Changing our council tax support scheme

Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently asked questions to the council tax support scheme consultation for the financial year 2017-18.

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Why is your council tax support scheme changing?

Our existing council tax support scheme has been in place, with some minor changes, for four years. Now Ashford Borough Council and all other local authorities in Kent have been asked to undertake a comprehensive review of their scheme and ask claimants and other interested organisations for their views on a revised version of the scheme.

When you pay your council tax to Ashford Borough Council, we only keep 10p from every £1. We distribute the rest to Kent County Council (73p in every £1), Kent Police and Crime Commissioner (10p), Kent Fire and Rescue Services (5p) and if you live in a parished area, your town or parish council (2p).

As you will have no doubt seen and heard in the media, the major preceptors to whom your council tax is distributed (for example, Kent County Council and Kent Police) are facing shortfalls in funding from central government and have asked us to consider revising our scheme so that effectively they receive more money to fund the services they provide to you.

What is council tax?

Council tax is a local tax on residential properties that helps to pay for local services provided by Kent County Council, the local authority in Ashford and other boroughs and districts in Kent, as well as Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and services you receive from parish councils.

The amount you have to pay depends on the property band that your home is placed in, which is based on the value of your property. Ashford Borough Council is responsible for collecting the council tax payments made by Ashford residents. It then distributes this to the other authorities in the amounts outlined above.

Council tax is the responsibility of people living in the property. However, if you are the only person living in your home you may be eligible for a discount. Council tax on unoccupied properties is the responsibility of the owner.
What is council tax support?
Instead of receiving a payment towards council tax, the amount of council tax charged is reduced. Our scheme is as fair as possible and upholds the principles of the government when council tax support was introduced in 2013 – i.e. people who are of working age are incentivised to return to work, while those who will find that returning to work is more challenging (such as disabled claimants) are protected.

What specifically is changing?
Please refer to the document, Changing our council tax support scheme – the details, which lists the proposed changes, the people or groups who these may affect, and tells you how you can contribute to the consultation.

Who will the new changes affect?
As with the early years of the scheme, pensioners will not be affected by the changes. The council is the only authority in Kent to offer some additional support to disabled claimants and this policy will remain in place. Also, if you live in your property alone then you will still receive your single person discount. However, if you are a claimant of working age then you will be affected by the proposed changes and may have to pay an additional amount towards your council tax bill.

Will I have to reapply for council tax support?
If you currently receive council tax support you will not have to reapply. You will automatically be reassessed using the revised criteria when a finalised scheme has been determined. This will be indicated on the council tax bill you receive in March 2017.

How much more will I have to pay?
It is likely that most working-age people who qualify for council tax support will have to pay more than they do now. Pensioners are not affected by the proposed change and will receive similar support to that which they currently receive.

When will we know what the final system is?
The new scheme will be considered by councillors in December 2016, following the results of our public consultation over the summer.
Difficulty in understanding this leaflet?
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