will be immense particularly at this current time during the pandemic. This may seem like a small part of the benefit system, but support such as this plays an important part in life chances of the recipient.</p>
<p>This will further discriminate against larger families and increase levels of poverty still further for some of the poorest households in the county. This appears simply to be a cost saving measure and one I strongly disagree with.</p>
<p>Would put larger families at a disadvantage</p>
<p>Parents/grandparents/carers should not be penalised because if size of family</p>
<p>This is an abhorrent and loathsome proposal which could only come from those in a high socioeconomic background. There are families living in deprivation with both parents working. This would be a total disgrace. It will be the children who will suffer. It seems to me that you intend to increase payments whilst taking away any other support.</p>
<p>This is discriminatory</p>
<p>You are aligning this new system to two of the worst dysfunctional government departments in the country. If their track record is anything to go by may god help us all.</p>
<p>Why two children? This is an arbitrary figure plucked out of the air.</p>
<p>Whilst I agree that benefit caps are positive in theory, the blanket application of this policy does not take into consideration the complex circumstances of families. Some families had more than 2 children prior to the benefit caps and should be excluded; families whose earned income has been negatively impacted by the government's decisions with regard to the Covid response, e.g. furloughed, JSS, redundancies, should also be exempt from this blanket policy if they were previously not in receipt of means tested benefits. They have contributed to the 'communal pot' and should not now be denied access to assistance that they have contributed to. I feel that this blanket policy is discriminatory against families in general and that each case should be assessed individually.</p>
<p>Why should you be penalised for having a bigger family.</p>
<p>Discrimination against larger families</p>
<p>This is unfair to people with more than 2 children.</p>

Hits the poor and disadvantaged AGAIN.
This just isn't workable, like it or not many families have more than two children. Take away this premium and children suffer.
Why should it be capped at 2 children this is just wrong
Anyone with more than 3 children before the date should be honoured then anyone after should be 2 max children
Single parents struggling already with Covid and already struggling. Seen parent shop lifting and not getting help they need already as a single parent and now loosing out and cutting back again.
It is not the place of the council or government to judge someone on the size of there family for what ever reason, or then to go on and penalise them. If they need the help of the council it should be given. Capping a benefit dose not help that family, it will only make there lives harder. Often then it will boil down to food heat or tax not being paid for. This situation dose not benefit anyone in a family. If they have to make a choice which one gets paid or bought.
Why would we impose fiscal sanctions on larger families? Are we China?
Its not fair to penalise a mother with more than 2 children if that mother has worked or is actively looking for work
This will increase child poverty and penalise the most vulnerable in the current climate this would be vicious and unfair
You categorically cannot punish people for having more than 2 children. Maybe look at reducing the amount but not cut it off altogether.
Because it won't be fair on those family and they wouldn't be able to afford it
Punishing larger families
This should only apply to the third children born after 1st April 2017 and not those born before
I prefer Proposal 1 (to harmonize minimum CT contribution to 25%) as this is the only proposal that will affect me.
All Local Authorities have a duty to complete a local child poverty needs assessment given the proposal to penalise families with children, what is your assessment on the impact on families?
there needs to be another layer of safeguards in place to ensure that vulnerable families needs are taken into account.
People may need help after they have had their children. I strongly disagree with the government stance on capping assistance at 2 children. I think all children should be counted in the assessment.
This will have an impact on Child Poverty, you cannot count the children in one hand and discount them in the other hand, by discounting or limiting families to two children the money has been taken off the overall benefit income at source through UC. to do so again puts families at a huge disadvantage. this is a local scheme that needs to take account of local circumstances and you have a duty to reduce health inequalities and improve child poverty.
We are not an eastern block communist state dictating how many children people should have.
Every child matters and should not be disadvantaged because they live in a larger household
Where are these children supposed to go? If no one is helping them, is there not a danger that lack of food, warmth and nurturing that they will become sick and disadvantaged?
Fair scheme for everyone not just those who have less than two children
where do you want these children to go? who will pay for them?
Disadvantages a very vulnerable group in our community (young families) who are very important to the whole community's future.
This is a cruel, draconian measure, taking food out of the mouths of children.
Children suffer again.
Also people with financial struggles get affected by council taxi increase but also if they have more than two children this is unfair and discriminatory to big families trying to live ordinary lives
Not very well explained
I don't know what this is. But I had two children because I could afford two children.
Also people with financial struggles get affected by council taxi increase but also if they have more than two children this is unfair and discriminatory to big families trying to live ordinary lives

## **Comments Received for Proposal 4 - to restrict backdating to 1 calendar month**

### **Strongly agree with proposal 4**

Again the letter from KBC states this would not affect us here as they already have this in place.

### **Tend to agree with Proposal 4**

As this is only one local council that backdates. This would make sense to align it with the Majority. (With supporting and aligned consideration for point 6)

Finding work can often take longer than some would like and the council must be seen to support a persons circumstance not penalise if they change suddenly

### **Neither agree nor disagree with Proposal 4**

If this is in relation to collecting late payments back dated for 6 months disagree as this will put families in hardship

If someone has been eligible and have missed the boat as they have not been informed. The blame lies with the council for not keeping them informed of what they could get. Communication. Communicate what families can claim when you sent council tax bills.

Trust it will still be the case that if someone can show good cause for backdating outside this period it will still be permitted.

### **Tend to disagree with Proposal 4**

If residents are entitled to a benefit from x date it is not fair only allowing a 4 weeke back date. You should think of a middle of the road compromise.

Where the unitary is responsible for this needing backdating then it should be as far as required, however, if it is the claimant then 1 month would be fair.

Phased integration to take place

I do disagree as I have been in this situation and one month is not enough to get letters, proof from hm revenue , your employer, bank statements. I think two months is about right as that's how long I had to get my evidence and the postage.

Sometime you cant get all information within the set period given

One month seems strict given possible circumstances that cause new claims. Bereavement mental health issues, relationship breakdowns. Three months seems a fairer time period for applicants to become aware especially in Covid times.

Whilst understanding that awards cannot be backdated for an interminable length of time there are those individuals who are not computer literate and may not always the necessary support available to them to complete complicated forms etc. If there is a good reason e.g. lack of literacy/reading skills there should be allowances given to backdates to up to 3 months for example where it can be fully justified as a bona fide reason for non-completion.

Am going through this at the moment due to the loss of my mother and brother to covid19 and it is horrible

My experience suggests the delay is often administrative in nature. If the backdating of 1 month is from date of application that is fair.

I think this should be slightly longer. There are a lot of issues at the moment with delaying in applications for Universal Credit in particular so I believe this should be three months if the person can demonstrate why there has been the delay.

this is not long enough as some people need to supply extra paperwork which they may to wait to come through the post, back date limit of three months.

Many people struggle finding out what they are entitled to claim. Suggest 3 months

A consistent approach is needed but 1 month isn't much.



It some times takes longer for a claim to go through
If a claim is delayed and not through fault of claimant this would be unfair and cause hardship
If the error is made by the council and is no fault of the customer I wouldn't say it wasn't fair to people who could potentially be losing a substantial amount of money
I believe that the alignment of support is the best option.
I think one month is too little for people that are struggling to understand what they can or cant claim for this process can take months to sort out. 1 month is too less, set this at a fair time say 4 months, it took us 10 months to work out all that we could get help with. Its a slow process when your also have to care for someone.
people should at least have the option to ask for a backdate. especially if they have cause and proof
The information is not always made clear to claimants and the claim for universal credits can result in a delay, I believe backdating should take place, perhaps restrict to 3 months.
If there are delays with updating benefits and documents this can take longer than 4 weeks if there are queries or new set up
Processing times can be long
i have no knowledge of why backdating is needed so again cannot make informed decision
The information required to determine if there is an entitlement to LCTS, i.e. upon bereavement, furlough or redundancy, therefore it seems that setting a limit of 3 months for backdating a claim would be more reasonable and would benefit the residents of the 3 authorities currently setting a limit of 1 month.
I think it should be case dependant & mitigating circumstances taken into account. The reasons for needing more than one month back dated payment are varied & multitude.
Can take longer for authorities to act
Sometimes it takes ages to hear anything from council tax benefit so really should work both ways
If people have been over paying (which could mean a financial struggle) they should get a refund.
I don't agree with this, I know someone who had no income for 3 months, yet bills kept coming in. Yet he wasn't backdated anything due to some ridiculous new confusing rule they decided to make up. Meaning lots of debt and hardships that could have been completely avoided with some competency and compassion. A 1 month limit seems harsh, especially for those who had to wait a long time for any income, obviously you already make it nigh impossible to get a backdate but a 1 month only seems to put salt in that wound.
When people hit difficult circumstances they do not always fully appreciate the implications until their first month on reduced income hits them, especially if they have never been in such a situation before, so one month backdating makes no allowance for this shock and follow up action. Also many people are not initially aware of their possible entitlement, again especially if they have not had the misfortune to need benefits before, and so do not claim immediately. For the above reasons I think a 6 week backdating period is more just and equitable.
People may not understand what help they are entitled to and so should not be disadvantaged by that. I think a backdate of 6 months should continue to assist those in crisis.
Only disagree unless North Northamptonshire Council is able to deal with claims much speedier than current councils do.

#### **Strongly disagree with Proposal 4**

1 month is too short a time to backdate : families moving into the area, those with health problems, even having a difficult birth and poorly baby could easily take up that month. Suggest 3 months - residents are entitled to these rebates and should not be punished for reasonable delays.

The solution is simple - list what is currently on offer from each of the four Borough / District Councils, and then apply the option that is perceived to be the most generous to people already in difficult circumstances usually through no real fault of their own.

This would almost certainly see a rise in Council Tax to cover the nett increase in costs, but the principle of the notion of "community" is "He ain't heavy, he's my brother".

There are plenty of fat cats in the county for whom Council Tax is chicken feed, and who can easily help to support those in less fortunate circumstances.
Claimants ought to receive all that is due to them.
No changes of anything should not be backdated
The fault is usually the amount of time it takes to process claims & that is not the claimants fault. They should not be penalised for this. All monies should be backdated to however long the claim takes not just 4 weeks.
Whilst it is important to create uniformity and simplicity for the claimant we should align with the authority paying the most support. The system is extremely complex for the customer and the 1 month backdating rule is incredibly tight and required by people who have been experiencing difficult circumstances meaning that the 1 month period is often up by the time they claim. A backdate award can make a big difference to the amount of debt the customer is potentially in and as good cause must be shown I don't consider this to be a large impact to the authority's budgets.
I strongly disagree because in the event that some failing or oversight by the council leads to an under-payment by a council tax-payer the council is not limited in time in it's ability to reclaim what is owing. If an applicant for LCTSS can show they were eligible prior to one month before their application they should have their entitlement back-dated. However supposedly cash-strapped the council it is much better placed to stand the loss of back-dating than is the individual applicant.
Not everyone has the life skills to deal with form filling, benefits and with authorities, as such I feel it is extremely unfair for those who are entitled to a backdated claim not to receive it. Perhaps a 3 month restriction would be slightly more humane.
Serious consideration needs to be given to how proposed changes that detrimentally impact the most needy are put forward
There should be no time limit on backdating until the system is perfect and it never will be.
This decision will impact on the most vulnerable people in our society as they are most likely to not have the competence to apply or to challenge a decision within time limits. This decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society. If harmonisation must happen, due to the inept financial management of the Conservative run County Council, then the initial decisions should consider the financial impact on residents and staff. As an alternative I would propose that the other members of the new Unitary Authority, consider managing their finances in such a way that they can all afford to pay the benefits as Corby currently does!
Being able to have this benefit backdated for up to six months provides a safety net for the poorest members of society who may not be able to find large sums of money in a hurry to cover the inevitable mistakes and delays in implementing this new system. Even with the old system delays and mistakes are inevitable which can result in a large unexpected bill with little to pay.
If someone is entitled to an award from a certain date I cannot see what legal basis you have for not backdating it to six months as it should be. Whatever the DWP does is neither here nor there. If I worked for an employer who limited a pay rise award not to the date it was awarded but to one month I would tell them where to stick their job. I doubt that many of the well-paid council officers involved in these proposals would accept that either.
backdating it if on esa jsa or IS is ok but if on working/child tax no
I strongly disagree with this blanket policy. While I agree that it would be best to align the backdating to 1 month in the case of MOST UC claims, I disagree that this should be applied to other means tested benefits. There are many vulnerable individuals who have not been able to access support with regard to benefit advice (digitally excluded; closure of support services; degree of vulnerability) and this unfairly discriminates against them. Add to this the previously mentioned aggressive pursuit of debtors via bailiff services, causing debts to spiral out of control, resulting in additional and unnecessary fees, and you have created a totally unnecessary negative situation. As a provider of support services, I have witnessed many of these cases, and the impact that the behaviour of both the LA and the bailiff's have had on the individuals that I have supported.
If someone has been eligible for this for 6 months and hasn't had the relevant information to claim it then it should be backdated as effectively they've spent too long overpaying.

It is unfair if council takes more than 1 month to sort.
Three calendar months would be a fairer figure
To restrict backdating for one month is something what has been dreamed up by people who've never struggled in their life. It's totally disgraceful. Backdating should be unlimited if people have a good reason.
One month is unacceptable as sometimes these things take months to go through the system
Hits the poor and disadvantaged AGAIN.
Claims should be backdated as waiting times for awards can be too long, causing financial hardship.
The backdate should stay at 6 months or even longer.
The claimed benefit should be paid and back dated to the point of when the benefit was entitled from. But by no more than the tax year that we are in.
As all information is sometimes not sent for specific date
Backdating is often necessary due to clerical error , ignorance of entitlement or other errors. Backdating in itself often saves families from severe debt
Do not backdate for only 1 month unless you can guarantee that the claim will not go over this period to be awarded. Claims have taken months previously & that's why they were awarded up to 6 months backdated. Do not punish people if the Unitary Council is going to take longer than 4 weeks to deal with their claims.
Cauz family won't be able to afford it if they are entitled to help and only get back date one month which wouldn't be fair on them because they might already pay 2 or 3 month of council tax
Some people have a lot on their plate and forget things. Backdating it by 6 months allows them time to get something which is rightly theirs. If they are entitled to it they may not know. Why should the council add to it's funds at the expense of others who are in need.
I prefer Proposal 1 (to harmonize minimum CT contribution to 25%) as this is the only proposal that will affect me.
By the time one has found out about all this, it will probably be too late
With claimants having to wait five weeks for the Universal Credit process to come through their is a disparity on timings, greater though needs to be given to how this would work: you also need to look at why some delays occur for example people fleeing domestic abuse where there is no documentation to support a claim. the support scheme is not a one size that fits all and should reflect the claimants needs. there needs to be extra support on place to safeguard families.
P4- I think 1 month backdating is too short- people are sometimes not aware - one month is really short - if it has to be shortened from 6 months (which is generous) then 2-3 months.
no one knows what reason someone has not applied in the correct way and in the correct time, any scheme must be flexible to meet the needs of our most vulnerable citizens including those with mental health and dementia/head injuries. Ensure the scheme is flexible.
Sometimes more time is needed when a persons situation changes
Causing financial hardship for families when unemployment is increasing and cost of living rising
Why, you don't know everyone's circumstances, health, mental or physical, other support etc why?
Any scheme put in place needs to be flexible.
A lot of people especially the elderly are not even aware they can get help. One month to find out is not enough.
Any monies being backdated are monies that these people are entitled and should not be prevented from having as they may not have been aware of their entitlement qualifications

## **Comments Received for Proposal 5 - to restrict temporary absence outside of the UK to 4 weeks**

### **Strongly agree with proposal 5**

not fair on the old that like to go abroad in winter

Totally agree. Why should someone receive help when they do not live in the country? Or if they can afford to take a holiday for longer than 4 weeks. Then I'm certain they don't need to be on benefit.

If people are going to leave the U.K. for long periods of time then they won't be paying council tax so won't need the relief so it should be withdrawn. However, an individual's circumstances should be looked at. For example the family currently in Greece where their Son is in a coma & the other 1 was killed. They need all the help they can get, not hounded for Council Tax.

### **Tend to agree with proposal 5**

Wellingborough council has already made this change.

12 weeks would be better for the over 65 population.

### **Neither agree nor disagree with proposal 5**

Are you going to make allowances for special cases IE illness abroad or in cases whereby the claimant has no control.

This decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society.

If harmonisation must happen, due to the inept financial management of the Conservative run County Council, then the initial decisions should consider the financial impact on residents and staff.

As an alternative I would propose that the other members of the new Unitary Authority, consider managing their finances in such a way that they can all afford to pay the benefits as Corby currently does!

It is difficult to form a view without the data to determine the potential impact on individuals or groups of individuals.

### **Tend to disagree with proposal 5**

I suggest the limitation be reduces from 4 weeks to 2 weeks or less to limit claims by those who fund periods away from home through relatives and third parties.

Phased integration

There are possible issues if residents are visiting family overseas at times of illness or hardship. Corby's level of 13 weeks seems more realistic and considerate

People who can afford to leave the country should not be allowed to claim benefits from taxpayers.

When I deployed with the forces the best I could get on a reduction for my council tax was around 25%...and I had to deploy for a substantial amount of time...more than a month. However I was informed by the pop-in-desk in the Corby cube that Zero adjustments to my council tax were available when I deployed in 2012?...Correct information should be the critical focus for ALL public front staff. Why should 4 weeks absence from the UK get a reduction in council tax? Neighbours would still be able to utilise their bins and that doesn't discount sub-letting. (Which is possibly an overlooked

occurrence). Therefore I strongly disagree with any reduction due to absence from the UK as all anyone with foreign links would have to do is move to each others houses each month to fraudulently avoid paying it each month.

people may have relatives outside the UK who are very sick and may have to spend time and look after those relatives so not sure this is fair.

I believe that the alignment of support is the best option.

If someone goes and lives outside the up ( usually in their "home" country) or holiday home, why should we give them a discount.

Absence means absence no matter how long or how short.

There should be exceptions such as for medical reasons.

Don't see why you would restrict people's movement outside UK. What that got to do with council tax

support?

**Strongly disagree with proposal 5**

Why should the tax payer pay someone's council tax, if they can afford to travel outside of the UK?  
This is tax payer funded holiday.

The solution is simple - list what is currently on offer from each of the four Borough / District Councils, and then apply the option that is perceived to be the most generous to people already in difficult circumstances usually through no real fault of their own.

This would almost certainly see a rise in Council Tax to cover the nett increase in costs, but the principle of the notion of "community" is "He ain't heavy, he's my brother".

There are plenty of fat cats in the county for whom Council Tax is chicken feed, and who can easily help to support those in less fortunate circumstances.

The people this payment is due to could not afford to travel outside of the up for anything like 4 weeks.

Those who decides to go overseas for up to 4 weeks should pay the full amount of council tax and housing benefit if entitled to it and means we are leaving the EU this year will be new guideline then

Once absent everything stops. Fresh application should be necessary.

Should be longer than four weeks, I think 8 weeks is a better time frame especially as I understand it will effect proposal 5 of no new backdating claims

We still live in a multi cultural country, we have many families living in the up that come from many parts of the world. Families should not be penalised if they were to take holidays to see families. 8 weeks would be more reasonable. Thus a family would be able to visit both the 6 week summer holiday and may be the 2 weeks at Christmas. I know a number of families that do this.

Some people due to work commitments or health leave up for over 4 weeks

If you go out of the country still pay same council tax.

So now you're not allowing people to go on longer holidays or go visit their relatives for a longer period. There is no reason for that at all as far as I can see.

Authoritarian measures.

If you are outside of the UK then you are not using council services. Why then would you need to pay for them

I prefer Proposal 1 (to harmonize minimum CT contribution to 25%) as this is the only proposal that will affect me.

P5- The 4 weeks outside of UK per year is too short - I would like it to be 13 weeks, but if it has to go down then at least 8 weeks.

The period of 4 weeks is too long. If they need support the question has to be how they could afford to be out of the country for more than 2 weeks.

This leave people in position of not being able to go travelling far places like Thailand etc. as it needs about 3 months leaving people cultural poor and uneducated from this steaming cultural and ethnic discrimination and prejudice.

depends on circumstances

Any scheme needs to be flexible dependant on the needs of claimants

If temporary absence then it should stop

This leave people in position of not being able to go travelling far places like Thailand etc. as it needs about 3 months leaving people cultural poor and uneducated from this steaming cultural and ethnic discrimination and prejudice.

Also people with financial struggles get affected by council tax increase but also if they have more than two children this is unfair and discriminatory to big families trying to live ordinary lives

**Don't know**

Not sure why anyone entitled to this benefit should be able to spend four weeks outside the UK. It would be a bit like having your cake and eating it.

**Comments Received for Proposal 6 - to remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium (SDP) where a person is paid Universal Credit (Carer's Element) to look after them**

**Strongly agree with proposal 6**

This is another example of picking on the disabled They are an easy target for you as most of them are to busy just surviving from day to day. I am a carer for my partner who is severely disabled and needs 24 hr support. Removing this financial support will cause untold hardship to a lot of people who really struggle to survive day today as it is.

so you want to charge people who care for people , just take 25% pay cut and leave people that care

As far as I'm aware from the letter from KBC. It states this would not affect us here as they already have this in place.

**Tend to agree with proposal 6**

Although we tend to agree with the principle, the absence of data to determine impact makes this difficult to determine on individuals or groups or whether additional mitigations are required.

**Neither agree nor disagree with proposal 6**

I don't really understand the issue, but on general principles the new council should be looking to harmonise outcomes for population at or near the current best provision, not seeking the lowest common denominator; again, use some of the projected savings from unitary to fund this.

You say 'severe' disability but I think ultimately my views would depend on the individual circumstances. For example, if the severely disabled person is the downer or primary occupier of the property and would be unable to administer the process of applying for Council Tax and handle this financial matter themselves the SDP should apply. If the carer has responsibility for it, I agree with your proposal.

Don't know enough about it

**Tend to disagree with proposal 6**

Claimants have this allowance for a reason, severe disability. Don't agree that you should make life harder for them.

Keep the SDP in.

Phased integration

I'm concerned that disabled people may have a decrease in income

Don't you think people who are disable have enough to worry with out another change to there benefits

Pushes disabled into poverty

Impact on disabled and carers is dis-proportionate generally and they should be protected.

carers struggle enough financially having to pay for transport when taking the person they care for to local appointments that are not covered by other means, they still have to pay their bills on very limited money if they look after someone 24/7 without a break.

Removing SDP would cause hardship as generally on a low income and this would cause more stress and financial difficulties

It would cause a lot of carers to rethink their role as they will lose out for caring

carers provide an essential service looking after disabled people . it would cost the local authority much more to provide the service the carers currently give for free

Discriminatory

I believe that the alignment of support is the best option.

DWP remove SDP if carers allowance is claimed, however you are still able to claim carer premium from UC without getting carers allowance. I do not think this should be removed.

I don't think anybody's pip or carers allowance should be taken in to consideration as they do all the caring for the individual

seems another cut to disabled people

money from the poor
Some of them did not choose to be disabled
I fell the disabled have been hit hard enough by this government and if they can't work, why should they be penalised because of their disability.
Quality of life is very important to community. Being mean spirited is really a disgusting trait to have as a civil servant. Get another job that doesn't involve contact with humans.
A carer does not make someone less disabled. I think SDP should continue to be paid to all those who would be entitled under the council who do allow it.

<b>Strongly disagree with proposal 6</b>
People with disabilities and their carers frequently have additional financial needs and frequently end up below the poverty line because of this. No entitlements should be removed, if anything these should be increased.
Severe disabled people need a carer so should get that paid for and they also still have a severe disability.
The solution is simple - list what is currently on offer from each of the four Borough / District Councils, and then apply the option that is perceived to be the most generous to people already in difficult circumstances usually through no real fault of their own. This would almost certainly see a rise in Council Tax to cover the nett increase in costs, but the principle of the notion of "community" is "He ain't heavy, he's my brother". There are plenty of fat cats in the county for whom Council Tax is chicken feed, and who can easily help to support those in less fortunate circumstances.
Not in favour of removing a lifeline/essential income, from those who are fulfilling a vital role.
These families require as much help as possible. The knock on effect is that the council would potentially have to spend far more on supporting them. E.g. carer would need to go to work instead of providing full time caring leaving the council to find a carer.
The disabled & their carers are penalised enough. You are talking about the severely disabled here & they deserve everything they get as do their carers. They are suffering enough & it's unfair to keep removing their financial stability from them. Life is hard financially they should get what little they have as it's hard to live a disabled life as everything is so much more expensive.
Carers save the gov/local councils thousands. My father is cared for by his partner alongside carers - she does far more for him than they could possibly do 24/7 - she is a gem and worth her weight in gold
I feel that it would be unjust and inhumane to remove this entitlement.
Stay away from changing all disability benefit
Once again an assault on the most vulnerable members of society. This decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society. If harmonisation must happen, due to the inept financial management of the Conservative run County Council, then the initial decisions should consider the financial impact on residents and staff. As an alternative I would propose that the other members of the new Unitary Authority, consider managing their finances in such a way that they can all afford to pay the benefits as Corby currently does!
I think that it is just penalizing something that they cannot help they did not ask to be disabled.
People with disabilities are some of the poorest in the population because of the extra costs involved in caring for somebody with a disability. This looks like penalising carers and the disabled. I am fed up with seeing "is affordable, consistent and fair to all our residents wherever they live." And for that matter what the DWP does - the DWP needs dismantling and starting again with the words 'humanity, dignity and social inclusion' as its 'mission statement'.
SDP is also paid on legacy benefits and will continue to do so once moved over to UC
Just because the DWP hates disabled people doesn't mean the new authority should too.
Again. You want to penalise people on benefits with disabilities shame on you
Disabled people are already punished quite enough, for something they have no control over. Please don't bring in any more punitive measures
Just wrong

Another notion made up from people who don't have a clue. Leave the disabled alone. It's scary that this question is even being asked.
It will take more people to implement. Leave it alone.
Discrimination against disabled and their carers
As only one council does this, this is quite clearly not in line with the majority. Under democratic and public scrutiny if other councils in a majority 'carry' a suggested change...it would make clear and obvious sense to 'carry' this majority of council change. Therefore I strongly disagree with this suggested change (in line with my precious point 2)
Disabled people need full time care.
Discrimination.
Hits the poor and disadvantaged AGAIN.
Vulnerable people depend on this allowance and should not have it removed. Punishing an already vulnerable group is not the answer.
I cared for my mother who had dementia every day for six years, I struggled on the money I received and full time carers (40+ hours) who have to pay a set amount if they wish to put the person they care for into respite for a week or two.
discriminatory , if a disabled person is receiving SDP and they have a career who is receiving CE they should still be paid for there work. The disabled persons cant work for themselves so they need that money to live and so do the careers to provide that support. especially as the support in the local area is non existent if they wanted to pay for support themselves from a provider.
Lets not hurt the most vulnerable in society financially. Life is hard enough on Universal Credit anyway
Penalisation of the vulnerable
Stop punishing the people who need the tax relief
I'm sick & tired of the most vulnerable people in our society being penalised. No it should not be removed at all. If anything it should be raised. Stop punishing disabled people their lives & those of their carers are hard enough.
I wouldn't not remove this from them as it would help them a lot
Victimisation of the disabled
Your rationale is backward. You should all be doing what the one council does who does NOT remove the severe disability premium
I prefer Proposal 1 (to harmonize minimum CT contribution to 25%) as this is the only proposal that will affect me.
People with disabilities need extra help to allow them to live as independently as possible, as well as the help of a carer they also need help with other things that they are unable to do, by removing this premium within a determination of LCTSS you are putting a disabled person at a serious disadvantage. please look at your PSED and see if you are meeting your statutory obligations.
Why, is a carers allowance well paid going on minimum wages? you are taking away from a disabled persons general fund, this is for a carer but you expect the disabled person to pay from a non means tested element? is that even legal?
I think this would be discriminatory
No one who needs a carer or providing care should be financially disadvantaged
Taking away from people who do not have the capacity to work.
Another ploy to make disabled people pay for your mistakes
If a person is severely disabled, they would need someone to look after them.
Disabled people need to keep their benefits to pay for services they need.
This is a vicious attack on the vulnerable.
This should never be scrapped! Disabled people rely on this extra help towards the cost of their council tax. They deserve to get it too! This is just so wrong! Borderline discrimination.

### **Don't know**

Find this a very confusing statement! What effect does this have on true Carers/Disabled people and the discount they are entitled to???



Does anyone understand what this about? It has got me beat.
This doesn't apply to me, I don't think, as I live alone so shouldn't comment
I can't tell by your wording what it is you're even saying you want to do. If it helps low income disabled people/carers than I'm all for it. If it doesn't and you're just attempting to shaft more people I'm against it naturally.

**Comments Received for Proposal 7 - to remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium (SDP) where a person is paid Universal Credit (Carer's Element) to look after them.**

<b>Strongly agree with proposal 7</b>
greed by councils proposal have 1 council run from Northampton
Yes remove this. It's obviously no longer needed.

<b>Neither agree nor disagree with proposal 7</b>
I don't know what this is, so have no strong views.
The majority of employed people are on this because of the government civic restrictions strongly disagree with this option
Unsure on the effect of this one honestly. Again just try to shaft the common man is all I ask.

<b>Tend to disagree with proposal 7</b>
If they're ill or disabled they still need support in this field
Picking on the sick and disabled yet again
they may need more money for travel, meals, work clothing and other things to help them back to work.
People should be helped to get back into work. Its an incentive
I believe that the alignment of support is the best option.
Because they would need help from you even though they are new claimant
Support the poorest members of the community to encourage them to be a part of the community. This mean thinking is spiteful and backfires to create a miserable environment for all. For example you are only as strong as your weakest link. Having as much money as possible when you are in need can only be an advantage and strength that person who is obviously trying their best to be their best self. Offer a system that has a warm safe home with new white goods and a comfortable environment to ensure you instil self worth and a want for a better life. Currently your system is a disgrace that has a bare minimum attitude to the welfare of the people you represent. In short you disappoint yourselves with you pathetic attempts of a fair system. If you were at the mercy of the system how would you survive. In a tent on £90 a week.
It is hard enough to adjust to not having a salary without being left in poverty overnight
Again an attack on the poor and the vulnerable.

<b>Strongly disagree with proposal 7</b>
All claims should be calculated, before additional assistance is granted.
The solution is simple - list what is currently on offer from each of the four Borough / District Councils, and then apply the option that is perceived to be the most generous to people already in difficult circumstances usually through no real fault of their own. This would almost certainly see a rise in Council Tax to cover the nett increase in costs, but the principle of the notion of "community" is "He ain't heavy, he's my brother". There are plenty of fat cats in the county for whom Council Tax is chicken feed, and who can easily help to support those in less fortunate circumstances.
We should be supporting those in receipt of ESA to return to work and the WRAC should remain.
This decision will have a significant negative impact on the poorest in our society. If harmonisation must happen, due to the inept financial management of the Conservative run County

<p>Council, then the initial decisions should consider the financial impact on residents and staff. As an alternative I would propose that the other members of the new Unitary Authority, consider managing their finances in such a way that they can all afford to pay the benefits as Corby currently does!</p>
<p>In order to meet the criteria for the WRAC an individual has usually gone through a tedious, prolonged, and dehumanising assessment by the DWP and its cohorts. There has usually been a long period of appeal due to the DWP failure to get things 'right first time'. The individuals affected have then been assessed as having a vulnerability, and a need for additional support. Your proposal is discriminating against them, once again and depriving them of a portion of the additional help required.</p>
<p>Please don't. Just don't. Life is hard enough as it is for anyone who is disabled and on benefits. Don't make it harder</p>
<p>Again why should we change from a system that works</p>
<p>Absolutely ridiculous that you ask questions like this where 75% of people won't have a clue what you're talking about. I've been to university and even I find it hard to understand. I guess that's why the questions is asked in the first place.</p>
<p>NCC should be isolated .</p>
<p>Hits the poor and disadvantaged AGAIN.</p>
<p>Again those with disabilities tend to have more expenses just to live, punishing them is uncalled for.</p>
<p>Less money unless they will add something else to make it up with.</p>
<p>again money from the poor</p>
<p>It is pressuring the poor and penalising the vulnerable. This is cruel.</p>
<p>Again, backward rationale. All of these proposals say they are about aligning the councils but they are really about saving money and to hell with anyone who is in need</p>
<p>I prefer Proposal 1 (to harmonize minimum CT contribution to 25%) as this is the only proposal that will affect me.</p>
<p>People with disabilities need extra help to allow them to live as independently as possible, as well as the help of a carer they also need help with other things that they are unable to do, by removing this premium within a determination of LCTSS you are putting a disabled person at a serious disadvantage. please look at your PSED and see if you are meeting your statutory obligations.</p>
<p>why would you do this? most disability benefits are means tested. disability benefit claimants need more help and support (not just the care element) and they have to have the means to pay for that extra support. you are not the DWP any scheme is local and should be flexible to meet peoples needs.</p>
<p>your rational on this is that if three councils have used this in their schemes that this is the way to go and in my mind it should be about which is the best scheme to support our most vulnerable people</p>
<p>I think it would be discriminatory</p>
<p>All should be given the benefit. It should not be taken away</p>
<p>Taking away from people who cannot help their circumstances</p>
<p>It seems these decisions are being taken at the lowest service level because of one council's decision. We should be raising standards</p>
<p>just another money saving tactic</p>
<p>Disabled people need their money to pay for services they need</p>

<p><b>Don't know</b></p>
<p>Again, very confusing??? What percentage of CT do people receiving Universal Credit pay towards it anyway?</p>
<p>Carers probably pay more which is totally unfair</p>
<p>Why should all council come in line immediately- can't this be a phased process</p>
<p>Why are we removing anything that could assist people in need</p>
<p>it is not clear. I think it is important to encourage people in the support scheme and wrac to get out of the house and into the community. so would every new claimant get the support group or would every one end up with 74?</p>

I don't know what this is.

do not know what it is so yet again can not make informed decision

## Other comments received via letter:

### Other comments:

Other comments received via letter from organisations and so not linked with a specific proposal included a suggestion to move to a flat rate of 20% rather than 25%, and for this transition to be made over a period of 3 years. There was also a comment about whether a child poverty needs assessment was completed and outcomes from it included within the proposals. There is questioning of why North Northamptonshire are not having a special dispensation for people in receipt of a war widows pension as part of their armed forces covenant commitment like West Northamptonshire are, and why the discretionary power to reduce Council Tax liability in cases of real hardship are not being used. There was also a requesting that these proposals are reviewed to ensure the statutory duty has been met to make this scheme fair and affordable for the residents.

A further comment via email was received about why single occupants only get 25% discount instead of 50% when the council tax bill is based on two people sharing a house:

'...to harmonise the minimum Council Tax contribution to 25% of Council Tax liability for working age people.'

I don't know what their circumstances would have to be to be eligible for a 25% Council Tax Bill.

This made me think of my own situation and something that seems very unfair. Since Council Tax is based on two people in a household, why does a single occupant only get a 25% Council Tax discount instead of 50%? Why am I paying for 1.5 people when I live alone? I am on state pension and £90 p m is a big payment to find. I am not receiving benefits because I fall just the wrong side of the requirements. I'm sure there must be many pensioners in my position who live alone but are having to pay hefty Council Tax bills from a small income.

Another email was received showing dissatisfaction with the Equality Impact Assessment carried out for this work.