



Rother District Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25 Consultation

1. Introduction to the Council Tax Reduction Consultation

Each year Rother District Council must decide whether to change the Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants in its area. There are no changes for Pension Age applicants as they are part of the national scheme. This year the Council is deciding whether to significantly change the working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

We are legally required to consult on any proposed changes to the scheme and we're asking you to take part in this consultation to find out what you think about our proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which would start from 1 April 2024. We want to essentially make two changes to the scheme for the coming financial year namely:

- provide up to 100% support for households on the lowest incomes; and
- remove the minimum award of £5 per week so that any amount of Council Tax Reduction will be payable.

Thank you for taking the time to share your views. It should take around 10 minutes to fill in this consultation.

2. Background to the Consultation

What is Council Tax Reduction?

Council Tax Reduction is a discount for Council Tax. The level of discount is based on the income of the household. Currently the maximum discount for Pension age households is 100% and for working age households 80% of Council Tax.

The Council can only make changes to the working age scheme as the Council Tax Reduction scheme for pensioners is prescribed by Government.

Why is a change to the Council Tax Reduction scheme being considered?

Councils are required to review their schemes each year and decide if they want to make any changes.

Before any changes can be implemented, they must be subject to public consultation.

Rother District Council is proposing two changes to its existing scheme. The Council has a duty

to consult you and provide you with the opportunity to tell us your views on the proposed changes to our Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Council is consulting on the following **changes** to its scheme for 2023/24 (more detail on the change proposals is given further in the consultation):

To increase the maximum level of support for working age applicants from 80% to 100% . This is designed to provide more support to low income households **(Part 1); and**

To remove the current minimum Council Tax Reduction level of £5 per week so that **any** amount of reduction will be payable **(Part 2)**.

All other parts of the existing scheme will remain unchanged.

In the Rother District Council area, 6401 people currently receive Council Tax Reduction. 3648 are working age and are therefore potentially affected by the proposed changes.

The gross cost of the scheme is c£8.2m which is spread across the County Council (74.45%), the District Council (8.73%), Fire (4.59%) and Police (10.55%), and 1.68% going to Parish Councils in accordance with the proportion of Council Tax which each organisation levies (which is shown in brackets).

Who will this affect?

Working age households in the Rother District Council area who currently receive or will apply for Council Tax Reduction.

Pension age households will not be affected as Central Government prescribes their scheme.

Are there any alternatives to changing the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

We have considered continuing with the current scheme - this would provide less support for certain households. The Council feels that it is essential low income households are supported as much as possible at this time.

1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme:

This question must be answered before you can continue. *

Yes

No

3. Part 1 – Increasing the level of support within the Income Grid scheme for all applicants of working age

As explained in the background information, the Council is primarily consulting on the following proposals to change the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1st April 2024. This will provide increased support to those households on the lowest incomes.

Your responses are a part of this consultation.

The current 'income-grid' scheme for Council Tax Reduction was introduced on 1st April 2019 and it replaced the traditional means-tested scheme which had been in place since the introduction of Council Tax Reduction in 2013.

The introduction of the new scheme has been successful albeit that it maintained the maximum level of support for working age applicants at 80%. The scheme has however brought many advantages, not least that:

it assists a large number of households with payment of their Council Tax;

it is easy to understand for applicants; and

it is administratively efficient.

The Council now proposes to make changes to the scheme to provide more support, especially to those on lower incomes. The scheme will also be adjusted to some degree to allow for increases in income. The changes to the scheme are shown below:

Table 1 shows current scheme for working age applicants; and

Table 2 shows the proposed scheme for working age applicants.

Table 1. - The CURRENT scheme for working age applicants

Band	Discount	Passported	Single (weekly net income)	Couple (weekly net income)	Family with 1 child (weekly net income)	Family with more than 1 child (weekly net income)
1*	80%	Relevant Benefit	£0 to £112.39	£0.00 to £159.72	£0 to £218.89	£0 to £278.05
2	60%	N/A	£112.40 to £171.55	£159.73 to £218.89	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21

3	40%	N/A	£171.56 to £230.72	£186.78 to £239.23	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39
4	20%	N/A	£230.73 to £289.90	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39	£396.40 to £455.55
5	0%	N/A	Over £289.90	Over £337.21	Over £396.39	Over £455.55

* 'Relevant Benefit' means that the applicant or partner is in receipt of Income Support; Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Related Employment & Support Allowance

Table 2. - The PROPOSED scheme for working age applicants

Band	Discount	Passported	Single (weekly net income)	Couple (weekly net income £)	Family with 1 child (weekly net income £)	Family with more than 1 child (weekly net income £)
1*	100%	Relevant Benefit	£0 to £112.39	£0.00 to £159.72	£0 to £218.89	£0 to £278.05
2	60%	N/A	£112.40 to £171.55	£159.73 to £218.89	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21
3	40%	N/A	£171.56 to £230.72	£218.90 to £278.05	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39
4	20%	N/A	£230.73 to £289.90	£278.06 to £337.21	£337.22 to £396.39	£396.40 to £455.55
5	0%	N/A	Over £289.90	Over £337.21	Over £396.39	Over £455.55

* 'Relevant Benefit' means that the applicant or partner is in receipt of Income Support; Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Related Employment & Support Allowance

It is anticipated that the majority of applicants will either receive the same level of support or see an increase in the support given and the Council is keen to protect as many applicants as possible.

The benefits of doing this are:

It provides more targeted support to those on the lowest incomes; and

It retains the advantages of the existing scheme design which is easily understood by all applicants;

The drawbacks of doing this are:

The scheme is more generous in some cases and therefore there may be an increase in scheme costs.

2. Do you agree with revising the income-based banded discount scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

3. If you disagree with revising the income-banded scheme please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

5. Part 2 - Removing the minimum Council Tax Reduction level of £5 per week

Under the current scheme, Council Tax Reduction is not paid where the amount to which an applicant would otherwise be entitled is less than £5.00 per reduction week (or £5.00 x 1/7 per day). It is the Council's intention to remove this limit so that **any** entitlement would be payable.

The benefit of this Part is:

The change will ensure that applicants receive **any** reduction they are entitled to.

The drawbacks of doing this are:

It will potentially increase the cost of the scheme

4. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? *

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

5. If you disagree please explain why and what alternative would you propose?

7. Alternatives to changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

If the Council maintains the current scheme, it will be less supportive to low-income households and administratively more complex. The proposals set out in this consultation will deliver more targeted support and allow the scheme to be more flexible.

6. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme.

7. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).

8. If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.

8. About You

We collect this information to help us understand the communities that we serve so that services and policies can be delivered to meet the needs of everybody. Please feel free to leave questions that you do not wish to answer. All of the information gathered in this questionnaire is confidential and anonymous.

Your personal information will not be passed on to anyone and your personal details will not be reported alongside your responses.

9. Are you completing this form on behalf of an organisation or group?

Yes

No

If yes, please tell us the name of the organisation/group and add any other comments you wish to make.

9. Questions for Individuals

Please answer the following questions.

10. Do you live in the Rother District Council area?

Yes

No

11. Are you currently receiving Council Tax Reduction?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Don't know

12. What is your current employment status? Please tick all that apply

Apprenticeship scheme/ training

Employed / self-employed

Employed fixed term

Not employed and looking for work

Not employed and not looking for work

Retired

- Student
- Unable to work
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify):

13. Are you liable to pay Council Tax?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

14. What is your sex?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify):

15. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74

- 75-84
- 85+
- Prefer not to say

16. Do you have an impairment, health condition or learning difference that has a substantial or long-term impact on your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? (tick all that apply)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

**17. If you have answered 'yes', please tick the box (s) that best describe your impairment(s).
(This information helps us improve access and remove barriers to our services).**

- Blind or visual impairment uncorrected by glasses
- Deaf or have a hearing impairment
- A long-standing illness or health condition e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic asthma, epilepsy, cardiovascular conditions, sickle cell anaemia, motor neurone disease, some forms of dementia
- A mental health difficulty, e.g. schizophrenia, depression, anxiety disorder, some forms of dementia
- A physical impairment or mobility issues, e.g. walking, dexterity, difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches
- A social/ communication impairment, e.g. speech and language impairment or Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder
- A specific learning difficulty e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D
- An impairment, health condition or learning difference that is not listed above
- Prefer not to say

To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong?

- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- White
- Other Ethnic Group
- Prefer not to say

18. Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background

19. Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background

20. Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed or multiple background

21. White

- English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British

- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Roma
- Any other White background

22. Other ethnic group?

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

23. Next steps....

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

The consultation closes at midnight **dd/mmm/yyyy**

We will listen carefully to what you tell us and take the responses into consideration when making a final decision on the 2024/25 scheme.

Following the decision, the full results from the consultation will be available on the Council's website.

The new scheme will start on 1 April 2024. The Council will consider the impact of the scheme annually and consult again if it thinks further changes need to be made.