

Annex 1 – Documents Released Fully/or Partially as Redacted

Question 1	Document 20 email	Partially redacted
	Document 21 email	Partially redacted
	Document 22 email	Partially redacted
	Document 23 email	Partially redacted
	Document 24 email	Partially redacted
	Document 35 email	Partially redacted
	Document 37 email	Partially redacted
	Document 38 email	Partially redacted
	Document 20 excel table	Partially redacted
	Document 21 excel table Page 1	Partially redacted
	Document 21 excel table Page 2	Partially redacted
	Document 23 excel table	Partially redacted
	Document 45 excel table Page 1	Fully released
	Document 45 excel table Page 2	Fully released
	Document 45 excel table Page 3	Fully released
	Document 45 excel table Page 4	Fully released
	Document 45 excel table Page 5	Fully released
	Document 45 excel table Page 6	Fully released
	Document 45 excel table Page 7	Fully released
	Document 45 excel table Page 8	Fully released
Question 2	Document 2	Partially redacted

Annex 2

FOI 2023003476337: REASONS FOR NOT PROVIDING INFORMATION

An exemption applies to Question 1 and Question 2.

An exemption under section s.38(1)(b) of FOISA applies to some of the information you have requested. This information contains the names of more junior officials or members of staff and is therefore exempt.

This exemption is not subject to the 'public interest test', so we are not required to consider if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption.

An exemption applies, subject to the public interest test

An exemption under section 29(1)(a) of FOISA (formulation or development of government policy) applies to some of the information requested because it relates to the development of the Scottish Government's policy on Council Tax reform.

This exemption is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemption.

We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosing information as part of open, transparent, and accountable government, and to inform public debate. However, there is a greater public interest in high quality policy and decision-making, and in the properly considered implementation and development of policies and decisions.

This means that Ministers and officials need to be able to consider all available options and to debate those rigorously, to fully understand their possible implications. Their candour in doing so will be affected by their assessment of whether the discussions on Council Tax reform will be disclosed in the near future, when it may undermine or constrain the Government's view on that policy while it is still under discussion and development.

Annex 3 - Additional Information

I have also included additional information which you may find useful.

Council Tax datasets: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/council-tax-datasets/>

- Council Tax by Band by year
- Number of chargeable dwellings by Council Tax Band by year
- Band D Council Tax: 1996-97 to 2023-24

Council Tax Reduction data: Council Tax Reduction: local authority tables and charts - April 2013 to July 2023 - gov. scot (www.gov.scot)

- Council Tax Reduction recipients – April 2013 to July 2023
 - Council Tax Reduction income weekly income forgone - April 2013 to July 2023
1. For individual properties, Council Tax is determined by eight bands based on the value of a property, with Band A being the lowest and Band H being the highest. The level of Council Tax in each local authority is determined by individual Councils, who set a Band D rate.
 2. The charges for all other valuation bands (A – C and E to H) are proportions of that Band D charge. The methodology for calculating these charges is set in law. Those proportions can be amended by the Scottish Government through secondary legislation. Such a change was made for the start of the 2017 Council Tax year with increased charges for properties in Bands E-H.
 3. Council Tax is less in Scotland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom:
 - Every Scottish household benefits from cheaper Council Tax – the average band D charge in Scotland is £648 less than in England and £463 less than in Wales.
 - Council Tax in Scotland is lower than in England – for 2023-24, the average Band D Council Tax bill in Scotland is £1,417 compared to £2,065 in England and £1,879 in Wales.

Consultation Background

4. On 15 June Local Government representatives (Institute of Revenue Rating and Valuation) presented a paper at the 'Joint Working Group on sources of Local Government Funding and Council Tax Reform'.
5. The paper set out an aim to make Council Tax less regressive through increasing the charges on Bands E to H. FM indicated he was content to consult on 5 June 2023. COSLA Leaders agreed to support the publication of the paper at the end of June.
6. On 12 July 2023, COSLA and the Scottish Government launched a joint consultation on a proposal to change the current system of council tax multipliers. The consultation will run for a total of ten weeks, closing on 20 September.

Consultation Proposal

7. The present council tax system is perceived by some as unfair and regressive because it levies a higher tax rate on lower value properties, and a lower rate for higher value properties.
8. A chargeable property in a Band H has a council tax liability of about three times that of a Band A property, but is, on average, worth about fifteen times the value.
9. The consultation seeks views as to whether those in properties in the highest bands should be making a greater contribution, where they can afford to do so.
10. The current consultation proposes increasing the multipliers for those properties in Bands E to H by the following percentages and amounts (average amount for indicative purposes) in the table below.
11. These increases would potentially raise an additional £176 million, with around 28% of all properties being impacted.
12. The average annual increases, based on 2023-24 Council Tax rates, would be around £139, £288, £485, and £781 per dwelling in these Bands respectively, potentially raising an additional £176 million, with around 28% of all properties being impacted:

Band	%	Average annual increases based on 2023-24
E	7.5%	£139
F	12.5%	£288
G	17.5%	£485
H	22.5%	£781

13. Note, should the proposed increases proceed, the average Band E to G charge would still be lower in Scotland than in England.

Band	%	Average annual increases based on 2023-24
E	7.5%	£139
F	12.5%	£288
G	17.5%	£485
H	22.5%	£781

14. Band E and H properties in Scotland:
 - 354,197 households in Band E
 - 211,243 households in Band F
 - 135,840 households in Band G
 - 14,032 households in Band H

Table Comparing England and Scotland:

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
% change in average bill	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	12.5%	17.5%	22.5%

Average charge in Scotland after increases	£944	£1,102	£1,259	£1,417	£2,001	£2,590	£3,259	£4,251
England 2023-24	£1,377	£1,606	£1,836	£2,065	£2,524	£2,983	£3,442	£4,130
Average comparison with England after increases	£433 less	£504 less	£577 less	£648 less	£523 less	£393 less	£183 less	£121 more

Only around 28% of properties are in bands E-H and could be impacted by the proposed change.

15. The Consultation also sought views on:

- whether percentages should be lower
- whether any proposal could be introduced on a phased approach (1/3 percentage increases each year for 3 years)
- whether the Council Tax Reduction scheme should be expanded to protect those on low incomes, that live in Bands E to H, from the increases (note in 2017, those with below median income were protected from increases).

16. Scotland vs England for property

- There are 2.56m chargeable dwellings in Scotland according to our internal statistics, with around 14,000 in Band H (0.0055%)
- There are around 25 million homes in England, and around 100,000 in Band H.

17. Band E and H properties in Scotland:

- 354,197 households in Band E
- 211,243 households in Band F
- 135,840 households in Band G
- 14,032 households in Band H