

Appendix 2: 2nd January 2024 – Executive - City of Lincoln Council – Council Tax Support 2024/25 Scheme – Policy Scrutiny Committee 3rd October 2023 Draft Minutes

EXTRACT FROM COMMITTEE

Policy Scrutiny Committee

3 October 2023

Present: Councillor Emily Wood (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Liz Bushell, Councillor Natasha Chapman,
Councillor Bill Mara Councillor Mark Storer and Councillor
Calum Watt

Apologies for Absence: None.

20. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

Tracey Parker, Revenues and Benefits Manager:

- a. presented the proposed scheme for Local Council Tax Support for the financial year 2024/25 and accompanying Exceptional Hardship Payments Scheme, as part of the formal consultation period.
- b. gave the background to the scheme as detailed at paragraph 2 of the report and advised that there were currently 8458 residents claiming Council Tax Support in Lincoln.
- c. advised that there were 2,591 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 5,867 working age claimants who would be affected by any changes made to the scheme, and as such any potential reduction in support being provided. This figure includes those working age customers considered 'vulnerable'..
- 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 2.9%. These were summarised in Appendix 1 of the report which gave an indication of the potential cost and savings to the City of Lincoln Council. Also included was the potential value for non-collection (based on projected collection in the tax base of 98.75%)

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- 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. Schemes being consulted on 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. reported that the options considered for consultation by Executive on 18 September 2023 were as follows:
 - Option 1: No change to the current scheme;
 - Option 2: Introduction of a 'banded scheme' for all working age customers (as detailed at paragraph 5.6 of the report)
- k. referred to paragraph 5.8 of the report which detailed the Exceptional Hardship Payments Scheme and proposed an Exceptional Hardship Budget of £35,000 be put in place for 2024/25.
- l. asked for Committee's consideration and comments as part of the formal consultation process.

Question: Did the exceptional hardship fund start from the beginning of the financial year?

Response: Yes, the proposal was to increase the exceptional hardship fund to £35k. It was expected that more claims would be made next year if we moved to a banding scheme.

Question: Could members have a copy of the consultation letter?

Response: The letter was available on the website; however a copy of the letter could be circulated to members following the meeting.

Question: Did members of the public have access to a hard copy of the consultation letter?

Response: We encouraged online responses to the consultation; however a hard copy could be provided on request.

Question: When did the consultation start?

Response: The consultation started on 2 October and would end on 13 November 2023.

RESOLVED that:

1. That consultation on a 'no change' scheme for 2024/25 be supported.
2. That consultation on a working age banded scheme for 2024/25 be supported, as well as further detailed modelling of a working age banded scheme for 2024/25 to take place.

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The Exceptional Hardship Scheme of £35,000 for 2024/25 be supported.