



Buckinghamshire Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026-27 Consultation

A new Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Buckinghamshire Council

Each year Buckinghamshire 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.

In Buckinghamshire, currently around 22,196 Council Tax payers receive Council Tax Reduction of which 13,912 are of working age. The gross cost of the scheme is spread across Buckinghamshire Council (84.4%), the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley (13.0%), and the Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Authority (2.6%) in accordance with the proportion of Council Tax which each organisation levies (which is shown in brackets). Currently, the total cost of the scheme is around £32.8m, with around £19.7m supporting working age households. The proposed scheme costs are estimated at £31.7m.

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. If agreed the Council Tax Reduction Scheme would start from 1 April 2026.

How your data is used by the Council is detailed in the Council's Privacy Notices as follows:

Buckinghamshire Council Tax Privacy Notice - [Privacy and Council Tax | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Buckinghamshire General Privacy Notice - [Privacy notice | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

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

Background to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme consultation

What is Council Tax Reduction?

Council Tax Reduction is a discount that helps people on low incomes pay their Council Tax bill. The level of discount is based on the income of the household.

Why are we proposing changes?

The existing means tested system is largely based on the previous Council Tax Benefit system that was in place prior to the introduction of Council Tax Reduction in 2013. We want to:

- continue to support the lowest income households;
- make the scheme easier to understand and access;
- make the scheme work better with the Universal Credit system;
- support families and applicants who receive a disability benefit;
- take away the need for constant changes in awards;
- make the scheme easier to manage.

What scheme is the Council proposing?

We are proposing an income banded scheme that is easier to understand but continues to support the most vulnerable. The changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme will affect **working age households** in the Council's area who will get Council Tax Reduction from 1 April 2026. **Pension age households will not see any change as the scheme to support this group is set out by Central Government.**

The areas we are consulting on are:

- Introducing an income banded scheme for all working age applicants. The scheme will provide support to low income households up to 100% of Council Tax liability depending on income; **(Part 1)**;
- Maintaining the standard Non Dependant Deduction of £5 **(Part 2)**;
- Disregarding a number of elements of Universal Credit **(Part 3)**;
- Replacing the current variable earnings disregards with a standard deduction of £25 per week **(Part 4)**;
- Supporting families by continuing to disregard all Child Benefit and Child Maintenance **(Part 5)**;
- Continuing to disregard disability benefits (Personal Independence Payments, Armed Forces Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance) and providing additional disregards of £50 where the applicant, partner or dependant is in receipt of a disability benefit **(Part 6)**; and
- Disregarding the support component of Employment and Support Allowance and Carer's Allowance **(Part 7)**;
- Continuing to protect War Pensioners by disregarding War Pensions or War Disablement pensions in full **(Part 8)**;
- Reducing the capital limit (maximum capital) to £6,000 **(Part 9)**;
- Removing the Extended Payment Provisions **(Part 10)**; and

- Introducing a Transitional Protection scheme where applicants may see a loss in support due to the changes **(Part 11)**.

Under the current scheme, the Council can provide a reduction that may be up to 80% of the Council Tax liability and in some cases, where an applicant is deemed to be vulnerable, provide up to 100% support. ("Vulnerable" in the current scheme means a working age person or their partner or any dependant is in receipt of an enhanced or severe disability premium ; or they or their partner are in receipt of a support component within their Employment and Support Allowance; or they are in receipt of the Limited Capability for Work element of Universal Credit; or they or their partner or any dependant are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Armed Forces Independence Payment, War Disablement Pension or a War Widow's/Widower's Pension; or they are a lone parent who is responsible for and resides with a dependant who is aged under 5 years).

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

This question must be answered before you can continue.

☐ Yes

☐ No

Part 1 - Introducing an income banded scheme for all working age applicants

We are proposing a new Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which will be introduced from 1 April 2026 for all working age applicants. This is an income banded scheme based on household income. The proposed scheme will:

- provide a **standard** level of support to **all** working age applicants on the lowest incomes (up to 100%);
- be easy to understand;
- make claiming easy; and
- be simple to manage.

The scheme will work with the roll out of Universal Credit and will provide stability to Council Tax payers by making sure that minor changes in income won't affect entitlement.

We are proposing a simplified, income banded scheme. Table 1 shows the level of discount that will be available.

Table 1 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme Income Bands

Household Categories	1	2	3	4	5
	100%	75%	50%	25%	0%
Net Weekly Income Bands					
Single	£0.00 - £125.00	£125.01 - £175.00	£175.01 - £225.00	£225.01 - £275.00	£275.01+
Single +1 child	£0.00 - £225.00	£225.01 - £275.00	£275.01 - £325.00	£325.01 - £375.00	£375.01+
Single 2+ children	£0.00 - £300.00	£300.01 - £350.00	£350.01 - £400.00	£400.01 - £450.00	£450.01+
Couple	£0.00 - £175.00	£175.01 - £225.00	£225.01 - £275.00	£275.01 - £325.00	£325.01+
Couple +1 child	£0.00 - £275.00	£275.01 - £325.00	£325.01 - £375.00	£375.01 - £425.00	£425.01+
Couple +2 children	£0.00 - £350.00	£350.01 - £400.00	£400.01 - £450.00	£450.01 - £500.00	£500.01+

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Where any applicant, or their partner are in receipt of Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based) or Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related), discount will be awarded as shown in Band 1.

Changes to entitlement to Council Tax Reduction

We recognise that change can be unsettling, and the proposals may impact some people more than others. Where an applicant would receive less support and experience exceptional hardship, they would be able to apply for extra help through our Exceptional Hardship Scheme.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- provide support (up to 100%) to all working age applicants depending on their income;
- treat all working age applicants equally by providing the same maximum support level;
- provide protections for disabled applicants by disregarding disability benefits;
- provide protection for carers by disregarding carer's allowance;
- be simpler and easier to understand;
- make savings in administration costs caused by the introduction of Universal Credit; and
- provide greater stability to Council Tax Reduction recipients by reducing the number of Council Tax demands during the year, preventing multiple changes to monthly instalments

However, we recognise that:

- The removal of the vulnerable group may mean that some applicants will receive less support. Where this happens any applicant will be able to apply for extra help through the Council's Exceptional Hardship Scheme.

2. Do you agree with introducing an income-based banded discount scheme as shown above?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

3. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 2 - Creating a standard Non Dependant Deduction of £5 per week.

Under the current Council Tax Reduction scheme, an applicant's entitlement to Council Tax Reduction can be reduced where other adults (non-dependants) live in the premises (other than the applicant or partner). The charge made is £5 per week for each non-dependant with some exceptions where either the taxpayer or non-dependant is disabled.

The new scheme proposes to introduce a standard non-dependant charge of £5 per week for **all** non-dependants.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- Maintain the same deduction for most households with non-dependants; and
- Make the scheme easy to manage.

However, we recognise that:

- Where a household currently has an exception from the non-dependant deduction, this will no longer apply.

4. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

5. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 3 - Disregarding certain elements of Universal Credit

In order to move to an income-banded scheme, it's important that certain benefits would be disregarded from the calculation of income. To protect applicants who need support most, we propose that any amount decided as being awarded for the following elements of Universal Credit would not be counted when assessing a person's income:

- Housing Element;
- Disabled Child Element;
- Carer's Element;
- Limited Capability for Work & Work Related Activity Elements (LCWRA Element)

We are proposing the change because it would:

- Help the people who need support most.

However, we recognise that:

- Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and are in receipt of Universal Credit.

6. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

7. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 4 - Replacing the current earnings disregards with a standard £25 per week disregard (irrespective of the number of hours worked)

Currently the scheme provides for a variety of disregards from earnings. These range from £5 per week for a single person to £25 per week for a lone parent.

The new scheme will provide a single standard disregard of up to £25 per week to any earnings of the applicant (or partner if they have one). The new scheme will not apply any other disregards to earnings (either additional earnings disregards or child care disregards). For those applicants who have dependants, the income levels allowed for in the scheme are higher to allow for any child care costs.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- Encourage work at any level or number of hours; and
- Make the scheme simple and easy to manage.

However, we recognise that:

- The change may affect a limited number of applicants who have high childcare costs.

8. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

9. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 5 - Continuing to protect families by disregarding Child Benefit and Child Maintenance

In order to move to an income banded scheme, it's important that certain benefits and incomes would be disregarded from the calculation of income. In order to protect families, we propose that Child Benefit and Child Maintenance would not be counted when assessing a person's income.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- Continue to help and support families.

However, we recognise that:

- Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

10. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

11. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 6 - Continuing to disregard Personal Independence Payments, Armed Forces Independence Payments and Disability Living Allowance and providing a disregard of £50 where the applicant, partner or dependant is in receipt of one of those benefits

In order to continue to protect the most vulnerable, the proposed Council Tax Reduction scheme will disregard the following disability benefits:

- Personal Independence Payments;
- Armed Forces Independence Payments; and
- Disability Living Allowance.

In addition to disregarding disability benefits, the proposed scheme will provide a further £50 per week disregard where the applicant or partner or dependant is in receipt of a disability benefit.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- provide help and support to disabled persons.

However, we recognise that:

- Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

12. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

13. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 7 - Introducing a new disregard for the support component of Employment and Support Allowance and Carer's Allowance

In order to provide additional support for applicants (or their partner if they have one) who are unable to work and for those who provide care, the new scheme would fully disregard the following:

- the support component of Employment and Support Allowance; and
- Carer's Allowance

This is an enhancement to the current scheme which treats both payments as income.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- Support applicants who are most vulnerable and the people who assist them.

However, we recognise that:

- Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

14. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

15. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 8 - Protecting War Pensioners by continuing to disregard War Pensions or War Disablement pensions in full

The proposed scheme would protect certain war pensioners by continuing to disregard the war pension or war disablement pension in full. This would be a continuation of the existing provisions.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- maintain the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

However, we recognise that:

- Although the proposal could increase the cost of the scheme, there are no negatives for people who qualify for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

16. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

17. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 9 - Reducing the capital limit to £6,000

Currently, the capital limit is £16,000. Any capital held which is valued at less than £6,000 is ignored.

The proposed scheme would reduce the capital limit to £6,000.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- Still protect applicants with savings below the limit of £6,000.

However, we recognise that:

- Where applicants have more than £6,000 in capital, for example savings, no Council Tax Reduction will be given.

18. Do you agree with this proposal?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

19. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 10 - Removing the Extended Payment provision.

In certain cases, where applicants have been in receipt of prescribed benefits (such as Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance) and move into work which ends their entitlement, Council Tax Reduction can be paid for an additional four weeks after commencing work or increasing their hours. Similar provisions do not exist for Universal Credit claimants. As Universal Credit is to replace those existing (legacy) benefits, the proposed scheme does not include the extended payment provision.

We are proposing the change because it would:

- Treat all applicants in receipt of DWP benefits equally; and
- The change is simple and will be easier to understand.

However, we recognise that:

- Applicants who are still in receipt of legacy benefits and who move into work before being transferred to Universal Credit may lose any potential extended payment.

20. Do you agree with this proposal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

21. If you disagree please explain why. You can also use this space to let us know if you have any alternative suggestions.

Part 11 - Transitional Relief

The proposed new Income Banded Scheme for Council Tax Reduction is designed to make the system fairer and easier to understand. However, we recognise that some households may see a reduction in the support they receive.

To help ease this transition, we are proposing Transitional Relief (TR) for households that would otherwise experience a significant loss.

Transitional Relief will be paid as a single amount on 1 April to households receiving Council Tax Reduction on the date the scheme changes. This payment will help cover part of the difference between current and new Council Tax Reduction entitlement when the scheme changes.

Transitional Relief (TR) will only apply to Households who:

- Are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction on the date the scheme changes.
- Have capital of £6,000 or less.

Calculation:

- If your weekly loss is between £10 and £15, TR will equal 50% of the amount above £10, multiplied by 52 weeks
- If your weekly net loss is more than £15, your Transitional Relief will equal £2.50 (which is 50% of the first £5 above £10) plus 100% of any amount above £15, multiplied by 52 weeks. This ensures your weekly loss does not exceed £12.50 (equivalent to a maximum annual loss of £650).

This means that everyone will still pay at least £12.50 of any weekly loss, even if your loss is much higher.

Transitional Relief is temporary and designed to ease the transition, not remove all differences between the current and new scheme.

Transitional Relief will be applied for a maximum of three years and will reduce gradually each year in a phased Reduction:

- Year 1: Full TR amount
- Year 2: 50% of Year 1 amount
- Year 3 onwards: No TR

22. Do you agree that Transitional Relief should only apply to households receiving CTR on the scheme change date?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not Sure

Comments

23. Do you agree that households losing £10 or less per week should not receive Transitional Relief?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

Comments

24. Do you agree with the way Transitional Relief is calculated (tiered approach and cap)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

Comments

25. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the proposed Transitional Relief scheme?

Your comments and suggestions on the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Whilst the Council must have regard to its financial situation and does require savings from the scheme, the proposed scheme will provide a high level of support to working age households depending on income.

The scheme will treat all working age applicants **equally** whilst still maintaining protections by continuing to disregard disability benefits and carer's allowance.

The proposed scheme is easier for people to understand and less complicated to manage.

26. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme or any alternative suggestions you have.

About you

We will use the information you provide here only for the purpose of this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details.

27. 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.

Questions for Individuals

We want to hear from as many people as possible to understand the views and needs across Buckinghamshire. The following questions help us see if the communities we serve have had the opportunity to be heard through this activity.

All questions are optional. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer, or you can skip all the questions by clicking 'Next page' at the bottom of the page.

28. Do you live in the Buckinghamshire Council area?

☐ Yes

☐ No

29. Do you pay Council Tax?

☐ Yes

☐ No

30. Are you currently receiving Council Tax Reduction?

☐ Yes

☐ No

31. Are you

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ I prefer not to say

32. What is your age?

☐ Under 16

☐ 16 to 24

☐ 25 to 34

☐ 35 to 44

☐ 45 to 59

☐ 60 to 74

☐ 75 to 84

☐ Over 85

☐ I Prefer not to say

33. Would you describe your ethnic group?

☐ Asian - British

☐ Asian - Bangladeshi

☐ Asian - Chinese

- ☐ Asian - Indian
- ☐ Asian - Pakistani
- ☐ Any other Asian background
- ☐ Black - African
- ☐ Black - British
- ☐ Black - Caribbean
- ☐ Any other Black, African or Caribbean background
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black British
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - Mixed or Multiple Ethnic backgrounds British
- ☐ Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background
- ☐ White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- ☐ White - Irish
- ☐ White - Gypsy or English traveller
- ☐ White - Irish Traveller
- ☐ White - European
- ☐ Any other White background - Please give details below
- ☐ Other ethnic group - Arab
- ☐ Other ethnic group - Arab British
- ☐ Other ethnic group
- ☐ I prefer not to say

34. Do you consider yourself to have a disability / disabilities, impairment(s) or long term health condition(s)?

- ☐ Disability / disabilities
- ☐ Impairment(s)

☐ Long term health condition(s)

☐ No

☐ I prefer not to say

Thank you for completing the survey.

The consultation closes at 23:59 2nd February 2026

We will review all of the responses we receive and take the responses into consideration when making a final decision on the 2026/27 Council Tax Reduction scheme.

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

Any new scheme would start on 1 April 2026. We consider the impact of the scheme annually and would consult again if further changes were proposed.