

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FROM 1 APRIL 2013
(Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 6 September 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) considered the report by the Head of Customer Services on the local Council Tax Support scheme. The following paragraphs contain a summary of the Panel's discussions on the report.

2. THE PANEL'S DISCUSSIONS

- 2.1 The Government will reduce the funding it provides to Councils to meet the cost of Council Tax support. Some of those who could have been affected by this are protected from any reduction in the support they receive. The Panel has concurred with the view that the whole reduction should not be passed on to the remaining recipients of support and that the Council should make up part of the difference. It is recommended that, when the changes are being developed and implemented, the Council should make clear that the Government has imposed the reduction on the Council and that the Council will not benefit from any savings.
- 2.2 Attention is drawn to the fact that the consultation being undertaken has not targeted all Council Tax payers. It is suggested that the consultation might have been more widely distributed. Officers have given an undertaking that this will be taken into account when all the responses are analysed. Nevertheless, the comment has been made that it is most important that those affected are consulted to enable the Council to complete an impact assessment.
- 2.3 On behalf of the Social Well-Being Panel, Councillor S Criswell has also expressed the view that the Council is minimising the effects of the changes as far as possible, that if the Council made up the whole of the short-fall it would have to find an extra £1m in savings and that the Council will take a decision on behalf of all Council Tax payers on the basis of the consultation responses received.
- 2.4 A suggestion has been made that the Council might assist those affected to move to properties in a lower Council Tax band. However, it has been reported that this already takes place through the housing list and that Registered Social Landlords help their tenants to move.
- 2.5 Having noted that payments will be made on a monthly basis rather than weekly as has been the case in the past, the point has been made that this could cause budgeting difficulties for some recipients. There is now, however, the facility for some payers to pay their Council Tax over twelve months. The Panel has been assured that this will not cause the Council any cash flow problems.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to consider the discussions of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) as part of their deliberations on this item.

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Background Documents

Report and Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 6th September 2012.