

A Fairer Council Tax: phase 2

Organisation (if applicable):

Monmouthshire County Council

Responses to consultations may be made public. To keep your response anonymous (including email addresses) tick the box:

Questions about Council Tax bands and tax-rates

Please read about the 3 possible approaches to designing a new Council Tax system before answering the following questions. We welcome evidence about the possible benefits for, and impacts on, households and councils. We are particularly interested in the views of people with lived experience of disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have experience working with people with protected characteristics.

Question 1

What Council Tax band are you currently in? Please choose an option, you may wish to refer to your latest Council Tax bill or [you can check your council tax band by looking up your address or postcode](#).

- Band A
- Band B
- Band C
- Band D
- Band E
- Band F
- Band G
- Band H
- Band I
- I don't pay Council Tax
- Not applicable

Question 2

Which council area do you live in?

- Isle of Anglesey / Ynys Mon
- Cyngor Gwynedd
- Conwy
- Denbighshire
- Flintshire
- Wrexham
- Powys
- Ceredigion
- Pembrokeshire
- Carmarthenshire

- Swansea
- Neath Port Talbot
- Bridgend
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Caerphilly
- Blaenau Gwent
- Torfaen
- Monmouthshire
- Newport
- Cardiff
- Not applicable

Question 3

The Welsh Government has shown 3 possible approaches for how to design a fairer Council Tax system. We want to ask you about your appetite for reform.

Do you think we should aim for:

- approach 1: minimal reform
- approach 2: modest reform
- approach 3: expanded reform

Or do you have other views or ideas about the approach we should take to the scale of reform (please specify)?

The council is generally in support of council tax reform. However, is concerned about the impact these proposed reforms could have on households across the County.

The accompanying modelling by the IFS indicates that Monmouthshire's council taxpayers could be adversely affected by all 3 approaches, with approach 3 having the greatest impact.

At a time of ongoing cost of living pressures, it is feared that these proposals will lead to unintended pockets of poverty. Therefore the council can only support approach 1 which moves some way to update the current system and to reflect modern property values, whilst providing the least impact to households in the county.

The main concern about approaches 2 and 3 is the scale of the changes to the tax rates per band. An alternative option could be to expand the tax bands as proposed and to scale back the proportions for the tax rate per band.

Question 4

The Welsh Government has described when the changes could be made to the Council Tax bands and tax-rates. Again, we want to ask about your appetite for reform:

Do you think we should make changes according to the:

- fastest timetable: minimal, modest or expanded reform by 1 April 2025
- slower reform: minimal modest or expanded reform starting in 2028
- staged reform: minimal or modest reform in 2025, moving to expanded reform in the next Senedd term

Or do you have other views or ideas about the approach we should take to the pace of reform (please specify)?

Given the potential impact of the approaches to households in Wales, the Council consider the fastest timetable to represent too much of a shock to households. If the expanded reform approach is taken, then this needs to be adopted over time as this would put particular strain on both households and the council's budget (which could be affected by households ability to pay any increased charges). Therefore in our view, any expanded reform needs to be introduced over time to give owners time to adjust to the new charges and for councils to plan their finances.

Welsh Government should be mindful of the current ongoing cost of living crisis and other recent economic factors e.g. rising interest rates and a slowing housing market. Whilst property values in Monmouthshire have increased over recent years, this trend may not continue. Regular revaluations would help ensure that properties are in the most appropriate council tax band.

Consideration also needs be given to the potential impact these reforms will have on possible charges across Wales for households that are also subject to a council tax premium. This could have a considerable impact for properties that are in a higher tax band in areas where a 300% council tax premium applies.

Questions about discounts, disregards and exemptions

Question 5

Do you agree there should be an overall time-limit on Exemption F to discourage properties being left empty and exempt from Council Tax for an indefinite period?

A Class F exemption is currently provided for properties that have been unoccupied since a former resident's death where the only person liable for Council Tax would be the deceased's personal representative, and no grant of probate or letters of administration has been made.

- Yes
- No

Question 6

What do you consider is a reasonable period for obtaining probate or letters of administration?

- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years

- Other (please specify)

This will help to bring properties back into use.

Question 7

Which title do you think should replace the term 'severely mentally impaired'?

- Option A: significant brain impairment
- Option B: significant brain condition

Question 8

Do you agree with the proposed definition to describe a person with a significant brain impairment or condition?

The definition is: "Significant (and permanent) mental condition or change that impacts on the brain's ability to function."

- Yes
- No
- Any other views (please specify)

To ensure that the terminology is the same as the title would suggest changing the definition to "*Significant (and permanent) mental impairment or change that impacts on the brain's ability to function*".

Question 9

Do you have any views on the qualifying criteria for a person with a significant brain impairment or condition to be entitled to an exemption or disregard?

The current qualifying criteria are for a person to be entitled to a qualifying benefit and to have medical certification from a registered practitioner.

- Option A: remove the requirement for a person to be entitled to a qualifying benefit in order to qualify for the exemption or disregard but retain the need for a medical certification
- Option B: where a person can provide proof of clinical diagnosis, the requirement for a person to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit could be removed at the discretion of the council
- Other (please specify)

The requirement to be entitled to a qualifying benefit should be retained as it assists in determination. However we would like to see it amended to "in receipt of".

Questions about Welsh language

Question 10

We would like to know your views on the effects that these proposals would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

No comment

Question 11

Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy approach could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

No comment

Any other views

Question 12

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related points which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to record them.

The council supports a move to more regular revaluations. This should help ensure that the amount of council tax households pay reflects the value of property they live in. Increasing the frequency of revaluations allows for changes in market conditions and will take account of property improvements on a timelier basis.

Should the decision be to move forward with approaches 2 and 3, the council would advocate for a robust transitional relief package to help support households most affected by the changes. The council is also awaiting the proposed accompanying consultation to proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS), as this potentially provides a further mechanism to support households significantly affected by these approaches.

The council is disappointed that alternative options for reform e.g. Land Value Tax, were not also considered as an option for future consideration.