

### 71. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

#### Purpose of Report

1. To provide information regarding the outcome of consultation regarding 2024/25 Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) options.
2. To propose options for a Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2024/25 financial year, which must be approved by Council before 31st January 2024.

#### Decision

- (1) That the content of the report, taking into consideration the responses received as part of the consultation be noted.
- (2) That it be recommend to the City of Lincoln Council that:
  - (a) A 'no change' to the core Council Tax Support scheme for 2024/25, as set out in Section 4 of the report, subject to the technical amendments described in paragraph 5.3 be approved.
  - (b) Provision of an Exceptional Hardship Fund of £25,000, for the financial year 2024/25, be approved.
  - (c) Approval be given to a further detailed modelling of a banded scheme for all working age customers, with delivery to be assured from our ICT provider at a timescale to allow for robust and accurate testing of such a potential scheme, with a view to consulting on such a scheme for 2025/26.

#### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

An option of introduction of a 'banded scheme' for all working age customers for 2024/25 – as detailed within paragraph 5.6 of the officer's report. This would be subject to a further detailed modelling process with the aspiration for future adoption.

#### Reasons for the Decision

The council tax benefits system had been abolished by the government on 31 March 2013 and replaced by the Council Tax Support Scheme, which could be determined locally by the City of Lincoln Council, as the billing authority, after consultation with precepting authorities, key stakeholders and residents.

As at November 2023, there had been 8,330 residents claiming Council Tax Support in Lincoln, with 2,579 of these as pensioners protected under the legislation and receiving Council Tax Support, as prescribed by the Government, broadly similar to the level of Council Tax Benefit.

It was the 5,751 working age (including those classified as 'vulnerable' for CTS purposes) claimants, where a local scheme could be determined which could change the level of support provided. The split of the 5,817 working age CTS recipients was 3,242 working age (vulnerable) and 2,575 working age (not vulnerable)

The initial City of Lincoln CTS Scheme from 2013/14 effectively 'protected' working age Council Tax payers seeking support, retaining eligible entitlement of up to 100% and not restricting other areas of entitlement calculation. However, in recent years the scheme had changed in light of increasing scheme costs and budget pressures.

Unless a decision was made by Council to apply scheme changes to vulnerable working-age claimants, the localised CTS scheme would historically only be applied to non-vulnerable working age claimants.