

11th January 2016 Executive – Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17
Appendix 7: Extract from Policy Scrutiny Committee Minutes 17th December 2015

40. Localised Council Tax Support 2016/17

The Head of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service:

- a. presented the report 'Localised Council Tax Support 2016/17'.
- b. advised that the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme was required to be approved by 31 January 2016.
- c. informed that there would technically be 'no change' to the scheme however, some minor amendments had been made, and some changes to be announced from DCLG would need to be considered and included.
- d. brought members attention to 5.3 of the report and the reduction in caseload from April 2013 by 11.4%.
- e. summarised that the latest projection shows that the Council's cost of the 2015/16 Council Tax Support Scheme would be approximately £57,517 less than initially forecast.
- f. explained to members the proposed 2016/17 scheme found at paragraphs 6.1 to 6.9 of the report.
- g. advised of the assumptions made to the 2016/17 scheme including a -1% caseload change and how Council Tax would be distributed.
- h. reported that under the 2016/17 scheme it was anticipated that there would be a reduction in costs of £28,422.
- i. advised members of the consultation process that was required to take place as set out in paragraph 7 of the report.
- j. invited members questions and comments.

Members made the following questions and comments and received the relevant responses.

Question What criteria was in place with regards to Hardship and how was this funding allocated, was it in relation to the Section 13A Policy?

Answer This was really the Section 13A Policy, but could be combined with Housing Benefit. It allowed a supplement towards peoples Council Tax in exceptional circumstances.

Question What reasons were there for the reductions in the caseloads?

Answer Could only speculate as there were a number of reasons. It may be that there had been a 'knock on' effect following the 2008 recession. However, the 'churn rate' was still very high and meant that despite a drop in caseloads officer workloads were still high.

Question The consultation response seemed to be mixed almost 50/50 between positive and negative comments, why do you think this was?

Answer On this subject the consultation was often mixed. As some residents would be claiming and gave positive comments, others that would never claim gave negative comment, causing a split across the whole consultation.

Question Could you provide more detail of what the 'family premium' was?

Answer Essentially the 'family premium' was provided by the central government for families to receive additional 'premiums'; these premiums allowed people access to further discounts and financial support.

Comment Within the report it mentions an uprating freeze would be in place for four years.

Response Central Governments did announce this as part of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015/16. We would not look to freeze rates for the purpose of calculating Council Tax support.

Question As part of those announcements housing benefit could only be back dated for four weeks, this could potentially have a huge impact on people's lives?

Answer We were not looking to implement this for Council Tax Support, however we could only urge people to come in as soon as possible to give as much time otherwise people may lose out on their benefits.

RESOLVED that members comments and the report be noted and forwarded to the Executive for consideration and approval.