

COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 17 DECEMBER 2014

Late Items

7. REPORTS OF THE CABINET AND PANELS

(a) Cabinet (Pages 1 - 18)

Report of the meeting held on 11th December 2014 now attached.

(g) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)
(Pages 19 - 22)

Report of the meeting held on 9th December 2014 – now attached.

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Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on 11th December 2014

Matter for Decision

32. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/2016

The Cabinet has considered a report by the Benefits Manager (a copy of which is reproduced as an Appendix) on a proposed change to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016. The change will see all child maintenance disregarded in the calculation, which will result in greater levels of Council Tax Support entitlement to those customers in receipt of this type of income.

The change will affect approximately 350 households and will cost in the region of £ 2k. It will bring the Council into line with the majority of other Councils. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has supported the change (Item No. 28 of their Report refers). **Having requested the Social Well-Being Panel to carry out an evaluation of the overall scheme and, in particular, its effect on employment trends, the Cabinet**

RECOMMEND

the Council approve the change to the local Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1st April 2015.

Matters for Information

33. ZERO BASED BUDGETING

Executive Councillors have discussed progress of the Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) programme, in which they have had considerable involvement. They are satisfied that the process has been robust and that much has been learned. There has been a mixed response from services, though this may partly be attributed to a lack of understanding about how the Council defines ZBB and what practical steps are required for the star chamber. The Corporate Management Team has been charged with robustly enforcing the Cabinet's view that cultural change should be adopted along ZBB principles.

The Cabinet has discussed the approaches of individual services to ZBB and their performance in the star chamber. All services have to do more work on their individual budgets. A draft budget is being

prepared by Officers in conjunction with their respective Executive Councillors. There will be scope for further debate by Members and changes to be made before the budget is finalised in February.

Of the improvements that need to be made to the process, the most important is to develop the Council's systems to provide the necessary financial / management information to enable Officers to manage and monitor their services. In particular, the new systems will resolve what service budgets include and what are deemed to be corporate costs. In addition, the information will be independently verified. The Cabinet has asked for a plan for action that will be taken leading to the introduction of the new systems.

The Cabinet has received the comments of Members of the Economic Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Item No.28 of their Report refers), who have welcomed the Cabinet's approach to working with them. The Panel has invited all Executive Councillors to its meetings in the New Year to discuss their budget proposals and will undertake further scrutiny work on their performance throughout the year.

34. ENERGY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Executive Councillors have received an update on the energy and cost savings that have been made through the Council's Carbon Management Plan in 2009/14. In 2013/14 projects to the value of £183,000 have been implemented, saving the council an estimated £55,000 per annum. The progress in reducing the Council's energy use and carbon emissions from its buildings and fleet has been recognised.

There is considerable scope to undertake further work. The Cabinet has, therefore, supported a proposal to enter into a partnership with the County Council, the Greater London Authority and Local Partnerships to access the RE:FIT programme. The RE:FIT programme is a nationwide scheme involving an assessment of property to identify the potential for the installation of energy saving measures, leading to the preparation of a detailed Investment Grade Proposal outlining the cost of all potential projects and the guaranteed savings that will result. Initially the Council will commission free desk top energy assessments of the Council's nine main sites and the Cabinet will be consulted before the subsequent stages of the programme are undertaken.

Executive Councillors have stressed that the revenue savings of such capital investments are realised in future budgets.

35. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the implications for the Council of Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The Act means enforcement will be streamlined and it gives the Council more control over its enforcement activities. With the exception of the community trigger, which is a duty, all the provisions of the Act

constitute powers so the Council only has to use them if they are appropriate.

Executive Councillors have expressed concerns that public space protection orders and dog control orders will expire if they are not reviewed and re-evidenced, thereby creating an additional workload. More generally, attention has been drawn to the absence of available data on the likely benefits of the Act and on its objectives.

Executive Councillors have commented that the Act could cause resources to be diverted to activities that have less benefit for the public and that the Community Trigger could be used in a way for which it was not intended. It could also have unintended consequences. They have discussed various ways of managing its use.

Having expressed their support for the delegations associated with the new powers created by the Act and with the creation and maintenance of policies and procedures, the Cabinet has requested Executive Councillors, Senior Officers and Overview and Scrutiny to look at how enforcement will be undertaken in conjunction with the police and to devise a draft scheme of thresholds for application to the Community Trigger.

J D Ablewhite
Chairman

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Council Tax Support Scheme 2015/16

Meeting/Date: CMT – 17 November 2014
Overview & Scrutiny Panel(Social Well-Being) - 2 December 2014
Cabinet - 11 December 2014
Council – 17 December 2014

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Barry Chapman

Report by: Benefits Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with details of a proposed change to the Council Tax Support scheme for 2015/16. The Council Tax Support scheme is means tested and gives financial assistance to people on low incomes in paying their Council Tax liability.

Within the current Council Tax Support scheme the first £10 of any child maintenance received is disregarded in the calculation. The remainder of child maintenance received is counted as income. The more income a person is treated as having will result in a lower entitlement to Council Tax Support.

Having carried out a review of the scheme, it is proposed to disregard all child maintenance in the calculation which will result in greater levels of Council Tax Support entitlement to those customers in receipt of this type of income.

This has a small budgetary impact to the Council (estimated to be c.£2K), but will make a difference to customers who receive child maintenance payments (estimated to be c.350). Council Tax Support is funded through the Revenue Support Grant. It is treated in the same way as Council Tax discounts and exemptions for the purposes of the Council Tax Base calculation. A more generous Council Tax Support scheme leads to a lower Council Tax base which means in turn less Council Tax income is raised.

Under the Local Government Finance Act, any changes to the scheme have to be approved at Council before 31 January in the year in which the changes are to take effect.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is requested to recommend to Council to approve this change for the local Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1 April 2015.

1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT?

- 1.1 In April 2013, the national Council Tax Benefit scheme was abolished and was replaced by a requirement for each local authority to devise a localised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme. Within certain parameters (including reduced government funding) each authority had to devise their own scheme based on local priorities for working age customers and protect pensioners from any changes.
- 1.2 The Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) scheme is based on the following principles:
- Everyone of working age should pay something towards their Council Tax (except for the most vulnerable)
 - The scheme should provide some protection for the most vulnerable in society
 - The scheme should incentivise and support people moving into work and help those in low paid work
- 1.3 The basic provisions of the scheme remained the same for 2014/15, but a review of the scheme was undertaken this year to ensure that it continued to meet the criteria set by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and also the priorities for HDC in both what is important to the local community and in terms of expenditure.
- 1.4 This report sets out the results of that review.
- 1.5 The Local Government Finance Act states that any revisions to a localised Council Tax Support scheme must be made no later than 31 January in the financial year preceding that for which the revision is to have effect.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The basis of the current HDC CTS scheme (Appendix A) is as follows:

For working age customers, the current scheme is broken down into three areas:

- Vulnerable: where the customer or partner qualify for the severe disability premium, or disabled child premium, CTS is assessed on 100% of their Council Tax liability
- Children under 5: where the customer has any dependants under the age of 5, CTS is assessed on 85% of their Council Tax liability
- Other: all other working age customers have their CTS assessed on 80% of their Council Tax liability

Once a customer is allocated to one of these three schemes, entitlement to CTS is means tested.

- 2.2 In addition to the above, the following factors are HDC specific and apply to all working age schemes:
- Child Benefit for the eldest child only is disregarded, i.e. it is not counted as income in the assessment (all Child Benefit is fully disregarded for pensioners)
 - The first £10 per week of any child maintenance received is disregarded (fully disregarded for pensioners)

- Some earnings are disregarded in assessing a person's liability, these amounts are small (typically £5-20).
- Deductions taken from CTS entitlement for any other adult living in the property at the rate of £7 per week if they work and £5 per week if they don't work (with modified rules for pensioners)

2.3 In carrying out the review of the scheme, regard was given to:

- Representation from Gingerbread who contacted HDC in October 2013 outlining their concerns that HDC was one of only 22 local authorities to include child maintenance in their CTS calculation (Appendix B)
- DCLG guidance published in February 2014 -'Localising Support for Council Tax, Vulnerable people – key local authority duties'. This document set out the legislation that local authorities must take account of when designing a localised CTS scheme. Reference is made to the Child Poverty Act and a local authority's duty to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty. It goes on to say that the payment of child maintenance helps to improve children's life chances and that authorities may wish to use their CTS schemes to help encourage separated parents to make child maintenance arrangements and maximise the money reaching children. They could do this by fully disregarding child maintenance when assessing eligibility for their schemes.
- Cambridgeshire Children's Trust Child Poverty Strategy 'Breaking the Cycle 2011 – 2014'

2.4 On the whole the scheme works well, and little change is warranted. However following consultation with the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, and the points made in 2.3, it was felt appropriate to examine the case for making a small change to the CTS scheme. The proposal was to disregard all child maintenance in the calculation

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 HDC receives funding for the CTS scheme as part of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). This funding is assessed prior to the start of the financial year and does not change when the amount of CTS changes, i.e. the funding is fixed and not demand led. Therefore, if more CTS than expected is awarded there is a cost to all precepting authorities and if less is awarded, there is a saving.

3.2 CTS is treated in the same way as Council Tax discounts and exemptions for the purposes of the Council Tax Base calculation. A more generous CTS scheme leads to a lower Council Tax Base which in turn means less Council Tax income is raised.

3.3 CTS feeds into the collection fund. HDC is one of the precepting authorities and our proportion of the total Council Tax charge is around 8% so HDC would be responsible for 8% of the cost of a more generous scheme.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

To be circulated separately.

4.1 TBA

5. KEY IMPACTS

- 5.1 Based on current caseload, this change will see around 350 customers (out of a total caseload of 8300) receive an increase in the amount of financial assistance they get towards paying their Council Tax liability.

6. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 The proposed change will take effect from 1 April 2015.

7. LINK TO THE LEADERSHIP DIRECTION

- 7.1 This service supports 'Ensuring we are a customer focussed and service led council'.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Prior to revising a scheme, the Local Government Finance Act requires the authority to carry out a consultation exercise as follows:
- a) consult major precepting authorities
 - b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it sees fit
 - c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of a scheme.
- 8.2 There were no responses from the major preceptors. The consultation exercise went ahead based on the original proposed change.
- 8.3 The consultation took place between 26 August and 31 October 2014 by way of an on-line survey on the Council website and through Shape Your Place. 120 local organisations and Town and Parish Councils were also contacted directly.
- 8.4 There was a limited response with only 66 responses being received. A report showing the analysis of the consultation and the comments can be found at Appendix C.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The change enables the Council to meet its legal requirements to minimise child poverty by ignoring child maintenance contributions and recognising that is an important protective element for children at a time when single parent families are among the groups hardest hit by a stream of government changes to welfare benefits and tax credits.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The estimated total cost of disregarding all child maintenance payments in the calculation of CTS would be approximately £28,000 apportioned across all of the major preceptors via the Collection Fund. The net impact to the Council is estimated to be £2,200.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The proposed amendment to the existing CTS scheme takes account of a finding from the Equality Impact Assessment completed when the existing CTS scheme was developed, i.e. the proposal to take some Child Benefit and child maintenance into account in calculating the amount of CTS due would have a detrimental effect on those in receipt of these payments, many of whom are female.

- 11.2 The proposed amendment takes account of feedback from local residents, voluntary and community groups during recent consultation. The amendment also takes account of feedback provided by Gingerbread (charity for single parents) which sets out clearly why the council should reconsider taking child maintenance into consideration when calculating CTS.

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 12.1 In making this minor change to the Council Tax Support scheme, HDC will have taken account of the representation from Gingerbread, the guidance from DCLG and also continue to meet its legal requirements to help mitigate child poverty.

- 12.2 It is recommended that Council:

Approve the amendment to the Council Tax Support scheme

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix A - Summary of current HDC CTS scheme
Appendix B - Gingerbread briefing to local authorities
Appendix C - Consultation analysis

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Local Government Finance Act 2012
- DCLG document: Localising Support for Council Tax, Vulnerable people – key local authority duties'
- Cambridgeshire Children's Trust Child Poverty Strategy 'Breaking the Cycle 2011 – 2014'

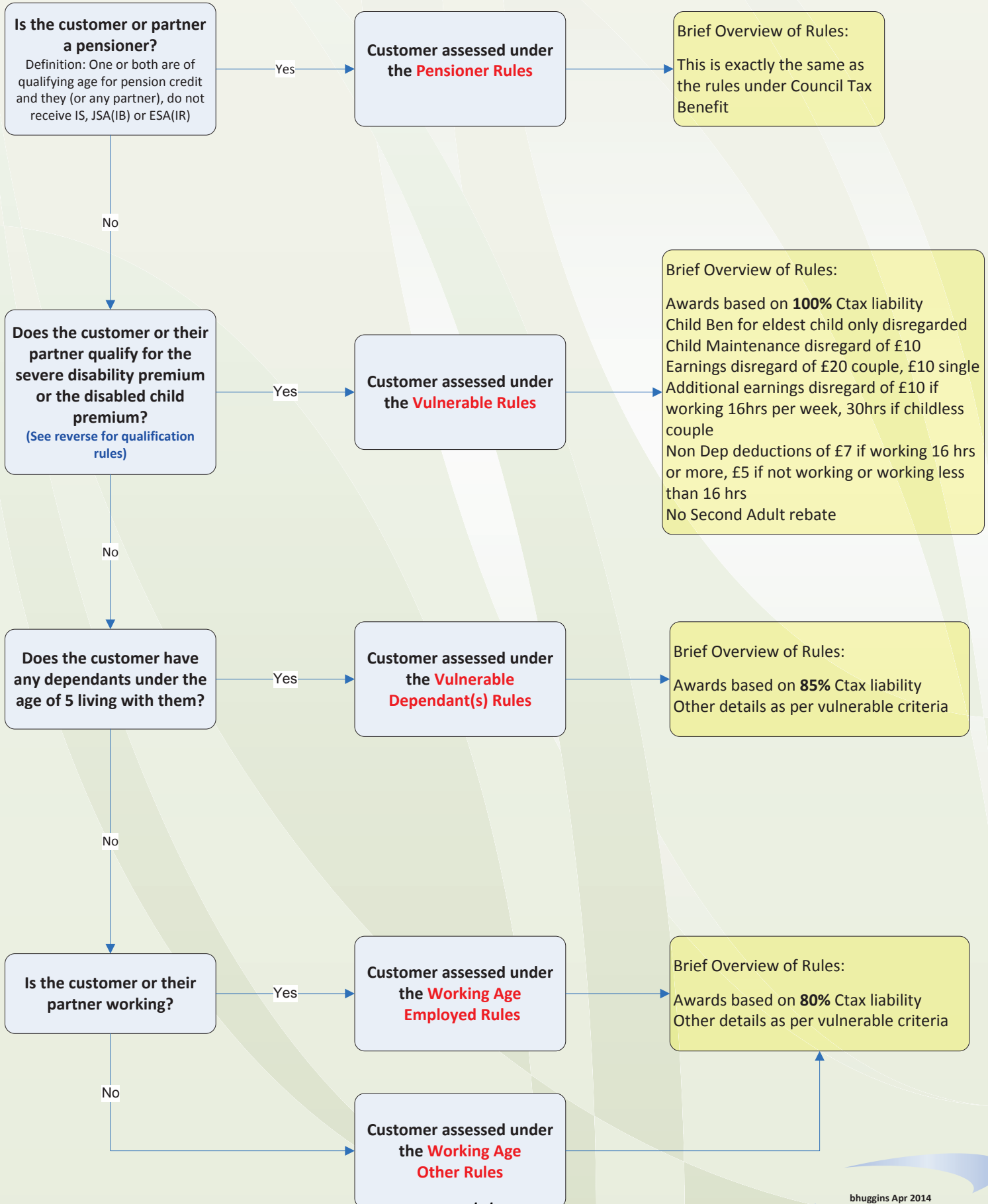
CONTACT OFFICER

Amanda Burns - Benefits Manager
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Council Tax Support Scheme Rules (April 2014)

Use this flowchart to establish which rules a customer's entitlement to Council Tax Support will be assessed



Qualifying Rules for Severe Disability & Disabled Child Premium

Qualifying Rules for Disabled Child Premium

The disabled child premium is added to a customer's applicable amount where a disabled child in the household is:

- registered blind, or
- receiving Disability Living Allowance

Qualifying Rules for Severe Disability Premium

In the case of a single customer or lone parent the severe disability premium may be included in the applicable amount where:

- they receive the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the highest or middle rate, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance, and
- they live alone (see below), and
- no-one receives Carer's Allowance for looking after them

In the case of a couple the severe disability premium may be included in the applicable amount where the claimant and partner both:

- receive the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the highest or middle rate, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance, or
- the partner is blind and the claimant receives the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the highest or middle rate, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance, and
- no-one else lives with them (see below), and
- no-one receives Carer's Allowance for looking after either one or both of them

Other people living in the household

For the purposes of the severe disability premium, customers are still classed as living on their own if other people in the household are:

- children
- aged 16-17
- a person who is registered blind
- a person receiving the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the highest or middle rate, or Attendance Allowance
- a carer who is employed by a charity that makes a charge for this service
- co-owners or co-tenants

Why child maintenance should not count for Council Tax Support

Introduction

In Scotland, Wales and across 93% of English councils, maintenance paid for children living in single parent households does not affect council tax.

But in a small minority of councils – 22 out of 326 across England – single parents face higher council tax payments if their ex-partner makes child maintenance payments. The 22 councils in question are listed at the end of this briefing.

Against a background where - in the face of cuts in funding from central government - all councils have had to review the support given with council tax bills for low income groups, Gingerbread says that the large majority of councils got it right, in deciding not to target money meant for children in single parent households.

As all councils consider their Council Tax Support schemes for 2014/15, Gingerbread outlines the reasons why child maintenance should not count for Council Tax Support.

Facts and figures about council tax and child maintenance among low-income single parent families

- **Nearly half of single parents rely on help with their council tax bills.** In 2011/12, 47% of single parents across the UK were getting help with council tax bills through council tax benefit.¹
- **The amounts of child maintenance they receive are modest.** For those receiving council tax support in 2011/12, the average (mean) amount of child maintenance received was £19 per week. The median amount was £12 per week.²
- **Those with lower incomes are already less likely to get child maintenance.** Among the poorest fifth of single parents divided by income (before housing costs) 32% are receiving child maintenance compared to 44% among the richest fifth.³

¹ Family Resource Survey 2011/12, DWP (2013)

² Ibid

³ Skinner C. and Main G., 'The contribution of child maintenance payments to the income packages of lone mothers' in *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, Vol 21, No 1, Feb 2013. Analysis based on the UK Families and Children Study (2008-09)

Why child maintenance matters to low income families

- **It helps reduce child poverty.** Poverty scars children's futures. Children living in single parent households are almost twice as likely to be at risk of poverty compared to children in couple families. Child maintenance lowers that risk. Among single parents on benefit, a fifth of families receiving child maintenance would be living below the poverty line without it.⁴
- **It improves children's lives.** All the evidence shows that children living in separated families are more likely to thrive if they continue to have the support of both parents, emotionally, practically - and financially.⁵ Maintenance is part of a non-resident parent's engagement with a child. Even modest amounts can give a child a better quality of life, for example by allowing new shoes for growing feet or ensuring a child is well-fed. This is a contribution which can mean a lot to children beyond the actual financial value.⁶
- **Single parents' incomes are already being hard hit.** Child maintenance is an important protective element for children at a time when single parent families are among the groups hardest hit by a stream of government changes to welfare benefits and tax credits. These include cuts to help with childcare costs within tax credit; reduced help with housing costs due to the benefit cap, reforms to local housing allowance and new under-occupancy rules; a lowering in the real value of benefits and tax credits compared to inflation; and forthcoming universal credit reform where – unless there are changes – two-fifths of low income single parents will be worse off than they are under the current welfare system.

Why the government ignores child maintenance in calculating benefits and tax credit⁷

Since 2010, central government has applied a full income disregard to child maintenance in the calculation of all benefits and tax credits, meaning that child maintenance is ignored as income when assessing financial support for single parent families. This decision was taken for the following reasons:

To ensure more low income children in separated families get parental support

- Successive governments have agreed that, when parents split up, both parents should continue to take responsibility for their children, including contributing to the costs of raising them. Yet for poorer parents, because benefits used to be reduced if maintenance was paid, there was a disincentive to actively pursue it. The decision to ignore child maintenance within benefits and tax credits was therefore taken partly to improve the numbers of low income families where maintenance was paid, thus engaging more 'non-resident' parents in meeting their responsibilities towards their children.

⁴ Bryson C., Skipp A, et al, *Kids Aren't Free*, Gingerbread (2013).

⁵ Mooney A., Oliver C., and Smith M., *Impact of Family Breakdown on Children's Well-Being*, DCSF Research Report No RR113 (2009)

⁶ Fortin, J., Hunt, J. and Scanlan, I. (2012) Taking a longer view of contact: The perspectives of young adults who experienced parental separation in their youth, University of Sussex Law School.

⁷ Child maintenance has been ignored in tax credits since 1999, from Housing and Council Tax benefit from 2008; and from out-of-work benefits since 2010. Ministers have confirmed that child maintenance will continue to be ignored as income within Universal Credit.

To make benefits and tax credits simpler and cheaper to administer

- Child maintenance income is frequently subject to change, due to partial or non-payment by some non-resident parents and alterations due to changes in the paying parent's income, work or family situation. Given the modest amounts of maintenance received on average by low income single parents, the revenue saved by taking maintenance into account was being substantially off-set by the administrative costs of having to make repeated adjustments and recalculations, and to pursue debts.

Why counting child maintenance is a retrograde step

Gingerbread believes that the decision taken by a minority of councils to count child maintenance as income in calculating council tax support is the wrong one, for the following reasons:

- **It risks fewer single parents seeking maintenance** because, if they do, their council tax bills will go up. Where council tax support is calculated on the assumption that child maintenance is being paid, it means families can be plunged into instant financial hardship and debt if maintenance does not arrive. The fear of this can lead to single parents to decide to forgo child maintenance altogether and settle for a lower, but stable, income. Children then lose out and parental responsibilities are not met.
- **It will increase the risk of child poverty among single parents.** Including child maintenance as income in assessments of council tax support is of particular concern in the light of councils' obligations under the Child Poverty Act 2010 to have a strategy in place aimed at reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty in their area. Counting child maintenance for CTS directly targets single parent families who already face a higher risk of poverty compared to couple families.
- **The potential revenue savings may be eroded by increased administrative costs**, due to repeated adjustments of CTS to deal with fluctuations in maintenance or periods of non/partial payment – when the sums involved are likely to be modest in any case.
- **It will mean a double 'tax' on child maintenance for single parents.** In 2014, central government plans to start charging single parents 4% of any child maintenance collected via the new Child Maintenance Service. This means that in the local authorities concerned, single parents using the collection service will, in effect, face two deductions from the maintenance for their child: one 'take' by central government and another from the council.
- **It is a penalty on relationship breakdown**, where the same income risks being counted twice by a local authority for council tax support purposes: once as the income of the paying parent and then again as the income of the receiving parent. This is unfair to both separated parents and their children.

For all these reasons, Gingerbread urges councils to reconsider the inclusion of child maintenance within their council tax support schemes.

Councils counting child maintenance for Council Tax Support⁸

Council	Full CM counted or partial
Bath and North East Somerset	Full
Bolton Metropolitan Borough	Full - with transitional protection for those who would have received full amount of CTB
Brentwood Borough	£15 disregard
Cannock Chase	Full
Chelmsford City	£10 disregard
Colchester Borough	Full
Crawley Borough	Full – with transitional protection for those who would have received full amount of CTB
Doncaster Metropolitan	Full – with transitional protection for those who would have received full amount of CTB
Epping Forest District	£15 disregard
Huntingdonshire District	£10 disregard
Maldon District	Full
Mendip District	Full
Rochford District	Full
Rushmoor Borough	Full
Slough Borough	Full
South Somerset District	Full
Stafford Borough	Full
Tamworth Borough	Full
Taunton Deane Borough	Full
Tendring District	Full
Waverley Borough	Full
West Somerset	Full

About Gingerbread

Gingerbread is the national charity working for and with single parent families. We provide expert information and advice, along with membership and training opportunities. We campaign against poverty, disadvantage and stigma to promote fair and equal treatment and opportunity for single parents and their families. We support the development of a child maintenance system where children living in separated families receive the support of both parents throughout their childhood.

For further information please contact Janet Allbeson, Senior Policy Adviser at Gingerbread janet.allbeson@gingerbread.org.uk

⁸ One more council, Sedgemoor, allows a disregard of £65.62 per child. In practice, no low-income families are affected as this disregard is set at a much higher level than average child maintenance amounts.

Summary of responses for Council Tax Support consultation

The consultation consisted of one question with the ability to add comments:

Question:

Do you agree that no Child Maintenance should be counted as income in the Council Tax Support calculation?

Yes/No

Comments:

The main consultation ran from 26 August to 31 October 2014.

We received 66 responses:

38 respondents (58%) agreed with the proposal

28 respondents (42%) disagreed with the proposal

The responses were broken down into the following categories:

- Resident affected by the change
- Resident not affected by the change
- Voluntary group
- Other
- Blank

Category of respondent	Number of responses	% in agreement with the proposal	% not in agreement with the proposal
Resident affected	3	33%	67%
Resident not affected	46	42%	48%
Voluntary	5	80%	20%
Other	5	60%	40%
Blank	7	86%	14%
Total	66	58%	42%

Category	Comment
Don't support	all income should be counted!
Don't support	Because not all parents receive child maintenance, so the parents that don't get any help from the ex-partner will be disadvantaged.
Don't support	Child Maintenance is paid for the living costs of a child, one of which is paying rent and being able to live in a house, of which one of the costs is council tax. This should be counted towards income.
Don't support	Child maintenance payments can be very large and could end being subsidised by people who receive no maintenance for their children!
Don't support	In deciding whether someone is in poverty, I don't think the source of the money is important. What matters is their total income. If child poverty is felt to be a particular problem in the district, I feel the money should be targeted at all poor families with children. You could for example discount a certain amount of income, regardless of source, from anyone who is looking after a child.
Don't support	The question is very ambiguous. The use of a double negative is misleading and suggests an underlying intention to manipulate the outcome of the consultation, Should there be any doubt as to my view, I stress all income regardless of source should be treated as income when calculating council tax support.
Don't support	With the reduction in income from central government HDC needs to be looking to get more money in - especially with a high population of older residents who are 'protected' and the lack of CT increase v the cut back across services - without giving more concessions. The single parent families are already well accommodated financially in other benefits. (Hence why many married couples live as single persons already.)
Other	I am a resident NOT affected by this proposal but have been unable to register this in the place below!!!
Other	I do not agree to this proposal as there are many households who do not qualify for support in respect of Benefits and struggle to live day to day on a low wage.
Other	it isn't just the kids, disabled and pensioners are struggling too, Income Support, PIP or DLA and state pensions should not be calculated either.
Other	You want to reduce child poverty over haul your WHOLE system. From how information is put into the system to how LONG it takes to sort out any changes needed, The other problem to solve is get people BACK INTO WORK without this you will never stop child poverty. I may not be affected by this particular problem but it is one which everyone should ensure is heard by ALL COUNCILS but you lot never listen and do as you want anyway.
Support	I agree with the proposal but feel I like other people, in that while not directly affected. This proposal will reduce the overall amount that is available to the council for other matters.
Support	I think HDC should do this as it will be a relatively small increase in CTS spend but will be of benefit to some families with children. HDC's reputation could be affected if we continue with the current scheme while nearly all other LAs have chosen not to count any Child Maintenance in their CTS calculations.
Support	I think this is a great idea to help parents on low incomes
Support	The money for child maintenance is designed to ensure the child(ren) are sufficiently well cared for and provided for. To deduct this and essentially make this used to pay CTAX seems backward and counterintuitive.
Support	This is an excellent proposal and if accepted would show that HDC Council Tax Support really does support families in financial difficulty.
Support	This measure will assist low income single parent families, whose children are twice as likely to be living in poverty compared to children in couple families - a situation partly caused by the fact that many single parent families have only one income to rely on. Receipt of even modest amounts of child maintenance can make a real difference to children in working age single parent families, who are among those hardest hit by reduced help with childcare costs through tax credits; reduced help with housing costs as a result of reforms to the local housing allowance and the 'bedroom tax', and the lowering in the real value of benefits and tax credits compared to inflation. It is a measure which would assist the council to fulfil its obligations under the Child Poverty Act 2010. At a time of financial hardship for single parents struggling to make ends meet, choosing to treat child maintenance as income to be ignored for council tax support purposes will assist single parents to keep up with their council tax bills, and thus reduce the costs of the council in seeking enforcement of unpaid council tax. The change would also be acknowledgement by the council that parental responsibility for children living apart is something to be encouraged and supported.
Support	without doubt we should do everything possible to support families and their entitlement to Council Tax support.

Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 9th December 2014

Matters for Information

28. ENERGY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Panel has received an update on the energy and cost savings which have been achieved through the Council's Carbon Management Plan since its adoption in 2009.

Over the lifespan of the Plan which has encouraged a rigorous approach to energy management by the Council, Members have been informed that the Authority has reduced its carbon emissions by 17.4% and its overall energy consumption by 10% (an average of 2% per annum). This is set against the normal expectations of a 3% rise per annum. Whilst the Authority has not achieved the original targets (a 30% reduction over a 5 year period), the Panel has been advised that the target set had not been achieved by any of the 50 local authorities who had sought to achieve it.

The Panel has noted that whilst a number of significant projects have been implemented there is considerable scope to build upon the success to date and introduce a framework that will deliver further energy and cost reductions. With this in mind, Members have been advised of plans to enter into a partnership with the County Council, Greater London Authority and Local Partnerships to access the RE:FIT procurement framework to assist with the identification and implementation of further energy saving measures. This will enable the Council to commission free desk top energy assessments of its nine main sites and to explore commissioning Investment Grade Proposals, where a business case for energy reduction is identified by the desk top assessment.

In considering the proposal, Members have been advised of the objectives of the initiative and that the RE:FIT framework forms part of the Mobilising Local Energy Investment (MLEI) initiative. The Panel also has also discussed the costs associated with the RE:FIT programme and has noted there would be a charge in the region of £1,000 - £4,000 for the preparation of a full Investment Grade Proposal. These costs would be recovered by the partner provider from the savings achieved by the Council in the first year. If the Council wishes to progress further an upfront capital investment will be required.

In response to a question from a Member, the Environment Team Leader has been asked to circulate an update on the Green Deal Home Improvement Fund which had been re-launched this week. Members have also been advised that the £7.8m funding which had been secured from the 'Green Deal Communities Fund' for solid wall installation in Cambridgeshire does not have to be spent until 30th September 2015 which would give the Council more time to actively promote the scheme to residents and secure sign-up.

Having endorsed the proposals within the report, the Panel has requested that further updates on progress with the identification and procurement of future projects through the RE:FIT procurement framework should be presented to future meetings of the Panel in due course.

29. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Panel has received a preview of the new Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document. This sets out a number of design principles, based on recognised best practice, and outlines the key requirements that the Council will take into consideration when assessing planning proposals. The need to update the Council's existing Design Guide had been identified following a previous review by the Panel of the design principles for future developments. The new Design Guide will directly comply with National Planning Policy Guidance and align with the other documents currently being established by the District Council's Planning Team (i.e. the Council's Tree Strategy).

Having been informed that it is intended that the new Design Guide will be viewed primarily online, the Panel has congratulated Officers on the presentation of the document and welcomed the use of 'Plain English' within it. However, Members have expressed disappointment that some of the examples of good practice provided had been taken from outside of the District. The Panel has also emphasised the need to be consistent when referencing examples of good and bad practice throughout the Guide.

In terms of the content of the Guide, Panel Members have discussed the continuing impact of on-street parking and the lack of private parking on the overall visual amenity of new developments. Whilst it was acknowledged that this required to be overcome, Members have welcomed the inclusion of a minimum size for garages within the Guide.

The Panel has discussed the need to ensure that the statements made with regard to on-street parking within the new Design Guide are supported by the County Council as the Highways Authority. Members have been advised that the County Council will be a consultee to the document and as such it will be possible to make these points to them directly. It is hoped that the new guide will influence the County Council to impose requirements which are

consistent with the new SPD and thus improve the design quality of new developments.

The Panel has been advised that a six week public consultation on the Huntingdonshire Design Guide will take place between the 9th January and 20th February 2015. Having discussed the expectations of this exercise, Members have emphasised the need to promote the consultation and the need for feedback to members of the public. The Panel will also have a further opportunity to make comments on the Design Guide during this time.

Finally, and having regard to the timetable for the adoption of the Guide as an SPD in March 2015, the Panel has emphasised the importance of achieving a robust and sound document notwithstanding the timescale for its approval.

30. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) - PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), the Panel has appointed Councillors G J Harlock, B Hyland and R J West to the Select Committee on Project Management.

Other Matters of Interest

31. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. In doing so, it has been reported that a meeting of the Tree Strategy Working Group will be held in January to enable Members to review the final content of the Strategy prior to its launch. It has also been noted that survey work to inform the review of waste collection policies will be undertaken in the New Year.

Having noted that the compilation of the planned water and flooding Supplementary Planning Document for Cambridgeshire was taking longer than anticipated, the Panel has noted that a meeting of the Flood Prevention Working Group will be convened once a finalised draft has been completed. The first meeting of the working group which had been arranged to consider future litter and graffiti service scope and standards will also be convened in the New Year.

32. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has received details of the studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

33. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel has been acquainted with the content of the Notice of Key Executive Decisions.

34. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein. Members have requested an update on the current position with the injunction order which has been secured under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to prevent any further works to the Manor Farmhouse, 15 High Street, Spaldwick. The building is on the Council's Buildings at Risk Register.

G J Bull
Chairman