

Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27 Consultation Report

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Executive Summary

From 25 September 2025 to 4 November 2025 a consultation was held on the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/27.

The consultation was promoted via postal surveys, an online survey, press, social media, through e-newsletters such as One Torbay, emails to stakeholder groups, local events, and paper copies in libraries.

In total there were 269 survey responses to the consultation, with more respondents supporting the proposal than not. The main proposal was to increase the level of support to some single parent families who currently receive less than the maximum levels of support, where children are at risk to higher levels of poverty, by aligning the income bands that allocate Council Tax Support discounts for single parents with couples that have children. In addition to the survey responses, there were email responses to the consultation from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service.

A recommendation will be made at Full Council on 18 November about the proposed scheme with a final decision at Full Council in December which, if approved, would be implemented from April 2026.

Why the consultation was needed

The Council Tax Support scheme helps households on a low-income with financial assistance to help pay their Council Tax bill. We review this scheme every year.

We are proposing to make one change to our working age scheme from April 2026 and encourage anyone that receives a Council Tax Support discount, or if you have a view on it, to respond to this consultation on how the proposed change could affect you.

The proposed change will only affect working age applicants as the pension age scheme is set nationally by central Government.

In this consultation, we were proposing to increase the level of support to some single parent families who currently receive less than the maximum levels of support, where children are at risk to higher levels of poverty, by aligning the income bands that allocate Council Tax Support discounts for single parents with couples that have children. By making this change it will help to alleviate the cumulative effects of welfare cuts and rising household costs.

Proposal One

Currently, single parent households that do not receive the maximum 75% discount, receive less discount, when comparing income bands with couples with children.

The table below shows the current income bands for single parents and couples with children for financial year ending 31 March 2026.

Level of discount	Single and 1 child	Single and 2 children or more	Couple and 1 child	Couple and 2 children or more
To receive a 75% discount	£0 - £179	£0 - £261	£0 - £234	£0 - £316

To receive a 55% discount	£179.01 - £220	£261.01 - £302	£234.01 - £275	£316.01 - £356
To receive a 40% discount	£220.01 - £261	£302.01 - £342	£275.01 - £316	£356.01 - £397
To receive a 20% discount	£261.01 - £302	£342.01 - £383	£316.01 - £356	£397.01 - £438
0% discount	£301.01 or more	£383.01 or more	£356.01 or more	£438.01 or more

To support single parent households we are proposing to align:

The income band for a single parent with one child with the income band for a couple with one child.

The income band for a single parent with two or more children with the income band for a couple with two or more children.

The aligned income bands would come into effect from 1 April 2026 for single parent households receiving Council Tax Support on 31 March 2026 and for all new applications.

This change will increase the level of support for working age single parent households that are currently not receiving the maximum 75% discount.

Proposal Two

The second proposal in the consultation was 'make no changes to the current scheme.'

Number of responses received

In total there were 269 survey responses, with the vast majority of these coming back from the paper surveys that were sent out with a covering letter.

In addition to the survey responses, the Council received email responses from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, both of which were in support of the proposed changes. Both organisations are preceptors, funded in part by Council Tax precepts.

Summary Table of results for Council Tax Support Scheme

Below is a summary of the responses to the ten proposals in the consultation with the numbers for each answer and percentages in brackets.

Q No.	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	Do you agree with aligning the income bands for single parents with couples who have children?	101 (38%)	90 (34%)	25 (9%)	24 (9%)	24 (9%)

6	Do you agree with making no changes to the current scheme?	34 (14%)	34 (14%)	49 (20%)	67 (27%)	67 (27%)
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Summary of Free text responses

The final question was a Freetext box for people to add any additional comments. In total, out of the 269 surveys completed, 41 respondents chose to add comments into the freetext box.

The largest number of comments relating to an individual theme (13) said that single parents needed more support. However, the second largest number of comments on an individual theme (5) said they felt single parents already got too much support.

Examples of these contrasting comments include:

“Single parents are at a distinct disadvantage and children suffer as a result. Any measures to help even the playing field must be taken and prescribed.”

“These people get far too much already and some are not spending the money on the right things some don’t even work when they could.”

Introduction

From 25 September to 4 November 2025, a consultation was held on proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/7.

The scheme helps people on low incomes to pay their council tax and is funded by the council.

The initial scheme was introduced in April 2013, when the Government ended Council Tax Benefit and councils were made responsible for their own schemes. Further changes were made over a two-year period from 2017/18, but have remained largely unchanged since then.

We are proposing to make one change to our working age scheme from April 2026 and encourage anyone that receives a Council Tax Support discount, or if you have a view on it, to respond to this consultation on how the proposed change could affect you.

The proposed change will only affect working age applicants as the pension age scheme is set nationally by central Government.

In this consultation, we were proposing to increase the level of support to some single parent families who currently receive less than the maximum levels of support, where children are at risk to higher levels of poverty, by aligning the income bands that allocate Council Tax Support discounts for single parents with couples that have children. By making this change it will help to alleviate the cumulative effects of welfare cuts and rising household costs.

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To support single parent households we are proposing to align:

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The aligned income bands would come into effect from 1 April 2026 for single parent households receiving Council Tax Support on 31 March 2026 and for all new applications.

This change will increase the level of support for working age single parent households that are currently not receiving the maximum 75% discount.

Proposal Two

The second proposal in the consultation was 'make no changes to the current scheme.'

Methodology

The consultation was launched on 25 September with an online survey on the Council's Your Say Torbay website and this was promoted initially via a range of channels including a Members Briefing e-newsletter for all Councillors, press release to all local media and our wider PR distribution list which includes Community Partnerships, key partners such as the NHS and police and many more.

Postal surveys were sent to 4,000 households with 2,000 going to a random sample of people receiving Council Tax Support, and a further 2,000 sent to a random sample of residents who are not currently receiving Council Tax Support.

Paper copies of the surveys were also available at the Council's Residents' Satisfaction Survey roadshow events, of which there were ten, at a number of locations across Torbay and there were also paper copies available in local libraries, and the reception area of Torquay Town Hall.

The survey was also promoted via the Council's One Torbay residents e-newsletter, Staff News, and on Facebook, NextDoor, Instagram and LinkedIn.

There were 41 unique views of the main Consultation webpage on the corporate Torbay Council website, and 61 unique views of the press release webpage on the News page of our website.

Consultation responses

In total, taking into account online and paper surveys, there were 269 responses to the consultation.

Although the online survey was promoted in a number of places for example our website, social media, press release and newsletters, nearly all of the completed surveys came back via the mail out we did to households. There was also a QR code for the online survey included on the front of the paper surveys, but nearly everyone chose to complete the paper survey and return it in the pre-paid envelope that was included within the letter and mail out.

In addition to the survey responses, the Council received email responses from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, both of which were in support of the proposed changes. Both organisations are preceptors, funded in part by Council Tax precepts. Below are their responses:

Andrew Furbear, Head of Finance/Treasurer to the Authority at Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service: “On behalf of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, I am happy to support the proposed changes.”

Nicola Allen, Treasurer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly: “As a major preceptor we have reviewed the proposed changes relating primarily to single parent households and can confirm our support for the change. Although this will reduce the income to policing it is important that we support those most vulnerable in our communities.”

Responses to individual survey questions

As mentioned above, there were just two main questions in the survey, one about whether we should align income bands for single parents with couples who have children, and the other was about whether we should just keep things the same as they are.

The rest of the questions in the survey were a freetext box and our standard demographic questions.

Question: Proposal One

Currently, single parent households that do not receive the maximum 75% discount, receives less discount, when comparing income bands with couples with children.

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The aligned income bands would come into effect from 1 April 2026 for single parent households receiving Council Tax Support on 31 March 2026 and for all new applications.

This change will increase the level of support for working age single parent households that are currently not receiving the maximum 75% discount.

Question 5: Do you agree with aligning income bands for single parents with couples that have children?

More people agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal than not, with 191 respondents saying they either agreed or strongly agreed and 48 respondents saying they either disagreed or strongly disagreed. There were also 25 respondents who replied 'Don't know' to this question.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Number	101	90	25	24	24
Percentage	(38%)	(34%)	(9%)	(9%)	(9%)

Question 6: Proposal Two – make no changes to the current scheme.

More people either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to make no changes to the current scheme, with 134 respondents saying they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this.

There were 68 respondents who said they either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, while 49 respondents replied that they don't know.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Number	34	34	49	67	67
Percentage	14%	14%	20%	27%	27%

Question 7: Thank you for completing this consultation. Your views are very important to us. If you have any further comments or feedback that you would like to make regarding the proposals for the 2026/2027 Council Tax Support scheme, please enter these in the freetext box below.

This question was a freetext box to allow respondents to add any additional comments they may have about Council Tax and the proposals being consulted on. In total out of the 269 surveys completed, there were 41 freetext comments. There were a number of themes that came out of the comments, below is a summary table of the themes.

Theme	Number of comments	Theme	Number of comments
There should be more help for disabled people	3	Higher tax bands should pay more	1
More help is needed for domestic abuse victims	1	More help is needed for single parents	13
Single parents already get too much help	5	We should not be giving more discounts, it's too expensive.	3
The discount is vital and welcome	3	There should be more help for people on low incomes	3
Child Support should also be assessed	2	People may take advantage of the system, claiming they are single parents falsely.	2
Carers need more help	1	More help is needed for all struggling parenst	2

The highest number of comments in an individual theme, 13, were saying that single parents needed more support. Individual comments included:

“Single parents are at a distinct disadvantage and children suffer as a result. Any measures to help even the playing field must be taken and prescribed.”

“It is important that single mums get as much support as possible. They have to pay the full rent for their accommodation, just as with a couple.”

“If anything, single parent households should receive more support.”

However, the second highest number of comments on an individual theme, 5, said they felt that single parents already got too much support. Here are some of the comments:

“These people get far too much already and some are not spending the money on the right things some don't even work when they could.”

“Children are a choice, if you can't afford to have them, don't have them.”

Respondent demographics

Which of the following options best describes how you think of your gender identity? Tick one only

Female	Male	In another way	Prefer not to say
146	112	0	6

Which of the following age groups applies to you? Tick one only

0-15	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75 plus
1	1	9	21	32	74	55	66

Which of the following best describes your ethnic background? Tick one only

White	Mixed ethnicity	Asian or Asian British	Black or British	Chinese	Other ethnic group
256	1	1	1	0	3

Employment Status - Tick one only

The breakdown of the 420 shows that the largest group of respondents to the survey (130) were retired – many of these would be from the random sample. Then the next largest group, 103, was temporary sick, then roughly a quarter (100) of respondents were in some sort of work, whether full time, part time or self-employed

Working full-time in Torbay	Working full-time elsewhere in Devon	Working part-time elsewhere in Devon	Self-employed – full - or part-time	Student	Working part time in Torbay
30	9	5	13	0	27
Temporary Sick	Long-Term Sick	Retired	Unemployed	Looking after family/home	Other
4	35	113	9	16	2

Question 17: Do you consider yourself to be disabled in any way? Tick one only

Yes	No
94	162

Question 18: If you answered "Yes", please tell us how it affects you. Tick as many as apply

It affects my mobility	It affects my vision	It affects my hearing	It affects me in another way
54	3	7	28

