

Present: Councillor Bill Bilton (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Calum Watt, Councillor Liz Bushell, Councillor
Bill Mara, Councillor Alan Briggs and Councillor
Rebecca Longbottom

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Jane Loffhagen, Councillor Mark Storer and
Councillor Pat Vaughan

22. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits

- a. presented the proposed scheme for Local Council Tax Support for the financial year 2022/23, as part of the formal consultation period, as well as regarding proposals made in relation to an Exceptional Hardship Payments Scheme.
- b. gave the background to the scheme as detailed at paragraph 2 of the report and advised that there were currently 8870 residents claiming Council Tax Support in Lincoln.
- c. advised that there were 2,704 pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Support and they were protected under the legislation so that they would not be affected by any changes made to the Council Tax Support Scheme.
- d. further advised that there were 6166 working claimants who would be affected by any changes made to the scheme, and such any potential reduction in support being provided. Unless a decision by the Council was made to apply scheme changes to vulnerable working-age customers, the localised Council Tax Scheme.
- e. highlighted the impacts of Covid-19 on the amount of Council Tax Scheme awarded, with significant increases in caseload and cost of the scheme as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report.
- f. referred to paragraph 4 of the report and gave an overview of the current Council Tax Support Scheme.
- g. advised that based on the current core elements of the existing scheme, caseload increases of 0% and 5% had been modelled, along with Council Tax increases of 1.9% and 2.5%. These were summarised in Appendix 1 of the report which gave an indication of the potential cost and savings to the City of Lincoln. Also included was the potential value for non-collection (based on projected collection in the tax base of 98.75%)
- h. explained that as a billing authority the Council could decide whether or not to amend core elements of its Council Tax Support scheme each year. Officers were proposing options for consultation to change certain core elements of the scheme which were summarised at Appendix 1 of the report.

- i. referred to paragraph 5.3 and 5.4 of the report and explained the technical amendments and assumptions that had been made in developing the modelling for each Council Tax Support Scheme.
- j. explained option 2 the 'All Working Age' Banded scheme as detailed at paragraph 5.6 of the report and advised that it was an option put forward and would make a fundamental change to the way that the Council Tax Support Scheme was calculated for all working-age customers.
- k. referred to paragraph 5.7 of the report and explained the 'De Minimis' Scheme which was put forward as option 3.
- l. referred to paragraph 5.8 of the report which detailed the Exceptional Hardship Payments Scheme and proposed that the Exceptional Hardship Budget be increased from £20,000 to £25,000 for 2022/23.
- m. asked for committee's consideration and comments as part of the formal consultation process.

Members discussed the Exceptional Hardship Scheme and supported the proposed increase in budget to £25K which they felt was reasonable considering the current circumstances.

The committee discussed in detail the options proposed and were minded to support option 2 which was the "All Working Age" banded scheme. It was felt that this option would be the best option for residents and would also be more streamlined for the Council to administer. Members questioned how many residents would 'lose out' in the scheme and requested information on which band would be affected by this. Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits responded that the scheme would be continued to be modelled based on the case load, to reduce the number of 'losers' as much as possible. The information on the affected band would be circulated to members following the meeting and be included within the Executive report.

RESOLVED that

- 1. option 2 "All Working Age" Banded Scheme, as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report be supported.

the proposed increase of the £5,000 to £25,000, in the Exceptional Hardship fund for 2022/23 to top up Council Tax support awards in appropriate cases be supported.