

AGENDA

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Wednesday 26 October 2016

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Town Hall, High Street,
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore (Vice-Chairman),
Boughton, Brice, Cox, Fermor,
Garland, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Harvey,
Harwood, McLoughlin, Pickett, Powell,
Round and Mrs Wilson (Chairman)

Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items
4. Notification of Visiting Members
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers

Continued Over/:

Issued on Tuesday 18 October 2016

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**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

6.	Disclosures of Lobbying	
7.	To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.	
8.	Minutes of the Meeting Held on 28 September 2016	1 - 12
9.	Presentation of Petitions (if any)	
10.	Questions and answer session for members of the public (if any)	
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15.	Report of the Head of Policy and Communications - Communication and Engagement Strategy, Action Plan 2016-17	97 - 130
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PUBLIC SPEAKING

In order to book a slot to speak at this meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, please contact Caroline Matthews on 01622 602743 or by email on carolinematthews@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 pm one clear working day before the meeting. If asking a question, you will need to provide the full text in writing. If making a statement, you will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on. Please note that slots will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY **28 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Present: Councillor Mrs Wilson (Chairman), and
Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, Brice, Cox, Ells,
English, Fermor, Garland, Mrs Gooch, Harper, Harvey,
McLoughlin, Pickett and Round

Also Present: Councillor M Burton

76. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Harwood and Powell.

77. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following Substitute Members were noted:

Councillor Ells for Councillor Powell
Councillor English for Councillor Harwood

78. URGENT ITEMS

The Chairman advised that there were no urgent items. However, as there was a petition on the agenda and a report of the Deputy Head of Legal Partnership at agenda item 16 related to that petition, this item should be taken immediately after the petitioner had presented his petition.

79. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor M Burton indicated his wish to speak on Agenda Item 12.

80. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

81. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that Councillors Ells and Gooch had been lobbied on Agenda Item 16 which related to the Petition on Council Tax Enforcement.

82. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

83. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2016 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments being made:-

- Under those Present:- That Councillor Ells be inserted and the second reference to Councillor Mrs Wilson be deleted.
- That Recommendation 1, on Page 7 of the minutes relating to the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement – Medium Term Financial Strategy and Efficiency Plan be amended to:-
 1. That it be recommended to Council that the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and Efficiency Plan set out at Appendix A to the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be agreed.

84. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

Mr Jon Hicks presented a petition relating to Council Tax Enforcement, the wording of which was as following:-

"We the undersigned petition the Council that any solicitors, currently or previously instructed to enforce council tax must be scrutinised by Councillors and to prohibit the use of external solicitors for the enforcement of council tax.

That only current up-to-date insolvency prescribed forms shall be submitted for bankruptcy proceedings. That no council tax sum of money submitted to the council's automated system can be re-allocated to a previous already secured amount without your customer's express written consent. That a prior warning in plain view must be placed onto the council automated system.

That no council officer without written consent can instigate charging orders or insolvency bankruptcy proceedings on behalf of the council, when notified prior to or afterwards, that the sum paid is to reduce the amount to below either the charging order amount or bankruptcy threshold, because it is always assumed that the money applies to a unsecured not a securitised amount.

We demand that all previous orders obtained by the council without the above due process of law being followed including proper service of current insolvency documents by external solicitor's firms and their agents must be quashed or annulled with immediate effect".

In presenting the petition, Mr Hicks made reference to the following points:-

- That the process should be Councillor lead, not Officer lead
- That the Council's website does not provide for payments to be made out of hours
- That the Council should prohibit the use of external solicitors for the enforcement of council tax
- That if a sum of money is paid by the council's automated system then why is it paid off of the original debt, not the new debt
- That only current up to date insolvency prescribed forms should be submitted for bankruptcy proceedings

RESOLVED: That the petition be noted pending the further report on the agenda.

85. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY HEAD OF LEGAL PARTNERSHIP - PETITION ON COUNCIL TAX ENFORCEMENT

Members considered the report of the Deputy Head of Legal Partnership which related to the Petition presented by Mr Hicks previously on Council Tax Enforcement.

Members noted that the Council followed procedures set out in the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 to collect council tax and to deal with non-payment.

The Deputy Head of Legal Partnership explained that when an instalment is missed the Council would send a reminder notice requesting payment within 7 days. A second reminder and/or final notice would be issued if a resident failed to make payment.

Members were advised that the individual's circumstances were always taken into account (i.e. whether they had genuine difficulties in making payments or were refusing to pay or engage).

Following questions from Members, the Deputy Head of Legal Partnership advised as follows:-

- That if a charging order was placed on the property for unpaid council tax, it could be several years before the property was sold or re-mortgaged and even then there would need to be sufficient funds from the sale or re-mortgage before the debt could be paid to the Council;
- That Officers would investigate what procedures other Kent authorities carry out in relation to outstanding council debt and provide a briefing note to Members.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the petition be noted;

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

- 2) That the procedures put in place currently to enforce unpaid council tax be noted; and

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

- 3) That the Committee requests Officers to prepare a briefing note on procedures for Council Tax payment of outstanding debt in other Kent authorities.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

86. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

There were no questions from members of the public.

87. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Committee Work Programme and noted the changes as advised by the Director of Finance and Business Improvement.

88. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE - ENHANCED INTER-TIER WORKING AND DEVOLUTION

Members considered the report of the Chief Executive which related to Enhanced Inter-Tier Working and Devolution.

The Chief Executive explained that the report had been produced as a result of a request by the Committee and as a result of a question by a Member at Full Council.

Members noted that the purpose of the report was to consider the merits of collaboration and partnership working across Kent. The Chief Executive emphasised that there was a desire of all authorities to improve inter-tier working which would include Kent County Council and Medway Council.

It was noted that the Leader and Chief Executive had attended meetings with districts and the debates have resulted in an overall driver to secure better outcomes through spending less public money. All options needed to be considered and this could be achieved for example by inter-tier working, more partnership working and may in some instances it might be better to go it alone.

The Chief Executive advised that it had become evident that West Kent and East Kent had a long history of collaborative working and had already

established district and cluster footprints and there was a distinct reluctance for them to work with districts outside of their own area. It is therefore clear that a desire to work with the North Kent authorities and Kent County Council would be the best option for this Council. This would include Gravesham, Dartford, Medway and Swale districts.

However, there is no suggestion that the partnership arrangements that the Council currently has with other districts would not continue.

Members were advised that devolution was already operating across the country and Maidstone had already benefited being part of the South East LEP (Local Enterprise Partnerships) growth deal. This had included funding to support transport infrastructure in Maidstone which is one of the Council's priorities.

The Council therefore needed to consider whether it wanted to progress working in the North Kent arena.

During the ensuing discussion Members made a number of points as follows:-

- That this was a pragmatic way forward and the Council cannot afford to stand outside. There was a clear message from East and West Kent that we are not welcome;
- We should look at ways of working with our colleagues to improve services for local people. We should try and get a deal with North Kent.
- The report was very concise and was the first step along a long path, we should not unpick it, we should work with it.
- Confused about the approaches made, on whose authority were they made.
- There should be some scrutiny undertaken about those Councils who we want to enter into a partnership with. We should look at bank sheets.
- Should the Council be looking at what the liability would be to Maidstone's taxpayers, what risk are we setting ourselves up for.
- Should the Council take the line of working with North Kent, rural services would be further down the priority list.
- We should be knocking on all districts' doors to be in charge of our own destiny, North Kent is a long way away and it pulls us into something we cannot relate to. The principle of devolution is correct but it has gone quiet in central government, so not sure if they are on the same pathway.

- Not enough evidence to persuade us to take a certain route which would affect the next 10 to 20 years. Can support the principle but cannot support the recommendations put forward as we do not have enough information in the report.
- There should be more information in the report about why the other areas were not open to discussions. Why was it not possible to use Tunbridge Wells as a conduit to work with others. What evidence supports that theory?
- The recommendations in the report were correct, it is the right direction. We do have some synergies with West Kent and no doubt those relationship would continue.
- There are clear economic synergies with Swale and Gravesham and there was no evidence to suggest that working with Dartford and Gravesham would harm our rural areas.
- We are in limbo, when did the Kent leaders meeting take place and why did we not have a report straightaway?
- Have the Council written to the West Kent Authorities?
- Have we looked at operationally how this would work, what would the impact on this Council be?
- Is the area finite or could we have the opportunity to be involved elsewhere?
- Economic development is the key, we need to have as many jobs as possible. We don't want Maidstone to turn into a dormitory town for another area. We need to build on this.

In response to the points made by Members, the Chief Executive advised that:

- The five Group Leaders had been appraised of the discussions on devolution that had been held at County and district level. However, there had not been anything substantial to bring to Committee until now. However, it was therefore considered important that the Committee gave a mandate now to move forward.
- Devolution had not gone away, indeed ten deals had already been made across the country. The risk of not participating was that the Council would only have a fixed amount of resources and with government cuts we would need to secure as much resources as possible.
- It was emphasised that the Council could not continue to be completely on their own.

- There is a suggestion that all our services would be carried out on the footprint of what is in the report, this is not the case or what we want to achieve. In terms of inter tier working, the other districts may do something that is better performing than we currently do, so it would be worth joining forces to work on one footprint.
- The list is not finite, there will be opportunities to work more closely together on other services.
- The outcome from this report would be to take the first step, after which the detail would be looked into more and Members would be fully involved.

During the discussion Councillor Mrs Blackmore proposed and Councillor Boughton seconded a change to Recommendation 3 to read:

'That if recommendation 2 is agreed, then Maidstone Borough Council should work with district councils across Kent, Medway and Kent County Councils'.

The motion was lost.

Voting: For: 4 Against: 11 Abstentions: 0

Councillor Mrs Blackmore then proposed and Councillor Boughton seconded a change to Recommendation 5 to read:

'Maidstone Borough Council should, when the opportunity arises, participate in discussions across the whole of Kent and Medway with the objective of developing potential devolution propositions and that the Leader and Chief Executive will participate fully in these'.

The motion was lost.

Voting: For: 5 Against: 10 Abstentions: 0

Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Boughton, Brice and Round asked that their general dissent be recorded.

The Committee then voted on the recommendations set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That Maidstone Borough Council should continue to engage with other Kent local authorities with the objective of strengthening service delivery resilience, improving cost effectiveness and securing investment in services and community infrastructures;

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

- 2) That Maidstone Borough Council should seek enhanced Inter tier working on the basis of the strategic priorities and services

summarised at paragraph 2.14 of the report of the Chief Executive and that any amendments to this list be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee until such time that local governance arrangements have been considered and established;

Voting: For: 13 Against: 1 Abstentions: 1

- 3) That Maidstone Borough Council should work with district councils across Kent, Medway and Kent County Council to achieve this and in particular with Dartford, Gravesham, Medway, Swale and Kent County Councils;

Voting: For: 10 Against: 4 Abstentions: 1

- 4) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to agree the detail of principles for enhanced inter tier working;

Voting: For: 13 Against: 2 Abstentions: 0

- 5) That Maidstone Borough Council should, when the opportunity arises, participate in discussions across the whole of Kent and Medway with the objective of developing a devolution proposition and that the Leader and Chief Executive will participate fully in these; and

Voting: For: 11 Against: 4 Abstentions: 0

- 6) That Maidstone Borough Council should participate in further development of devolution propositions alongside the North Kent authorities of Gravesham, Dartford, Medway and Swale and KCC for the reasons set out in paragraph 2.33 of the report of the Chief Executive.

Voting: For: 11 Against: 4 Abstentions: 0

89. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - FIRST QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement which provided an overview of the capital and revenue budget and outturn for the first quarter of 2016/17 and highlighted other financial matters which may have a material impact on the medium term financial strategy of the balance sheet.

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement drew Members' attention to Page 33 of the report where there was a projected overspend of £500,000 on temporary accommodation but explained that this would be offset by an increase in car parking income to leave a net overspend of £250,000.

In response to questions from Members, the Director of Finance and Business Improvement explained:-

- That the overall collection of business rates was not as good as anticipated. However, there was a factor which had contributed to that shortfall as the billing for the business rates payable on properties owned by the council was later than usual and the amounts were not paid until after the end of the first quarter.
- That two major capital schemes would slip into next year hence the underspend but there was a chain of procurement processes being progressed which would ensure that works start in the new year.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the revenue position at the end of the first quarter and the actions being taken or proposed to improve the position where significant variances have been identified, as set out in table 1, paragraph 2.8 of the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be noted;
- 2) That the proposed slippage in the capital programme of £4,526,591 into 2017/18 as detailed in paragraph 2.13 of the report of the Director of Finance and Business Improvement be approved;
- 3) That the performance of the collection fund and the estimated level of balances at the year end be noted; and
- 4) That the performance in relation to the treasury management strategy for the first quarter of 2016/17 be noted.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

90. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - CORPORATE PLANNING TIMETABLE

Members considered the report of the Head of Policy and Communications which set out a proposed approach to refreshing the current Strategic Plan and undertaking budget consultation as part of the corporate planning timetable.

Following questions from Members the Head of Policy and Communications confirmed the following:-

- That the report related to the corporate planning timetable only. When the Strategic Plan is presented to Members in February next year, there would be environmental/sustainable development implications.
- That the dates for the Budget Roadshows would be circulated to Members.

- That Member training and a briefing session would be carried out before the Roadshows commence.
- That a copy of the Residents Survey be circulated to Members of the Committee.

It was noted that the Budget Roadshow would run throughout October in locations across the Borough. Residents would be asked to prioritise those services that matter to them.

Policy and Resources Committee would be asked to consider the outcomes of the consultation and agree documents for consultation with Service Committees in December. Members were advised that they could submit their comments direct to the Head of Policy and Communications or take forward their comments to the individual Service Committees at the appropriate time.

RESOLVED: That the process for reviewing the timetable for refreshing the Strategic Plan and creating the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Service Planning be agreed.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

91. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - INFORMATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members considered the report of the Head of Policy and Communications which related to the Council's approach to information governance and assurance and actions that would be taken in regard to information management.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Policy and Communications explained that:-

- Initially the work would be picked up by the Policy and Performance Team.
- The Strategy was not developed in isolation and was in line with what other authorities had undertaken.
- Training would be forthcoming for all staff. A session for Members would be arranged by the Governance Solicitor.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the review of the Information Management Strategy as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Head of Policy and Communications be approved;

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

- 2) That the Chairman of Audit, Governance and Standards Committee act as the Council's Information Management Champion; and

Voting: For: 13 Against: 0 Abstentions: 2

- 3) That the Constitution be amended accordingly to reflect this.

Voting: For: 14 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1

92. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - ENTERPRISE ZONE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Members considered the report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development which related to the Government requirement for all local authorities on which a new Enterprise Zone site is situated to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government confirming their commitment to the Enterprise Zone and to set out the arrangements for its operation and development.

It was noted that the North Kent Enterprise Zone co-ordinator was notified of this requirement to submit an MOU by the 30th September only two weeks ago which is why the MOU was still in draft form.

The Regeneration and Economic Development Manager outlined the potential benefits to the Council which included up to 100% business rate discount, worth up to £275,000 per business over a 5 year period.

The business rates income retained by Maidstone Borough Council would be used to accelerate further development on Kent Medical Campus.

Members noted that an update on the North Kent Enterprise Zone would come back to this Committee in the New Year.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as set out in Appendix 1 to the report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development be agreed and that authorisation be given to the Chief Executive to sign it and submit it to Government; and

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

- 2) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee to agree the content of the final MOU.

Voting: For: 15 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0

93. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Policy and Resources Committee - Work Programme Schedule

Theme	Policy and Resources Committee
Town Centre Regeneration	
Brunswick Street Redevelopment	TBC
Union Street Redevelopment	TBC
Maidstone East Redevelopment	TBC
Town Centre Investment & Development Plan 2015/2020 Update	14 December 2016
Development of the Mall Including Bus Station	TBC
Parks & Open Spaces	
Disposal of Land at Unicomes Lane, Fant	26 October 2016
Medium Term Financial Plan	
Council Tax Tax Base 2017/18	23 November 2016
Council Tax 2017/18 – collection fund adjustments	23 November 2016
Projected Collection Fund Adjustment Account	14 December 2016
MTFS - Fees and Charges	18 January 2017
Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals 2017/18	14 December 2016
Medium Term Financial Strategy Update	18 January 2016
Medium Term Financial Strategy – Capital Programme	18 January 2017
Other Finance Issues	
Irrecoverable Business Rates	28 September 2016/29 March 2017
Council Tax Support Scheme	26 October 2016
Monitoring Reports	
Risk Management Update	26 October 2016
Second Quarter Budget Monitoring	26 October 2016
Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 2	23 November 2016
Strategic Plan 2015-2020 refresh	18 January 2017
Business Terrace – operation and financial update	14 December 2016
Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 3	15 February 2017
Third Quarter Budget Monitoring	15 February 2017
Fourth Quarter Budget Monitoring	TBA
Equality Objectives Annual Report	26 April 2017
Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 4	TBA
Commercialisation Strategy Update	23 November 2016
Economic Development Strategy Update	TBC
New/Updates to Strategic and Plans	
Communication and Engagement Strategy Action Plan 2016-17	26 October 2016
Strategic Plan 2015-20 Refresh	18 January 2017
Workforce Strategy	June 2017
Health and Safety Strategy	June 2017
Other	
Bi-annual risk register	26 October 2016 / 15 February 2017
Temporary Accommodation Strategy	Ad hoc
Review of the Fraud Investigation Team	29 March 2017
Income Generation	
Property Acquisition - Commercial	Ad Hoc

Agenda Item 12

Policy and Resources Committee

26 October 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Councillor Referral from Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Policy and Communications
Lead Officer and Report Author	Head of Policy and Communications
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Downswood and Otham Ward

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the referral be considered and a decision to either:
 - (a) endorse the original Committee decision; or
 - (b) substitute a different decision in place of the decision of the Committee

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	26 October 2016

Councillor Referral from Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the referral of a decision of Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee which related to a request to declare as surplus a strip of open space, with a total area of 414 square metres, to the north of Gore Court Road.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Constitution as agreed by Council on 21 May 2016 allows councillors to refer decisions of Service Committees in certain circumstances. Where the referral is of a decision of a Service Committee, as is the case with this referral, the requirement is for a minimum of three councillors to refer the decision to Policy and Resources Committee.
- 2.2 The Head of Policy and Communications received a referral request for a recent decision of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee on 4 October 2016 in relation to land north of Gore Court Road.
- 2.3 The Chairman of Policy and Resources Committee has been consulted on the issue and agreed to accept the referral for consideration at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 26 October 2016.
- 2.4 The referral details are set out below:-

Decision making body:	Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
Decision made:	That the open space strip of land with a total area of 414 square metres to the west of Gore Court Road, outlined in red on Appendix A to the report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development, not be declared surplus to requirement, and that no further action be taken.
Reason for referring the decision:	The wider impact of not declaring the land surplus on development plans for the area has not sufficiently been considered, including the enabling effect on the development already approved for land North of Bicknor Wood at Planning Committee on 14 July 2016. Of some relevance also is the fact that the proposed development would compensate for the loss of this strip by the creation of a much larger area of open space.

Members calling in the decision:	Signatories: Councillors Mrs Gooch, D Mortimer, Perry and Lewins
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 After consideration of the reasons for referral and the report and original decision of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee, the Committee may endorse the original decision of Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee. In this case the original decision will stand as published following the Committee meeting.
- 3.2 However, the Committee may propose an alternative decision and substitute that for the decision of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 As the matter is a decision based upon a referral there is no preferred option to be presented by officers.
- 4.2 Attached to this report is the original report, appendices, published decision and a copy of the referral.

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 The decision of Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee will either stand as published or be amended by the record of the decision of Policy and Resources Committee made in response to the referral.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The cross cutting issues which related to the recommendations set out in the original report of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee were as follows:-

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The proposed disposal of the land identified will support the Council's priority of planning for sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs.	Head of Planning
Risk Management	Failure to agree this disposal could lead to the risk of an agreed housing development	Head of Planning

	not coming forward.	
Financial	Disposal of this land supports the Council's overall strategy of planning for new homes, which will promote economic development and ameliorate the housing shortage in the borough. The value realised through the disposal proceeds will support the Council's capital programme. This value is only capable of being realised in the specific context described in the report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	No implications	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Legal	The referral has been made in accordance with the Constitution.	Interim Head of Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The impacts of the proposal have been considered within the body of this report and no adverse impacts on groups with protected characteristics is anticipated.	Head of Planning
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The proposed disposal would allow the implementation of agreed development whilst safeguarding ancient woodland. Not agreeing such a disposal would put this ancient woodland and associated protected trees at risk.	Head of Planning
Community Safety	The proposed disposal will not affect the safety of current or potential users of the remaining open space and the resulting realignment of the road will benefit road and pedestrian safety.	Head of Planning
Human Rights Act	None.	
Procurement	None.	
Asset Management	The retained asset, Senacre Recreation Ground, will continue to be managed in the same way due to the minor	Property and Procurement Manager

	impact the disposal will have on the remaining open space.	
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7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A – Report and Appendices to the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
- Appendix B – Original Decision of the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee relating to the disposal of land North of Gore Court Road, Parkwood
- Appendix C – Copy of Decision Referral

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

As appended.

**HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE
COMMITTEE****4 October 2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes**Disposal of Land North of Gore Court Road, Parkwood**

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Jason Taylor. Parks and Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	Downswood and Otham

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To declare surplus the open space strip of land with a total area of 414 square metres to the west of Gore Court Road, outlined in red on the attached plan Appendix A.
2. To authorise the placing of a Public Notice pursuant of Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough - Planning for sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee	4 October 2016
Policy and Resources Committee	If required

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council has been approached by Bellway Homes with a request to purchase an area of open space land on the eastern side of Senacre Recreation Ground as shown on the attached plan Appendix A, in order to facilitate a housing development.
 - 1.2 To dispose of the land, it needs to be declared surplus to operational requirements and the intention to dispose publically advertised pursuant to Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the LGA72")
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The disposal of this strip of land would allow the minor realignment of Gore Court Road, thus enabling the provision of a necessary road access to the "Land North of Bicknor Wood" development site, for which the Council's Planning Committee resolved to grant planning permission on 14 July 2016.
- 2.2 The alternative way to widen Gore Court Road to enable the development would be to take land on its eastern side which would involve the loss of ancient woodland and 3 statutorily protected trees. This option was considered and discounted by Planning Committee in favour of the proposal outlined in this report.
- 2.3 The strip of land has been confirmed by the Parks and Leisure team as having no strategic value to the Council for the reasons set out below and is therefore, in its opinion, surplus to operational requirements.
- 2.4 The strip of land which is proposed for disposal is currently hedgerow and a thin strip of amenity grass and is up to 6metres wide and 145 metres long. The total area is 414 square metres as shown in the plan in **Appendix I**. The existing fence and hedgerow would be replaced with like for like as a condition of disposal.
- 2.5 Senacre Recreation Ground is an informal open space maintained and owned by the Council. It includes a community building used as a community and skills centre leased by Kent County Council. Following discussions with Catch 22, who manage the building, the area of land to be disposed of appears to be primarily used by dog walkers. Catch 22 use the wider area of open space for informal team building exercises, picnics and kick-about. They operate two

community gardens as part of their facility. The rest of the open space has had football pitches but these have not been in operation since 2013 due to lack of demand. In the past a local church has used the open space for a fair. The proposed disposal would not prevent these activities taking place or make the open space less attractive to users. None of these activities would be adversely affected by the proposal to dispose of the strip of land in question.

- 2.6 The development approved by Planning Committee for Land North of Bicknor Wood site provides a minimum 5.8 hectares open space. The 414 square metre (0.04 ha) reduction of open space from the disposal of this land will be compensated by this new provision. The disposal of the strip of open space will also generate a capital receipt which will provide best value for the Council in accordance with the requirements of Section 123 of the LGA72.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 HCL Committee is recommended to declare this strip of open space on the eastern side of Senacre Recreation Ground, as shown in Appendix I, as surplus to operational requirements and authorise the placing of a Public Notice pursuant of Section 123 of the LGA72.
 - 3.2 HCL Committee could decide not to declare the land surplus to operational requirements and retain it as part of the Council's open space provision. This is not recommended, firstly, because it has been confirmed by the Parks and Leisure Team that this land is, in its opinion, surplus to operational requirements and, secondly, because the development which the disposal will support and which has been approved by the Council's Planning Committee, will provide much needed housing and additional open space in the Borough.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is 3.1 to agree that the land in question is surplus to requirements as outlined in section 2 of this report.
-

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Consultation will be through the publication of the Section 123 Notice.
-

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If HCL Committee recommends the disposal of the land then a public notice will be placed pursuant of Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972, as detailed in this report
- 6.2 After the six week period for comments and objections has expired, the final decision on disposing of the land will be taken either by Policy and Resources Committee or the Chief Finance Officer under delegated authority if appropriate.
- 6.3 Pursuant to Section 123 of the LGA72, if an independent valuation of the land is required, this will be undertaken following the decision of this Committee.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The proposed disposal of the land identified will support the Council's priority of planning for sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs.	Head of Planning
Risk Management	Failure to agree this disposal could lead to the risk of an agreed housing development not coming forward.	Head of Planning
Financial	Disposal of this land supports the Council's overall strategy of planning for new homes, which will promote economic development and ameliorate the housing shortage in the borough. The value realised through the disposal proceeds will support the Council's capital programme. This value is only capable of	Section 151 Officer

	being realised in the specific context described in the report.	
Staffing	No implications	Head of Commercial & Economic Development
Legal	Compliance with the procedural requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 is upheld by the production of this report.	Mid Kent Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The impacts of the proposal have been considered within the body of this report and no adverse impacts on groups with protected characteristics is anticipated.	Head of Planning
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The proposed disposal would allow the implementation of agreed development whilst safeguarding ancient woodland. Not agreeing such a disposal would put this ancient woodland and associated protected trees at risk.	Head of Planning
Community Safety	The proposed disposal will not affect the safety of current or potential users of the remaining open space and the resulting realignment of the road will benefit road and pedestrian safety	Head of Planning
Human Rights Act	None	
Procurement	None	
Asset Management	The retained asset, Senacre Recreation Ground, will continued to be managed in the same way due to the minor	Property and Procurement Manager

	impact the disposal will have on the remaining open space.	
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

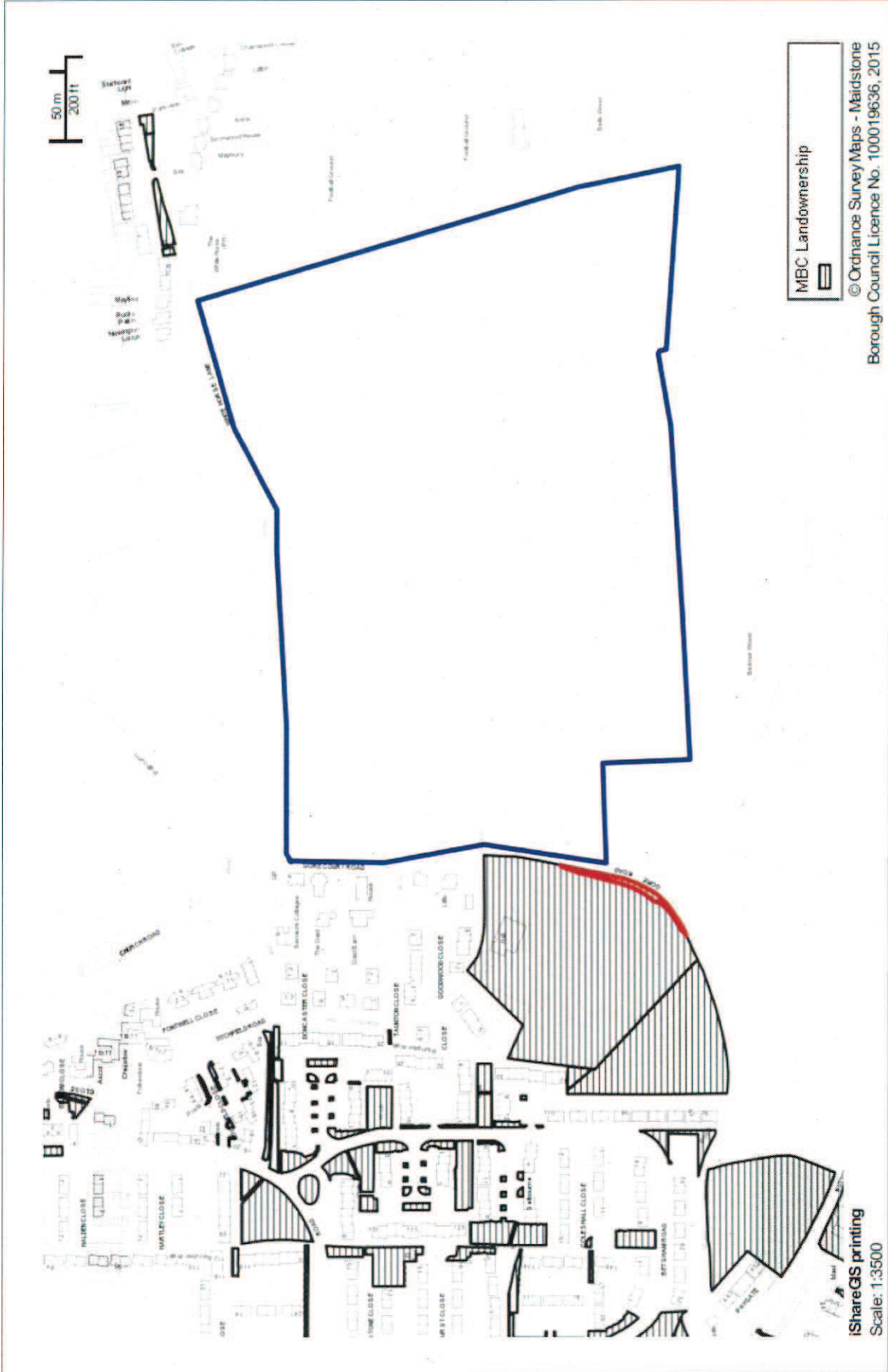
The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- **Appendix I:** The land which HCLC is considering the disposal of North of Bicknor Road, in Downswood and Otham ward.
 - **Appendix II:** Map showing the proposed housing developments site at the Land North of Bicknor Wood. This map also shows other open space currently located in the vicinity.
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Maidstone Borough Local Plan Publication (Regulation 19) February 2016
- Minutes of Maidstone Borough Planning Committee 14th July 2016.





MBC Landownership
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Printed on: 23/9/2016 at 10:54 AM

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE
COMMITTEE**

Decision Made: Tuesday 04 October 2016

**Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic
Development - Disposal of Land North of Gore Court Road**

Issue for Decision

To consider the request to declare as surplus a strip of open space, with a total area of 414 square meters, to the north of Gore Court Road.

Decision Made

That the open space strip of land with a total area of 414 square metres to the west of Gore Court Road, outlined in red on Appendix A to the report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development, not be declared surplus to requirement, and that no further action be taken.

Should you wish to refer this decision to the Policy and Resources Committee, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by three Councillors, to the Head of Policy and Communications by: 13 October 2016

Decision Referral

To:

The Head of Policy and Communications

Decision making body

Heritage, Culture and Leisure, 4 October 2016

Decision made

That the open space strip of land with a total area of 414 square metres to the west of Gore Court Road, outlined in red on Appendix A to the report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development, not be declared surplus to requirement, and that no further action be taken.

Reason for referring the decision

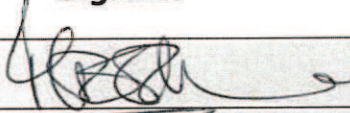
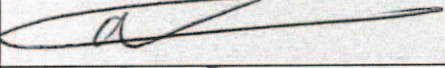

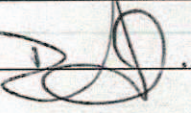
The wider impact of not declaring the land surplus on development plans for the area has not sufficiently been considered, including the enabling effect on the development already approved for land North of Bicknor Wood at Planning Committee on 14 July 2016. Of some relevance also is the fact that the proposed development would compensate for the loss of this strip by the creation of a much larger area of open space.

Desired outcome (please give full details)

1. To declare surplus the open space strip of land with a total area of 414 square metres to the west of Gore Court Road, outlined in red on the attached plan Appendix A.
2. To authorise the placing of a Public Notice pursuant of Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members referring the decision

Signed:

1. FAY GOOCH	
2. DEREK MORTIMER	
3. JOHN PERRY	
4. DIANA LEWIS	
5.	

(3 signatories are required to refer a decision of a Service Committee to the Policy and Resources Committee. However, a decision of the Policy and Resources Committee for referral to Council requires 5 signatories in accordance with the Constitution's rules of procedure). Any of the signatories making such a referral shall attend the meeting.

Please note that should new and relevant information come to light, or a more acceptable course of action be proposed which may resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the Committee, then a Committee Chairman, at the request of any three Councillors in writing, may choose whether to call another meeting of the original Committee to re-consider the decision within five working days of receipt of a referral. The referral to Policy and Resources or the Council would then fall away and the matter would be treated as having been dealt with by the original Service Committee. No further referral of the matter would be permitted.

Committee (or Council) responsible for examining this decision

Policy and Resources Committee

Agenda Item 13

Policy and Resources Committee

26 October 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/2018

Final Decision-Maker	Full Council
Lead Director or Head of Service	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All wards

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That having noted the outcome of the public consultation and considered the potential impact of the proposed changes on working age claimants with the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex, under the Equalities Act (2010); That the Committee recommends to Council that the council tax reduction scheme be amended to incorporate changes summarised within appendix A.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Great People
- Great Place
- Great Opportunity

Timetable	
Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	4 th October 2016
Policy and Resources Committee	26 th October 2016
Council	7 th December 2016

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/2018

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Council Tax Reduction provides financial assistance in the form of a rebate on the council tax bill for 9,000 low income households, at a total cost of £8.8m per year.
- 1.2 Prior to the localisation of the scheme in 2013 the cost of this support was met in full through an annual grant from the Department for Work and Pensions. Since that point funding has been incorporated within the council's revenue support grant which has seen year on year reductions and will be fully withdrawn from April 2017. Maidstone BC's share of the cost of the scheme amounts to £1.3m.
- 1.3 The council needs to balance this reduction in funding with the need to support low income households and the wider interest of the council tax payer.
- 1.4 This report provides the outcome of the public consultation on proposed changes to the council tax reduction scheme and make recommendation on the 2017/2018 scheme.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- 2.2 As part of its introduction, Central Government set out a number of key elements:

The duty to create a local scheme for Working Age applicants was placed with Billing Authorities;

Funding was reduced by the equivalent of 10% from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous CTB scheme; and

Persons of Pension Age, although allowed to apply for CTR, would be 'protected' from any reduction in support through regulations prescribed by Central Government.

- 2.3 Across Kent, a common 'platform' approach was adopted for the design of local schemes, with the new schemes broadly replicating the former CTB scheme but with a basic reduction in entitlement for working age claimants. In Maidstone, working age claimants must pay at least 13% of the council tax liability. The figure of 13% represented the 10% funding loss applied to the working age caseload across Kent. In other parts of Kent, the percentage varies.

- 2.4 Since its introduction in April 2013, our local scheme has been ‘refreshed’ annually for data changes, but the core elements remain as were originally agreed.
- 2.5 As mentioned above, the scheme is ‘underpinned’ by the Kent-wide agreement, which recognises that all the Kent districts (as the billing authorities) will seek to have a common ‘platform’. The original three year period of that scheme ceased on 31 March 2016, but as reported to Committee in September 2015, it was agreed with Kent County Council, Kent Police and Kent and Medway Fire & Rescue that the scheme would effectively ‘roll on’ for one more year (i.e. into 2016/17).
- 2.6 With funding for the scheme through Revenue Support Grant (RSG) subject to further cuts as part of the reductions in local government finance settlements, a greater share of the cost burden has continued to fall on billing authorities and the other major precepting bodies. From April 2017 Maidstone will receive no RSG from central government in relation to the cost of the scheme. This has been one of the main catalysts for the scheme to be reviewed.
- 2.7 To review the scheme a group of finance officers from the Kent districts and major precepting authorities worked together to set objectives for the review which were agreed to be:
- Having regard to the reductions in grant and the financial pressures facing the council, to make the scheme less costly (if possible) and more efficient in terms of its operation; and
 - Having regard to the impact such changes may have on vulnerable residents.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Following a consideration of a wide range of options (reported to P&R Committee 29th June 2016) the conclusion was that the most practical option would be to maintain a scheme similar to our current scheme and consult on possible adjustments to make it more affordable.
- 3.2 The primary reasoning being that;
- It is known to our claimants and it largely mirrors the housing benefit (HB) system, reducing complexity;
 - Our systems are adapted for this type of scheme, the changes can therefore be implemented with little additional cost; and
 - Our staff are familiar with the administration of this type of scheme and, as it is.
- 3.3 Having completed that consultation the council can decide to :

Do nothing – maintain the existing CTR scheme without making any changes with the reduction in funding to be met through other service changes.

The council currently has a savings target of £4.1m to meet the wider reduction in grant income. Maintaining the current scheme would require a savings of £157,000 to be found through the reduction or withdrawal of a different service.

- 3.4 Amend the existing CTR – The council has identified and consulted on 13 possible changes to its scheme, as summarised at 4.1. The council could implement all of the changes identified or any combination of changes.

4 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Given the financial challenge facing the council it is recommended that the council implements the changes set out within the consultation.

	Recommendation	Reason
Option 1 - Reducing the maximum level of support for working age applicants from 87% to 80%	Implement	Consultation findings support change.
Option 2 - Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants	Implement	Consultation findings support change. Change brings CTR in line with wider welfare system.
Option 3 - Reducing backdating to one month	Implement	Consultation findings support change. Scope to address vulnerability through hardship scheme (option 13)
Option 4 - Using a set income for self-employed earners after one year's self-employment	Implement	Consultation findings support change.
Option 5 - Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to four weeks	Implement	Consultation findings support change. Scope to address exceptional cases of vulnerability through hardship scheme (option 13)

Option 6 - Reducing the capital limit from the existing £16,000 to £6,000	Implement with amendment	Consultation findings support change.
Option 7 - Introducing a standard level of non-dependant deduction of £10 for all claimants who have non-dependants resident with them.	Implement	Consultation findings support change. Encourage work and simplify CTR scheme.
Option 8 – Taking any Child Maintenance paid to a claimant or partner into account in full in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction	Implement	Inclusion of maintenance income within calculation provides a level of support based on ability to pay.
Option 9 - Restricting the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction payable to the equivalent of a Band D charge	Implement	Consultation findings support change. Limit based on average of band D promotes fairness and balance to interest of wider council tax payer.
Option 10 – Removing Second Adult Reduction from the scheme	Implement	Second adult rebate does not consider means of main householder. Support still available for low income households through main CTR scheme.
Option 11 - Removing the work related activity component in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction	Implement	Consultation findings support change. Change brings CTR in line with wider welfare system.
Option 12 - Limiting the number of dependent children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two	Implement	Consultation findings support change. Change brings CTR in line with wider welfare system. Promotes fairness and balance with interest of wider council tax payer.
Option 13 – Introducing a scheme, in addition to Council Tax Reduction, to help	Implement	Consultation findings support change. Provides flexibility to safeguard cases of

applicants suffering exceptional hardship		exceptional hardship.
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5 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Following the report to Policy and Resources Committee on the 29th June a public consultation was undertaken between 1 July and 24 August 2016.
- 5.2 The survey was carried out online, with a direct email to approximately 9,000 households and was promoted on the council's website, social media and in the local newspaper. Paper copies were available in the Gateway and on request. An additional 150 paper surveys were sent via direct mail to residents aged 75 years and over (who are less likely to engage with us online), and a reminder email was sent to 230 payees aged 18 to 24 years to boost the responses from these groups.
- 5.3 The survey was open to all Maidstone borough residents aged 18 years and over (i.e. people who pay council tax or receive council tax reduction) with the results weighted according to the known population profile to counteract non-response bias.
- 5.4 A total of 1471 people responded to the questionnaire. The consultation results are provided as Appendix B.

6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 A decision on the final scheme to be implemented is required by a meeting of Full Council. That decision will be publicised through the local media with those residents directly affected by the changes notified in writing of planned changes.
- 6.2 The revised CTR will take effect from 1st April 2017 and be reflected in the annual council tax bills to be sent in March 2017.

7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The council needs to balance the needs of low income households with the wider interest of local taxpayers to ensure that vulnerable residents are protected whilst providing a scheme that is affordable.	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services
Risk Management	No impact.	Stephen McGinnes,

		Director of Mid Kent Services
Financial	<p>CTR reduces the amount of Council Tax that can be collected. Since the council's Revenue Support Grant has continued to fall and will be fully withdrawn by 2017/18, the cost of the scheme will now met in full by the council and preceptors.</p> <p>The cost of the scheme (currently £8.8m) needs to be reduced to reflect the changes in funding.</p>	Mark Green, Director of Resources and Business Improvement (S151 Officer)
Staffing	No impact.	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services
Legal	<p>The Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides a statutory duty to consult on a proposed scheme and Council to approve a scheme by 31 January 2017.</p> <p>Consideration must be given to the finding of the consultation and equality impact assessment in reaching a decision.</p>	Estelle Culligan, Interim Head of Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	<p>Decision-makers are reminded of the requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.</p> <p>The decisions recommended through this paper could directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and varies between groups of people. An equality impact assessment has found that:</p> <p>Current Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All working age claimants have received a reduction in their benefit amount. - Pension age claimants, who will also have protected characteristics, have not received a reduction, as they are protected from any changes. - People in receipt of council tax reduction with disabilities, carers and 	Anna Collier, Policy and Performance Manager

	<p>families with children receive a level of support higher than claimants without those characteristics, as a result of receiving additional allowances within the current scheme.</p> <p>Proposed changes to the scheme from 2017:</p> <p>The changes proposed will continue to maintain a range of additional allowances and income disregards for people with disabilities and carers and apply a consistent percentage reduction to the benefit award for all people of working age.</p> <p>All options could impact on working age claimants with one or more of the protected characteristics of disability, age, sex or race, to varying degrees. The extent of these impacts will be considered further following the consultation.</p> <p>The introduction of an exceptional hardship scheme will be considered as an action to mitigate any possible impacts.</p> <p>A copy of the full equality impact assessment is provided as appendix C.</p>	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	No impact.	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services
Community Safety	No impact.	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services
Human Rights Act	No impact.	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services
Procurement	No impact.	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services
Asset Management	No impact.	Stephen McGinnes, Director of Mid Kent Services

8 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Summary of Changes
 - Appendix B: Consultation Output
 - Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment
 - Appendix D: CTRS Scheme 2017/2018 (technical document available separately)
-

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

	% Agree option	% Agree Option		
	Residents	Stakeholders	Comments	Recommendation
<p>Option 1 - Reducing the maximum level of support for working age applicants from 87% to 80%</p> <p>5,500 people £54,000 MBC £306,000 Preceptors £1.14 average impact</p>	61%	40%	Comments in relation to this option show concern for people on low incomes, suggest that amount is too high or too low and suggest phasing down the reduction.	Implement
<p>Option 2 - Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants</p> <p>440 people £12,000 MBC £68,000 KCC £3.49 average impact</p>	50%	50%	Comments show support for bringing the scheme in line with other benefits however a concern people with children are being penalised, in particular single parents and those with larger families struggling financially.	Implement
<p>Option 3 - Reducing backdating to one month</p> <p>75 people £1,000 MBC £5,000 KCC £1.45 average impact</p>	75%	25%	Comments show concern for vulnerable people having the assistance they need, other comments express surprise that currently claims can be backdated for up to six months.	Implement – exceptional cases resulting from vulnerability addressed through hardship s
<p>Option 4 - Using a set income for self-employed earners after one year's self-employment</p> <p>440 people £37,500 MBC £212,500 KCC £10.90 average impact</p>	51%	50%	Comments express concern that does not allow new starters time to grow; self-employed often work longer hours to earn a basic income and national incentives to encourage entrepreneurship.	Implement.

<p>Option 5 - Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to four weeks</p> <p>No data.</p>	83%	100%	<p>Respondents from BME groups had higher levels of agreement with this option, 86%.</p>	Implement
<p>Option 6 - Reducing the capital limit from the existing £16,000 to £6,000</p> <p>50 people £5,500 MBC £32,500 KCC £14.81 average impact</p>	60%	25%	<p>The comments in relation to this option are generally supportive though some have suggested that £10,000 would be a more appropriate limit and that this option discourages savers.</p>	Implement – exceptional cases resulting from vulnerability addressed through hardship s
<p>Option 7 – Introducing a standard level of non-dependant deduction of £10 for all claimants who have non dependants resident with them.</p> <p>101 people £11,000 MBC £63,000 KCC £4.42 average impact</p>	71%	100%	<p>Respondents that are disabled and/or receive Council Tax Reduction had the lowest levels of agreement at 60% and 61% respectively.</p> <p>The comments show concern for people who are disabled or in education, while others see this option as incentivising work.</p>	Implement
<p>Option 8 – Taking any Child Maintenance paid to a claimant or partner into account in full in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction</p> <p>241 people £24,500 MBC £139,500 KCC £13.09 average impact</p>	54%	50%	<p>There are some significant variations between groupings. Council Tax Reduction recipients have the lowest levels of agreement at 44%, followed by women and respondents with a disability that both had agreement levels of 46%.</p> <p>Comments show concern for single parents and some state that this money is intended for the children. However, other comments support all household income being taken into account in the calculation of benefits.</p>	Implement

<p>Option 9 - Restricting the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction payable to the equivalent of a Band D charge</p> <p>41 people £3,000 MBC £18,000 KCC £9.75 average impact</p>	57%	25%	Council Tax Reduction recipients had the lowest levels of agreement with this option at 48%; with almost 1 in 5 people in this group responding 'Don't know' there may be confusion about how this will work in practice.	Implement
<p>Option 10 - Removing Second Adult Reduction from the scheme</p> <p>60 people £2,000 MBC £11,000 KCC £4.08 average impact</p>	61.3%	100%	Respondents with a disability had the lowest levels of agreement at 49%; there is a 14% difference in levels of agreement between respondents with a disability and respondents without.	Implement
<p>Option 11 - Removing the work related activity component in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction</p> <p>No data</p>	58%	100%	Disabled respondents had the lowest levels of agreement with this option at 43%, and there is an 18% difference in agreement between this group and respondents without a disability.	Implement
<p>Option 12 - Limiting the number of dependent children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two</p> <p>103 people £6,500 MBC £37,500 KCC £8.23 average impact</p>	73%	75%	Respondents 75 years and over and those with a disability have slightly lower levels of agreement but the majority of respondents in these groups are in favour of this option.	Implement
<p>Option 13 - Introducing a scheme, in addition to Council Tax Reduction, to help applicants suffering exceptional hardship</p>	75%	100%	The 25 to 34 year old group have the lowest levels of agreement at 67%. There is a difference of 17% between the age group with the greatest level of agreement and this group.	Implement

2016

Council Tax Reduction



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Headline Results

	% Agreeing with Option	Rank of Preferable Option ¹
Option 1 - Reducing the maximum level of support for working age applicants from 87% to 80%	60.7%	8.38
Option 2 - Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants	50%	6.55
Option 3 - Reducing backdating to one month	75.0%	8.77
Option 4 - Using a set income for self-employed earners after one year's self-employment	51%	6.08
Option 5 - Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to four weeks	83%	9.25
Option 6 - Reducing the capital limit from the existing £16,000 to £6,000	60.6%	7.34
Option 7 - Introducing a standard level of non-dependant deduction of £10 for all claimants who have non dependants resident with them	71%	6.86
Option 8 - Taking any Child Maintenance paid to a claimant or partner into account in full in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction	54%	6.56
Option 9 - Restricting the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction payable to the equivalent of a Band D charge	57%	6.50
Option 10 - Removing Second Adult Reduction from the scheme	61.3%	6.53
Option 11 - Removing the work related activity component in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction	58%	5.30
Option 12 - Limiting the number of dependent children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two	73%	7.58
Option 13 - Introducing a scheme, in addition to Council Tax Reduction, to help applicants suffering exceptional hardship	74.8%	7.71

¹ A higher figure indicates option is high preference.

Methodology

Maidstone Borough Council undertook a consultation on its proposed changes to council tax reduction between 1 July and 24 August 2016. A copy of the survey is available at Appendix B.

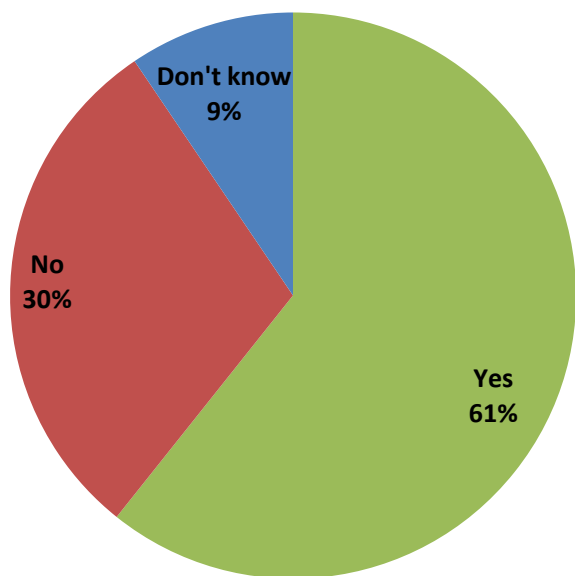
The survey was carried out online, with a direct email to approximately 9,000 Council Tax payees who had signed up for e-billing and was promoted on the Council's website, social media and in the local newspaper. Paper copies were available in the Gateway and on request. An additional 150 paper surveys were sent via direct mail to residents aged 75 years and over (who are less likely to engage with us online), and a reminder email was sent to 230 payees aged 18 to 24 years to boost the responses from these groups.

The survey was open to all Maidstone borough residents aged 18 years and over (i.e. people who pay council tax or receive council tax reduction. Data has been weighted according to the known population profile to counteract non-response bias.

A total of 1471 people responded to the questionnaire. This report discusses the weighted results; however unweighted results are shown at appendix B for reference. Please note not every respondent answered every question therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall.

The survey had a low response from respondents aged 18 to 24 so this group was significantly under-represented and whilst the results have been weighted to take into account some of the variation in respondents compared to the borough population, these results should be treated with caution. Other areas that should be treated with caution due to low number of responses are people from BME backgrounds and Ethnicity: Other respondents, though these will only be weighted if age and sex details were provided and are not weighted as a separate variable. These results are shown in this report, however they are not referred to in the commentary due to the low level of statistical validity.

Option 1 - Reducing the maximum level of support for working age applicants from 87% to 80%



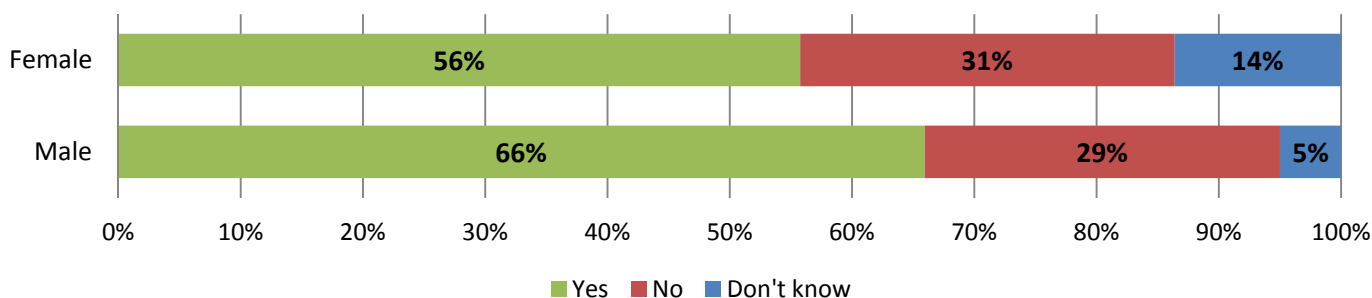
The majority of respondents to the survey are in favour of option 1 – reducing the maximum level of support for working age applicants from 87% to 80%.

Respondents with a disability had the lowest level of agreement with this option at 42%, a 22% difference compared to the responses of the non-disabled.

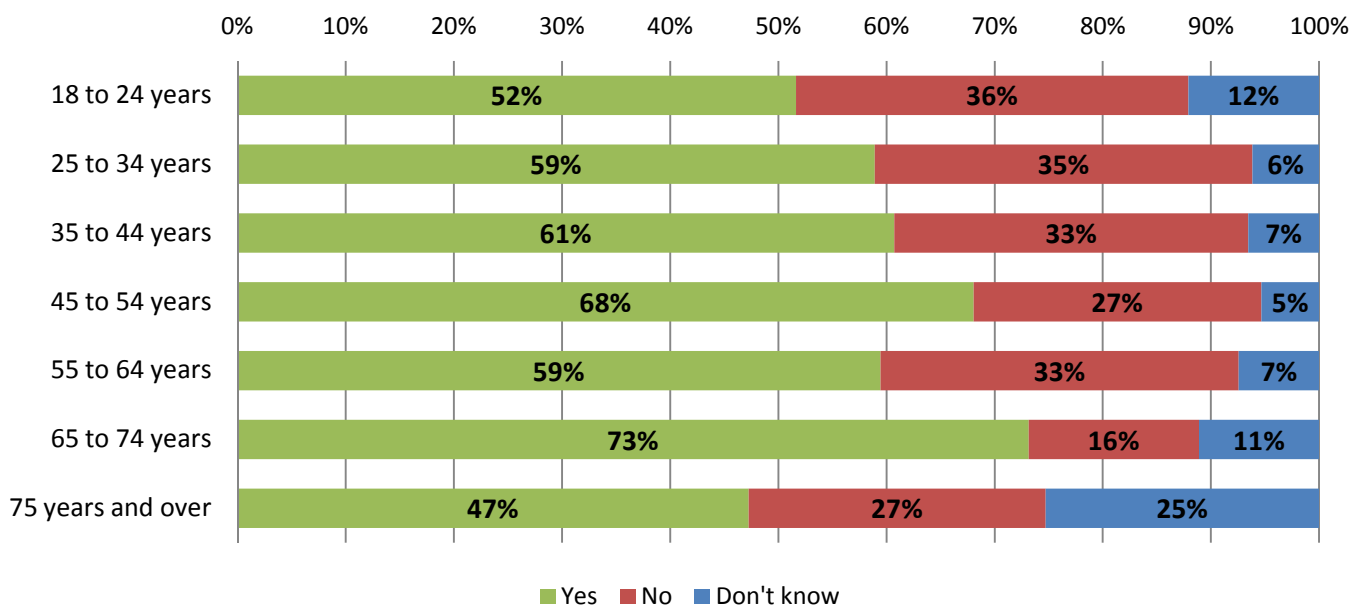
Respondents receiving Council Tax reduction had the second lowest levels of agreement at 43%; there is a 32% difference between this group and those who do not receive Council Tax Reduction.

The comments in relation to this option show concern for people on low income, suggest that there reduction amount is too high or too low and suggest phasing down the reduction.

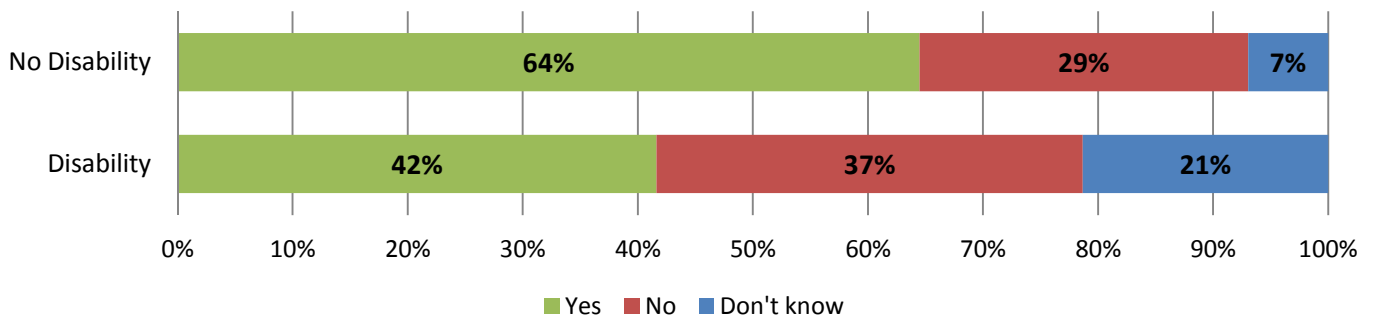
Gender



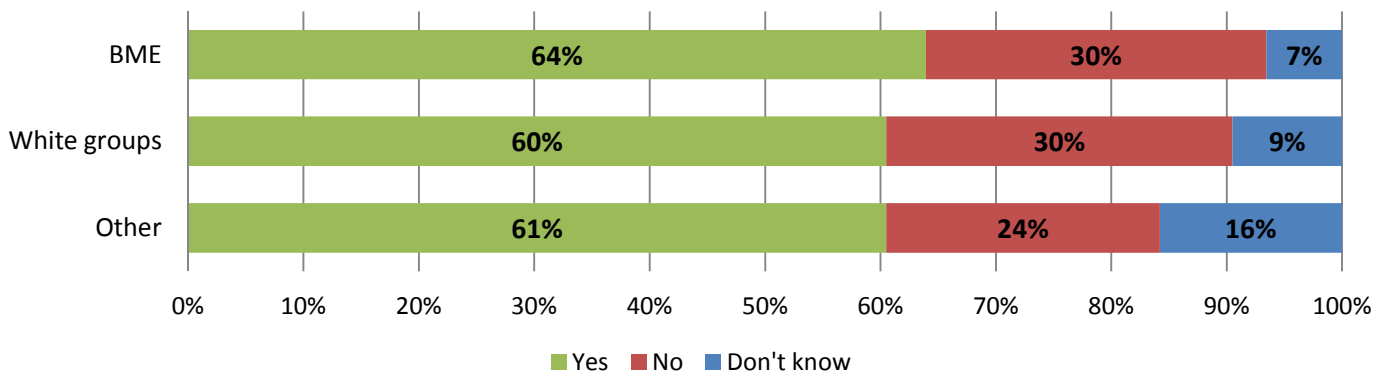
Age



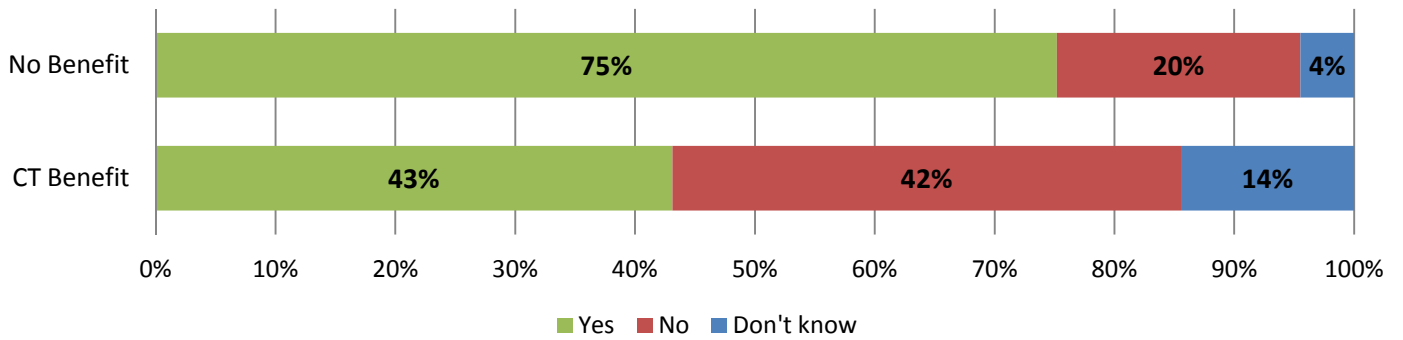
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



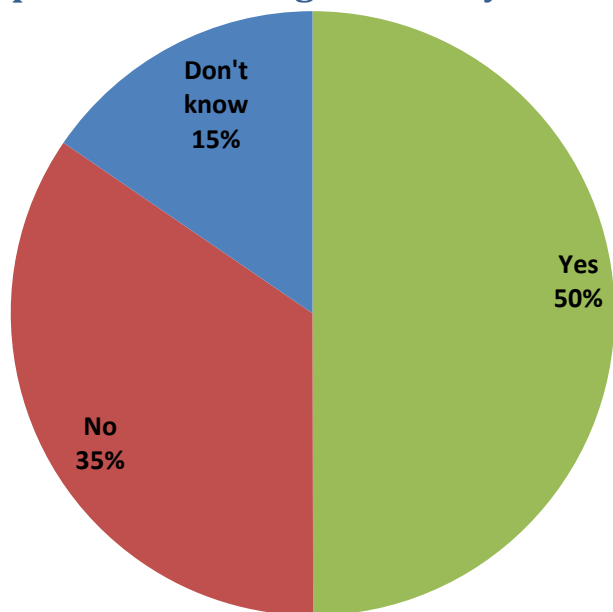
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Option 2 Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants

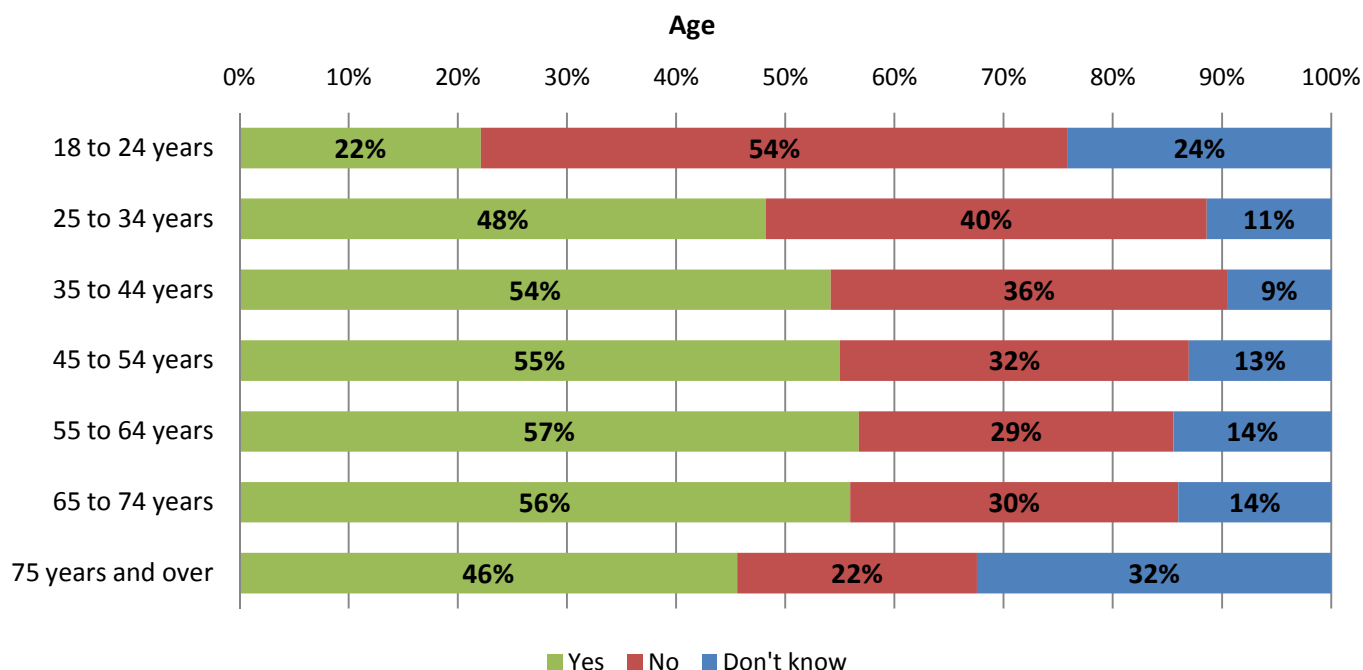
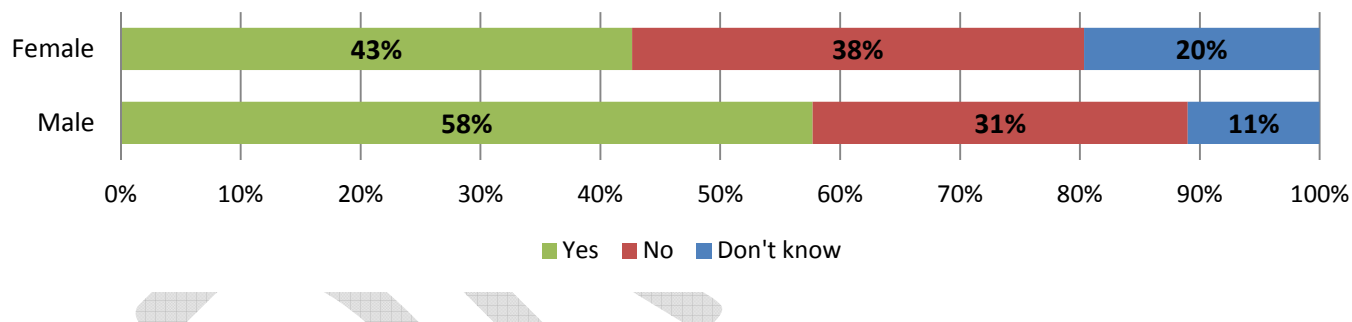


Overall, 50% of respondents were in favour of option 2 removing the family premium for all new working age applicants. When this is analysed by respondent type it shows that for some groups there is no clear majority of respondents agreeing with this option.

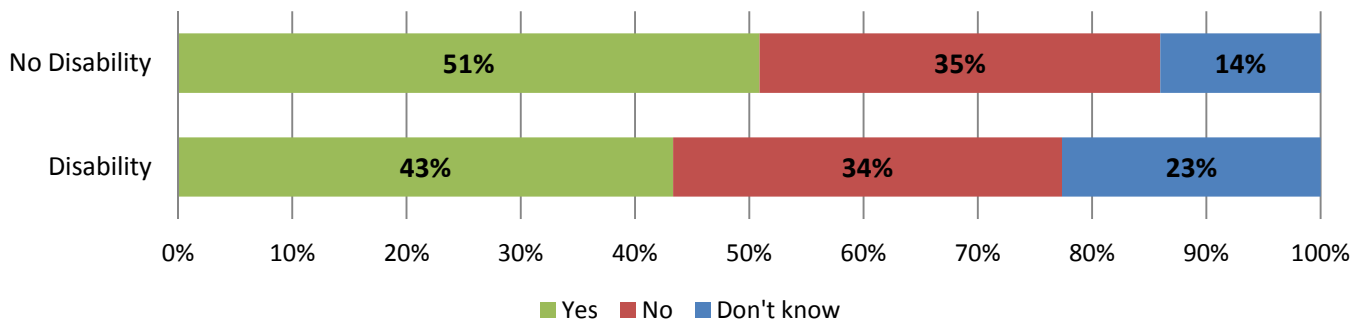
Respondents receiving Council Tax reduction have the lowest level of agreement at 39%. This is a 22% difference compared to those who do not receive this reduction.

Women and those with a disability also had at least 20% respondents answering 'don't know'. The comments show support for bringing the scheme in line

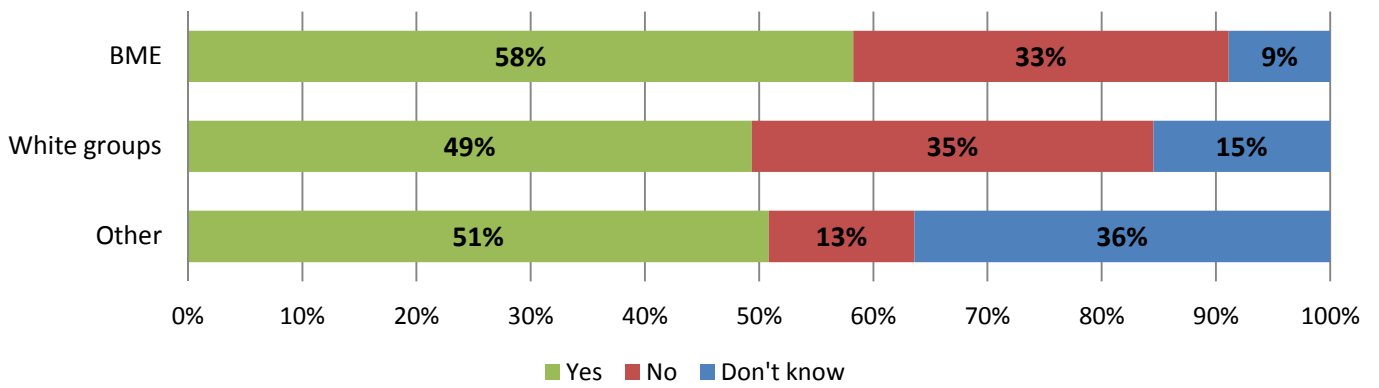
with other benefits however there is a concern people with children are being penalised, in particular single parents and those with larger families struggling financially. Women are more likely to be single parents than men so this may explain the difference in levels of agreement between these two groups.



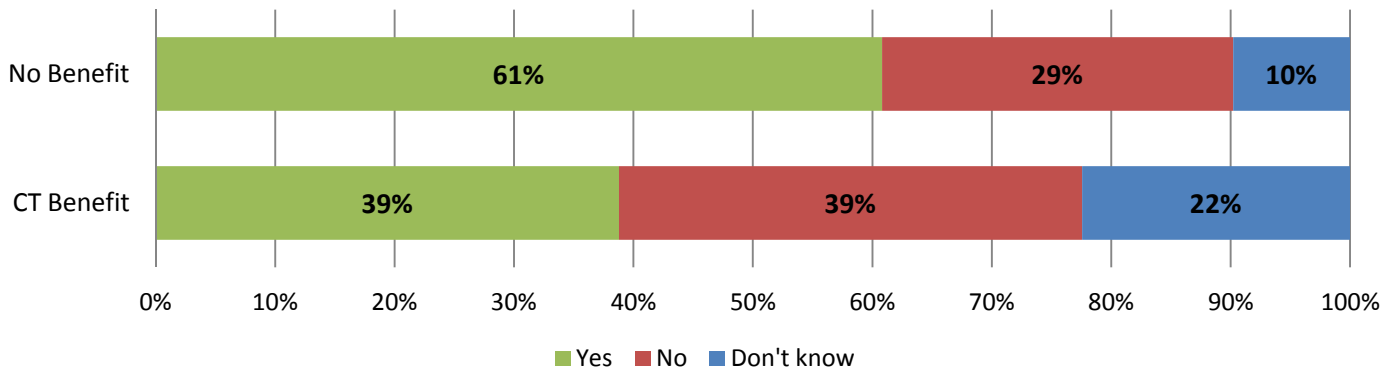
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



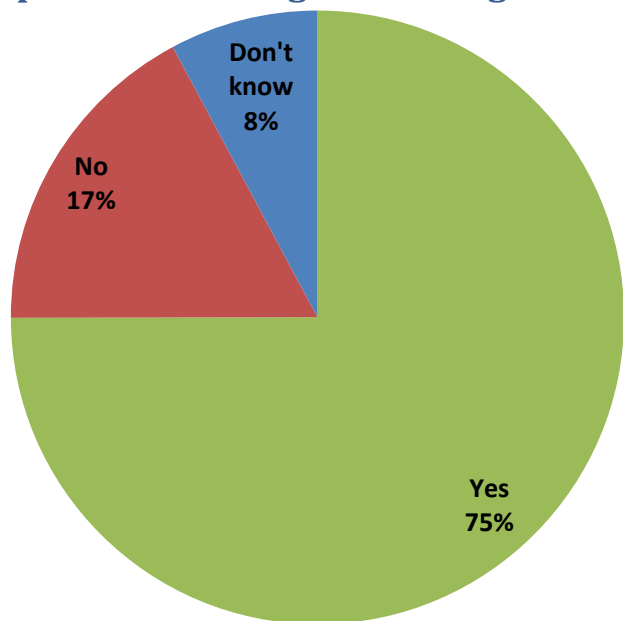
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Option 3 Reducing backdating to one month



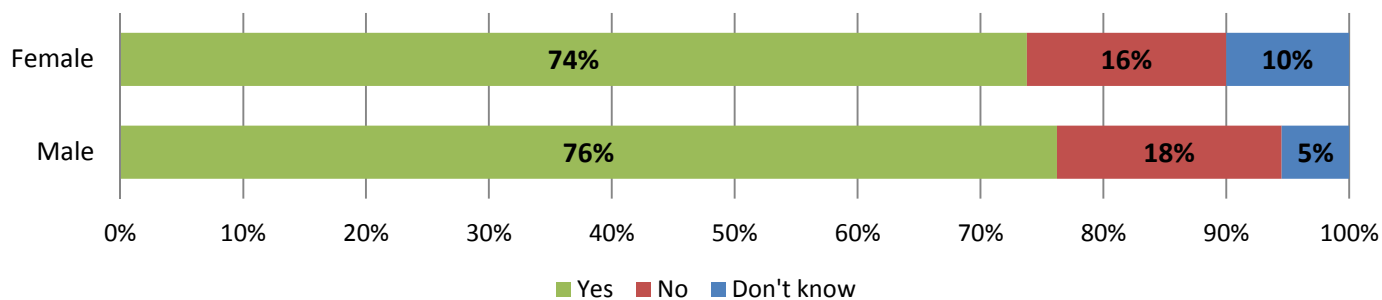
The majority of respondents are in favour of option 3, with three out of every four respondents agreeing with the proposed change.

With the exception of the 18 to 24 year olds, who are mentioned in the methodology section, there was support for this option across groupings.

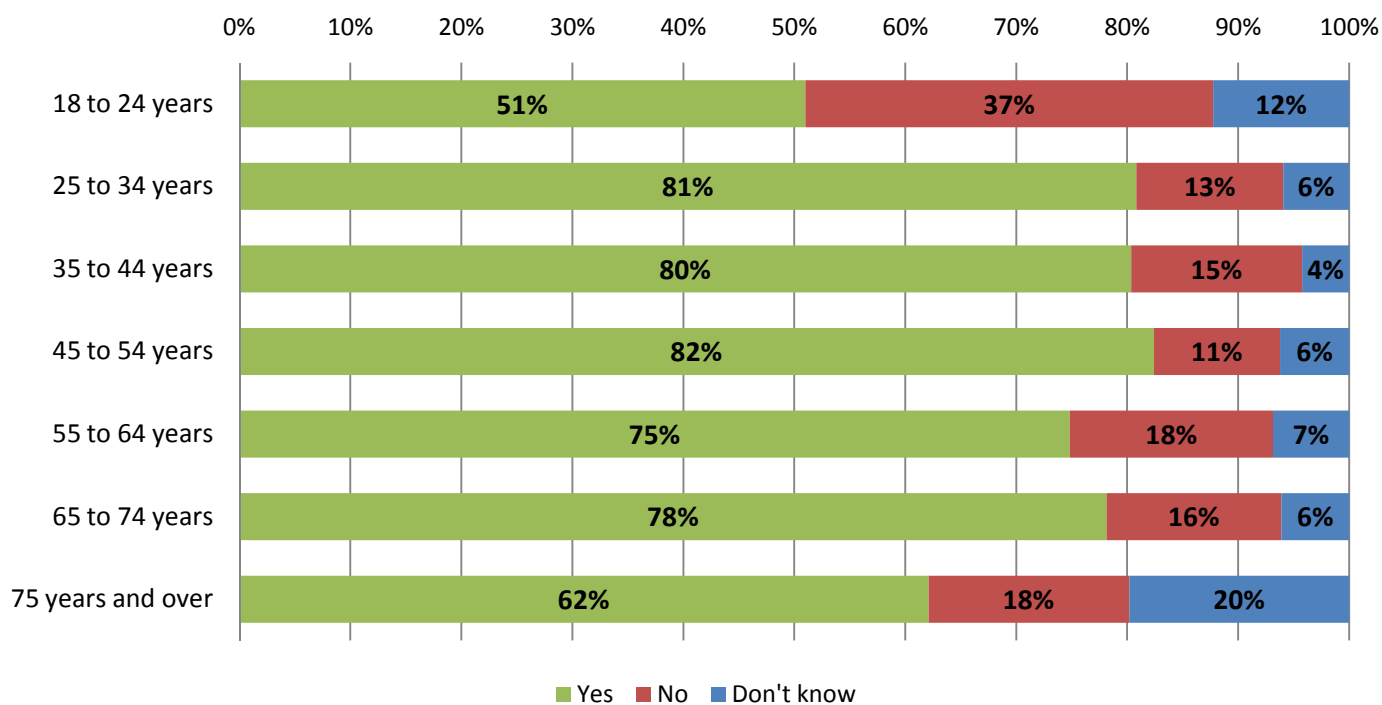
Respondents with a disability and those aged 75 years and over have slightly lower levels of agreement at 62%. The comments show concern for vulnerable people having the assistance they need to complete the paperwork.

Other comments express surprise that currently claims can be backdated for up to six months, with some stating if people need assistance they would apply for it sooner.

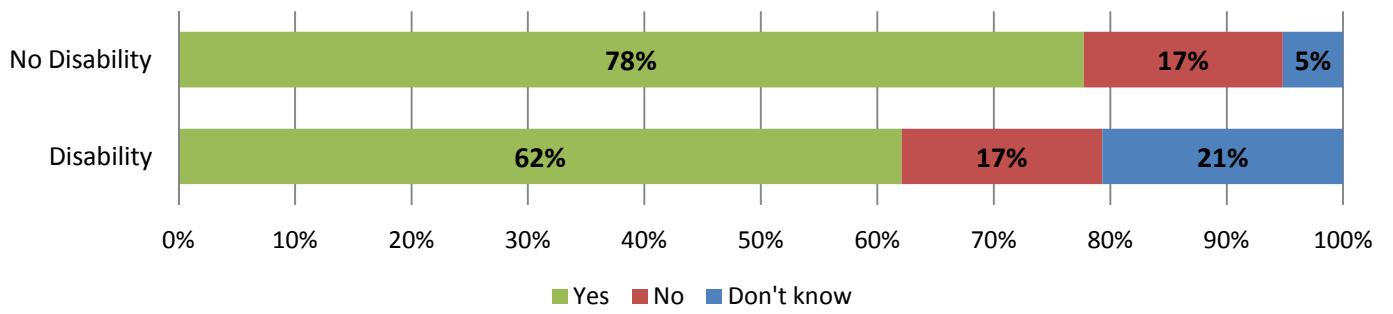
Gender



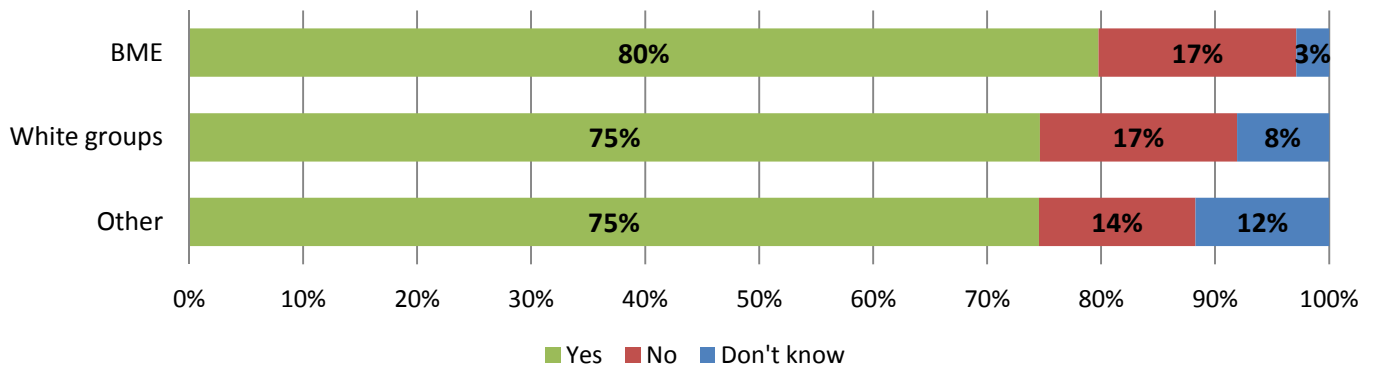
Age



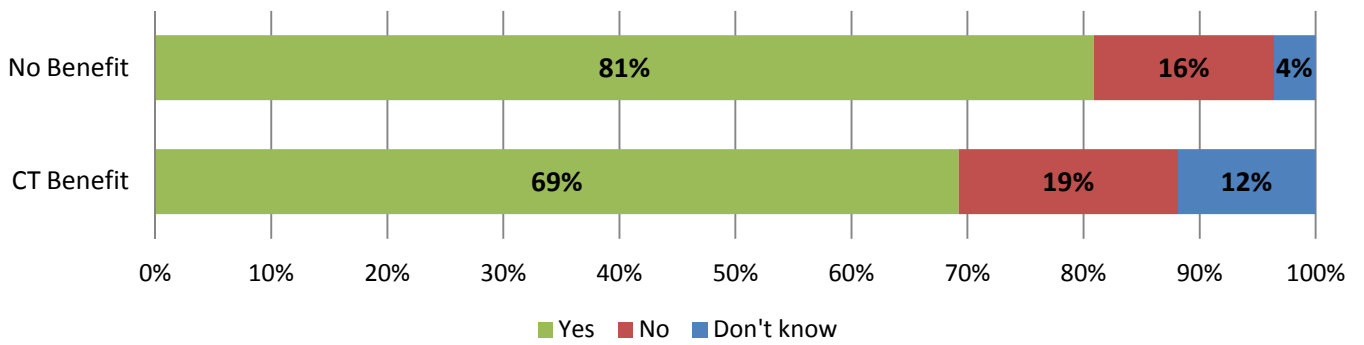
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient

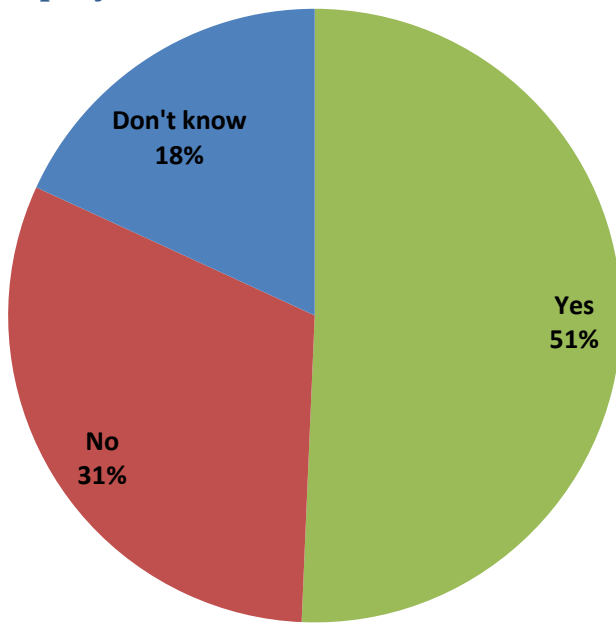


Option 4 using a set income for self-employed earners after one year's self-employment

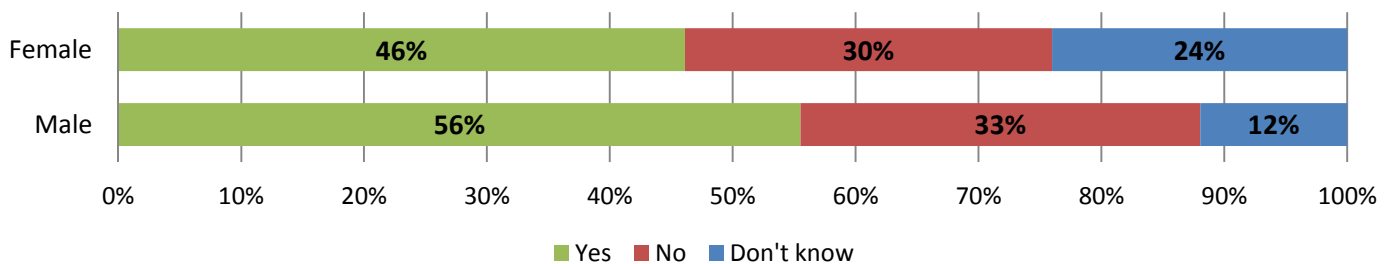
Just over half of respondents were in favour of option 4, using a set income for self-employed earners after one year's self-employment.

Respondents with a disability and those aged 25 to 34 years had low levels of agreement with this option when compared to the rest of their groupings.

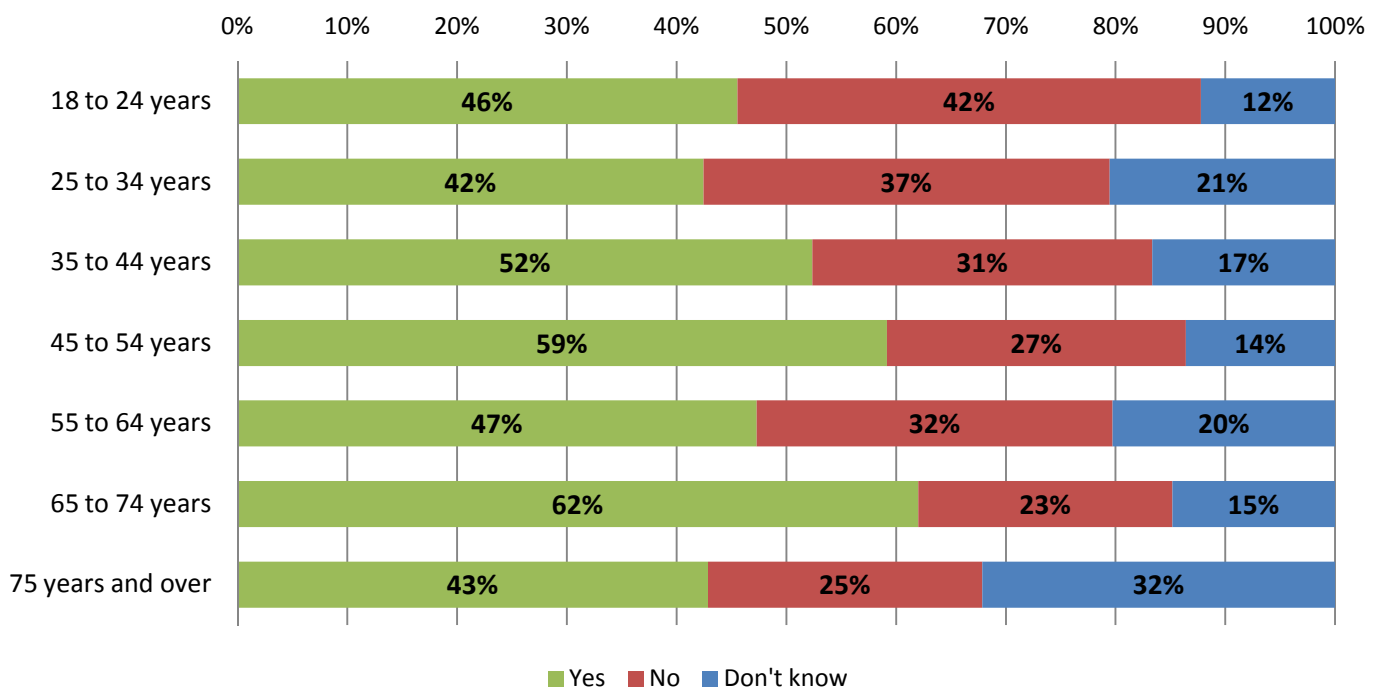
Comments in relation to this option express concern that this option does not allow new starter businesses to grow and that self-employed people will often work longer hours to earn a basic income. There were also comments around national incentives to encourage entrepreneurship which could explain the lower levels of agreement from the 25 to 34 years age group.



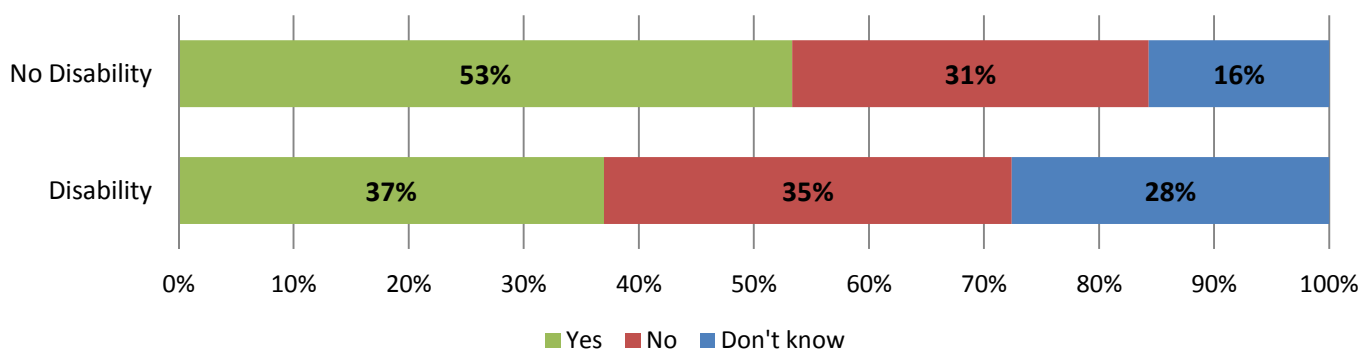
Gender



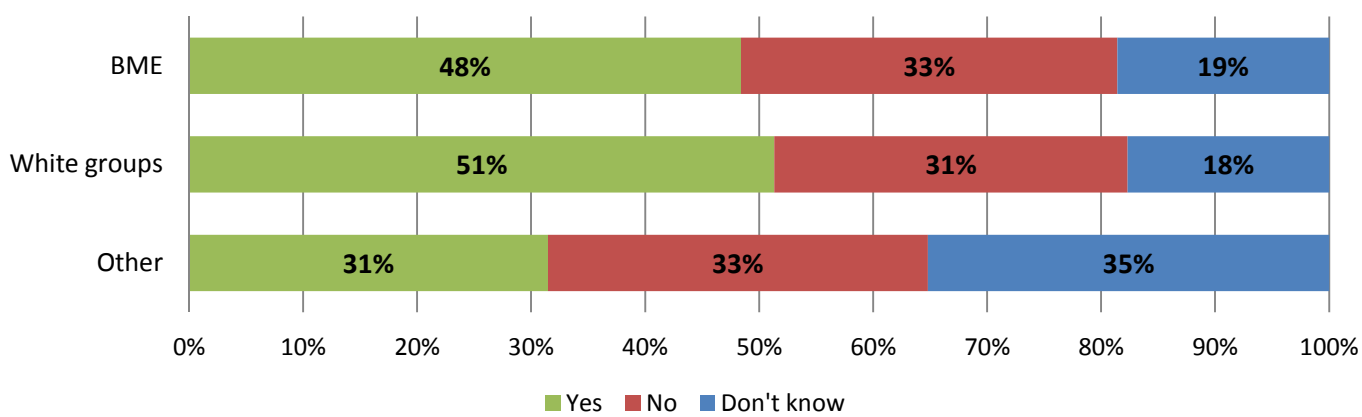
Age



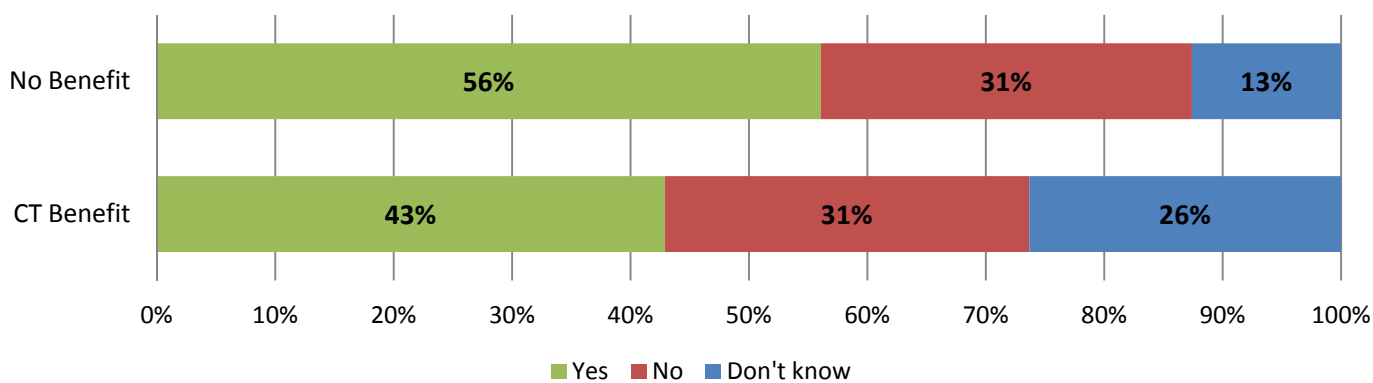
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



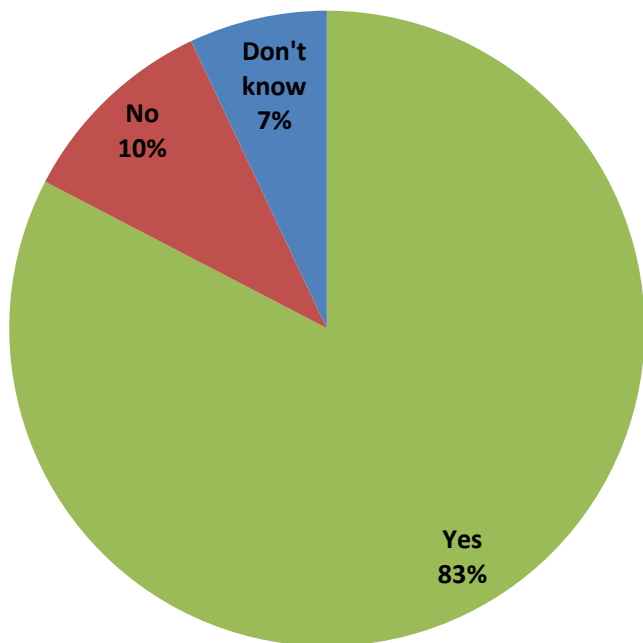
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



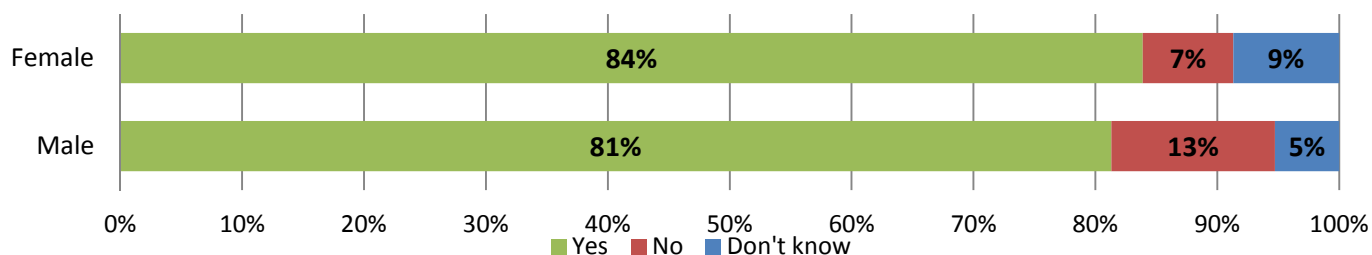
Option 5 Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to four weeks



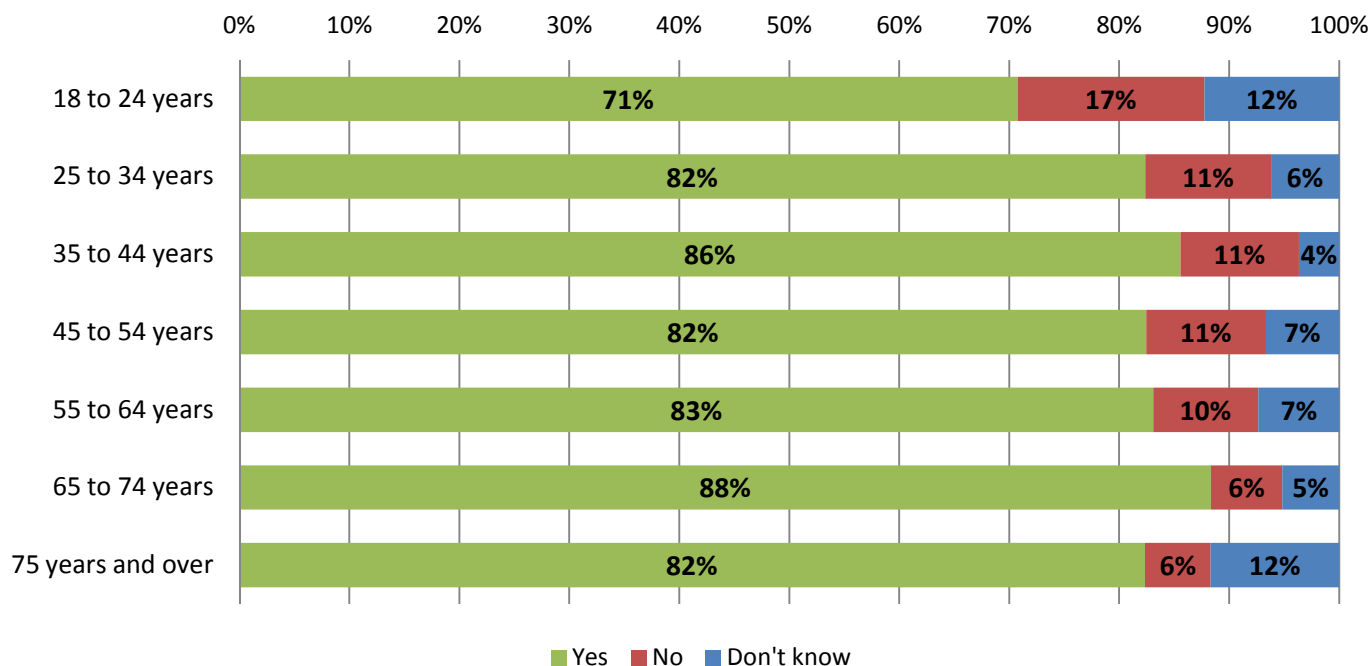
The majority of respondents are in favour of option 5 – reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to four weeks, with over four out of five respondents agreeing with the proposed change.

While the comments are mostly positive about this option there is some concern that this could unfairly impact on certain occupations such as the army.

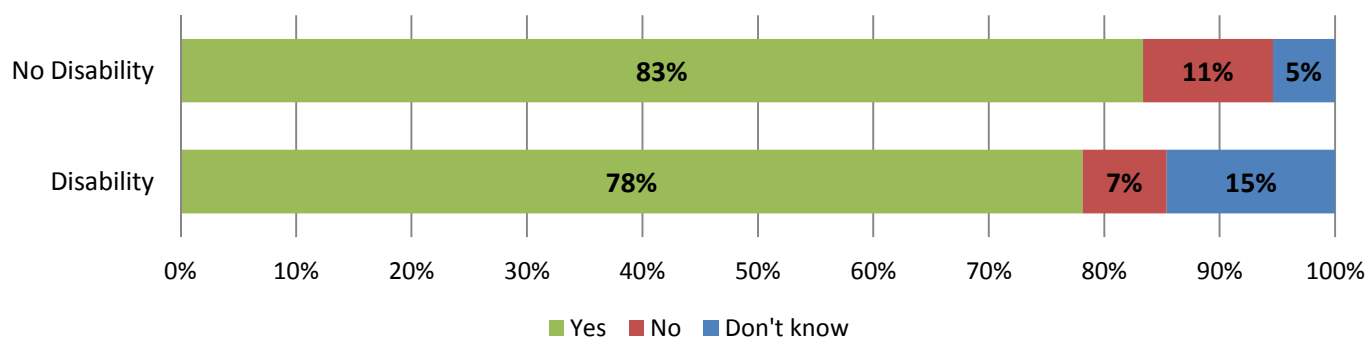
Gender



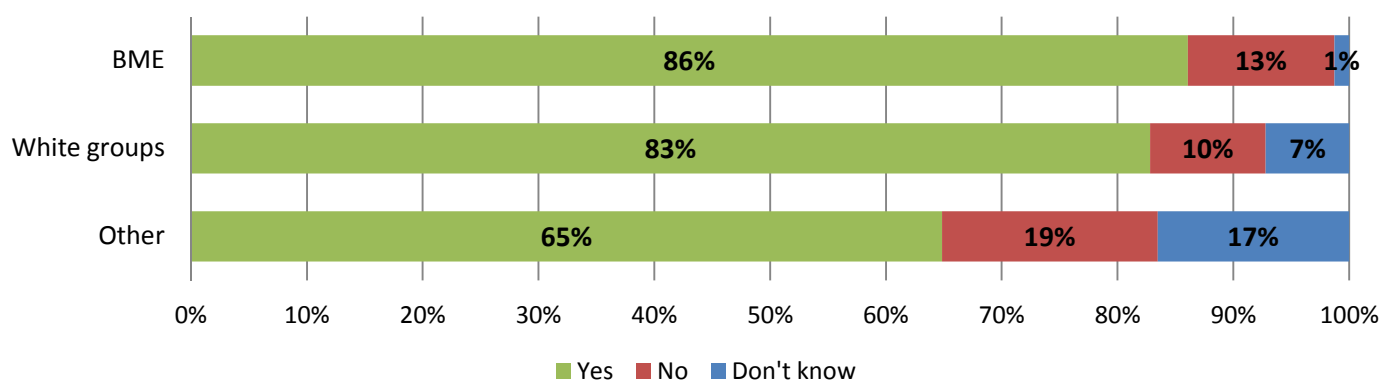
Age



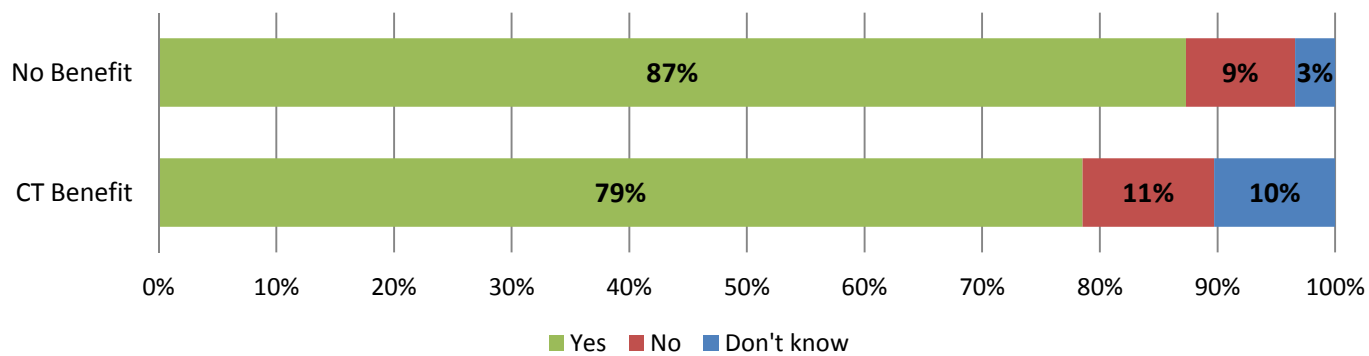
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



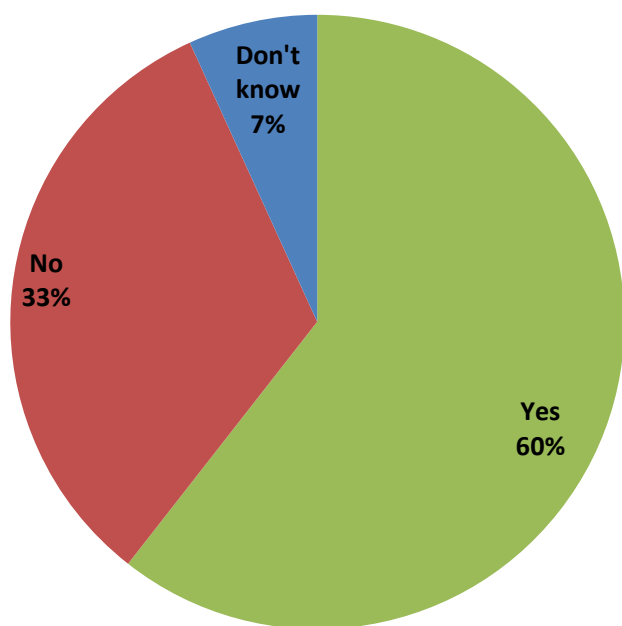
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Option 6 Reduce the capital limit from the existing £16,000 to £6,000

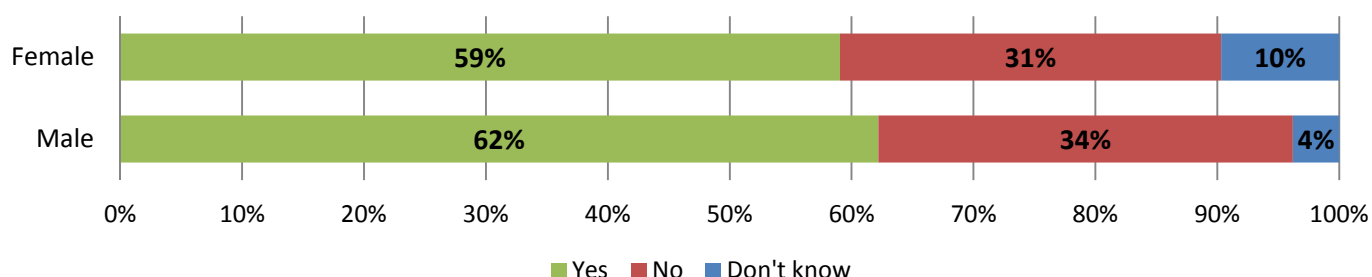


The majority of respondents are in favour of option 6 – reduce the capital limit from the existing £16,000 to £6,000.

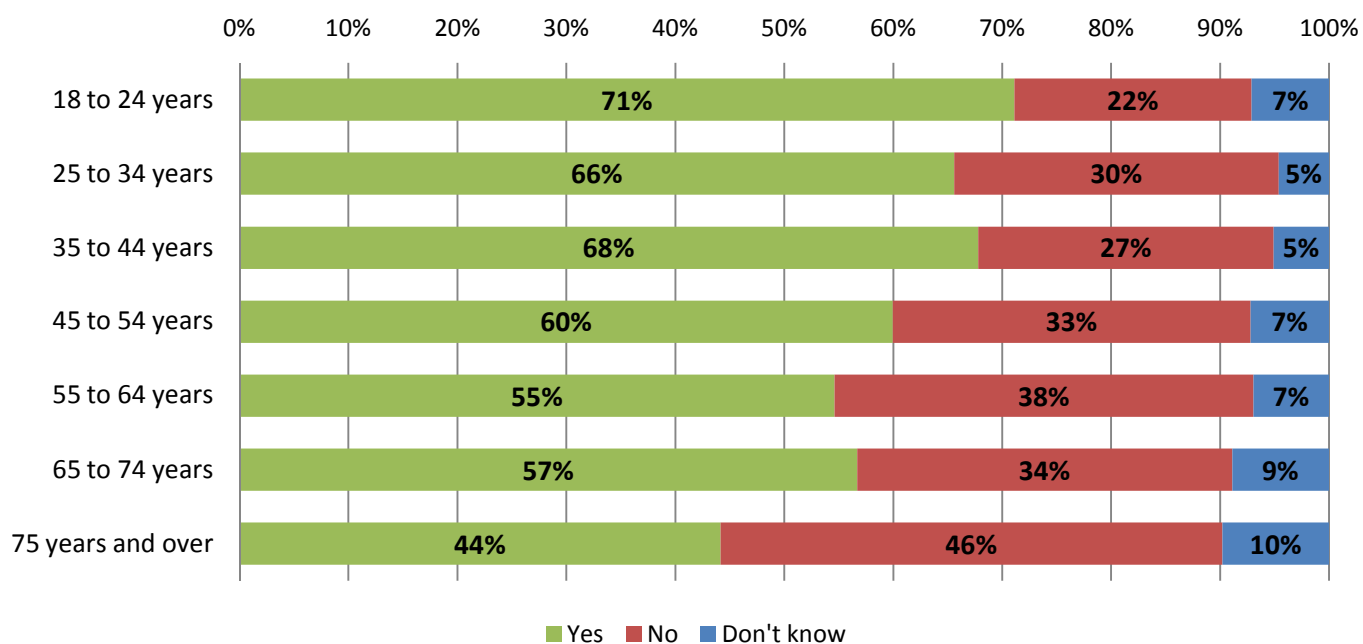
Respondents aged 75 years and over have the lowest levels of agreement with the option at 44%. It is possible that this group are concerned about leaving inheritance and savings they may have for end of life or after life care.

The comments in relation to this option are generally supportive though some have suggested that £10,000 would be a more appropriate limit and that this option discourages savers.

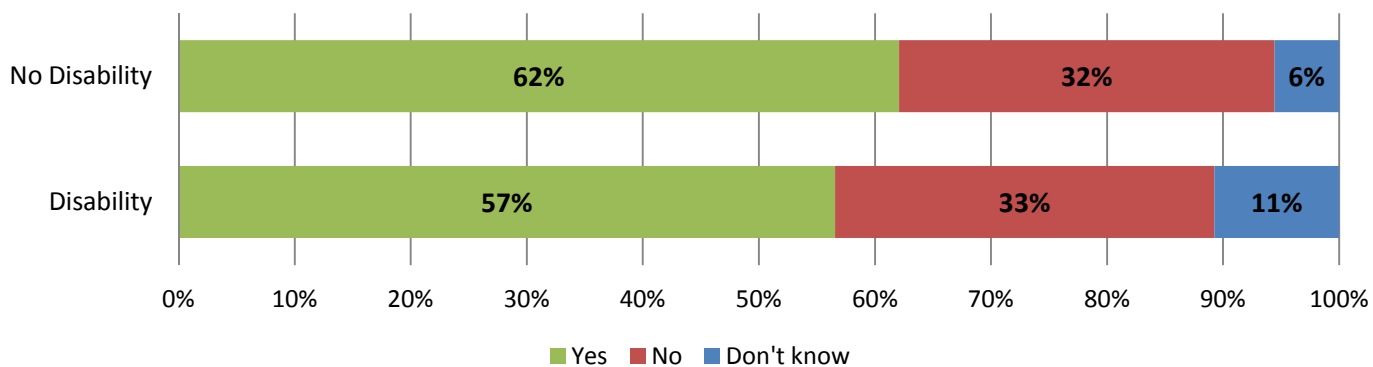
Gender



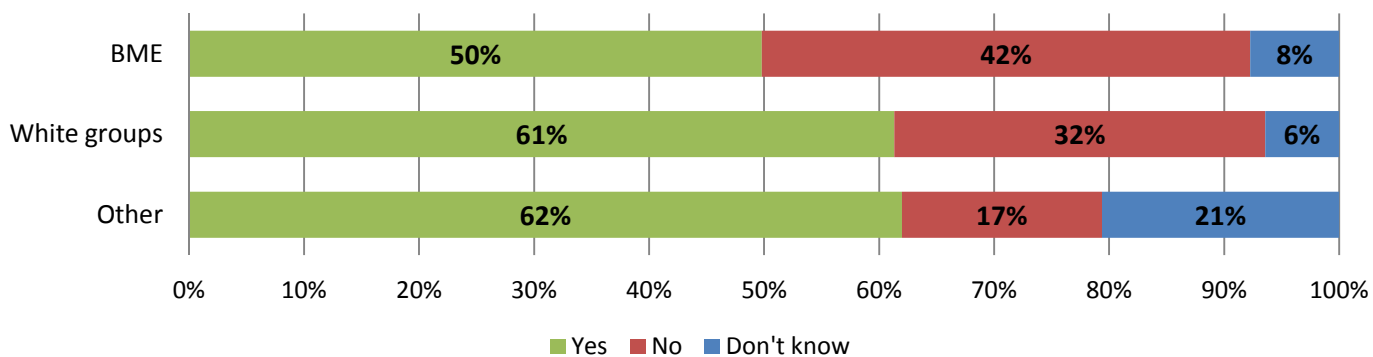
Age



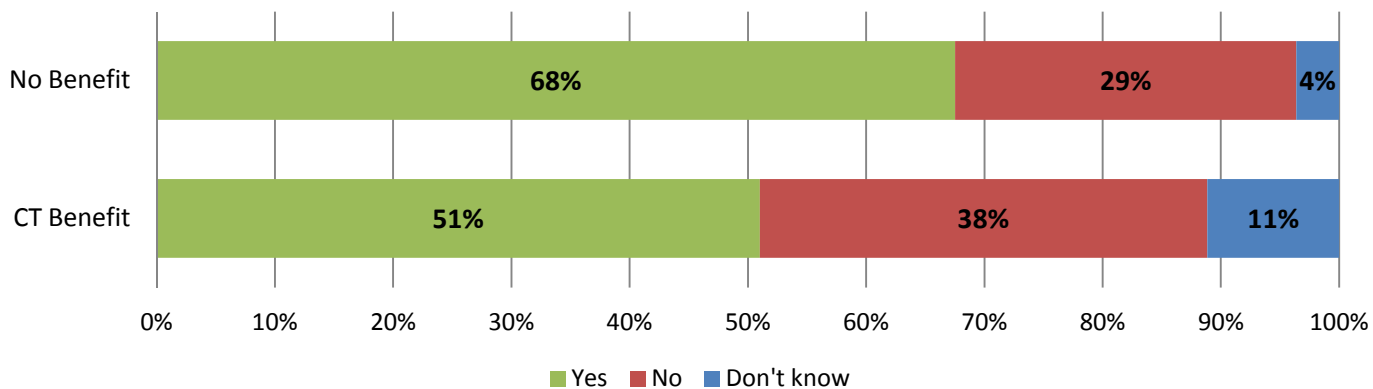
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



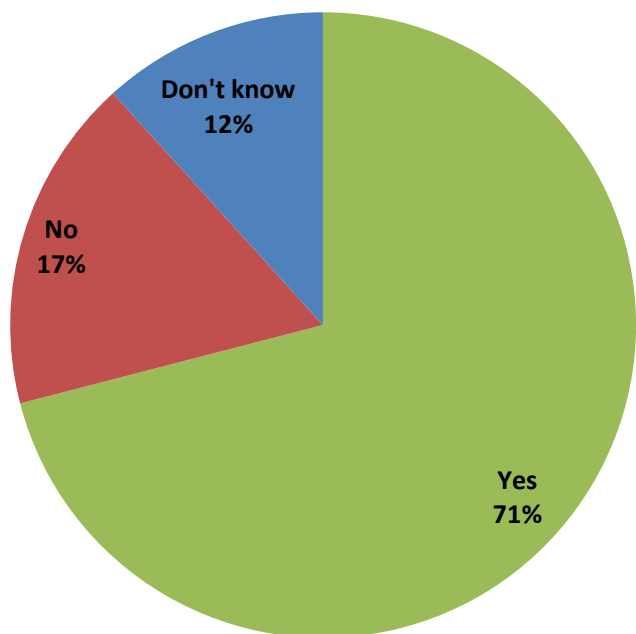
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Option 7 To introduce a standard level of non-dependant deduction of £10 for all claimants who have non dependants resident with them

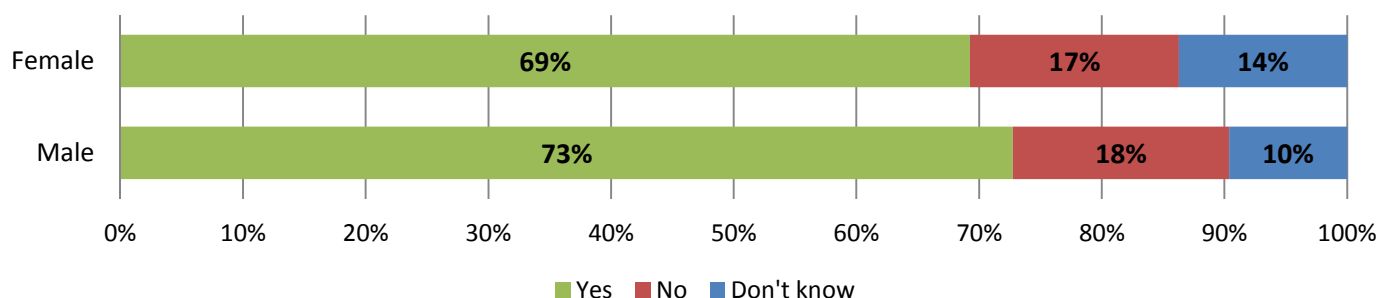


The majority of respondents are in favour of option 7 – to introduce a standard level of non-dependant deduction of £10 for all claimants who have non dependant’s resident with them, with 71% supporting this option.

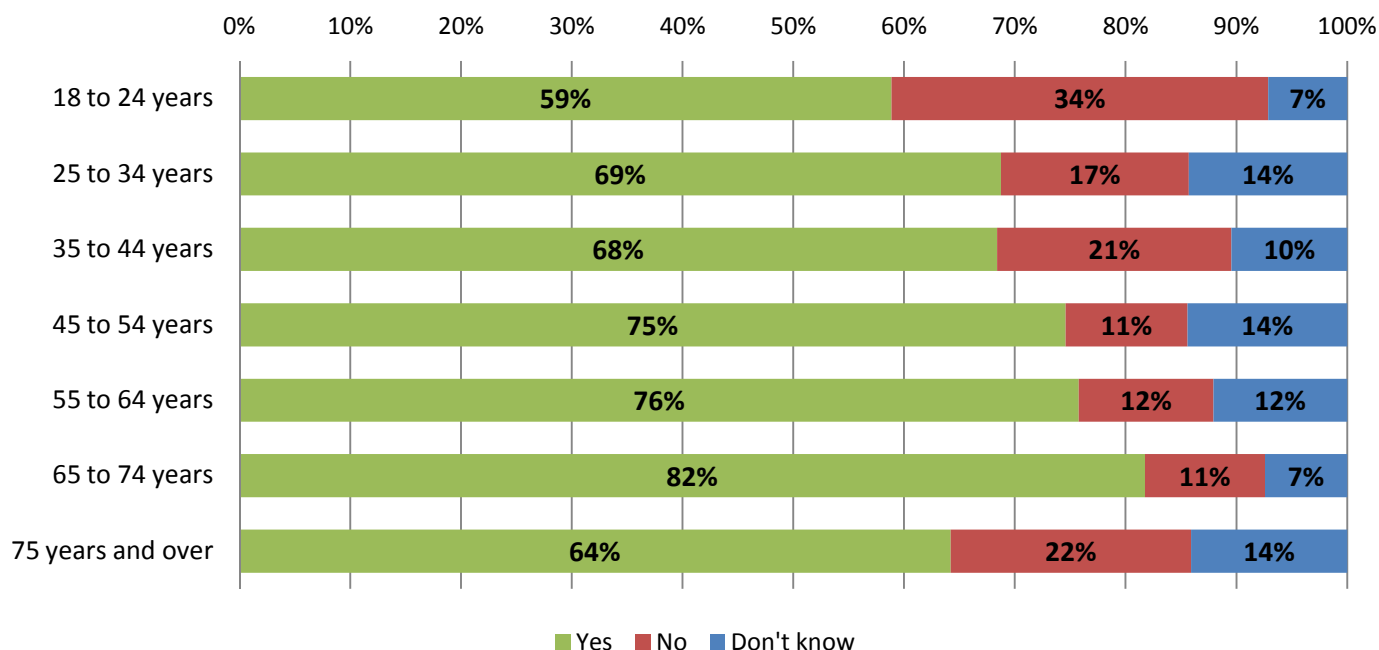
Respondents that are disabled and/or receive Council Tax Reduction had the lowest levels of agreement at 60% and 61% respectively. Respondents with a disability may be concerned about arrangements for carers living in.

The comments show concern for people who are disabled or in education, while others see this option as incentivising work. There also appears to be some confusion on how this impacts on students who stay at home.

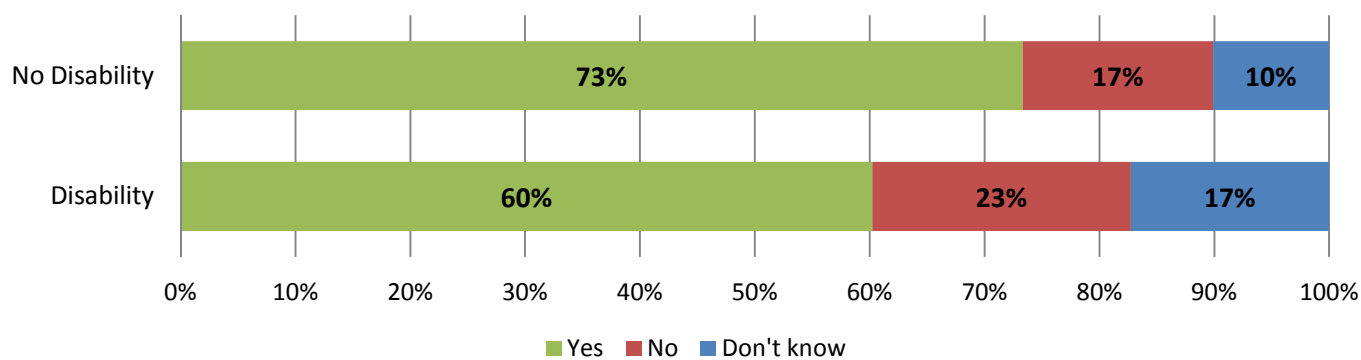
Gender



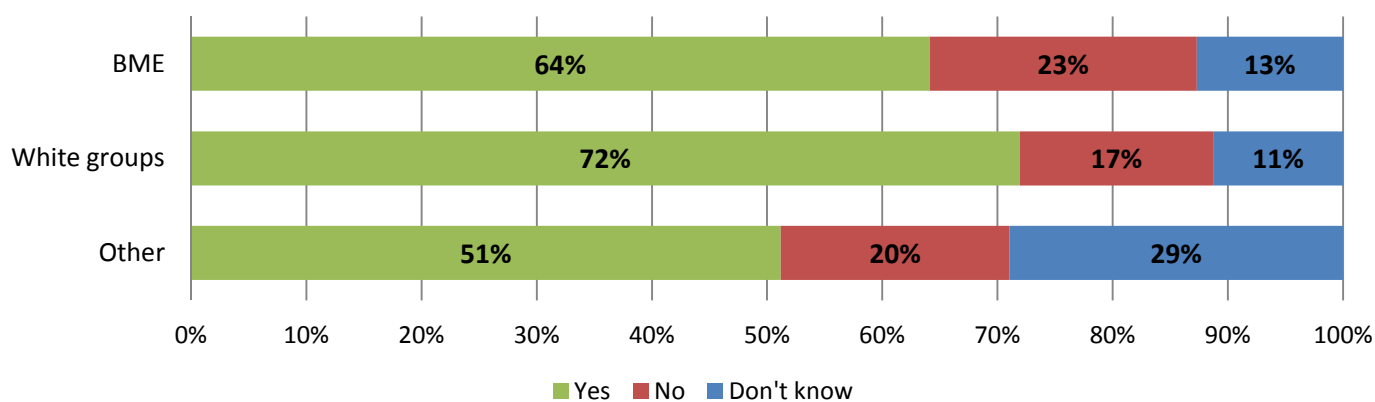
Age



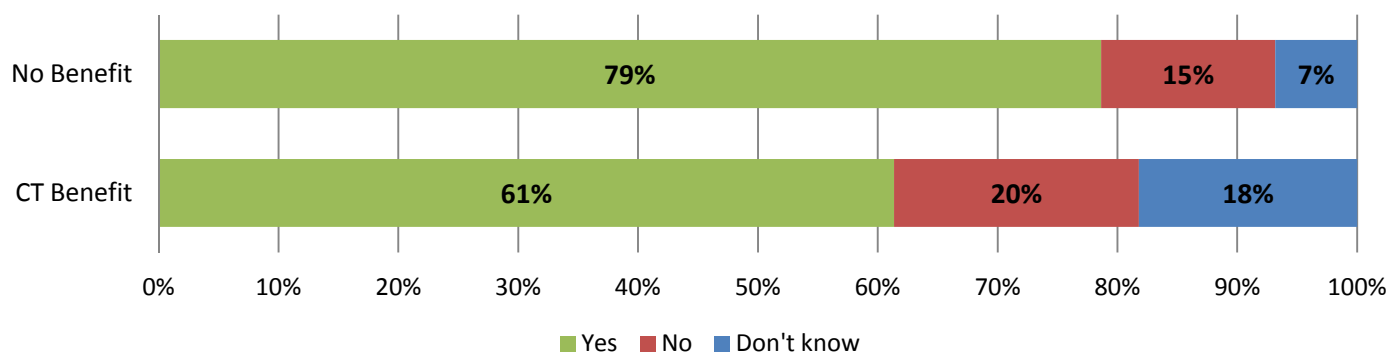
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



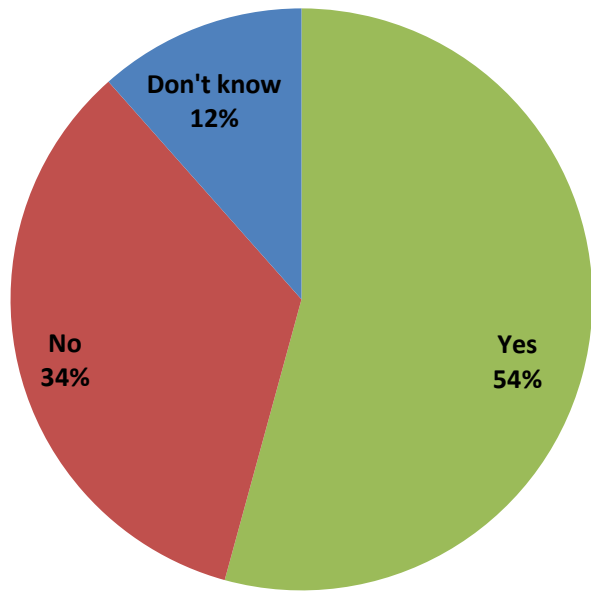
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Option 8 To take any Child Maintenance paid to a claimant or partner into account in full in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction

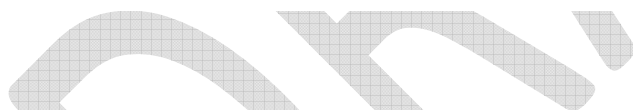
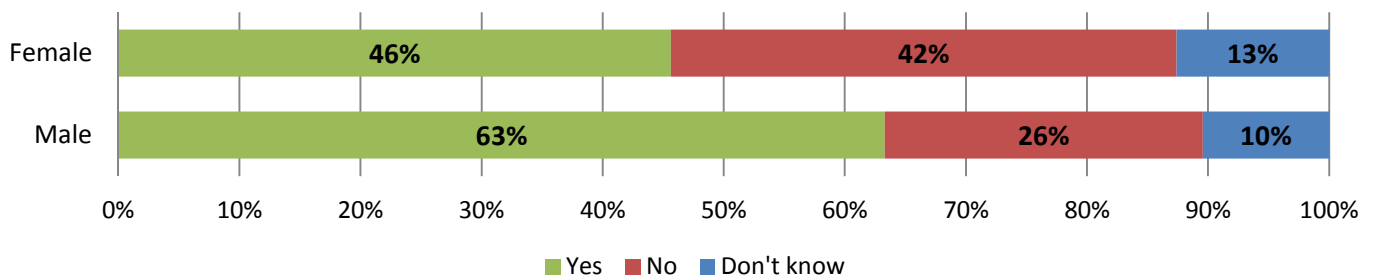


Overall, 54% of respondents are in favour of option 8 – to take any Child Maintenance paid to a claimant or partner into account in full in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction.

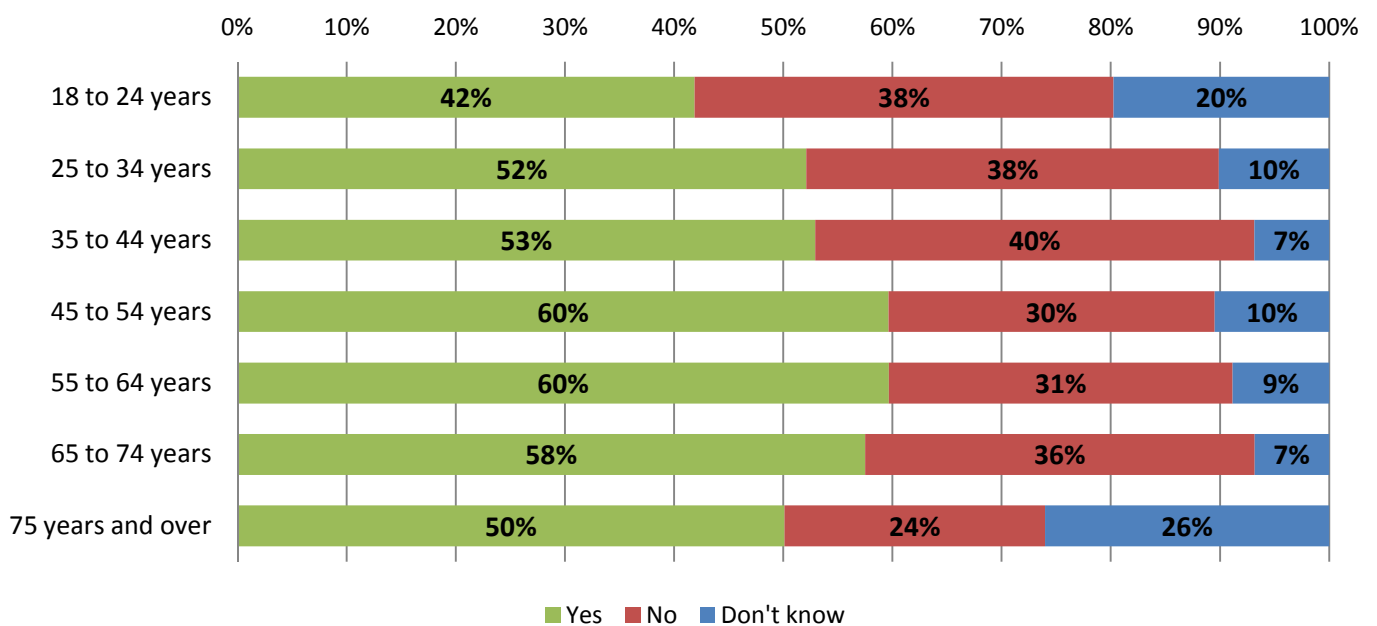
There are some significant variations between groupings. Council Tax reduction recipients have the lowest levels of agreement at 44%, followed by women and respondents with a disability that both had agreement levels of 46%. As women are more likely to be single parents this probably accounts for the lower levels of agreement from this group.

The comments show concern for single parents and some state that this money is intended for the children. However, other comments support all household income being taken into account in the calculation of benefits.

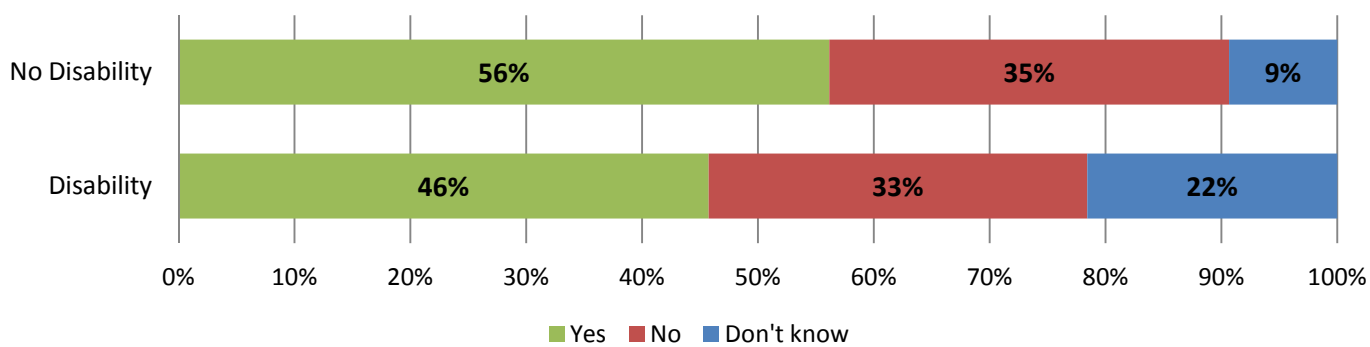
Gender



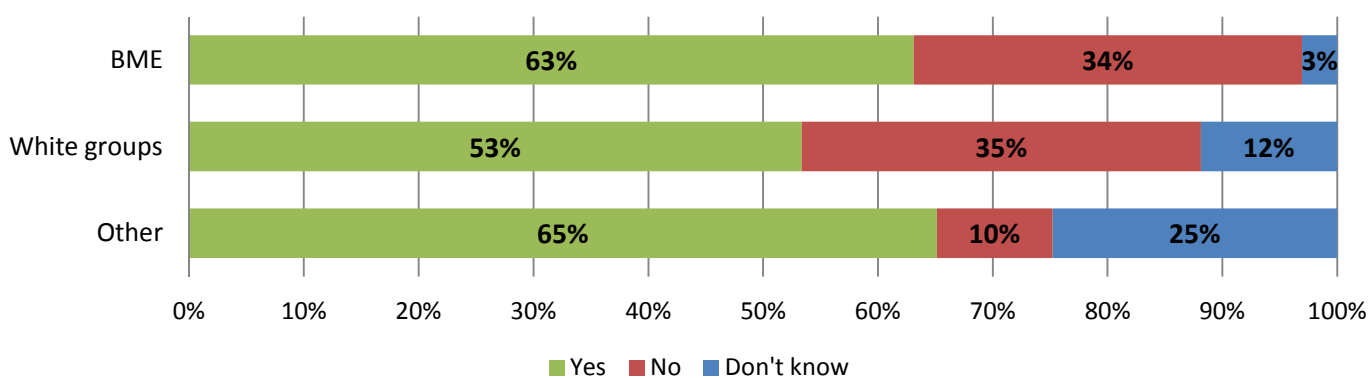
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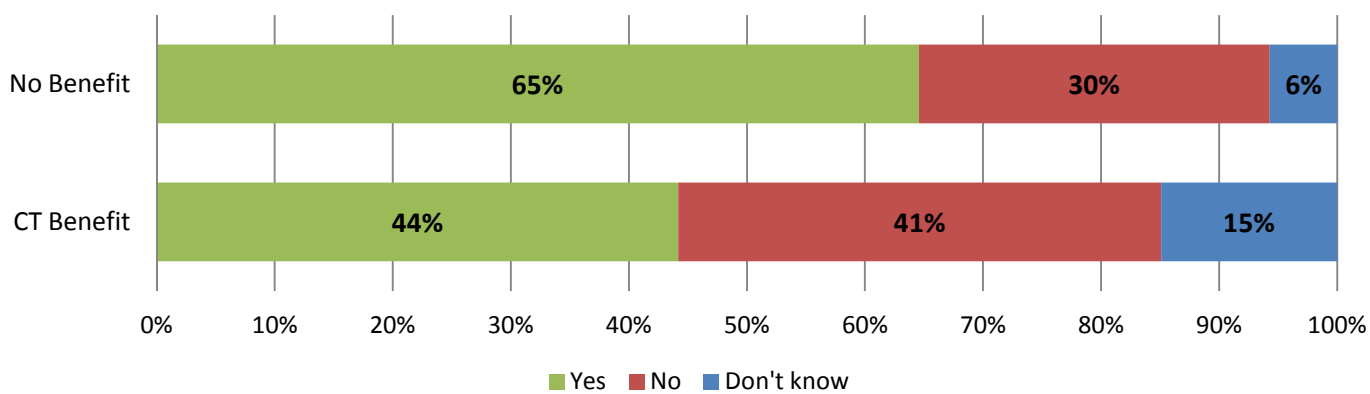
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



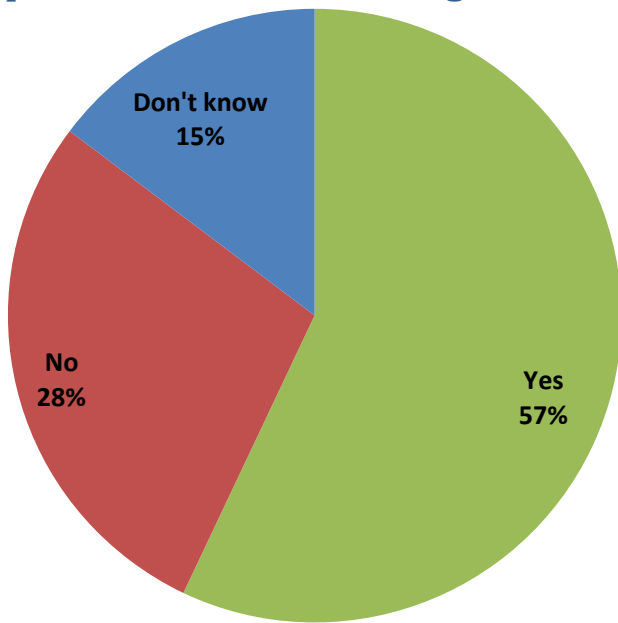
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Option 9 To restrict the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction payable to the equivalent of a Band D charge



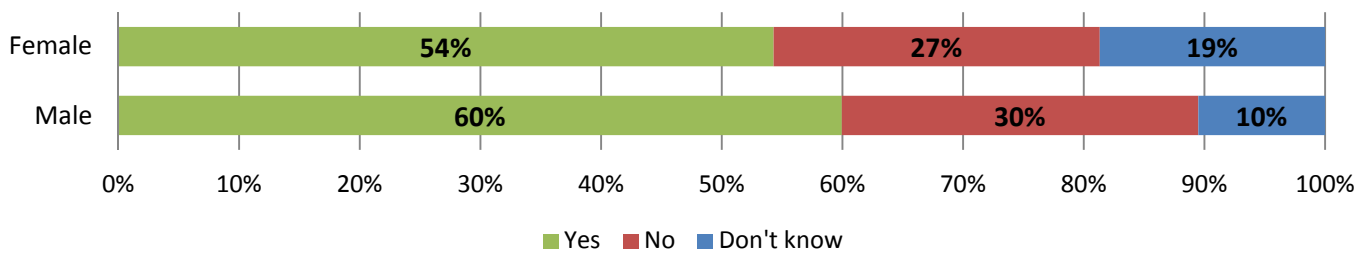
Overall, 57% of respondents are in favour of option 9 – to restrict the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction payable to the equivalent of a Band D charge.

Current Council Tax reduction recipients had the lowest levels of agreement with this option at 48%; with almost 1 in 5 people in this group responding ‘Don’t know’ there may be confusion about how this will work in practice.

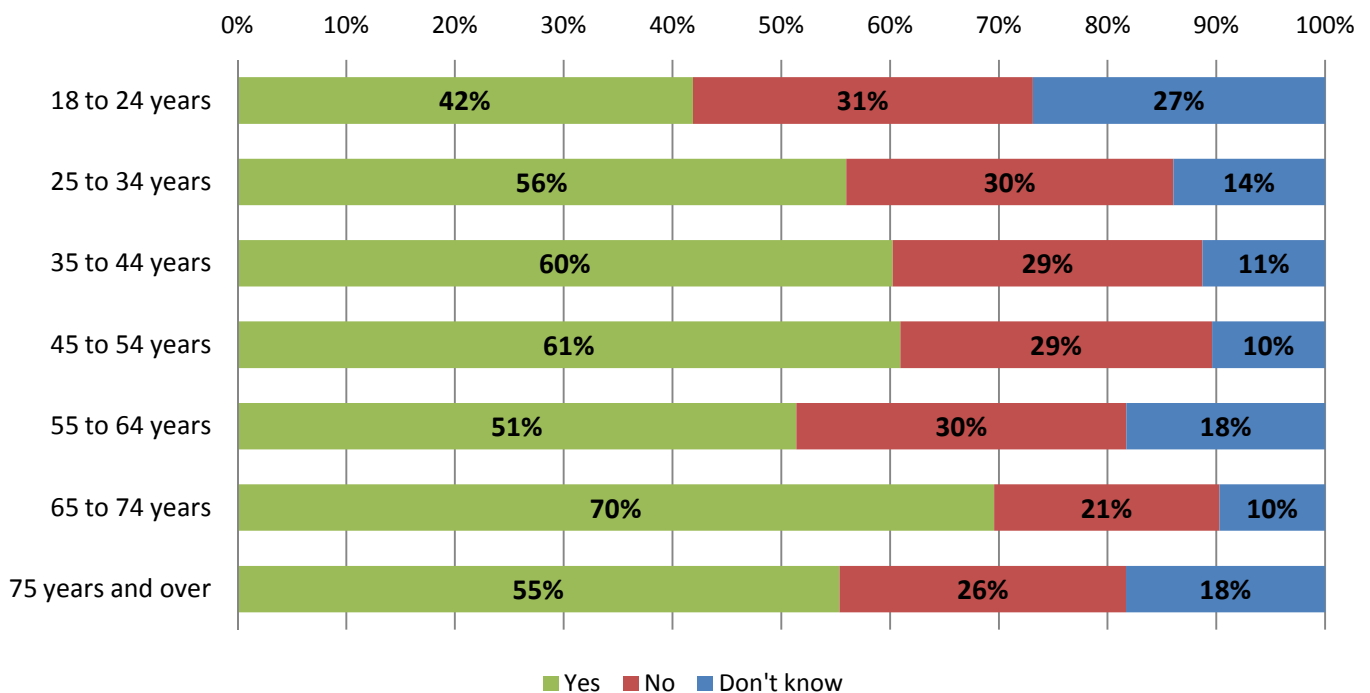
Respondents with a disability had the second lowest levels of agreement with this option at 50%. It is possible some disabled people may be occupying larger properties to accommodate carers and or equipment.

The 65 to 74 year old age group had the highest levels of agreement with this option out of all the groupings.

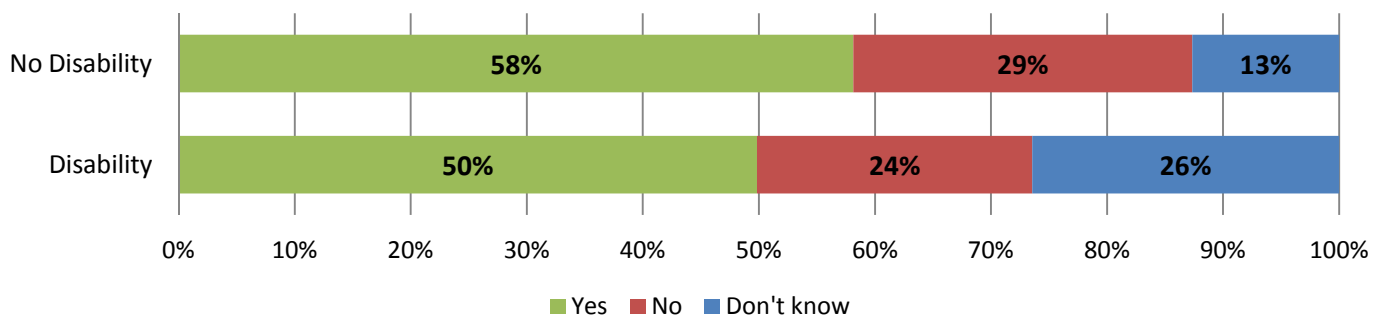
Gender



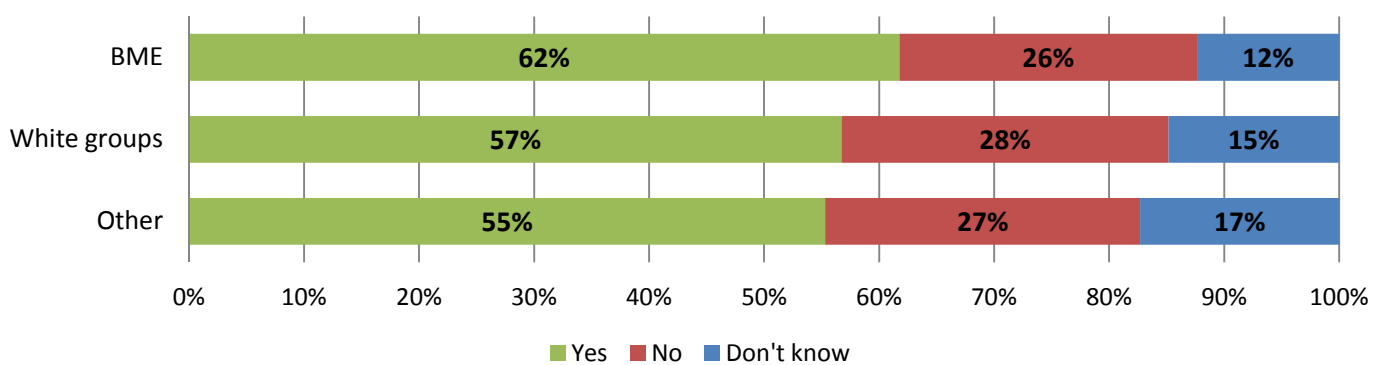
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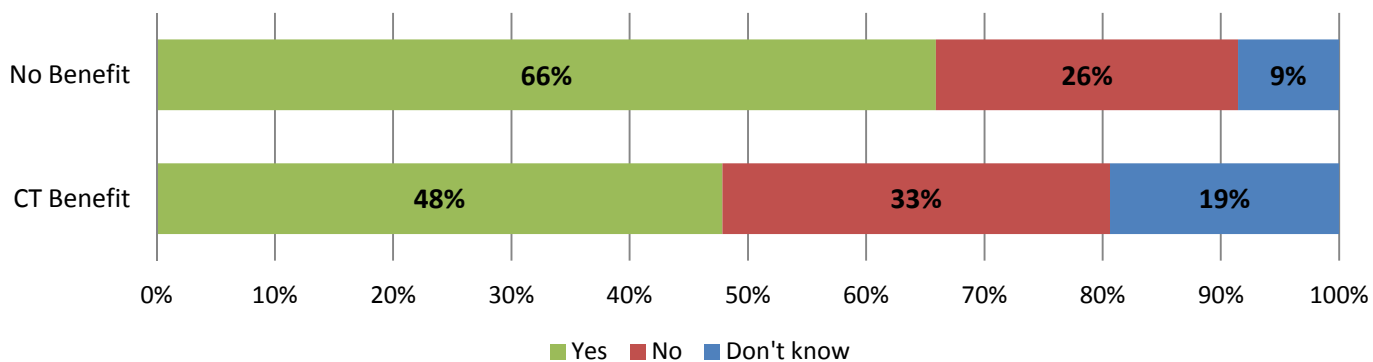
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient

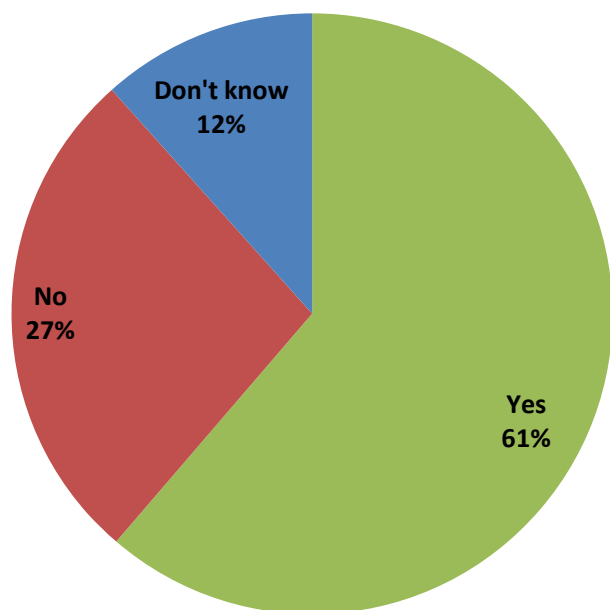


Option 10 To remove Second Adult Reduction from the scheme

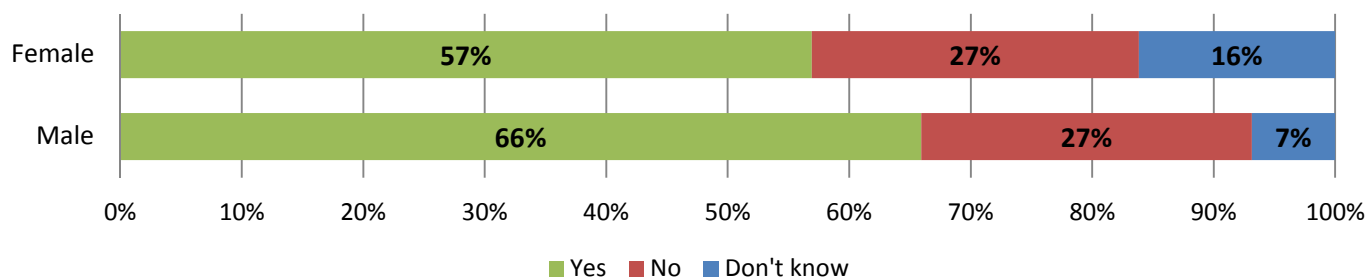
The majority of respondents (61%) are in favour of option 10 – to remove the Second Adult Reduction from the scheme. However, this trend is not reflected across all groupings.

Respondents with a disability had the lowest levels of agreement at 49%; there is a 14% difference in levels of agreement between respondents with a disability and respondents without. It is possible that there is some concern from the group in relation to arrangement for carers who may reside in the property as second adults and may have low incomes.

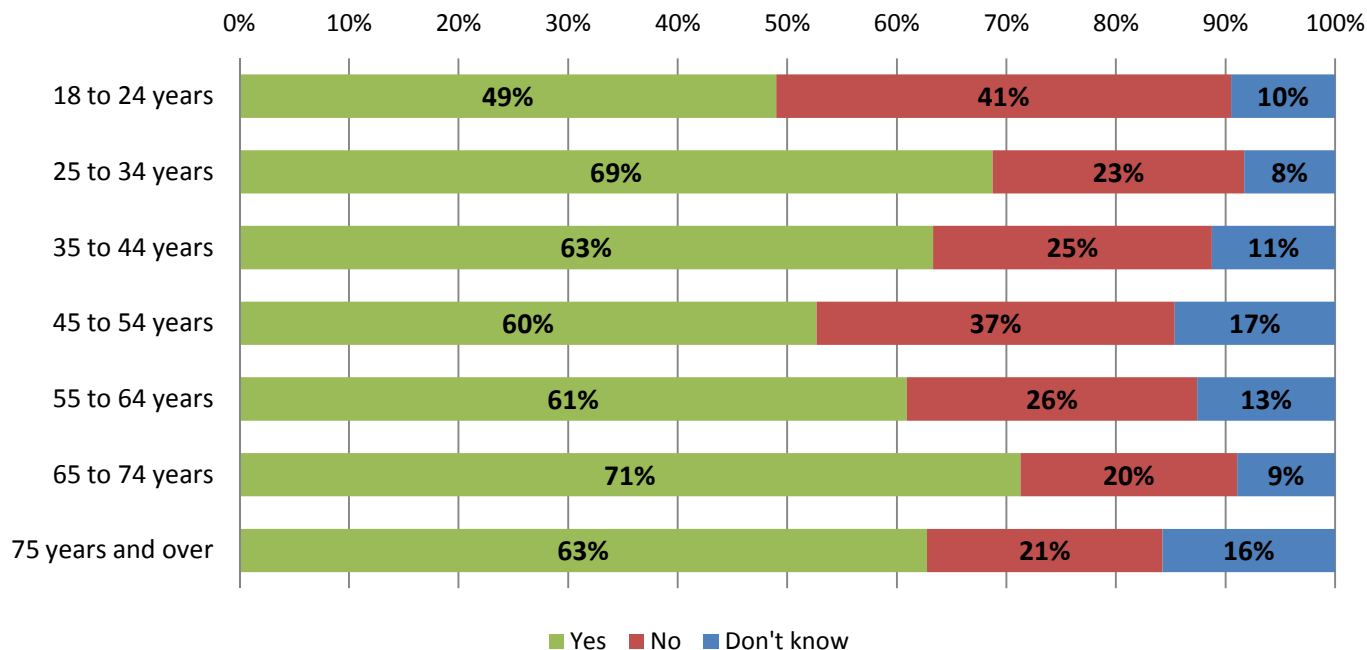
Council Tax reduction Recipients also had low levels of agreement and there was a 15% difference between levels of agreement for this group and respondents who do not receive council tax reduction. It is likely that some of these people will currently be receiving this reduction.



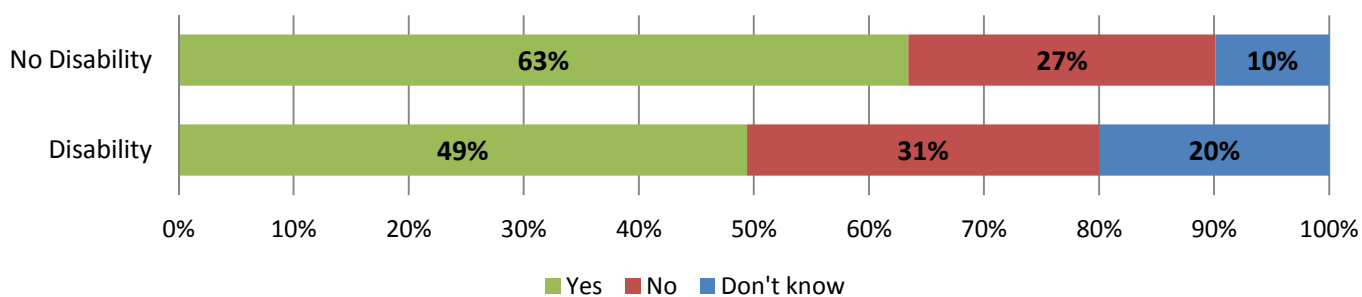
Gender



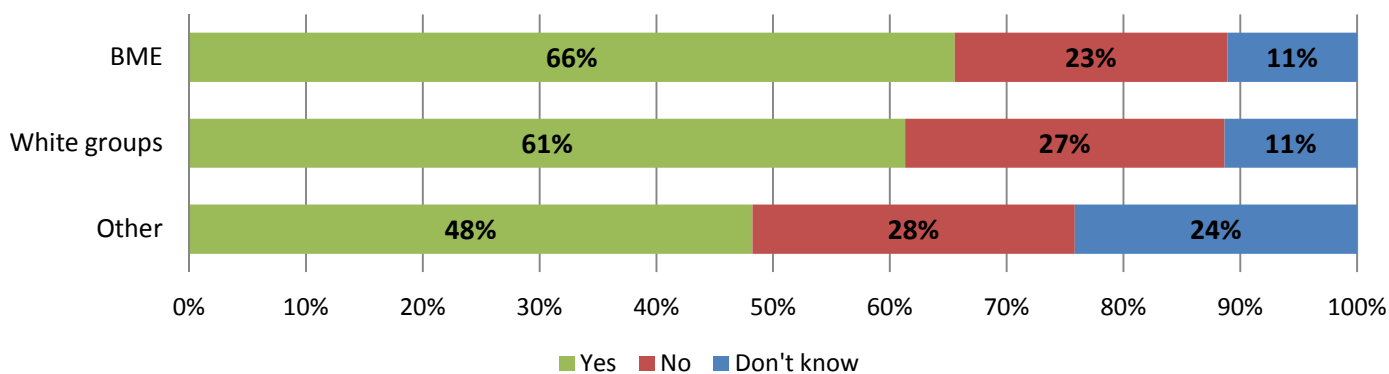
Age



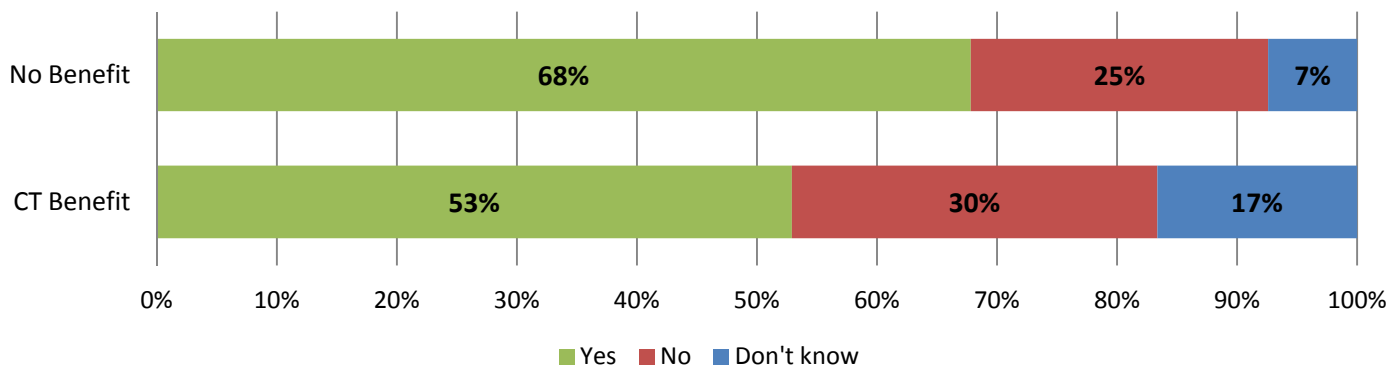
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



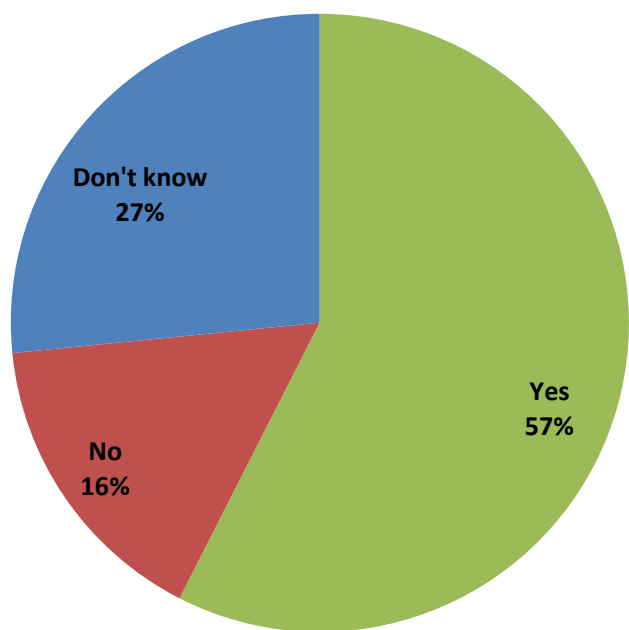
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Option 11 To remove the Work Related Activity component in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction



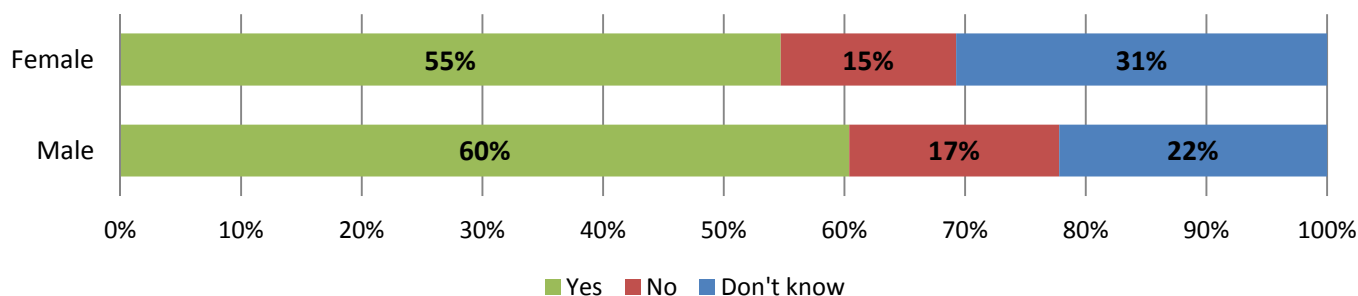
Overall, 57% of respondents are in favour of option 11 – to remove the Work Related Activity component in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction.

Disabled respondents had the lowest levels of agreement with this option at 43%, and there is an 18% difference in agreement between this group and respondents without a disability.

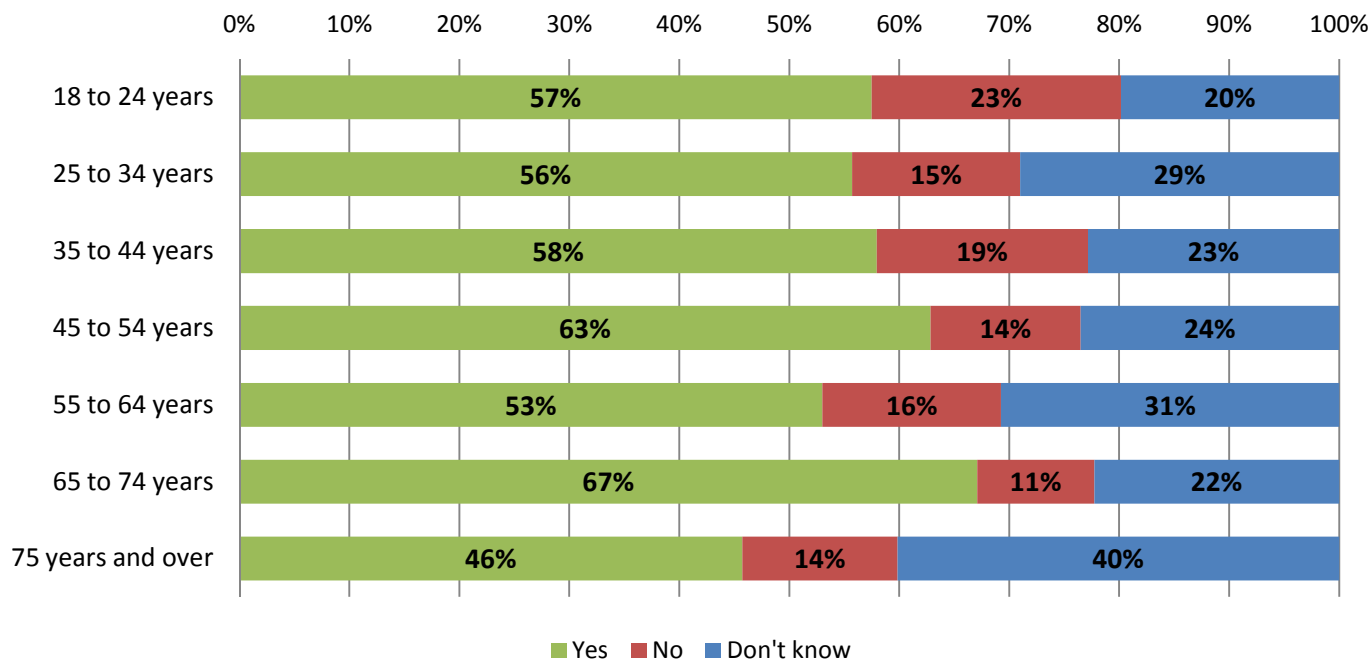
Respondents age 75 years and over also had lower levels of agreement with this option when compared to the other groupings and there is a 21% difference between this group and the age group with the highest agreement level (65 to 74 years).

In addition there is an 18% difference in the levels of agreement between Council Tax reduction recipients and those who do not receive this benefit.

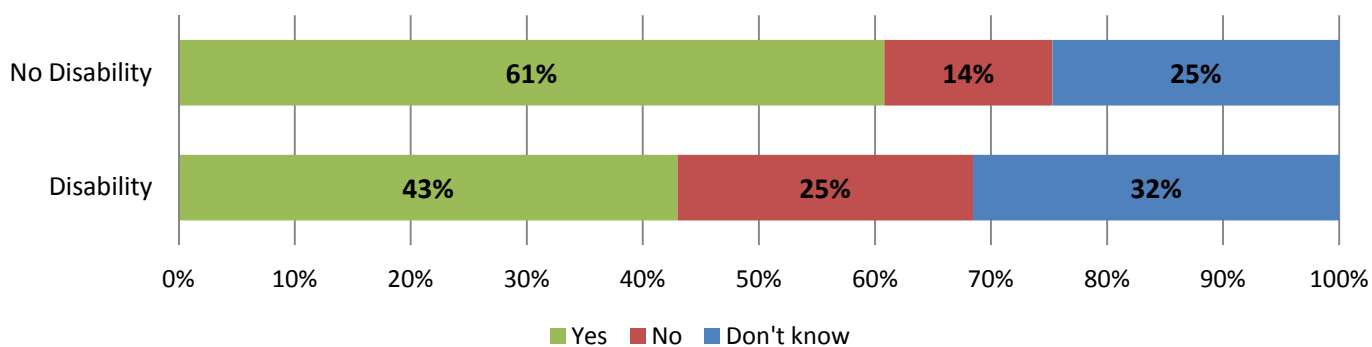
Gender



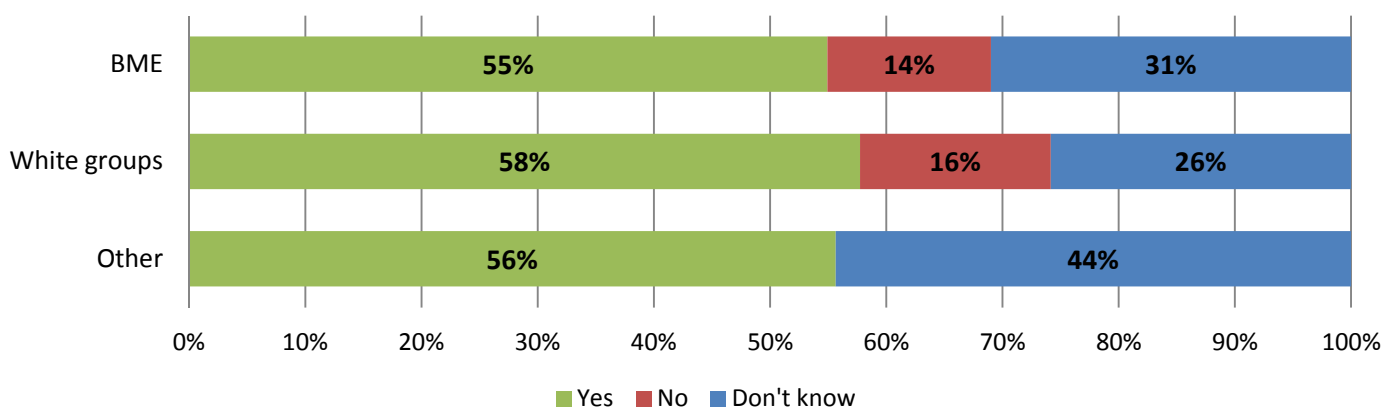
Age



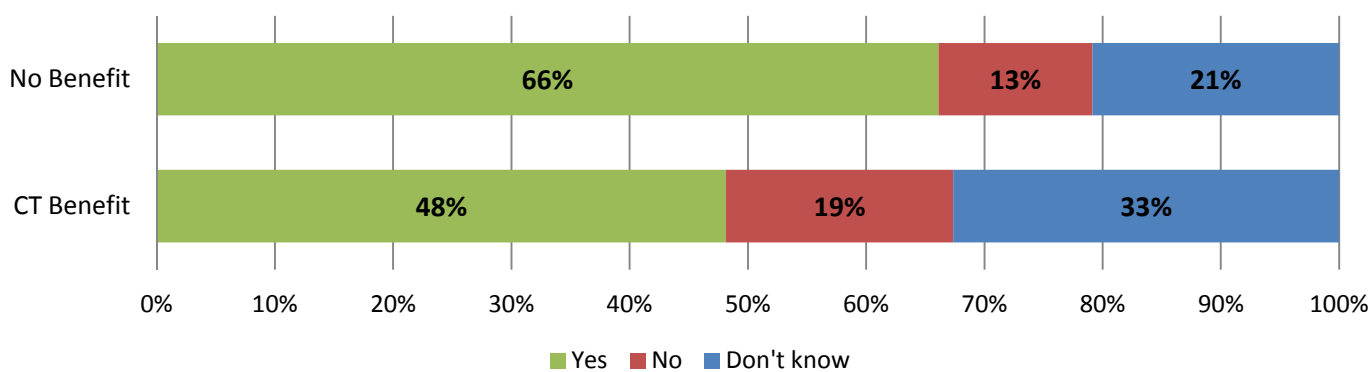
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



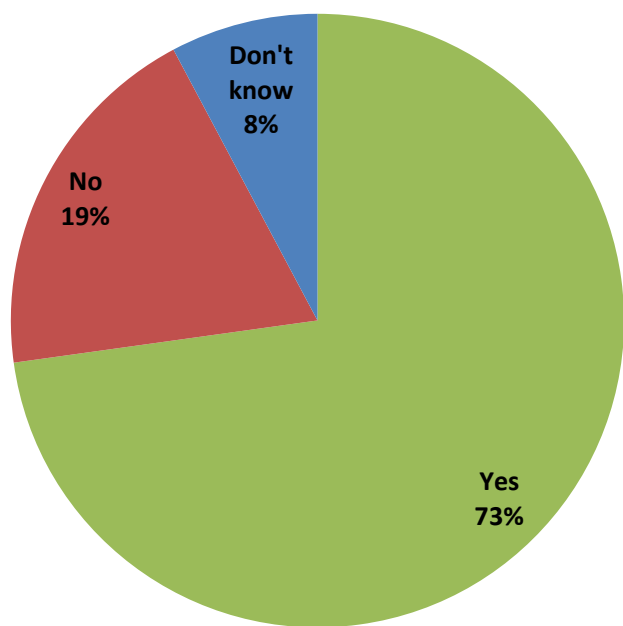
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Option 12 To limit the number of dependant children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two

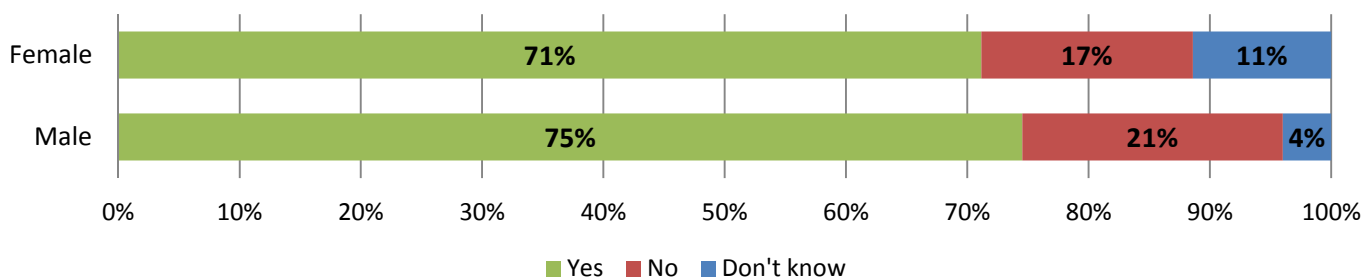


The majority of respondents were in favour of option 12 – to limit the number of dependant children within the calculation of Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two. This is the case across all groupings.

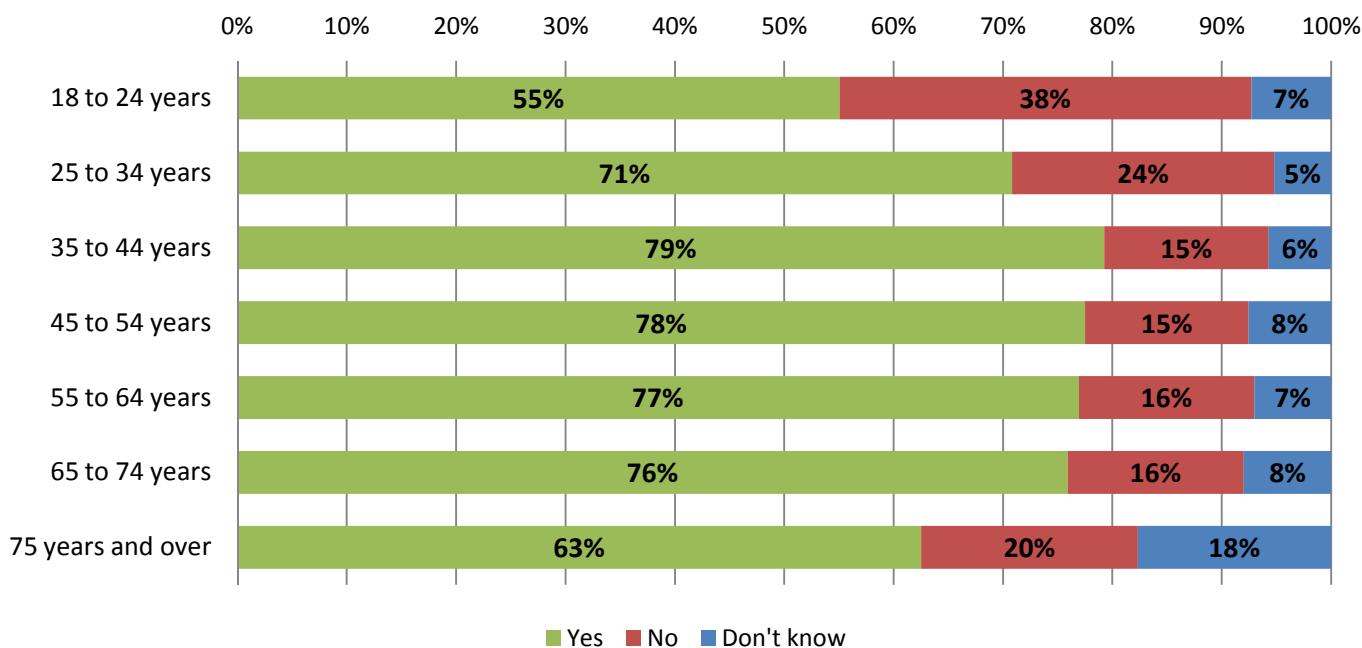
Respondents 75 years and over and those with a disability have slightly lower levels of agreement but the majority of respondents in these groups are in favour of this option.

The 18 to 24 years old group also had a significantly lower level of agreement with this option compared to the other age group but these results should be treated with caution as this group was under represented and therefore have been heavily weighted.

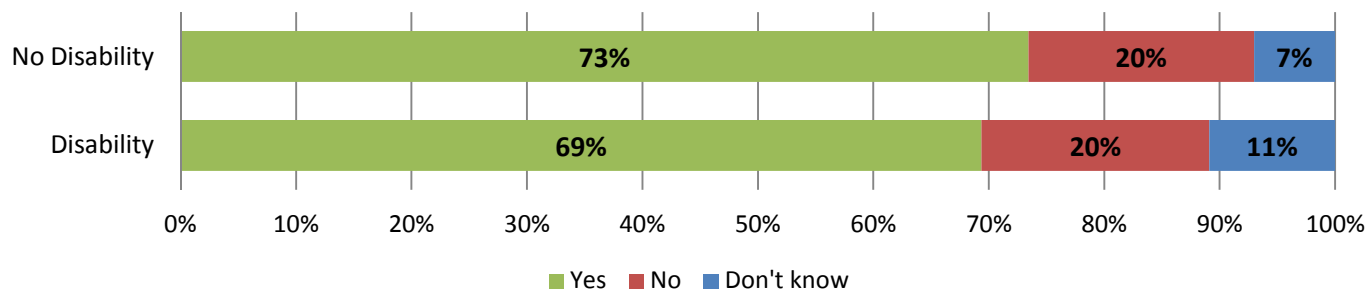
Gender



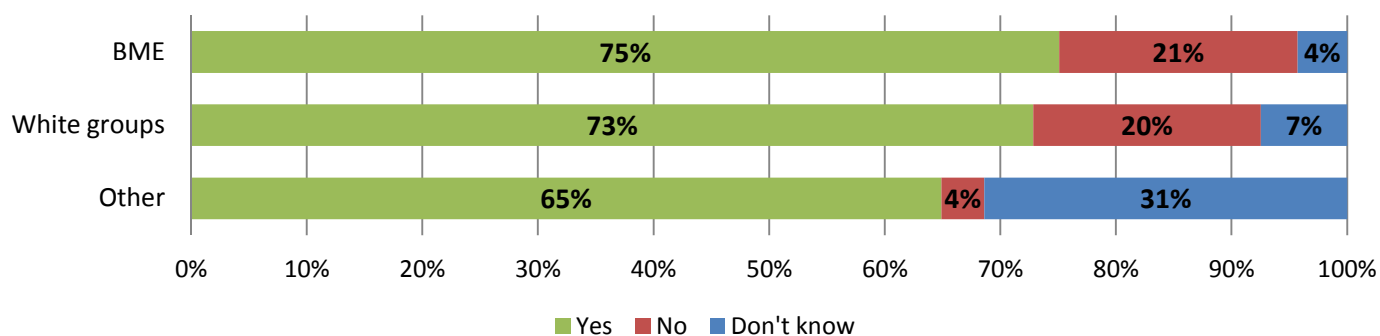
Age



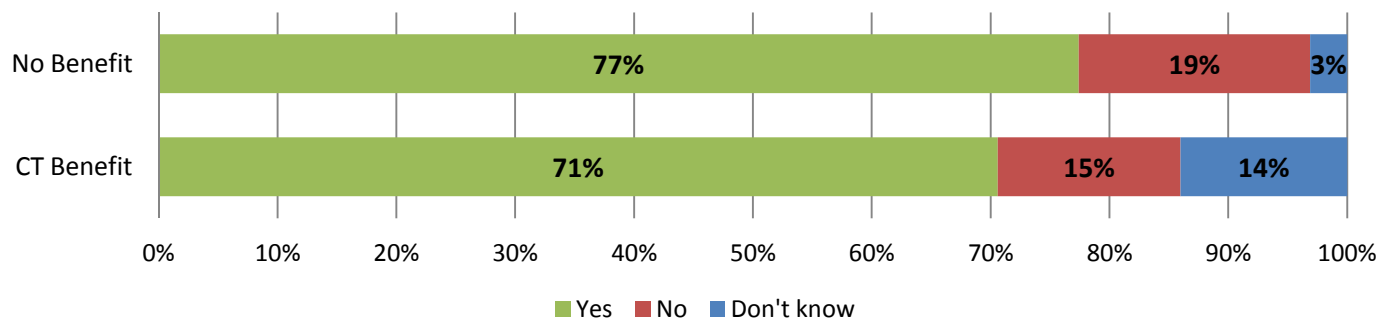
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



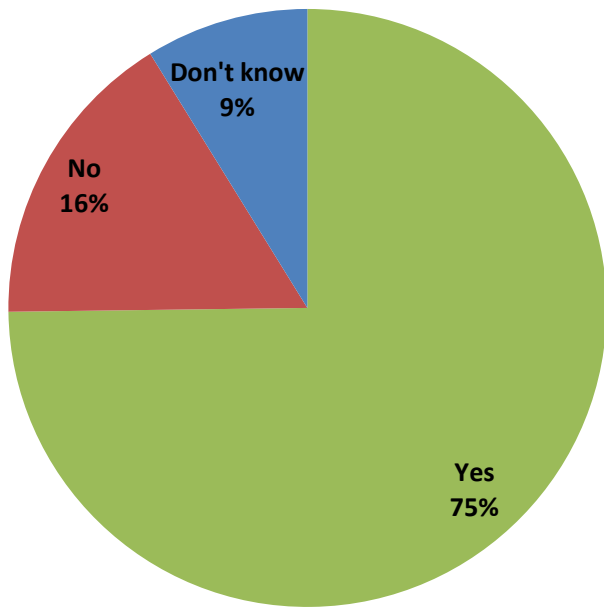
Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



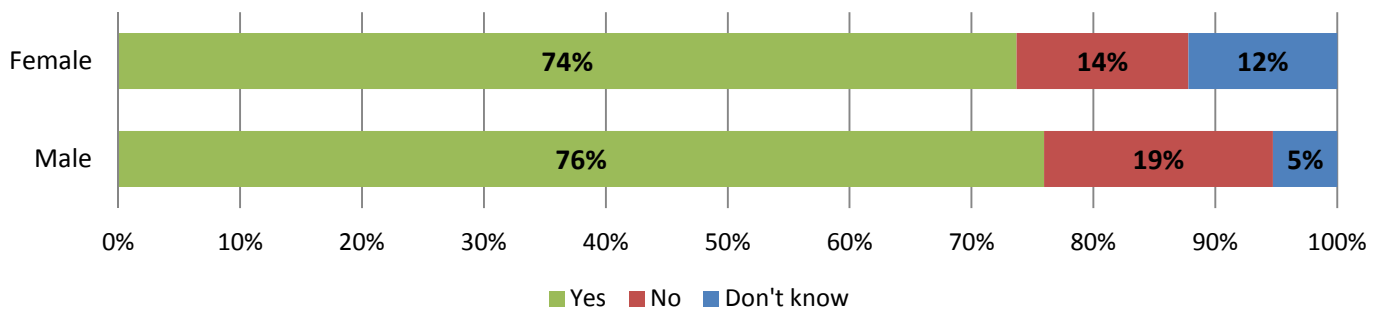
Option 13 To introduce a scheme, in addition to Council Tax Reduction, to help applicants suffering exceptional hardship



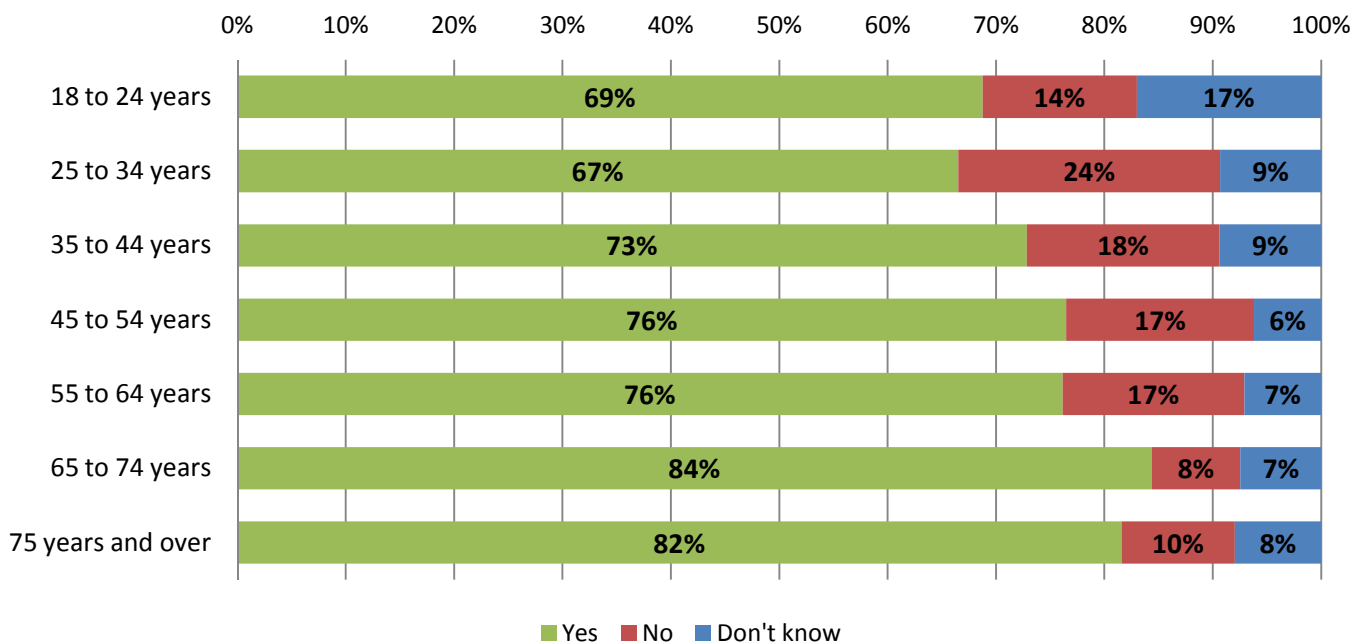
Overall, three out four respondents are in favour of option 13 – to introduce a scheme, in addition to Council Tax Reduction, to help applicants suffering exceptional hardship.

The 25 to 34 year old group have the lowest levels of agreement at 67%. There is a difference of 17% between the age group with the greatest level of agreement and this group.

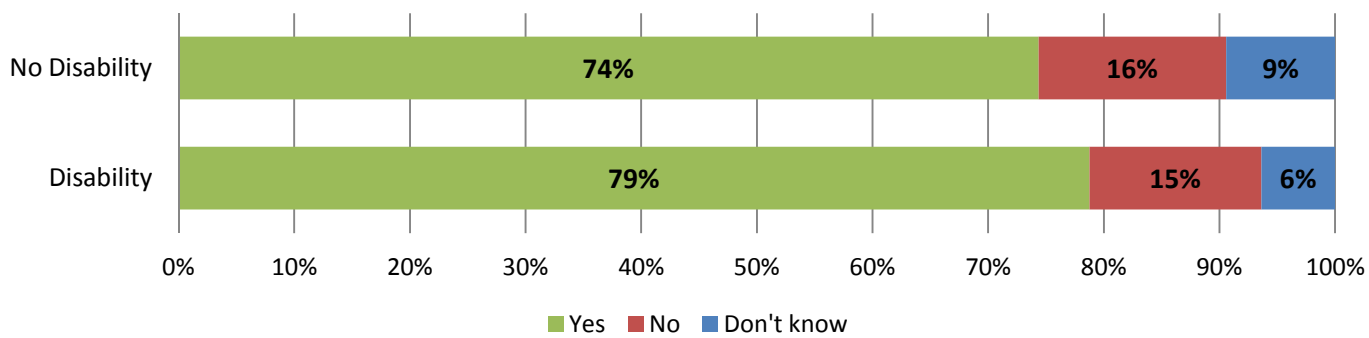
Gender



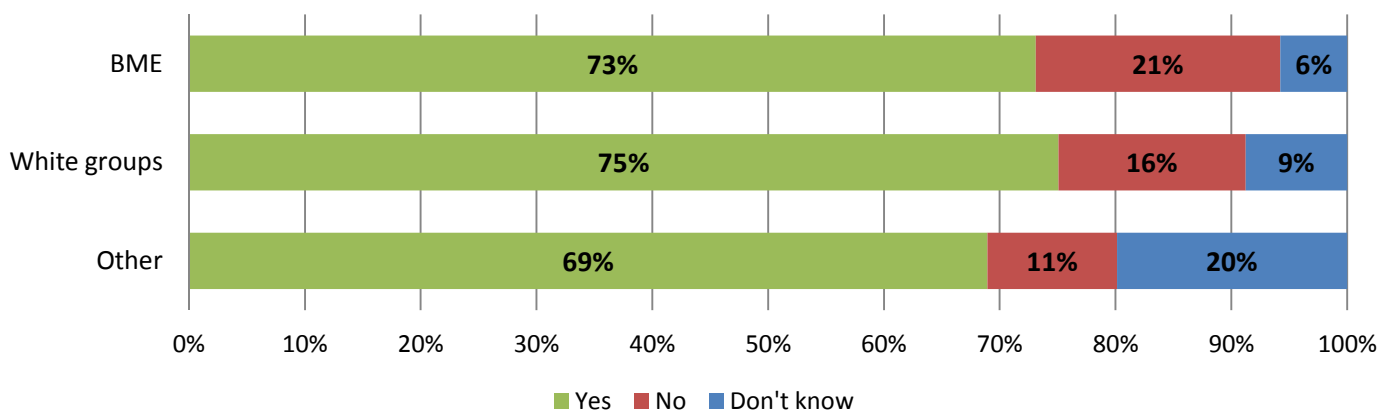
Age



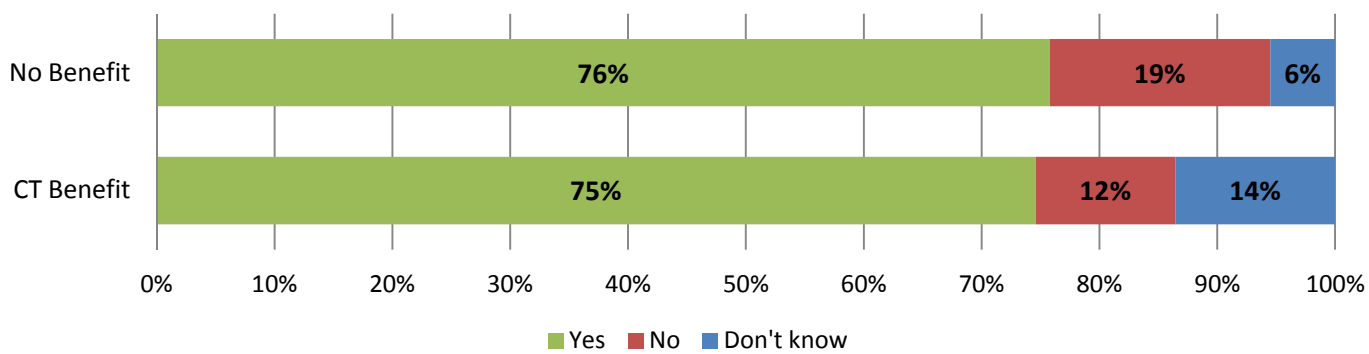
Disability or health problem expected to last at least 12 months



Ethnicity



Benefit Recipient



Ranking the Options

In addition to asking respondents specifically about each option the questionnaire also asked respondents to rank the options in terms of preference where 1 was the most preferable option and 13 was the least preferred option. To assess which options were most preferable a weighted average calculation has been used.

The table shows the results of the ranking question compared against the levels of agreement with each option as shown in this report. Option 5 was the highest ranked in terms of preferred options, the table shows that this option also had the greatest proportion of respondent agreeing with this as a proposed change to the scheme.

Option 2 had the second greatest proportion of respondents agreeing and came out second most preferable option in the ranking question.

Option 13 had the third greatest proportion of respondents agreeing with this option. However when ranked for preference it dropped to fourth, while option 1 was sixth for levels of agreement but third preferred option.

Option 4 had low levels of agreement and was also came out as low preference, ranked 12th for both.

	Average	Average ranked	% Agreeing	% Agreeing ranked
Option 5 - Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to four weeks	9.25	1	83%	1
Option 3 - Reducing backdating to one month	8.77	2	75.0%	2
Option 1 - Reducing the maximum level of support for working age applicants from 87% to 80%	8.38	3	60.7%	6
Option 13 - Introducing a scheme, in addition to Council Tax Reduction, to help applicants suffering exceptional hardship	7.71	4	74.8%	3
Option 12 - Limiting the number of dependant children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two	7.58	5	73%	4
Option 6 - Reducing the capital limit from the existing £16,000 to £6,000	7.34	6	60.6%	7
Option 7 - Introducing a standard level of non-dependant deduction of £10 for all claimants who have non dependants resident with them	6.86	7	71%	5
Option 8 - To take any Child Maintenance paid to a claimant or partner into account in full in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction	6.56	8	54%	11
Option 2 - Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants	6.55	9	50%	13
Option 10 - To remove Second Adult Reduction from the scheme	6.53	10	61.3%	8
Option 9 - To restrict the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction payable to the equivalent of a Band D charge	6.50	11	57%	10
Option 4 - Using a set income for self-employed earners after one year's self-employment	6.08	12	51%	12
Option 11 - To remove the work related activity component in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction	5.30	13	58%	9

Survey Demographics and Applied Weighting

	Unweighted ²		Population	
	Count	%	Count	%
Gender (Over 18s 2011 Census)				
Men	450	48%	59,049	49%
Women	496	52%	62,410	51%
Age (2011 Census)				
18 to 24 years	27	3%	12,001	10%
25 to 34 years	164	17%	19,223	16%
35 to 44 years	194	21%	22,122	18%
45 to 54 years	208	22%	22,152	18%
55 to 64 years	182	19%	19,447	16%
65 to 74 years	114	12%	14,269	12%
75 years and over	52	6%	12,245	10%
Ethnicity (2011 Census 16 years and over)				
White groups	870	95%	145,996	94%
BME	50	5%	9,147	6%
Disability (2011 Census all people)				
Disability	138	15%	24,505	16%
No Disability	791	85%	130,638	84%
Council Tax Benefit Recipient				
Receives benefit	371	38%		
No CT Benefit	558	57%		
Not Sure & N/A	43	4%		

The table to the left shows the profile of the survey respondents in relation to the population of Maidstone.

This table shows that people aged 24 years and under and those aged 75 and over are unrepresented. It also shows that those respondents between 35 and 64 years are fractionally over represented.

The results in this report have been weighted by age and sex and therefore some of this variance has been accounted for.

Age	Population		Survey		Weighting Applied
	Males	%	Males	%	
18 to 24 years	6,300	5%	7	1%	6.88
25 to 34 years	9,319	8%	62	7%	1.15
35 to 44 years	10,879	9%	88	9%	0.94
45 to 64 years	11,163	9%	94	10%	0.91
55 to 64 years	9,534	8%	95	10%	0.77
65 to 74 years	6,955	6%	79	9%	0.67
75 years and over	4,899	4%	19	2%	1.97
	Females	%	Females	%	Weighting Applied
18 to 24 years	5,701	5%	20	2%	2.18
25 to 34 years	9,904	8%	100	11%	0.76
35 to 44 years	11,243	9%	102	11%	0.84
45 to 64 years	10,989	9%	112	12%	0.75
55 to 64 years	9,913	8%	84	9%	0.90
65 to 74 years	7,314	6%	34	4%	1.64
75 years and over	7,346	6%	32	3%	1.75

² Rounding anomalies mean that these percentages may not add up exactly to 100%

Appendix A – Unweighted Results

1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (this question must be answered before continuing).

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	98.5%	1449
No	1.5%	22
answered question		1471
skipped question		0

2. Should the Council continue to fund and operate the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as we do now?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	51.8%	663
No	33.8%	433
Don't know	14.4%	185
answered question		1281
skipped question		190

Option 1

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	59.0%	706
No	32.7%	392
Don't know	8.3%	99
answered question		1197
skipped question		274

Option 2

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	50.8%	586
No	35.2%	406
Don't know	14.0%	161
answered question		1153
skipped question		318

Option 3

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	76.2%	863
No	16.4%	186
Don't know	7.3%	83
answered question		1132
skipped question		339

Option 4

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	50.2%	557
No	31.7%	351
Don't know	18.1%	201
answered question		1109
skipped question		362

Option 5

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	82.0%	908
No	10.9%	121
Don't know	7.0%	78
answered question		1107
skipped question		364

Option 6

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	58.8%	644
No	33.5%	367
Don't know	7.8%	85
answered question		1096
skipped question		375

Option 7

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	70.6%	766
No	16.9%	183
Don't know	12.5%	136
answered question		1085
skipped question		386

Option 8

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	55.7%	602
No	34.5%	373
Don't know	9.7%	105
answered question		1080
skipped question		391

Option 9		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	56.5%	602
No	29.0%	309
Don't know	14.5%	154
answered question		1065
skipped question		406

Option 10		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	60.2%	641
No	28.1%	299
Don't know	11.7%	124
answered question		1064
skipped question		407

Option 11		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	55.9%	591
No	16.1%	170
Don't know	28.1%	297
answered question		1058
skipped question		413

Option 12		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	74.9%	793
No	17.8%	189
Don't know	7.3%	77
answered question		1059
skipped question		412

Option 13		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	73.7%	775
No	17.3%	182
Don't know	8.9%	94
answered question		1051
skipped question		420

30. Thinking about impact on claimants and the impact from the reduction in funding for the Council, say what you think would be most preferable by writing a number from 1 – 13 in the boxes below, where 1 is the option that is most preferable and 13 is the least.

Answer Options	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Rating Average	Response Count
Option 1	200	59	28	32	43	35	32	24	34	33	34	38	73	8.31	665
Option 2	16	44	50	45	57	42	59	54	55	71	47	68	36	6.51	644
Option 3	87	105	91	60	42	56	32	46	24	27	24	28	23	8.83	645
Option 4	17	34	27	62	51	48	58	50	62	57	66	42	67	6.21	641
Option 5	86	100	117	59	59	35	37	30	32	24	26	23	9	9.16	637
Option 6	50	69	61	55	53	62	37	35	31	45	47	53	61	7.26	659
Option 7	7	24	42	53	61	80	98	58	73	56	47	33	22	6.75	654
Option	26	40	62	53	63	43	54	81	34	43	38	57	75	6.65	669

8																
Option 9	22	31	37	63	62	52	53	57	71	65	59	57	40	6.47	669	
Option 10	18	32	43	53	68	49	57	72	69	74	57	42	43	6.49	677	
Option 11	5	17	20	29	43	62	56	58	79	86	101	73	72	5.22	701	
Option 12	93	65	79	58	45	63	46	37	33	32	40	48	65	7.76	704	
Option 13	180	62	46	39	32	40	48	35	25	45	31	57	127	7.53	767	
															answered question	857
															skipped question	614

31. Do you think we should choose any of the following options rather than the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme? Please select one answer for each source of funding.

Answer Options	Yes	No	Don't know	Rating Average	Response Count	
Increase the level of Council Tax	163	736	66	1.90	965	
Find savings from cutting other Council services	378	474	106	1.72	958	
Use Council's savings	438	391	122	1.67	951	
					answered question	985
					skipped question	486

32. If the Council were to choose these other options to make savings, what would be your order of preference? Please rank in order of preference by writing a number from 1 – 3 in the boxes below, where 1 is the option that you would most prefer and 3 is the least.

Answer Options	1	2	3	Rating Average	Response Count	
Increase the level of Council Tax	181	121	538	2.43	840	
Reduce funding available for other Council services	258	393	195	1.93	846	
Use the Council's savings	441	315	142	1.67	898	
					answered question	921
					skipped question	550

**Equality Impact Assessment
Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Authority:	Maidstone Borough Council
Date EqIA commenced:	1 June 2016
Date first stage EqIA finalised for pre-consultation decision:	7 June 2016 (to be agreed by Management Board).
Date second stage EqIA finalised after consultation closed, prior to final decision being taken:	13 September 2016
Job titles of officers involved in completing the EqIA:	MKS Shared Service Director Policy and Information Manager Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer

Summary of decision to be made

Since 1 April 2013 the council has maintained a local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The council has the ability to determine the level of reduction given to working age applicants only. The scheme for pension age applicants is determined by Central Government.

We have decided to complete a full review of the scheme. The objectives of the review are to:

- Accurately target support to those working age claimants who most need it.
- Align the scheme with proposed changes to Housing Benefit and introduction of Universal Credit.
- Address potential shortfalls in funding due to the continued reduction in Central Government grants.
- Maintain a common approach to the design of local schemes across Kent.

Scope of this equality impact assessment

- Review of the current scheme, introduced on 1 April 2013.
- Proposed changes to the scheme from 1 April 2017.

How is the decision relevant to the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty?

- The need to ensure that the scheme is not unlawfully discriminatory is relevant to the first aim of the duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- The need to consider how we can take steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and whether people with disabilities may need to be treated more favourably, in how the scheme is designed, is relevant to the second aim of the duty to advance equality of opportunity.
- The proposed service changes could also be relevant to fostering good relations with regard to maintaining the confidence and trust in the local authority by people with protected characteristics who may use our services.

Review of the current scheme, introduced on 1 April 2013

The current scheme requires all working age claimants to pay 13% of their council tax liability. Transitional funding meant claimants were only required to pay 8.5% in the first year of the scheme.

The current scheme was subject to a comprehensive equality impact assessment in 2012. That assessment identified that our Council Tax Reduction Scheme had the potential to have the greatest negative impact on working age people with disabilities and carers. To mitigate these potential impacts it was agreed that we would continue to treat people with disabilities and carers more favourably by disregarding some income, giving them a higher council tax reduction. The impact on working age groups was as a result of the Government protecting pension age people from any changes. However, transitional funding was intended to reduce the extent of the impacts in the first year of the scheme.

Equality Impact Assessment Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The equality impact assessment was reviewed during the transitional year, by Full Council in December 2013, prior to introducing a 13% reduction. No changes to the impacts or mitigating actions were identified.

The equality impact assessment was reviewed again by Full Council in December 2015, prior to extending the scheme for a further year in 2016-17 and found that the impact of the 13% reduction had been mitigated to some extent by disregarding some income for people with disabilities and carers, resulting in a higher council tax reduction. This outcome was better than predicted by an earlier analysis. The assessment also found that the difference between the average weekly amounts received by males and females had reduced. The difference in average weekly amounts received across age groups had also reduced. No further mitigating actions were identified.

The findings from the data are summarised below.

Disability

Working age people with disabilities continue to make up a high proportion of the caseload at 19%. Across the options put forward for consultation, working age people with disabilities continue to receive more per week, than working age people without disabilities, on average.

Carers

There is a slightly lower proportion of claimants with a carer in the household, than the population overall. Working age claimants with a carer in the household continue to receive more per week, on average, than working age claimants without a carer in the household.

Age

Age groups broadly reflect the overall population. Those aged 55-64 currently receive the highest weekly amount, on average. Those aged 18-24 currently receive the lowest weekly amount, on average.

Sex

Females continue to make up a high proportion of the caseload at 69%. Although, there is a difference between the average amounts females and males receive per week. This is due to factors relating to circumstances which directly affect the calculation of council tax reduction, and is not linked to a claimant's sex.

Race

This information is not collected from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of council tax reduction. No new data is available, following the consultation in 2012.

Equality Impact Assessment
Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Other protected characteristics

We do not collect information about the following characteristics from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of council tax reductions:

- Religion of belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity

Proposed changes to the scheme from 1 April 2017

There are 13 options being presented for consultation. Where an option applies to new claimants, data for current claimants has been provided as an indication of the possible impacts as it is not possible to predict who may apply after 1 April 2017.

Summary of initial findings prior to consultation

A summary of notable and/or significant potential impact of each of the consultation options on protected characteristics, identified from claimant data and other considerations, is provided in table below. All options could potentially impact on working age claimants with one or more of the protected characteristics of disability, age, sex or race. The extent of these impacts will be considered further following the consultation.

Consultation option	Protected characteristic (potential for impact identified from claimant data)			
	Disability (inc. carers)	Age	Sex	Race
1				
2		Yes	Yes	
3		Yes		
4		Yes		
5				
6	Yes	Yes		
7	Yes	Yes	Yes	
8		Yes	Yes	
9	Yes	Yes		
10		Yes	Yes	
11	Yes	Yes		
12		Yes		
13				

Review of the current scheme, introduced on 1 April 2013

Equality Impact Assessment Council Tax Reduction Scheme

All working age claimants, including those with protected characteristics, have received a reduction in their reduction amount. Pension age claimants, who also have protected characteristics, have not received a reduction as they are protected from any changes by Central Government.

The data shows that we have continued to provide higher reductions to working age people with disabilities and carers. There is no evidence to suggest that this is insufficient to mitigate the impacts of the scheme overall. The calculation of the reduction amount is not related to a claimant's sex or age (with the exception of those of pension age who are protected). Any differences between the average weekly amounts received by males, females and working age groups is likely to be as a result of other factors. The analysis has not taken account of any council tax increases year on year so it is not possible to make comparisons between amounts across years.

Actions to mitigate any identified impacts

The possible introduction of an exceptional hardship scheme has been included as an option for consultation. The potential impact on working age claimants with protected characteristics will be taken into account, together with the consultation findings, when deciding which options will be taken forward. The need for any additional mitigating actions will be identified at that stage.

It is possible that individual claimants may be affected by more than one of the options presented for consultation. We will carry out data modelling to identify categories of claimants who may be affected by any options taken forward

Findings following public consultation

Residents were consulted on proposed changes to Council Tax reduction between 1 July and 24 August 2016.

The consultation response has been evaluated in terms of the risk of discrimination against those with a protected characteristic. It should be noted that there were low response rates from the 18-24 and the 75 years and over age groups.

The impact on the protected characteristics of the following groups was considered prior to consultation as current claimant data was available: Disability (including carers); Age; and Sex. Current claimant data does not include information on a claimant's ethnicity as it is not relevant to the collection of Council tax. However, following consultations, significant differences of opinion between respondents with different ethnicities have been noted under some of the options considered and have been included in the findings.

Disability

There is a potential impact on people of working age with a disability as a result of the following consultation options:

- **Option 6 (reduce the capital limit to £6000):** 19% of existing claimants have a disability. Under this option, this could increase to 37%, a rise of 18%.
- **Option 11 (remove the award of a Work Related Activity Component):** 19% of existing claimants in this category have a disability; this could increase to 40% under this option, a rise of 21%. However as the proposal applies to **new claims only** the current figure would remain at 19%. We are unable to determine the impact on possible new claimants.

Consultation findings

- **Option 6:** 57% of those with a disability agreed with this option. There was a 15% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (57%) and those without (62%).
- **Option 11:** 43% of those with a disability agreed with this option. There was an 18% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (43%) and those without (61%).

Carers

There is a potential impact on people of working age with a carer in the household of the following consultation options:

- **Option 6 (reduce the capital limit to £6000):** There could be a 4% increase in the number of carers under this option, rising from 8% to 12%.

Equality Impact Assessment Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- **Option 7 (non-dependent deductions):** There could be a 7% increase in the number of carers claims under this option.
- **Option 9 (Awards with liability over band D):** 8% of existing claimants are carers. Under this option this could increase to 15%.

Consultation findings

- **Option 6:** There was no notable difference of opinion between respondents with a disability and those without.
- **Option 7:** 60% of those with a disability agreed with this option. There was a 13% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (60%) and those without (73%).
- **Option 9:** There was no notable difference of opinion between respondents with a disability and those without.

Age

Pension age households will not be affected by the schemes proposed, however there is a potential, notable impact on other age groups in the following scheme options:

- **Option 2 (remove family premium):** There could be an increase of 19% for existing claimants aged 25-44 which would be a total of 69%. However, the proposal applies to **new claims** only so the figure would remain at 50% at this stage.
- **Option 3 (awards with backdating):** A 10% increase for claimants aged 25-44 which would be 60% of all claimants.
- **Option 4 (self-employed income under 1 year):** A 12% increase of those aged 25-54 which would be a total of 87% of all claimants.
- **Option 6 (reduce the capital limit to £6000):** An increase of 26% of those aged 45-64 which would be 68% of all claimants.
- **Option 7 (non-dependant deduction):** An increase of 31% of those aged 35-64 which would be 98% of all claimants.
- **Option 8 (awards with child maintenance):** An increase of 21% of those aged 25-54 which would be 98% of all claimants.
- **Option 9 (claimants with liability over Band D):** An increase of 15% of those aged 45-64 which would be 64% of all claimants.
- **Option 10 (removal of second adult rebate):** An increase of 25% of those aged 45-54 which would be 50% of all claimants
- **Option 11 (remove the award of a Work Related Activity Component):** There could be an increase of 30% of those aged 45-64 which would be a total of 72% of all claimants. However, the proposal applies to **new claims** only so the figure would remain at 42% at this stage.
- **Option 12 (limit the maximum number of dependents to two):** There could be an increase of those aged 25-44 which would affect a total of 86%. However the proposal would only apply to claimants who have a subsequent or third child **after 1 April 2017** so the figure would remain at 50% at this stage.

Consultation findings

- **Option 2:** There was a 35% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 18-24 year olds (22%). The highest level of support was from 55-64 year olds (57%).
- **Option 3:** There was a 31% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 18-24 year olds (51%). The highest level of support from 45-54 year olds (82%).
- **Option 4:** There was a 20% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 25-34 year olds (42%). The highest level of support was from 65-74 year olds (62%).
- **Option 6:** There was a 27% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 75 years and over (44%). The highest level of support was from 18-24 year olds (71%).
- **Option 7:** There was a 23% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 18-24 year olds (59%). The highest level of support was from 65-74 year olds (82%).
- **Option 8:** There was an 18% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 18-24 year olds (42%). The highest level of support was from 45-54 and 55-64 year olds (60% respectively).
- **Option 9:** There was a 28% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 18-24 year olds (42%). The highest level of support was from 65-74 year olds (70%).
- **Option 10:** There was a 22% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 18-24 year olds (49%). The highest level of support was from 65-74 year olds (71%).
- **Option 11:** There was an 18% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 75 years and over (46%). The highest level of support was from 65-74 year olds (67%).
- **Option 12:** There was a 38% difference in support across the age groups consulted. The group least in support of this option were 18-24 year olds (55%). The highest level of support was from 35-44 year olds (79%).

Sex

There is a potential impact on working age males and females of the following consultation options. It should be noted that in terms of gender, females are more likely to be the primary applicant and/or have dependent children:

- **Option 2 (remove family premium):** There could be an increase of 24% for female claimants which would be a total of 93% of all claimants. However, the proposal would apply to **new claims only** so the figure would remain at 69% at this stage.
- **Option 7 (non-dependent deductions):** An increase of 11% of female claimants which would be a total of 80% of all claimants.
- **Option 8 (awards with child maintenance):** An increase of 30% of female claimants which would be a total of 99% of all claimants.

Equality Impact Assessment Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- **Option 10 (removal of second adult rebate):** An increase of 24% of female claimants which would be a total of 93% of all claimants.

Consultation findings

- **Option 2:** 58% of male respondents agreed with this option. There was a 15% difference in opinion between male (58%) and female respondents (43%).
- **Option 7:** There was no notable difference of opinion between male and female respondents.
- **Option 8:** 63% of male respondents agreed with this option. There was a 17% difference in opinion between male (63%) and female respondents (46%).
- **Option 10:** There was no notable difference of opinion between male and female respondents.

Race

This information is not collected from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of council tax reduction. The Census (2011) shows no significant or notable difference that people from Minority Ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be economically active and less likely to be self-employed, than people from a white background. We have no evidence to indicate that working age people with different ethnic backgrounds would be affected differently. However, we will ask people to identify their ethnic group, when responding to the consultation.

Consultation findings

- **Option 6:** There was an 11% difference of opinion between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds; 61% agreed from white groups and 50% agreed from BME backgrounds.
- **Option 8:** There was a 10% difference of opinion between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds; 53% agreed from white groups and 63% agreed from BME backgrounds.

There was no other notable difference of opinion across the other consultation options.

Armed Forces Community

This is considered in this equality impact assessment as part of the commitments within the Community Covenant. Armed forces personnel deployed on operations overseas who normally pay council tax, benefit from a tax-free payment on the cost of council tax paid directly by the Ministry of Defence. Following the announcement by the Chancellor in his 2012 Budget statement, council tax relief will be worth just under £600 (based upon 2012/13 council tax) for an average six-month deployment based on the average council tax per dwelling in England. This will continue to be paid at a flat rate to all eligible personnel. More information is

Equality Impact Assessment Council Tax Reduction Scheme

available at www.mod.uk. We also disregard income from war disablement pensions, providing eligible claimants with a higher council tax reduction

Other protected characteristics

We do not collect information about the following characteristics from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of council tax reductions:

- Religion of belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity

Option 12 to introduce a limit of two dependents; this would affect any claimants pregnant before 1 April 2017. There is no evidence to indicate that working age people with these protected characteristics would be affected differently to claimants overall.

Consultation summary

The table below summarises the consultation responses by proposed option, highlighting notable differences of opinion that correlate with the initial findings, prior to consultation.

Equality Impact Assessment
Council Tax Reduction Scheme

	Equalities Impact	Protected characteristic (Consultation response summary)			
Consultation option	Groups affected (increase in no. of claimants based on claimant data):	Disability	Age	Sex	Race
1	No impact identified from current claimant data	22% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (42%) and those without (64%)	Lowest group in support – 75 years and over (47%), highest level of support from 65-74 year olds (73%) equating to a 26% difference	10% difference in opinion between male (66%) and female respondents (56%)	No notable difference between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sex - female claimants Age – 25-44 year olds 	No notable difference in opinion between respondents with a disability and those without	Lowest group in support – 18-24 year olds (22%), highest level of support from 55-64 year olds (57%) equating to a 35% difference	15% difference in opinion between male (58%) and female respondents (43%)	No notable difference between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age - 25-44 year olds 	16% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (43%) and those without (51%)	Lowest group in support – 18-24 year olds (51%), highest level of support from 45-54 year olds (82%) equating to a 31% difference	No notable difference between male and female respondents	No notable difference between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age – 25-54 year olds 	16% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (37%) and those without (53%)	Lowest group in support 25-34 year olds (42%), highest level of support from 65-74 year olds (62%) equating to a 20% difference	10% difference in opinion between male (56%) and female respondents (46%)	No notable difference between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds
5	No impact identified from current claimant data	No notable difference in opinion between respondents with	Lowest group in support – 18-24 year olds (71%), highest level of support from 65-74 year olds (88%) equating to a 17% difference	No notable difference between male and female respondents	No notable difference between respondents from

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Equality Impact Assessment
Council Tax Reduction Scheme

		a disability and those without			different ethnic backgrounds
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carers & Disability claimants Age – 45-54 year olds 	No notable difference in opinion between respondents with a disability and those without	Lowest group in support – 75 years and over (44%), highest level of support from 18-24 year olds (71%) equating to a 27% difference	No notable difference between male and female respondents	11% difference of opinion between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds. 61% in favour from white groups and 50% in favour from BME.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carers Age - 35-64 year olds Sex – female claimants 	13% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (60%) and those without (73%)	Lowest group in support – 18-24 year olds (59%), highest level of support from 65-74 year olds (82%) equating to a 23% difference	No notable difference between male and female respondents	No notable difference between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age - 25-54 year olds Sex – female claimants 	10% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (46%) and those without (56%)	Lowest group in support – 18-24 year olds (42%), highest level of support from 45-54 and 55-64 year olds (60% respectively) equating to a 18% difference	17% difference in opinion between male (63%) and female respondents (46%)	10% difference of opinion
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carers Age – 45-64 year olds 	No notable difference between respondents with a disability and those without	Lowest group in support – 18-24 year olds (42%), highest level of support from 65-74 year olds (70%) equating to a 28% difference	No notable difference between male and female respondents	No notable difference between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age - 45-54 year olds Sex – female claimants 	14% difference in opinion between respondents with a disability (49%) and those without (63%)	Lowest group in support – 18-24 year olds (49%), highest level of support from 65-74 year olds (71%) equating to a 22% difference	No notable difference between male and female respondents	No notable difference between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability claimants 	18% difference in opinion between	Lowest group in support – 75 years and over (46%), highest level of	No notable difference between	No notable difference

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Equality Impact Assessment
Council Tax Reduction Scheme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age - 45-64 year olds 	respondents with a disability (43%) and those without (61%)	support from 65-74 year olds (67%) equating to a 21% difference	male and female respondents	between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age - 25-54 year olds 	No notable difference between respondents with a disability and those without	Lowest group in support – 18-24 year olds (55%), highest level of support from 35-44 year olds (79%) equating to a 38% difference	No notable difference between male and female respondents	No notable difference between respondents from difference ethnic backgrounds
13	No impact identified from current claimant data	No notable difference between respondents with a disability and those without	Lowest group in support – 25-34 year olds (67%), highest level of support from 65-74 year olds (84%) equating to a 17% difference	No notable difference between male and female respondents	No notable difference between respondents from different ethnic backgrounds

Actions to mitigate any identified impacts

The possible introduction of an exceptional hardship scheme was included as an option for consultation (option 13). It should be noted that there were no notable differences of opinion from respondents with protected characteristics and those without.

It is important that the Public Sector Equality Duty is considered as part of future decision making to ensure claimants with protected characteristics are treated fairly.

Policy and Resources

26th October 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Disposal of Land at Unicumes Lane, Fant

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Lucy Stroud
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	Fant

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. To agree to dispose of the open space land outlined in red on the attached plan.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all.

Timetable

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Policy and Resources	26 th October 2016
Council	n/a
Other Committee	n/a

Disposal of Land at Unicomes Lane, Fant

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council owns an area of open space off Unicomes Lane in Fant, known as the Fant Wildlife Area, and has been working with a local volunteer group to manage it.
 - 1.2 The volunteers, the Fant Wildlife Group, would now like to take over the management and lease the site from the Council. This requires a disposal of the land on a leasehold basis.
 - 1.3 To dispose of the land, it has been declared surplus to operational requirements by the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee, and the intention to dispose publically advertised. A recommendation to dispose is now being made to the Policy and Resources Committee to make the final decision.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Fant Wildlife Group is a charitable volunteer group from the local community, established in 1996 to manage an area of abandoned allotment gardens located between Upper Fant Road and the River Medway. The site is shown outlined in red on the plan attached as Appendix A.
- 2.2 The aims of the Group are to maintain and diversify the wildlife on the site, and to encourage educational use and local involvement. Over the last 20 years the Group has worked to improve the site and now wish to take on full responsibility for the maintenance and management. A long term lease is deemed the most suitable mechanism by which to provide the Group with the security they need in order to access funding and be able to further develop the site for wildlife.
- 2.3 The Wildlife Area is currently managed by the Group with the assistance and input of Council officers, and grounds maintenance team. The total area of open space to be disposed of by lease is 3.95 hectares / 39,500 square metres.
- 2.4 The land has been confirmed by the Parks and Leisure team as being suitable for disposal, and has been declared surplus by the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee.
- 2.5 The Group have also satisfied the Parks and Leisure team that they are a capable organisation and will manage the Wildlife Area successfully.
- 2.6 It has been determined that an independent valuation under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 is not required as there is no alternative non-community use. The proposed disposal would only be at an 'undervalue' if it was realistic to think that the Council could sell or lease the land for a capital receipt or a higher rent. Given the land will remain as public open space and accessible to all it is considered that an independent valuation is not required.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Policy and Resources Committee could decide to not dispose of the land and retain it as part of the Council's open space provision. This option would also allow the Council to retain management and maintenance control of the Wildlife Area.
- 3.2 This is not recommended because if the Council was responsible for the Wildlife Area, it would struggle to dedicate the necessary resources needed to successfully manage such a large open space.
- 3.3 The Policy and Resources Committee could decide to retain the status quo, making the Council responsible for the Wildlife Area, but allowing the Group to continue their management.
- 3.4 This is not recommended because the Fant Wildlife Group would be unable to access funding opportunities without a formal agreement to manage the land. The future successful management of the Wildlife Area would then be at risk and the site would suffer as a consequence.
- 3.5 The Policy and Resources Committee could decide to dispose of the land, relieving the Council of the maintenance responsibility and facilitating the proper management and future use of the site.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee agrees to dispose of all the land outlined in red on the attached plan on a leasehold basis to the Fant Wildlife Group.
- 4.2 The Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee declared the land surplus and agreed to the land being publically advertised for disposal pursuant to Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. No objections were received in response to the advert.
- 4.3 Officers have entered into negotiations with the Group, and have agreed a 99 year lease at a peppercorn rent. The Group will have full management and maintenance responsibility for the Wildlife Area, and be bound by the lease to use and preserve the land in a manner that preserves the flora, fauna or geological features of special interest in the area.
- 4.4 The lease will also ensure that the land remains as public open space and accessible to all. The Group must also provide officers with copies of its Management Plan, annual report to the Charity Commission and its Constitution.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 No objections were received to the public notice and the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee has declared the land surplus.
-

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If the recommendations are agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee, the Property Officer will instruct Mid Kent Legal Services to draft transfer documents.
- 6.2 Lease documents will be sent to legal representatives of the Group and the leasehold transfer of the land will be completed on agreement of both parties to the draft lease.
-

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	This report supports the priority Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all.	Parks and Leisure Services Manager
Risk Management	There are no material risks arising from this report	Parks and Leisure Services Manager
Financial	There are no specific financial implications from this report as maintenance costs in relation to the site are already borne by the Fant Wildlife Group.	Section 151 Officer and Finance Team
Staffing	There are no staffing implications arising from this report	Parks and Leisure Services Manager
Legal	The documentation for the land being transferred leasehold to the Fant Wildlife Group will be dealt with by Mid Kent Legal Services	Head of Legal Services
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	There are no implications arising from this report	Parks and Leisure Services

		Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The recommendations enable the delivery of public open space in the Borough	Parks and Leisure Services Manager
Community Safety	There are no implications arising from this report	Parks and Leisure Services Manager
Human Rights Act	There are no implications arising from this report	Parks and Leisure Services Manager
Procurement	There are no implications arising from this report	
Asset Management	Assets and the associated liabilities will be transferred away from MBC	Parks and Leisure Services Manager

8. REPORT APPENDICES

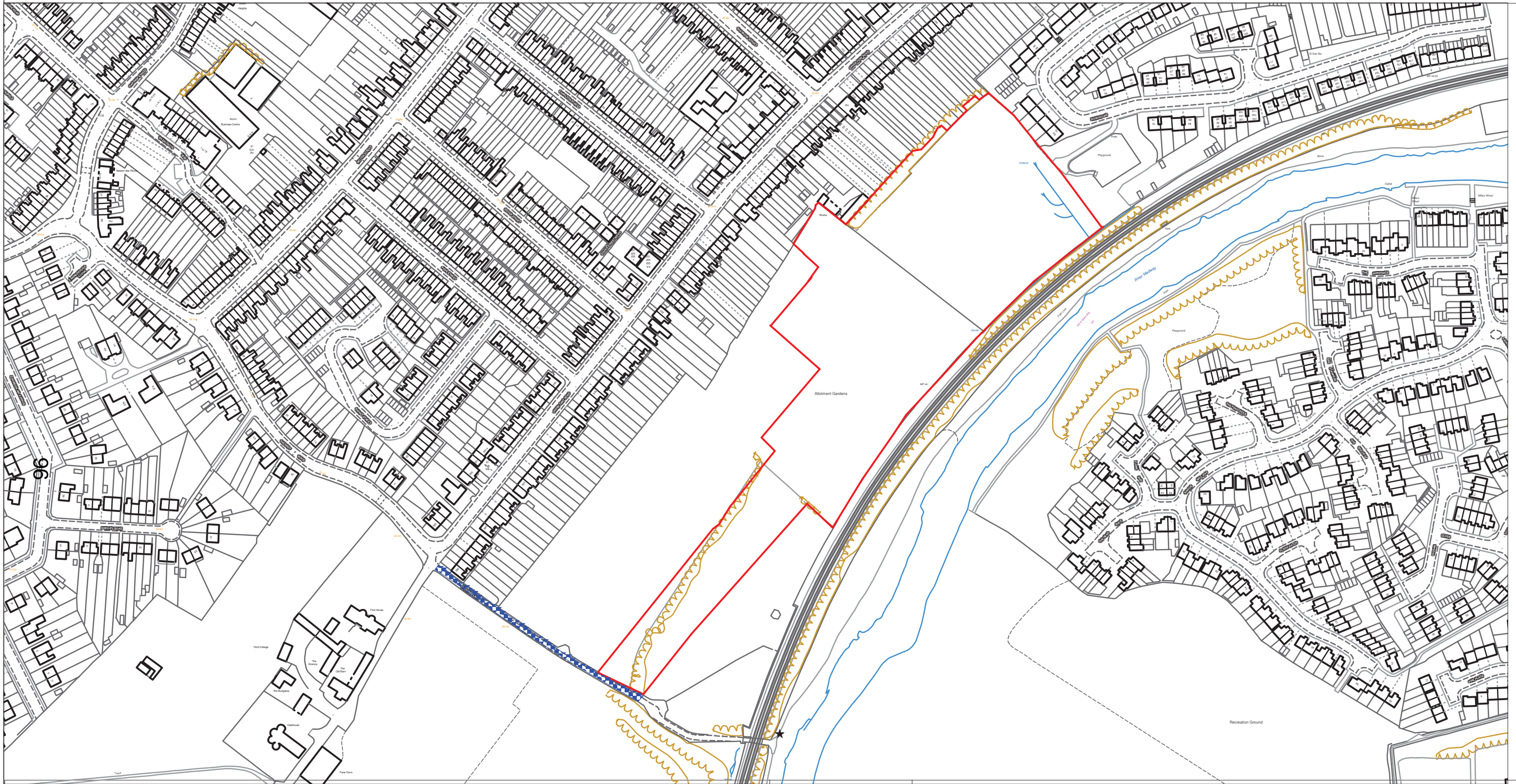
The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Site plan

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee Decision dated 3rd November 2015

THE MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL



Fant Wildlife Site



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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE HERITAGE, CULTURE AND LEISURE
COMMITTEE**

Decision Made: Tuesday 03 November 2015

**Report of the Head of Commercial and Economic
Development - Disposal of land at Unicumes Lane**

Issue for Decision

To consider the leasing of public open space at Unicumes Lane, Maidstone to Fant Wildlife group.

Decision Made

1. That the open space land outlined in red on the attached plan to the report of the Head of Commercial and Economic Development - Disposal of land at Unicumes Lane be declared surplus;
2. That the placing of a Public Notice pursuant of Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 be authorised; and
3. That the matter be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for a final decision concerning disposal of the land.

Should you wish to refer this decision to the Policy and Resources Committee, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by three Councillors, to the Head of Finance and Resources by: 12 November 2015

Agenda Item 15

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

26 October 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Communication and Engagement Strategy, 2016-20

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Policy and Communications
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse and Helen Bell
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee reviews and approves the Communication and Engagement Strategy 2016-20 at Appendix A; and
2. Notes the update on the 2015-16 Communication and Engagement Action Plan at Appendix B.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all ; and
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	26 October 2016

Communication and Engagement Strategy, 2016-20

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of the Communication and Engagement Strategy is to set out how we will approach our communication and engagement activity to deliver the vision and priorities for the borough of Maidstone.
- 1.2 The Communication and Engagement Strategy is a high level document which sets out our approach to communication and engagement. Its success is dependent on implementation and to that extent all employees and councillors have a role to play as highlighted in the strategy. The action plan covers how we will engage employees and councillors in our priorities to ensure we have pride in our borough.
- 1.3 The report also sets out the actions completed in 2015-16 at appendix 2 and the new Strategy sets out our actions for 2016-17.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's vision is that Maidstone is a place where residents, communities and businesses can all thrive. To achieve this, the Council will strive to help people reach their full potential, businesses to build a stronger economy and communities to flourish. The Strategy has been developed following two workshops with councillors reviewing the results of the residents' survey to identify actions.
- 2.2 The Council does face significant budget challenges. The Communication team must adapt and rise to the challenge of prioritising our finite resources to support the delivery of the Council's priority outcomes. The team will work with employees and councillors to ensure that the Council presents a consistent and positive message across all our audiences. To assist with engaging councillors in this process, it is proposed as part of the Strategy to establish a member sounding board which will be consulted on a regular basis.
- 2.3 We must ensure that residents understand what the impact of budget challenges mean to them, and that they have the opportunity to influence decisions taken by the Council in setting its budget and priorities. Alongside the strategy the Policy and Information team have been running consultations on key changes and services for teams across the council.
- 2.4 The purpose of this document is set out below.

External

- Communicate the Council's vision to residents and stakeholders
- Promote pride in Maidstone Borough Council in all communications

- Keep Maidstone Borough residents well informed
- Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders
- Address negative or potentially damaging information about council services
- Reach all sections of the community
- Maintain a strong and consistent identity for the council
- Raise awareness of council services to maximise access to them
- Develop and promote opportunities for residents, community groups and other stakeholders to engage with the council

Internal

- Support council staff in their roles as ambassadors for the organisation
- Support managers to deliver organisational change.
- Have a positive effect on employee engagement and staff satisfaction.
- Support elected members in their role as community leaders
- Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible
- Keep staff informed and promote understanding
- Working with partners and others to co-ordinate communications and engagement for the benefit of Maidstone residents and businesses

2.5 We want to share our story through our communications. Our narrative is informed by our Strategic Plan with an emphasis on promoting pride in everything we do. It shows our commitment to aligning our priorities with our vision that residents live in decent homes, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.

2.6 The 2015-16, Action Plan update at appendix B outlines the action taken over the past year. Highlights include:

- Communicated changes to governance arrangements to ensure residents understand how they can get involved in decision-making
- Completed a resident survey and two follow up workshops with councillors to look at the results and inform our new strategy and action plan
- Ran a number of campaigns for environmental services as part of ensuring the borough is an attractive place for all
- 'You said, we did' campaigns in Borough Update
- Working for you features in Borough Update
- Regular staff and councillor briefings through Wakey, Wakey and One Council events
- Social media campaigns to raise awareness of key messages and activities.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could choose not to agree the Communication and Engagement strategy for 2016-20. This will impact on the ability to take a coordinated approach to communication and engagement.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to review the proposed Strategy and approve it. The Strategy includes an action plan for 2016-17 to ensure we have a coordinated approach to communications.
- 4.2 Communication is not a bolt-on service but should be one of the first things that is considered when service planning. The failure to engage at the start of a project is a real risk to its ultimate success. The communications team can provide sound communication advice from the outset to help support any service change which will contribute to successful outcomes.
- 4.3 In order to demonstrate how our narrative and internal and external campaigns are delivering against the Council's outcomes, we must benchmark against past performance and target improvements.
- 4.4 In 2015 we conducted a survey with residents to investigate their attitudes towards the Council and the Maidstone area. These surveys provide a focus for the Council's business and performance planning and allow us to monitor changes in customer perceptions and satisfaction over time.

Key results were:

- 52% of residents agree that MBC provides value for money
 - 68% of residents are satisfied with the way Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) runs things
 - 66% of residents trust the Council, a great deal or a fair amount.
 - 56% of residents feel fairly or very informed about the services and benefits provided by Maidstone Borough Council
 - 31% of residents agree that they have the ability to influence decisions affecting their local area
 - 56% of residents responded positively to the statement 'MBC is making the area a better place for people to live'
 - 82% of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live
- 4.5 The Strategy seeks to improve communication and engagement to improve our results for the 2017 survey through ensuring a comprehensive and coordinated approach to communication with clear campaigns and actions.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 In 2015 the Council undertook a resident survey. The results of the survey have been used to benchmark our results in relation to communication and engagement and forms the basis of the action plan for 2016-17.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 Once the Strategy has been agreed it will be placed on the council's website and disseminated to all staff. The communications team will implement the action plan.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

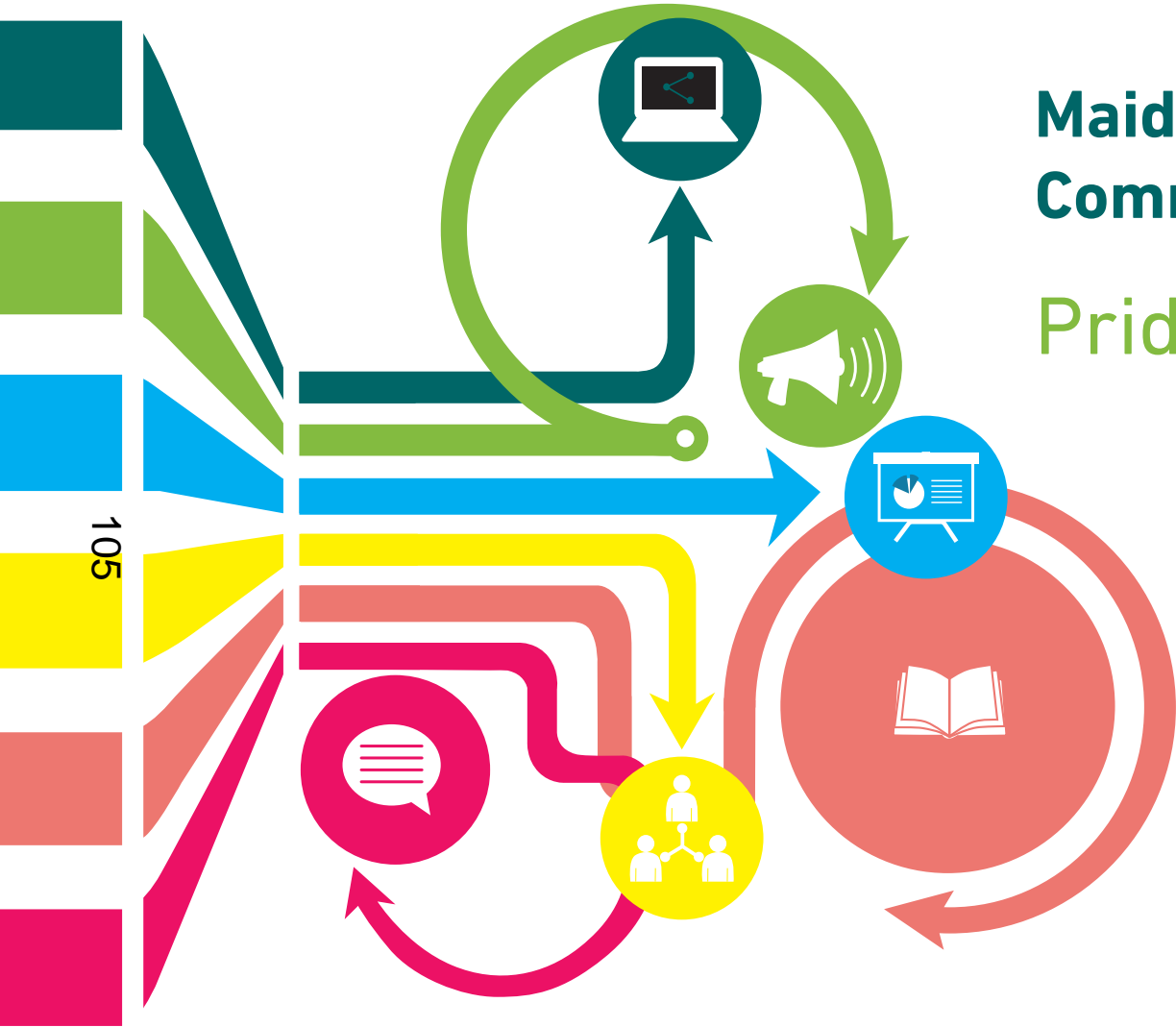
Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The communications and engagement strategy underpins the Council's Strategic Plan and Priorities.	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications
Risk Management	A key part of effective communication and engagement is to manage and mitigate the risk to the Council's reputation. An effective strategy will assist with the delivery of the Strategic Plan and the corporate priorities.	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications
Financial	The strategy plays an important role in communicating financial information about the Council. Specifically, it includes proposals for budget consultation.	Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement (S 151 Officer)
Staffing	Communications is the responsibility of every officer and member of the council so whilst the communications team will be	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and

	responsible for coordinating the delivery of the action plans for the strategy it will need the support of everyone	Communications
Legal	The strategy places great importance on the need for the council to continue to observe the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity	
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	Large campaigns will need to include stakeholder analysis and information on how our residents like to be communicated with and appropriate methods of communication	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Communication campaigns are run on environmental matters	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications
Community Safety	Communication campaigns are run on community safety matters as appropriate	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications
Human Rights Act	See equalities above	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications
Procurement	Any procurement for communication activities will be taken within procurement rules.	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications
Asset Management	Communications has a role to play in promoting our assets.	Angela Woodhouse Head of Policy and Communications

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Communication and Engagement Strategy 2016-2020
 - Appendix B: Communication and Engagement Strategy, Action Plan 2015-16 update
-



Maidstone Borough Council Communication Strategy 2016 - 20

Pride in our borough

Contents

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The Council has a vision to make Maidstone a great place where residents can:

- live in decent homes
- enjoy good health and a pleasant environment
- with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.

The effectiveness of how we deliver our vision is determined to a significant extent by the quality of our communications and engagement. This strategy outlines the approach we will take to ensure our communications and engagement activity is the best possible and helps to achieve our vision.

The council's vision is reflected in our 5-year strategic plan, which was formulated and adopted in 2015. It is important, when communicating with residents, that consistency is maintained over this timeframe so that our messages are clear and regularly reinforced. This does not prevent the communications strategy showing how the vision and strategic plan respond to changing circumstances.



Visions, Missions and Values

Our Vision

That our residents live in decent homes, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment, with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.



Our Values

Putting People First

Services

Everything we do impacts on our customers, both internal and external. We will listen to and understand their needs, then take action to provide the right service in a positive and professional manner.

Teamwork

Working together to achieve our objectives and goals in a way that utilises the talents and creativity of everyone in our organisation.

Responsibility

We work in an environment that encourages us to take ownership for our actions. Making the right choices and decisions that lead to a satisfactory outcome for all.

Integrity

We have the courage to act on our convictions to build trust and honesty. We work with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in everything we do.

Value

Taking care and weighing up our options, aiming to get the maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend.

Equality

Valuing our differences and understanding how they can contribute to a better working environment and services that are fair and easy to access

Context

The council's vision is that Maidstone is a place where residents, communities and businesses can all thrive. To achieve this the council will strive to help people reach their full potential, businesses to build a stronger economy and communities to flourish.

The council does face significant budget challenges. The Communication team must adapt and rise to the challenge of prioritising our finite resources to support the delivery of the council's priority outcomes.

We must ensure that residents understand what these reductions mean to them, and that they have the opportunity to influence decisions taken by the Council in setting its budget and priorities.

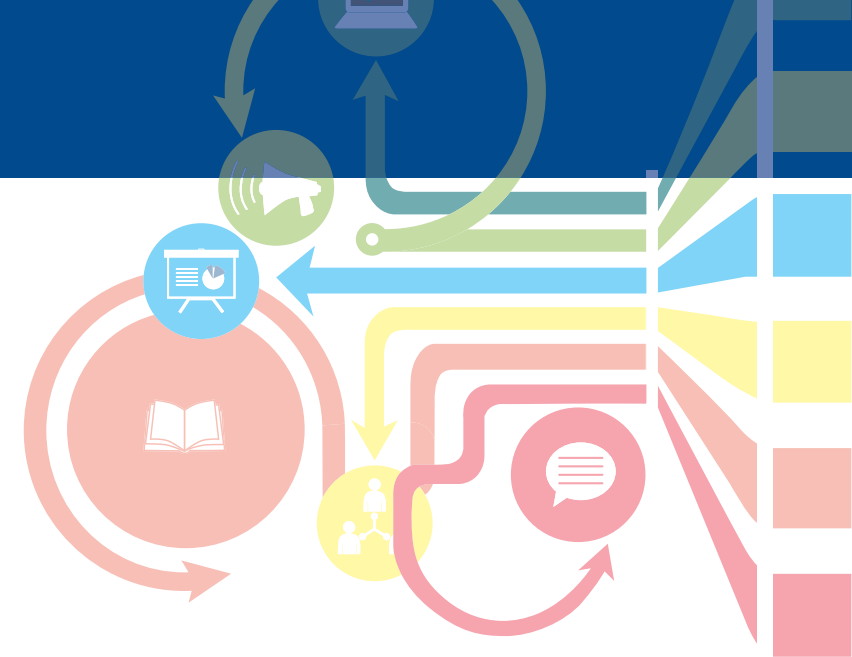
The purpose of this document is set out below.

EXTERNAL

- Communicate the Council's vision to residents and stakeholders
- Promote pride in Maidstone Borough Council in all communications
- Keep Maidstone Borough residents well informed
- Maintain a culture of two-way communication with all our stakeholders
- Address negative or potentially damaging information about council services
- Reach all sections of the community
- Maintain a strong and consistent identity for the council
- Raise awareness of council services to maximise access to them
- Develop and promote opportunities for residents, community groups and other stakeholders to engage with the council

INTERNAL

- Support council staff in their roles as ambassadors for the organisation
- Support managers to deliver organisational change.
- Have a positive effect on employee engagement and staff satisfaction.
- Support elected members in their role as community leaders
- Keep abreast of technological developments and embrace them where feasible
- Keep staff informed and promote understanding
- Working with partners and others to co-ordinate communications and engagement for the benefit of Maidstone residents and businesses.



Our Communications strategy is guided by the following principles:

1. We will communicate clearly, openly, accurately and regularly with residents, business and our partners, and throughout the council, to promote mutual understanding, and give a better service to the people of Maidstone Borough.
2. Our communication activity will protect, promote and enhance the council's reputation.
3. We will promote activities and services that support and deliver the strategic priorities in the council's strategic plan.
4. Our communications will be open, honest, clear, concise, simple and accessible.
5. We will make use of resident survey data to ensure our campaigns are audience led and outcome focused.
6. Our key messages will be consistent with the council's priorities of keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all and securing a successful economy.
7. We will ensure that there are clear opportunities for residents and partners to have an influence on decision making.
8. Our internal communication will ensure that employees understand that customer focused, good communication relates to all staff and we will work to embed best practice across the whole council.
9. We will use appropriate channels to help engage and inform residents and to drive behaviour change to encourage them to do things differently.
10. Communication will be creative, cost effective and innovative, comply with relevant laws and information standards and follow industry best practice.



The communications team plays a key role in how residents, staff and stakeholders perceive the council.

We recognise the importance of reputation and will work to protect and enhance the council's trusted name through effective branding, excellent media relations providing good quality information in a timely manner.

Paragraph 4 of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011 (available for download from the gov.uk website) says "Publicity by local authorities should:

- ➔ Be lawful
- ➔ Be cost-effective
- Be objective
- Be even-handed
- Be appropriate
- Have regard to equality and diversity
- Be issued with care during periods of 'heightened sensitivity'"

Councillors' Role

Councillors in their role as elected representatives will engage with residents, groups and business on a wide range of issues. Councillors provide a link between our community and the council.

Employees' Role

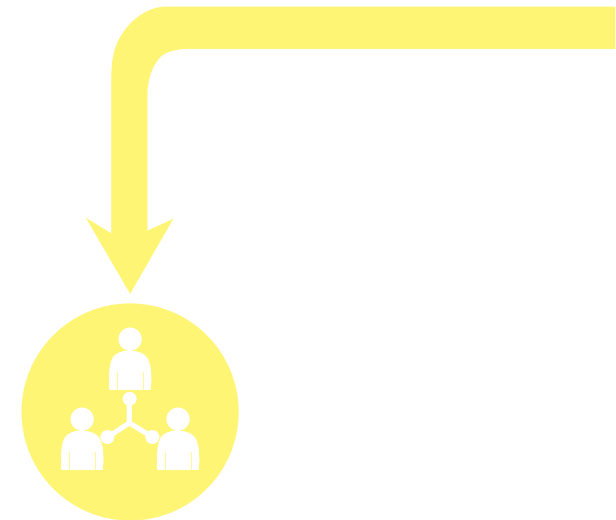
All employees have a responsibility for communication with the public and with their colleagues. It is important that all colleagues are kept well informed about our priorities and programme so they can act as council advocates.

Protecting and enhancing our reputation

We are guardians of the council's brand and reputation and we will use our resident survey data to form the basis for our work and action planning.

Research shows that the better informed people are about their council services, the more satisfied they feel. Good communications therefore can lead to more effective services, a better reputation and stronger relationships.

In our most recent residents' survey in Autumn 2015 56% of residents believed they were kept well informed about the services and benefits Maidstone Borough Council provides.



Services within the Communication Team

Who we are...

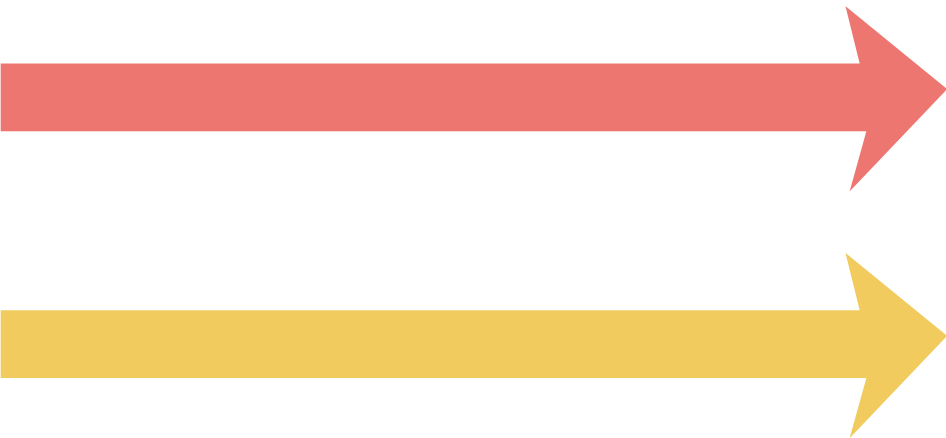
The Communications team is based within the Finance and Business Improvement Directorate of the council.

The team delivers internal and external communications, digital communications as well as campaigns, marketing, branding, design and print. The communications team also assists with consultations to canvas the views of our residents to inform priorities and service developments.

The services provided by the team include:

8

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External communications

The communications team issues press releases proactively to inform the public about council initiatives, good work, achievements and events. The team deals with media enquiries, often issuing statements and comments to meet media deadlines. The team also organises radio and television interviews where appropriate. Members of the communications team also meet regularly with key members of the print and broadcast media, as well as other partners and key stakeholders to build and sustain trusted relationships.



Our starting point



Digital communications

The communications team manages the council's corporate social media pages such as Facebook, Twitter and upload news stories to our public facing website. Members of the communications team are happy to provide help and advice to members who are interested in setting up a social media account and how to use it effectively to engage with local residents.

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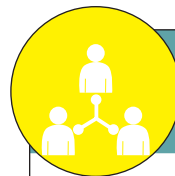
Marketing

The team works alongside colleagues and partners to develop, deliver and evaluate co-ordinated public relations and marketing campaigns to raise awareness of the council's priorities to both internal and external audiences.



Branding, design and print

The communications team is responsible for ensuring that the council's corporate identity is used consistently throughout the organisation and in all communications literature. A strong brand inspires confidence and positivity, which is why consistency is needed and a corporate identity style guide has been developed which should be followed at all times.



Internal communications

There are well-established internal communications channels in the council which celebrate the good work of our staff as well as updating them about key issues.

Members and Officers receive an electronic communication from the team at least once a week including a media update detailing coverage received in the Kent Messenger and Kentonline.

Our starting point

Communication is not a bolt-on service but should be one of the first things that is considered when service planning. The failure to engage at the start of a project is a real risk to its ultimate success. Our team can provide sound communication advice from the outset to help support any service change which will contribute to successful outcomes.

In order to demonstrate how our narrative and internal and external campaigns are delivering against the council's outcomes, we must benchmark against past performance and target improvements.

In 2015 we conducted a survey with residents to investigate their attitudes towards the council and the Maidstone area. These surveys provide a focus for the council's business and performance planning and allow us to monitor changes in customer perceptions and satisfaction over time.

Key results were:

68%

of residents are satisfied with the way Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) runs things.

52%

of residents agree that MBC provides value for money.

66%

of residents trust the Council, a great deal or a fair amount.

56%

of residents feel fairly or very informed about the services and benefits provided by MBC.

31%

of residents agree that they have the ability to influence decisions affecting their local area.

56%

of residents responded positively to the statement 'MBC is making the area a better place for people to live'.

82%

of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live

Our audiences

The team will ensure that any communication activity has a clear audience in mind and is outcome-focused in its approach. Campaigns that are linked to our action areas will be prioritised. This is a new approach for the team and the council. There will be an integrated approach to communication and engagement through the channels and methods we use.

All of our activity will be evaluated against measurable outcomes and will demonstrate how it has supported the priorities of the council as agreed by the Corporate Leadership Team and Leader of the Council.

Our Parish Councils are an important community voice as well as community groups and residents associations. We have put in place a parish charter and new parish liaison officer to improve communication and engagement with Parish Councils.



The Council's narrative

We want to share our story through our communications. Our narrative is informed by our Strategic Plan. It shows our commitment to aligning our priorities with our vision that residents live in decent homes, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.

Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all

- Providing a clean and safe environment
- Encouraging good health and wellbeing
- Respecting the character of our borough

Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

- Securing improvements to the transport infrastructure of our Borough
- Promoting a range of employment opportunities and skills required across our Borough
- Planning for sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs

Joint action area for both

- Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions
- Enhancing the appeal of the town centre for everyone

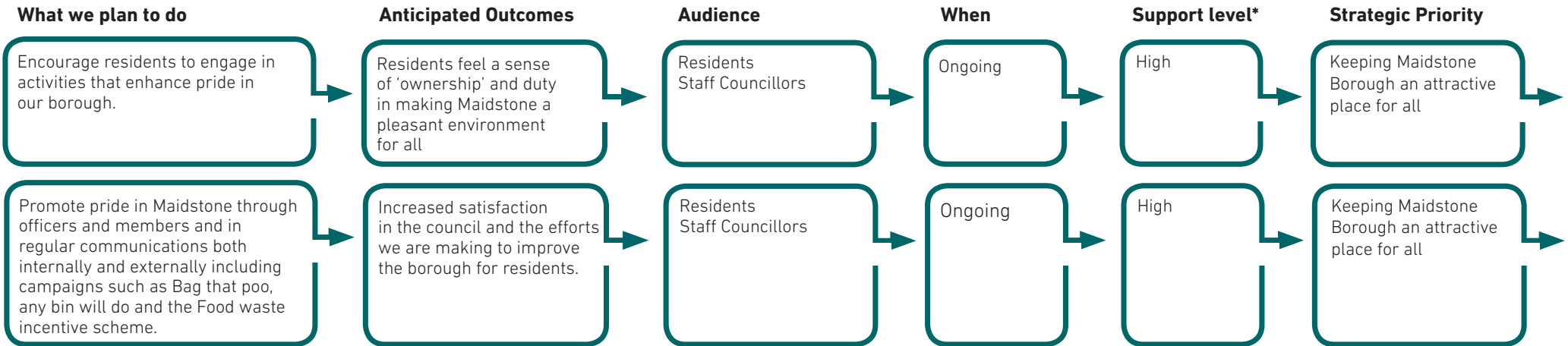


Priority communication activity

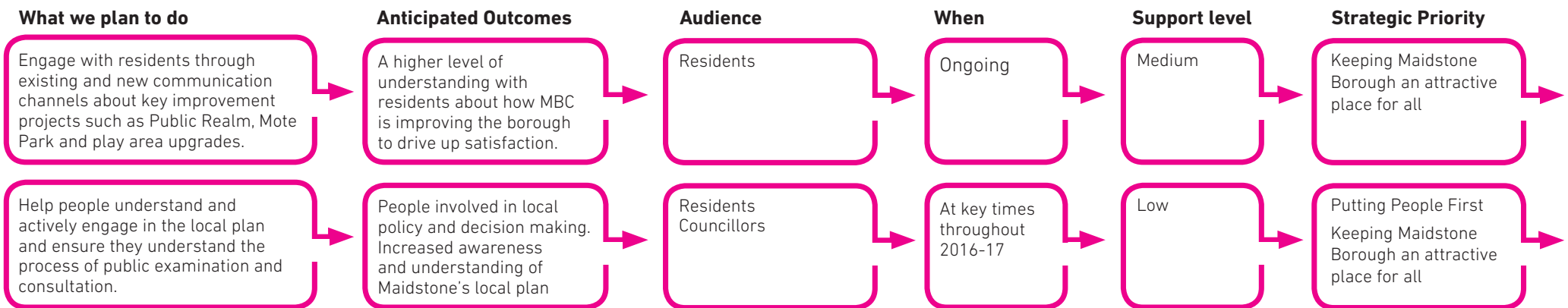
A number of priorities have been identified through resident survey data which align with priorities in the council's strategic plan which, if successfully implemented, will have a positive effect on the lives of residents and enhance the reputation of the council.

Communication and Engagement Action Plan 2016-17

Objective – Encourage pride in Maidstone

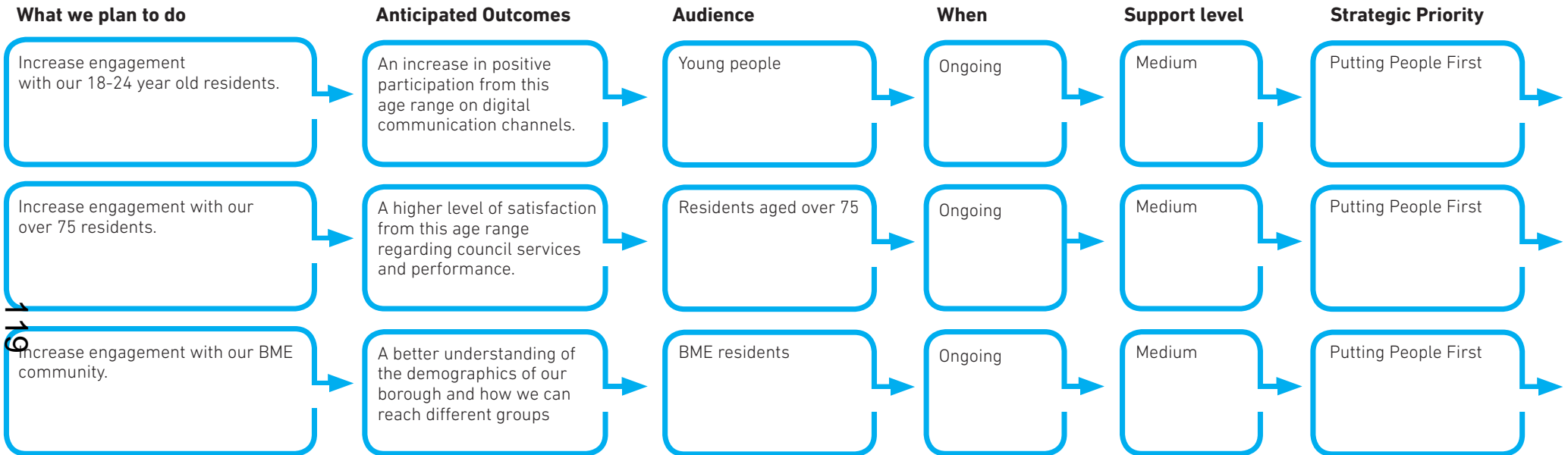


Objective - Satisfaction with local area as a place to live

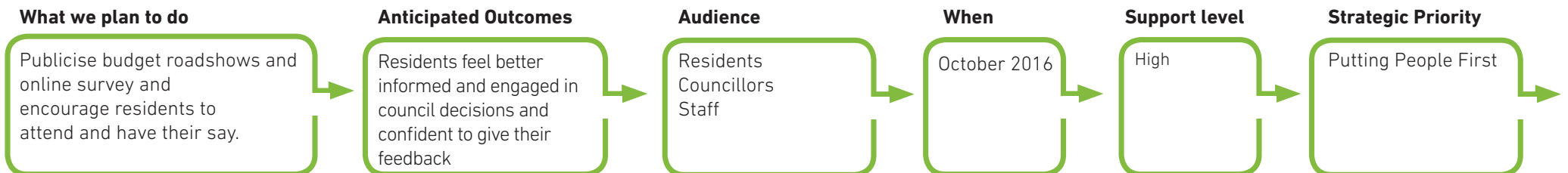


*This indicates the level of support that the communications team will give

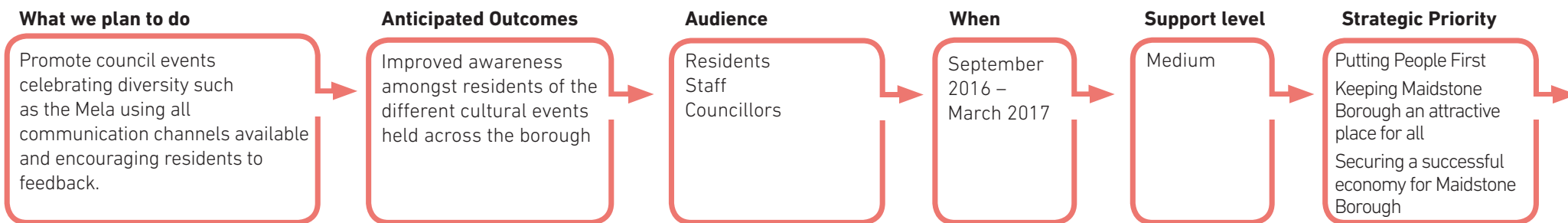
Objective – Trust the council



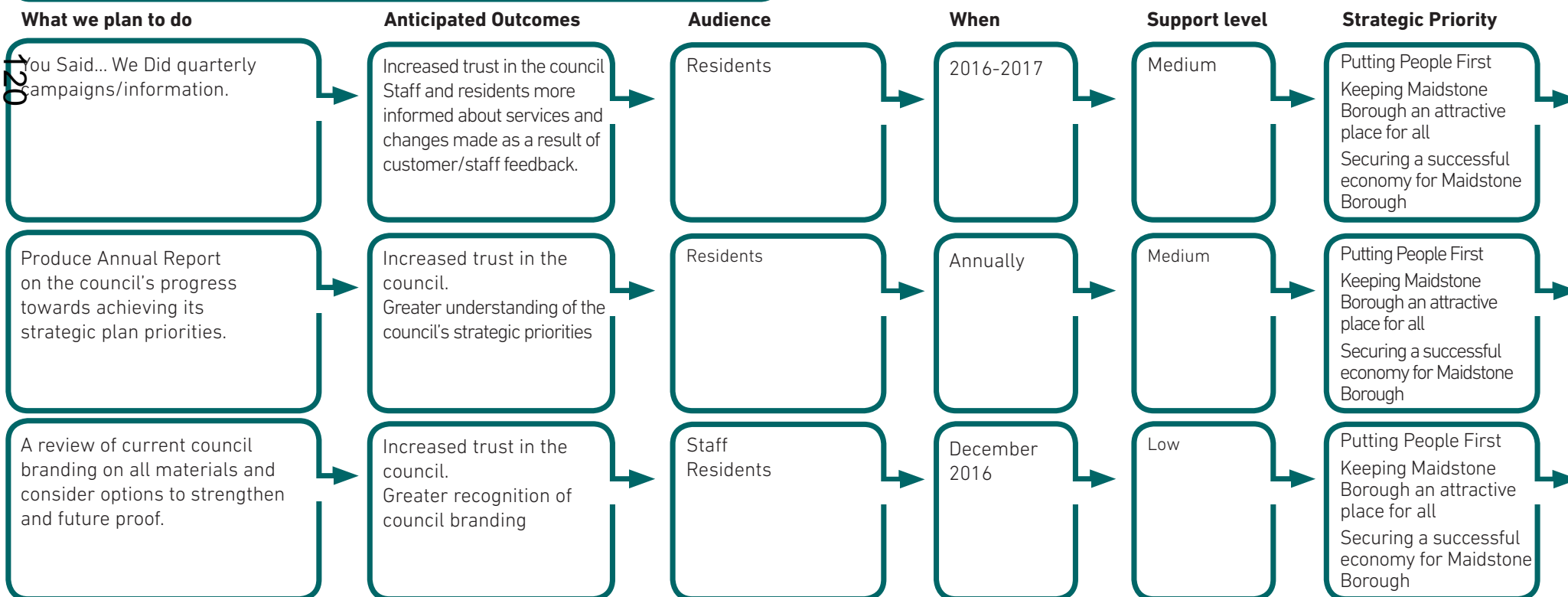
Objective - Residents can influence decisions affecting their local area



Objective - People from different backgrounds get on well together



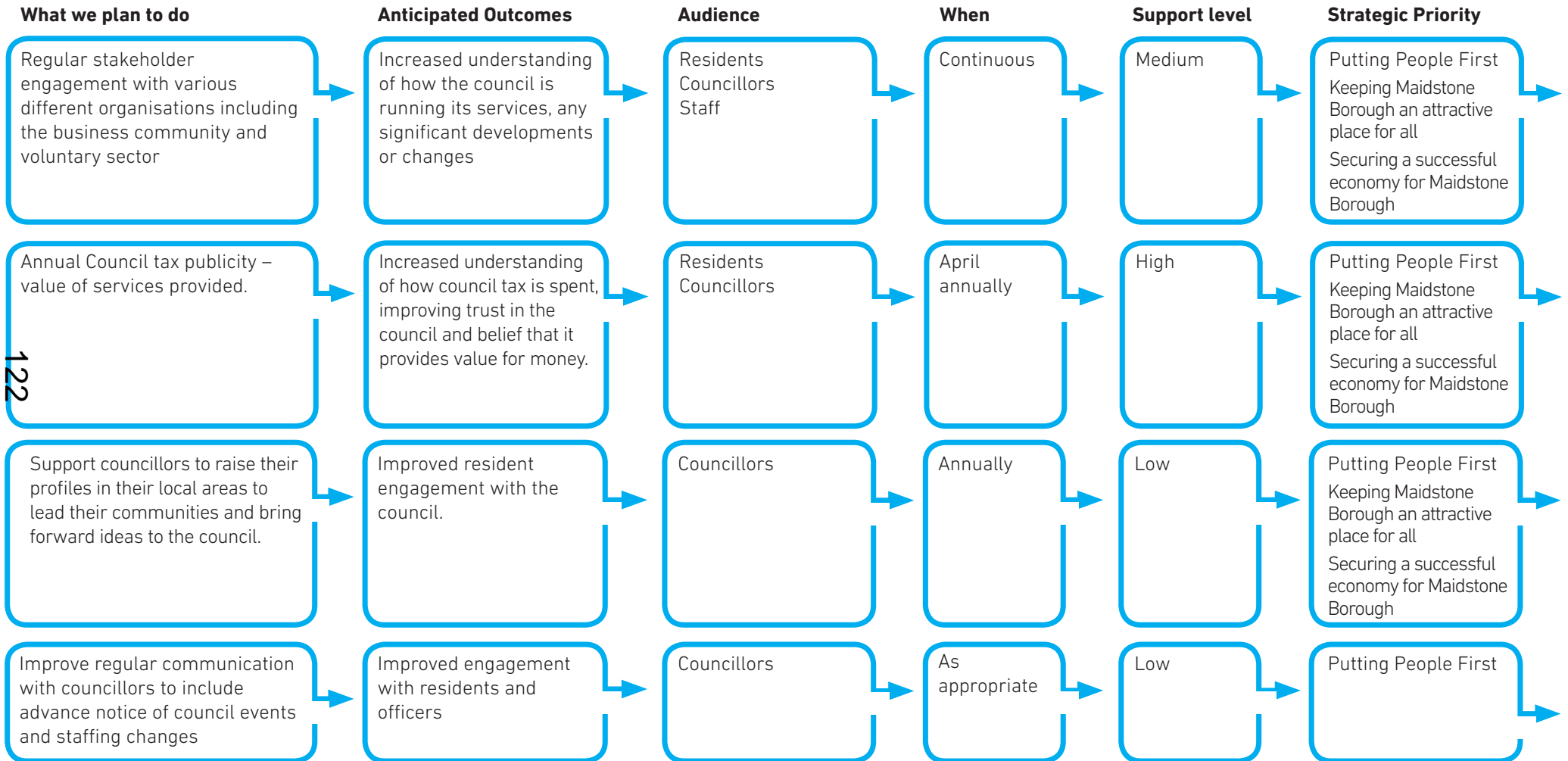
Objective - Satisfaction with local area as a place to live



Objective – Information about the council services and benefits

What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	Audience	When	Support level	Strategic Priority
Research costs for producing our own council magazine and consult with staff and councillors about the options.	Residents feeling more informed about the council through a recognised standalone magazine	Residents	December 2016	Low	Putting People First Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough
Publicise on all communication channels the council's list of services and responsibilities.	A better understanding from residents about the services the council provides and services KCC are responsible for	Residents	December 2016	Medium	Putting People First
A review of our external communications channels including our newsletter and social networking accounts.	More effective communication and better value for money.	Residents Councillors	Annually	Low	Putting People First
A review of our Social media Strategy, building on our policy for social networking accounts.	Clear direction for the council's use of social media to make sure that it effectively contributes to the council's priorities	Residents	December 2016	Low	Putting People First

Objective - Value for money



Objective - Employee and member engagement

What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	Audience	When	Support level	Strategic Priority
Redevelop the intranet	Staff can find information easily and we can promote our priorities and key projects	Staff Councillors	February 2017	High	Putting People First Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough
Review staff newsletter Wakey Wakey to ensure the format and messaging is relevant and informative for staff. Consider other design layouts and engage with officers on their views.	Improve staff communication channels to ensure new and existing officers have a better understanding of the council and latest updates	Staff Councillors	January 2017	High	Putting People First
Support annual One Council events to ensure topics are relevant and timely and relate to corporate priorities. Ensure events are followed up with staff feedback and this affects any changes necessary.	Increased employee engagement leading to better understanding of the council's strategic plan and priorities.	Staff	January 2017	Medium	Putting People First Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough
Forward plan a programme of co-ordinated staff communication and engagement activities including - team talks, Staff Forum, health and wellbeing week, and STRIVE awards etc.	Increased employee engagement leading to better understanding of the council's strategic plan and priorities.	Staff	Annually	Low	Putting People First Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough
Create a member sounding board to work on member engagement.	Members feel informed about the Council and decisions.	Members	December 2017 for first meeting then ongoing	High	Putting People First Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

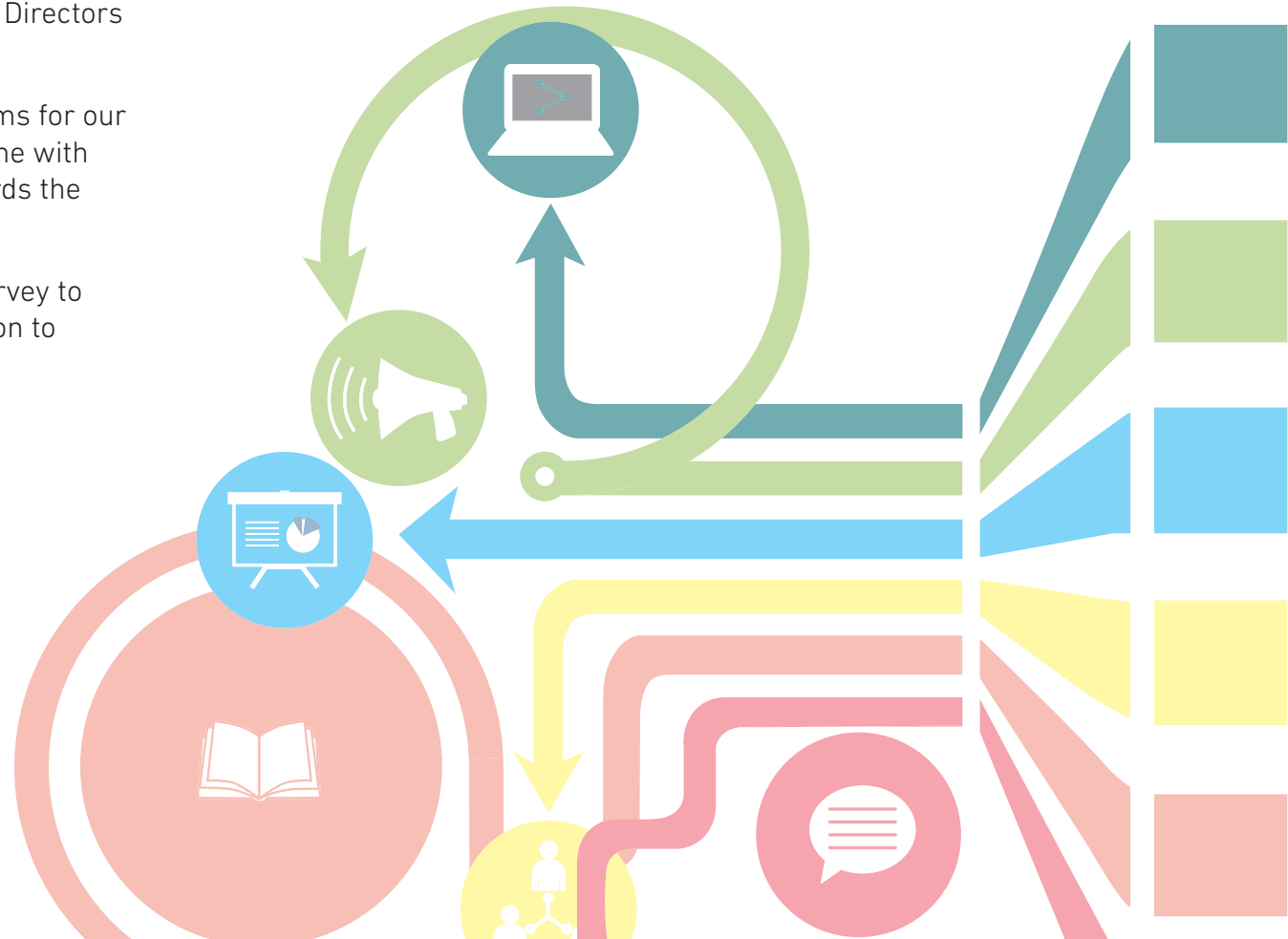
Evaluating our communication

The team will ensure that each priority campaign is set against clear communication objectives which will be agreed jointly with Directors or Heads of Service.

There are already in place formal measurement mechanisms for our communications and engagement activities. These are in line with communications best practice, and indicate progress towards the achievement of our targets.

We will also continue to support the delivery of the staff survey to evaluate the impact of our internal corporate communication to ensure that every employee feels that they have a voice.

We will regularly review our progress in implementing this strategy and will share updates as required.



Appendix B - 2015-16 Action Plan

The actions below were agreed as part of the 2015-2020 strategy

Objective - Satisfaction with local area as a place to live						
What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Strategic Priority	Action update
Consult with residents and other stakeholders to progress the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy towards submission for independent examination.	A robust approach to the implementation of CIL in the Borough and a targeted approach to the distribution of these resources.	Head of Planning and Development Communications Manager	2016	Inform	Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all	Ongoing
Help people understand and actively engage in local issues and opportunities through community forums such as - Maidstone Older Person's Forum, Disability Focus Group and BME Forum.	People involved in local policy and decision making. Improved networking, collaboration and partnership between the voluntary and community sector and agencies building their organisational capacities. Better community cohesion and equality of opportunity for all throughout the Maidstone borough.	Head of Housing and Community Services	Annually	Engage	Putting People First	Ongoing through existing networks and partnerships
Objective - Trust the council						
What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Strategic Priority	Action update
Develop a plan to communicate funding issues and their implications to residents.	Increased awareness and understanding of new commercial activities.	Head of Policy and Communications	September 2015	Inform	Putting People First	Completed and ongoing. Work has included council tax information in Borough Update
Communicate changes to governance arrangements to	Increased awareness and participation by residents in	Head of Policy and	June 2015	Engage	Putting People First	Completed and ongoing -

ensure residents understand how they can get involved in decision-making.	council decision making.	Communications				website updates, Borough Update stories and social media campaigns. The Local Democracy Week campaign included a new leaflet on how to get involved.
Regular feedback on the results of consultations on our website and through other channels as appropriate.	Increased trust among residents that consultation results are taken into account and do influence decision making.	Head of Policy and Communications	Ongoing	Inform	Putting People First	Ongoing
Objective - Residents can influence decisions affecting their local area						
What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Strategic Priority	Action update
Rollout an online Events Toolkit to support local community events and activities. Provide training events and workshops such as Community Participatory Appraisal and Planning for Real neighbourhood engagement.	Individuals and communities empowered and more resilient through training, information, advice and support. Increased confidence, skills, knowledge and ability to participate in community life, engage with services, local decision-making and democratic processes and take action for themselves.	Head of Housing and Community Services	Annually	Engage	Putting People First	Completed - Events Toolkit finalised and rolled out as an online resource to community groups, ward and parish councils. Community Participatory Appraisal and Planning for Real neighbourhood training was

						delivered by Maxine Moar Consultancy
Develop ways in which residents can have their say and influence the Council's new decision making process including the opportunity for regular dialogue and engagement.	Greater participation by residents in council decision making.	Head of Policy and Communications Head of Finance and Resources	June – July 2015	Engage	Putting People First	Completed - The 'New Committee System' Communication Plan has included actions to update the website, Borough Update stories and social media campaigns.
Participation in Democracy Week 2015 20 27	Raised awareness of the opportunities residents have to take part in council decision making.	Head of Finance and Resources	October 2015	Engage	Putting People First	Completed
Seminars and training in community engagement for staff and councillors.	More councillors and staff running community engagement events for their communities and service areas.	Head of HR Shared Services Head of Housing and Community Services Head of Finance and Resources	Annually	Engage	Putting People First	Carry forward to 2016-17
To partner with the community in decision making with neighbourhood action planning in Maidstone's areas of deprivation to involve community groups, residents and public organisations working together to tackle neighbourhood issues.	Communities have an input into addressing health, housing and wellbeing issues in their localities. Consultation and decision-making placed in the hands of the community.	Head of Housing and Community Services	Annually	Engage	Putting People First	Ongoing – partnership programmes taking place to engage with residents around community safety, housing

						and health issues. The council's Community Development and PSH teams have merged into a new Housing and Health team, engagement work is being reviewed to reflect health and wellbeing and housing needs.
Identify hard to reach groups and develop effective means of engaging with them, working with our partners when appropriate to ensure our communications and engagements are inclusive.	More representative samples from council consultations and greater participation in council engagement activities.	Head of Policy and Communications Head of Housing and Community Services	Review April – June annually	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Putting People First	Ongoing - The Housing and Community team is involved in various strands of work
Objective - People from different backgrounds get on well together						
What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Strategic Priority	Action update
Develop a guide to communities across the borough containing data about communication preferences and other information available through sources such as Mosaic and Acorn to better target communications.	Improved targeting of information and engagement activities so that people receive the information most relevant to them, improving their engagement with and trust in the council.	Head of Policy and Communications	April 2015 – March 2016	Engage	Putting People First	Ongoing - This work is being progressed by the Policy Team.
Objective - Satisfaction with the way Maidstone Borough Council runs its services						
What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Strategic Priority	Action update

				Engage		
You Said... We Did quarterly campaigns/information.	Increased trust in the council. Staff and residents more informed about services and changes made as a result of customer/staff feedback.	Head of Policy and Communications	2015-2016	Inform	Putting People First	Ongoing - You said... We did... examples are included in each issue of Borough Update and on social media.
Produce Annual Report on the council's progress towards achieving its strategic plan priorities.	Increased trust in the council. Greater understanding of the council's strategic priorities	Head of Policy and Communications	Annually	Inform	Putting People First	Completed
A consistent and memorable corporate identity on all front facing services.	Increased trust in the council. Greater understanding of how council tax is spent, demonstrating value for money.	Head of Policy and Communications		Inform	Putting People First	Ongoing

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Objective – Information about the council services and benefits

What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Strategic Priority	Action update
A review of our external communications channels including our newsletter and social networking accounts.	More effective communication and better value for money.	Head of Policy and Communications	July – September 2015	Inform	Putting People First	Carry forward to 2016-17
A new Social media Strategy, building on our policy for social networking accounts.	Clear direction for the council's use of social media to make sure that it effectively contributes to the council's priorities	Head of Policy and Communications	April – June 2015	Engage	Putting People First	Carry forward to 2016-17
'Our day' social media campaigns highlighting council services.	Increased awareness of council services, improving trust and understanding of how council tax is spent.	Head of Policy and Communications	Quarterly	Inform	Putting People First	Completed
Working for you features in our	Increased awareness of	Head of Policy	Each issue	Inform	Putting People	Completed and

newsletter and social media.	council services, improving trust and understanding of how council tax is spent.	and Communications			First	ongoing
Objective - Value for money						
What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Strategic Priority	Action update
Annual budget consultation for residents and staff including value for money information and report.	Increased understanding of how council tax is spent, improving trust in the council and belief that it provides value for money.	Head of Policy and Communications Head of Finance and Resources	October – January Annually	Consult/ Inform	Putting People First	Completed
Annual Council tax publicity – value of services provided.	Increased understanding of how council tax is spent, improving trust in the council and belief that it provides value for money.	Head of Policy and Communications Head of Finance and Resources	April annually	Inform	Putting People First	Ongoing
130						
Objective - Employee engagement						
What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/ Engage	Strategic Priority	Action update
An annual One Council rhythm of the year programme of co-ordinated staff communication and engagement activities including - One Council briefings, Core Brief, team talks, Staff Forum, health and wellbeing week, and STRIVE awards etc.	Increased employee engagement leading to better understanding of the council's strategic plan and priorities.	Head of Policy and Communications Head of HR Shared Service	Annually	Engage	Putting People First	Completed and ongoing
Objective – Improve communication with councillors						
What we plan to do	Anticipated Outcomes	By whom	When	Inform/ Consult/	Strategic Priority	Action update

				Engage		
Support councillors to raise their profiles in their local areas to lead their communities and bring forward ideas to the council.	Improved resident engagement with the council.	Councillors Head of Policy and Communications	Annually	Engage	Putting People First	Ongoing
Improve regular communication with councillors to include advance notice of council events and staffing changes	Improved engagement with residents and officers	Head of Policy and Communications	As appropriate	Inform	Putting People First	Ongoing

Agenda Item 16

Policy & Resources Committee 26th October 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

Risk Management Update

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Deputy Head of Service	Russell Heppleston – Deputy Head of Audit Partnership
Lead Officer and Report Author	Russell Heppleston – Deputy Head of Audit Partnership Alison Blake – Audit Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To **note** the key risks facing the Council and the measures in place for their management.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough -

The risk register spans all issues facing the Council that may impede or delay achievement of its corporate priorities.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy & Resources Committee	26 th October 2016

Risk Management Update

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In July 2015 the Policy and Resource (P&R) Committee approved the revised risk management framework, and agreed to the creation of a comprehensive risk register.
 - 1.2 The framework includes the principle that the highest risks will be reported to CLT quarterly for review and consideration, and bi-annually to P&R Committee. Our first risk update report was reported in February 2016.
 - 1.3 Since the February meeting, changes to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the re-structure of Mid Kent Audit have allowed the audit team to take operational responsibility for delivering risk management services, and co-ordinate the effective operation of the risk management framework.
 - 1.4 Throughout the summer, the audit team have met with risk owners and ratified, challenged and updated all of the highest level risks on the risk register. The purpose of this report (**Appendix A**) is to provide an update on the outcomes of the review of risks and provide more detailed information on the key risks facing the Council. Furthermore, the report sets out the next steps to be undertaken to further embed risk management within the Council, including the development of a risk appetite statement.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This Committee agreed the implementation of a new risk management framework in July 2015. This update sought to refresh the Council's overall approach to risk management, and provide a number of key improvements to bring the arrangements in line with good practice. One such improvement was the communication and monitoring of significant risks to Senior Officers (CLT) and Members (P&R and Audit, Governance and Standards Committee).
- 2.2 The comprehensive risk register was compiled throughout 2015/16 using the updated risk management process, and for the first time collated all risks in one place, using a common structure and format, and more importantly, risks were assessed using a clear set of impact and likelihood definitions.
- 2.3 We reported our first risk update to Members of this Committee in February 2016; this report included an update on the corporate risks identified during a risk workshop facilitated by Grant Thornton.
- 2.4 This report (**Appendix A**) has been updated in format and design to provide the next stage of updates to the risks. The report includes a summary of the corporate risks, and the highest scored risks on the register. The report also provides more detailed information on the

mitigations and key controls to manage those risks. We have also included information on the movement of risks over time, as it is through this that we can see the effect of the action being taken to address the impact or likelihood of the risks.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 There is no legal requirement on the authority to formally monitor its risks. However, failing to monitor and record risks will leave the Council vulnerable to external criticism, for example by its external auditors who are required to assess the effectiveness of risk management when considering their annual Value For Money conclusion. The Council has already recognised the value in having effective risk management arrangements in place and has agreed and adopted the new risk management framework.
- 3.2 The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the key risks arising from the risk management process, and the actions being taken by the Council to manage the risk impact and likelihood. As this report is not seeking a decision, there are no alternative options suggested.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 As this report is not seeking a decision, there are no preferred options / recommendations suggested.
-

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 This report has been through Corporate Leadership Team, and the risks and responses detailed were compiled following consultation with risk owners.
-

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The next steps for the continued embedding of the risk management process are set out in the report attached in **Appendix A**.
- 6.2 In accordance with the previous Committee recommendation, risk update reports will come to this Committee every 6 months (twice a year).

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Good governance underpins everything the Council does. Risk management is a vital component to the governance framework.	Russell Heppleston Deputy Head of Audit Partnership
Risk Management	Risk management is the focus of this paper	
Financial	There are no direct financial implications to this report.	
Staffing	There are no staffing implications to this report.	
Legal	There are no legal implications associated with this report.	
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	Not applicable	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Not applicable	
Community Safety	Not applicable	
Human Rights Act	Not applicable	
Procurement	Not applicable	
Asset Management	Not applicable	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Risk Register Update

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The risk management framework was adopted in the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on the [24th July 2015](#)
- The comprehensive risk register update was previously reported to Policy & Resources Committee on the [17th February 2016](#)

Maidstone Borough Council Risk Register Update

Risk Register Summary

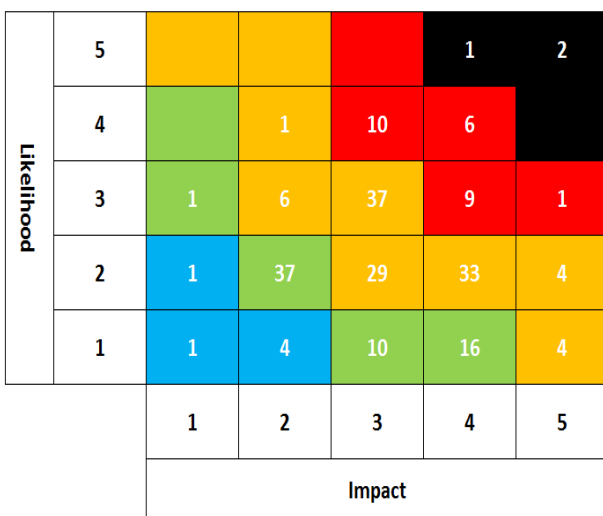
In February 2016 the Council’s comprehensive risk register contained 213 risks. The operational risks were identified across all Council services through risk workshops conducted by the Mid Kent Audit team. An externally facilitated session was conducted by Grant Thornton to identify corporate risks with Senior Officers and Members.

Throughout the summer, the audit team have met with risk owners to review and update the high level risks (those scoring 15 or more) to establish the actions taken and the effect of those actions on the overall impact and likelihood of risks (definitions for the impact and likelihood scores are attached in appendix I).

As a result of this update we have seen an overall decrease in the number of risks, from 213 to 187. The majority of these relate to project risks where projects have now been closed (for instance Debt Recovery and Planning Support). However, there has been the addition of some newly identified operational risks and removal of risks which are no longer relevant.

The risk matrices below plot the overall risk profile of the Council based on the mitigated risk scores for likelihood and impact. For a base of comparison we have included the profile from the previous risk update in February 2016:

Risk Map as at February 2016



213

Risk Map as at September 2016



187

Risk summary by total:

Risk Colour	February 2016	September 2016	Difference
Scored 1-2	6	5	-1
Scored 3-4	64	58	-6
Scored 6-10	114	108	-6
Scored 12-16	26	15	-11
Scored 20-25	3	1	-2
TOTAL	213	187	- 26

There has been some movement in risks following the update to the register, most notably a reduction in red rated risks. For the purposes of this report, key risks are those scoring **15 and above**.

Appendix A

Risk Themes

We took time during the review of risk registers to identify and allocate a classification type to each risk. By doing this we are able to gain greater insight into common risk areas and potential themes. While not all of the risks on the register will fit nicely into a single classification, there were 4 main types of risks that featured more prominently than others. These areas are:

- **Staffing:** 25% (44 service risks) relate to risks around staffing pressures, resilience, skills gaps or pay and conditions.
- **Finance:** 15% (27 service risks) relate to risks around funding pressures/gaps, lack of commercial investment or non-achievement of income targets.
- **Customer:** 12% (22 service risks) relate to risk that could prevent services from meeting customer expectations or risks that could result in reputational damage.
- **Information Technology:** 8% (14 service risks) relate to risks around IT failure or integrity and development of key systems.

We will continue to draw insights from the risk work across the Council, and also from the external environment and good practice guides. Mid Kent Audit supports the delivery of risk management services to varying degrees across the Mid Kent Partners. As this work progresses we will also be able to draw insights from our partner authorities and others across Kent. However, for the time being, as this work is still underway we will continue to monitor themes and trends within the risk register and address key issues with risk owners accordingly.

So what are the key risks?

The table below is an extract from the comprehensive risk register. The table includes all of the **corporate** level risks, along with any high scoring **operational** risks. This is the first time that this level of detail has been reported, and so we have sought to show any relationships between corporate level risks and operational risks within the table. This more clearly shows the flow of risks from the operational level up to corporate level.

Service & Ref	Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Inherent rating			
				I	L	Σ	
Corporate 1	Lack of progress on transport infrastructure Transport infrastructure not being fit for purpose	William Cornall & Rob Jarman	- Liaison with partners - Local Plan	4	4	16	
Corporate 2	Increasing difficulty in recruiting & retaining skilled staff Unable to recruit and retain	Alison Broom & Steve McGinnes	- Pay review	4	4	16	
138	Operational Building Surv. BCR8	Retention and recruitment of professional staff Insufficient terms/conditions of service and remuneration leading to loss of staff to other authorities or private sector	David Harrison	- Added market supplements (although no effect on recruitment) - Training / continued CPD - Pay prof subs and provide onsite parking - Working hours / holiday / Pensions - Use of agency / temp staff	4	4	16
	Operational Economic Dev MED10	Skills shortage Shortage of skills is a barrier to business growth and competitiveness. Poor engagement with schools	John Foster	- Working with Mid Kent College, KMEP, and MEBP on skills development issues.	3	5	15
Corporate 3	Significant commercial failure Commercial failure & risk that ventures will not deliver desired outcomes	William Cornall	- CLT monitoring - Project management	5	3	15	
Corporate 4	Not agreeing local plan Lack of sound legal footing for local plan leaving MBC at risk of appeal	William Cornall & Rob Jarman	- Local Plan consultation	4	3	12	
Corporate 5	MKIP fails to develop a coherent vision for its future Coherent vision for MKIP	Alison Broom & Steve McGinnes	- MKIP Board - MKIP Communications Strategy - Shared Service Boards	4	3	12	

Appendix A

Service & Ref	Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Inherent rating		
				I	L	Σ
Corporate 6	Further financial restriction Future government decisions post financial settlement that further restrict the Council's income	Mark Green & Ellie Dunnet	- Efficiency statement - Budget monitoring	5	2	10
Operational Economic Dev MED11	Restriction in access to government funding through SELEP/KMEP Government putting more funding through South East Local Enterprise Partnership and Kent & Medway Economic Partnership, leading potential restrictions in funding due to uncertainty in the bidding process	John Foster	- Feedback to KCC - Agreed to re-establish joint management group to review agendas/papers and address concerns earlier	4	4	16
Corporate 7	Over cautious administration Councils not taking 'brave decisions' due to elections and a lack of (or ill-defined) risk appetite	Alison Broom & Angela Woodhouse	- Governance review	3	2	6
Corporate 8	Demographic change Aging population and reduction of people in workforce	Alison Broom	- Residents' survey	2	2	4
Corporate 9	Slow or inaccurate decision making Lack of swiftness and information in decision making	Mark Green & Angela Woodhouse	- Governance review	2	2	4
Corporate 10	IT requirements progress faster than budget allows Lack of investment technology, inability to maintain pace with requirements	Mark Green & Andy Cole	- ICT Commissioning Group	3	1	3

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All 10 corporate risks on the register will be updated over the next couple of months, to ensure that they remain current. Most of these risks were identified at the beginning of the year, and so we will be working with the risk owners to update the risk descriptions, and then to identify any related risk actions necessary to manage the impact and likelihood of the risks.

Corporate risks by their very nature are more broadly linked to the achievement of the Council's priorities. Therefore, by keeping the corporate level risks under review and updated, the Council is able to remain aware of the key risks and barriers to the achievement objectives, and react and take action accordingly.

Housing & Homelessness

Perhaps one of the key insights provided from the risk assessments at the operational level was the identification of some significant risks being faced by the Council's Housing Service. Four of the Council's highest scored risks come for the operational risks associated with Housing, and the challenges around Homelessness:

Service & Ref	Risk (title & full description)	Risk Owner	Key Existing Controls	Inherent rating		
				I	L	Σ
Operational Housing H2	Housing market failure leading to an increase in homelessness approaches Inability to meet service demand, leading to longer stays in TA, increasing TA spend, reduced TA options due to capacity issues, leading to possible suitability issues. Potential for legal challenge due to likely increase in breaches of statutory duties. Focus shift from managing preventions, to resolving homeless cases due to service staffing constraints contributing to a cycle of increased approaches.	Ellie Kershaw	- Triage service in place. - Monthly and quarterly reports on service indicators, raising resourcing needs.	5	5	25
Operational Housing H3	Lack of suitable temporary accommodation options Open to legal challenge by judicial review. Excessive demand to keep moving houses leading to drain on team staffing resource. Difficulty in recovering rent. Increase in departmental spend. London boroughs taking temporary accommodation. Lack of >2 bed accommodation.	Ellie Kershaw	- Securing Maidstone owned TA - Working with more providers - Appeals on website for more providers - Working with provider to secure more disabled facilities	5	4	20
Operational Housing H6	Lack of affordable housing The Government reduced rents in social housing in England by 1% a year for four years from April 2016. This applies to both social rent and affordable rent. This could impact on the ability of registered providers (housing associations) to provide much needed affordable homes for rent. New powers through the planning system are also being proposed to allow starter-homes to count as affordable housing obligations. This could reduce affordable rented provision even further. Reduced supply will mean applicants on the Housing Register will be waiting longer to be re-housed.	Andrew Connors	- Adopted Affordable Housing DPD - New Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020. - Emerging Local Plan Policy - Viability evidence - Monitoring impact of 1% reduction - New s106 agreement agreed with legal	4	4	16
Operational Housing H4	Inability to access affordable private rents in Maidstone Minimal affordable renting options for residents in Maidstone. Resulting in increase in out of borough placements for homeless households. Failure to meet corporate goals. Increase in homeless approaches due to lack of affordable local renting options	Ellie Kershaw	- Survey of local landlords regarding current MBC incentive. - Best practice review approach of other local authorities Social Lettings services. - Incentive scheme reviewed	3	5	15

This is a good example of where we are seeing the raising of risks from the bottom up, with the operational level identifying potential consequences based on higher risk impact and likelihood.

What are we doing about the risks?

A key function of any risk management process is deciding what (if any) action should be taken to address the identified risks. The Council’s risk management framework requires action to be taken to manage any risks that fall within the Black/Red rating. The purpose of risk action is to reduce either the impact or likelihood of the risk.

Figure 1: High level risks (inherent)

Likelihood	5			2		1
	4			3		1
	3			3		1
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
		Impact				

This matrix shows the operational risks with an impact and likelihood score of 15 or above.

These risks may be more likely to occur, and if they do, the consequences are more significant and could prevent the Council and Service from delivering its objectives.

There are 7 risks that inherently sit above the risk appetite of the Council.

Figure 2: High level risks (residual)

Likelihood	5			2		1
	4			3		2
	3			3		1
	2					
	1					
		1	2	3	4	5
		Impact				

This matrix shows the movement of the 7 high level risks, following the identification of planned controls and the re-assessment of the impact and likelihood.

The residual risk assessment takes into account controls that are planned, or where additional action needs to happen in order to manage the risk down to an acceptable level.

The re-assessment of these risks leaves **3** risks that, even with planned actions and controls, sit above the risk appetite of the Council. We provide further details of these risks below.

As we progress with the implementation and embedding of the risk management process, the audit team will meet with risk owners on a regular basis to review the effectiveness of the controls and the effect on the risk impact and likelihood. This will take place over the course of the next few months, as we begin to update and refresh risk registers to complement the service plans as we move into 2017/18.

Appendix A

The table below provides details on the planned actions that the Council will take in order to manage the risk, and the effect that this is likely to have on the overall risk rating:

Service & Ref	Risk Title	Risk Owner	Inherent rating			Controls planned	Effective Date	Mitigated rating		
			I	L	Σ			I	L	Σ
Operational Housing H2	Housing market failure leading to an increase in homelessness approaches	Ellie Kershaw	5	5	25	Continuous delivery of a range of affordable housing. Improvements made to reduce unit cost of homelessness. Requests made for additional staffing proposed to improve preventions. Business continuity planning to deal with emergency situations. Recruiting bus improvement officer to identify efficiencies w/in service Employing 2 temp preventions officers Council owned/built properties	Ongoing	5	5	25
Operational Housing H3	Lack of suitable temporary accommodation options	Ellie Kershaw	5	4	20	Increase the number of directly owned TA through purchase and convert. Continuing to find more providers. Make deals with London boroughs to use proportion of their properties Bus improvement review of processes	Ongoing	4	4	16
Operational Building Surv. BCR8	Retention and recruitment of professional staff	David Harrison	4	4	16	Need to address remuneration restrictions	March 2017	4	4	16
Operational Housing H4	Inability to access affordable private rents in Maidstone	Ellie Kershaw	3	5	15	MBC investigating purchasing property.	Ongoing	3	4	12
Operational Economic Dev MED11	Restriction in access to government funding through SELEP/KMEP	John Foster	4	4	16	Discussions with MPs Monitor future bids	Autumn 2016	3	3	9
Operational Housing H6	Lack of affordable housing	Andrew Connors	4	4	16	Review s106 schemes, viability evidence and property types to be delivered in order to maximise affordable rent Creation of Local Housing Company to build/acquire new affordable and private homes to meet the commercial and housing objectives of the Council. Delivery of council led development through acquisition of land and on land already in our ownership. Local Plan Policy (including Affordable Housing SPD).	On going	3	3	9
Operational Economic Dev MED10	Skills shortage	John Foster	3	5	15	Bus/education partnership task & finish group	01/09/2016	3	3	9

As a result of the Council's response to the high level risks, and the planned actions, 3 of the 7 risks can be managed down to the amber level.

Next Steps

All risk owners involved in the review and update of their risks have been really engaged and positive about the process, and so we intend to build on this over the coming months to ensure that the risk profile and awareness remains at a good level, and so that we can continue to make improvements to the effectiveness of the process.

One significant piece of work being undertaken is to support the Council in establishing and articulating risk appetite and tolerances. This will provide guidance around the amount of risk that the Council is willing to seek or accept in pursuit of its long term objectives. In September 2016 we presented CLT with a number of different approaches which could be used. With an agreed format in mind, the next steps will be for us to engage with Members and Senior Officers about how we best reflect the Councils philosophy to risk taking, into an overall appetite statement. We anticipate this work to begin in **November 2016**.

Further key next steps include:

- Discussions are under way with Policy and Information about integrating risk management with the Council's service planning process.
- Establish a web presence on the Council's intranet in order to increase awareness of the Risk Management process and allow access to key documents and templates – **November 2016**.
- In association with Policy and Information adapt the Covalent system to reflect the Risk Management Framework and upload all identified risks into the system – **December 2016**.
- A template has been developed and disseminated to managers to facilitate the integration of risk assessment into the Council's decision-making process and to promote a positive risk culture. Further work is ongoing to ensure that this is embedded.

Definitions

RISK IMPACT

Level	Service risk	Reputation Risk	H&S	Legal Risk	Financial Risk	En'ment Risk
Catas-trophic (5)	Ongoing failure to provide an adequate service	Perceived as failing authority requiring intervention	Responsible for death	Litigation almost certain and difficult to defend. Breaches of law punishable by imprisonment or significant fines	Uncontrollable financial loss or overspend over £500k	Permanent, major environmental or public health damage
Major (4)	Failure to deliver Council priorities Poor service. Disrupted 5 days+	Significant adverse national publicity	Fails to prevent death, causes extensive perm injuries or LT sick	Litigation expected, but defensible Breaches of law punishable by fines	Financial loss or overspend greater than £250k	Long term major public health or environmental incident (1yr+)
Moderate (3)	Unsatisfactory performance Service disrupted/ stopped 3-5 days	Adverse national publicity or significant adverse local publicity	Fails to prevent extensive, permanent injuries or LT sickness	Complaint likely, litigation possible Breaches of regs or standards	Financial loss or overspend greater than £50k	Medium term major public health or environmental incident (up to 1yr)
Minor (2)	Marginal reduction in performance Service disrupted/ stopped 1-2 days	Minor adverse local publicity	Medical treatment required, potential long term injury or sickness	Unlikely to cause complaint Breaches of local procedures	Financial loss or overspend greater than £10k	Short term public health or environmental incident (weeks)
Minimal (1)	No significant service impact Service disruption up to 1 day	Unlikely to cause adverse publicity	First aid level injuries		Financial loss or overspend under £10k	Environmental incident with no lasting detrimental effect

RISK LIKELIHOOD

Type	Probability	Detail description
Almost certain (5)	90%+	Without action is likely to occur; frequent similar occurrences in local government/Council history
Probable (2)	60%-90%	Strong possibility; similar occurrences known often in local government/Council history
Possible (3)	40%-60%	Might occur; similar occurrences experienced in local government/Council history
Unlikely (2)	10%-40%	Not expected; rare but not unheard of occurrence in local government/Council history
Rare (1)	0%-10%	Very unlikely to occur; no recent similar instances in local government/Council history