

# Edinburgh residents given chance to shape future of local tax



by Marco Biagi MSP

How would it affect you if you were asked to pay more in Council Tax? What if you were asked to pay less? Is it fair that your bill is calculated solely on the value of the property you live in?

These are more than hypothetical questions. The way we fund our local services is going to change. A cross-party commission, which I co-chair, is currently considering alternatives to the Council Tax, and the Scottish Government is committed to bringing in a fairer system. The outcome will affect every one of us.

As things stand, most of us pay income tax when we work, VAT when we shop and Council Tax based on the property where we live. We're used to this system, but familiarity doesn't make it fair. Council Tax was introduced by the Tories as an alternative to Thatcher's hated Poll Tax, and while it was an improvement it was an imperfect one.

Although some receive full or partial discounts, in general Council Tax doesn't consider an individual's wealth, income or housing status. It lumps together people in completely different circumstances and demands the same payment based only on the crude measure of bands determined by the price of a property in 1991.

Elsewhere in the world, local taxes come in a variety of forms. There are some who believe that the Council Tax should

be replaced by a local income tax or a tax based on land value. Others argue that the Council Tax model should be kept broadly as it is but with additional bands.

While the Commission is considering a range of evidence from experts, I also want to know what ordinary people think. I'm hosting an open event on 9 September 2015 for Edinburgh residents to have their say on how we should replace the Council Tax.

The event will be informal and require no prior or expert knowledge. I want to hear from people based on their experience as Council Tax payers, city residents and citizens. This is about what matters to you.

This is a £2 billion question and will determine how we fund Edinburgh's schools, roads, parks, bins, and social care. The broader principle of who pays tax and how much is a fundamental test of our priorities as a society.

The event will be held at Augustine United Church on George IV Bridge, starting at 7pm, and will be open to all who wish to attend.

You can register for the event by clicking [here](#).

Submitted by [Marco Biagi MSP](#)