



COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 11th October 2012

Title: LOCALISATION SUPPORT OF COUNCIL TAX

Report of: The Director of Community Engagement

Report reference: CD 47/12

Summary: This paper provides an update on the consultation on the draft proposals for a Local Scheme to provide support for Council Tax. The draft scheme is identical to the current Council Tax Benefit scheme but will function as a discount rather than a benefit. Any agreed scheme will need to be approved by the Council by 31st January 2013. A verbal update will also be given at the meeting

Questions for / input required from Scrutiny: To note the report.

Recommendations:

This update on the draft scheme and consultation exercise is noted.

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Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: None

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 The previous report CD39/12 was considered by the Executive on Monday 6th August 2012 outlining the draft proposals for consultation for a local scheme through which the City Council will administer Support for Council Tax. The key recommendations of the report were:

- Agree the principle of not reducing the current level of reductions given to existing Council Tax Benefit recipients when changing from a Benefit to a Discount.
- Agree Carlisle City Council's LSCT Scheme will be identical to the current Department for Work and Pension's Council Tax Benefit Scheme but written as a S13A policy document, under The Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), to ensure it becomes a legal discount rather than a Benefit.
- Agree the principles of funding the scheme, in part or full, through the application of Council Tax Technical Reforms and other funding streams.
- Be aware that the full LSCT S13A policy and the decisions regarding implementation of Council Tax Technical Reforms and other funding streams will need to be approved by Council on 8th January 2013.
- Approve the principle of a draft policy (statement of intent), to include to consultees, as part of the formal consultation process.
- Consideration to be given to the financial implications of the local scheme during the first operational year and the position reviewed for subsequent years.

1.2 Following consideration, the recommendations were approved and the consultation process for the draft scheme was initiated. Key steps taken included:

- Devising and issuing customer questionnaire forms to the 9,467 current council tax benefit recipients.
- Issuing press releases to publicise the draft scheme proposals to all residents and relevant interested groups.
- Introducing website guidance on the proposed changes giving links to access the draft scheme provisions and an on-line version of the survey questionnaire.
- Scheme guidance information provided for all Members to raise awareness of the draft scheme and advise on frequently asked questions.

2. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 2.1 The consultation period was from 3rd September 2012 to 7th October 2012 inclusive and the responses received are currently being analysed. The key question was to seek views on the intention to maintain support at the same levels as currently provided through Council Tax Benefit. Options for potential scheme changes were also included to gauge opinion for any future proposals in subsequent years.
- 2.2 The findings from the consultation will be provided in a future update and used to recommend the provisions of the scheme for approval.

Impact assessments

Does the change have an impact on the following?

Equality Impact Screening	Impact Yes/No?	Is the impact positive or negative?
Does the policy/service impact on the following?		
Age	No	
Disability	No	
Race	No	
Gender/ Transgender	No	
Sexual Orientation	No	
Religion or belief	No	
Human Rights	No	
Health inequalities	No	
Rurality	No	

If you consider there is either no impact or no negative impact, please give reasons:

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If an equality Impact is necessary, please contact the P&P team.