

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

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 4th December 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) considered a report by the Head of Customer Services seeking the Panel's endorsement of a new local Council Tax Support scheme for the District.
- 1.2 The Executive Councillor for Customer Services and the Head of Customer Services were in attendance at the meeting. This report summarises the Panel's discussions.

## **2. THE PANEL'S DISCUSSIONS**

- 2.1 In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services reported that the new scheme will supersede the current national Council Tax Benefit scheme on 1st April 2013. The Panel's attention has been drawn to the financial impact of the proposals, with particular reference being made to the impact on the collection fund of both the proposed local scheme and the government's transitional scheme. He then went on to report that the draft scheme has been subject to consultation in late summer, which had resulted in changes being made to the backdating of payments made under the current Council Tax Benefit scheme and the capital limit which will remain at the existing Council Tax Benefit level of £16,000. These changes are now incorporated within the new scheme.
- 2.2 The Panel has discussed at some length the impact of the proposals upon Town and Parish precepts. Members appreciate the difficulties faced by the Head of Customer Services in providing accurate estimates on Council Tax calculations for each of the District's Parishes as this largely depends on a Government announcement, which is expected on 13th December 2012. Town and Parish Councils are advised by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils to defer agreeing their precepts until this announcement has been made and the impact on their Council Tax calculations known. Owing to concerns with the lack of time available, given that the Council is required to have a scheme in place by 31st January 2013, the Panel has requested sight of a report outlining the impact of the Town and Parish Council precepting process to be made available to them in February 2013.
- 2.3 Referring to residents protected under the proposed new scheme, some concerns have been expressed that some of those who previously were protected under the current national Council Tax Benefit scheme will be required to pay Council Tax under the new local scheme. Of particular concern to Members are those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance.
- 2.4 Reference has also been made to the recommendation arising within the Equality Impact Assessment relating to the definition of vulnerable groups. The Head of Customer Services has confirmed that she will be seeking expert legal opinion on the Council's position. Given this undertaking, the Panel recommends the Cabinet to approve the Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme and, in accordance with Section 10 and Schedule 4 of the Local Government Finance

Act 2012, authorise the Head of Customer Services to administer the Council Tax Support Scheme.

### **3. RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 The Cabinet is invited to take into account the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) as part of its deliberations on the report by the Head of Customer Services.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Minutes and Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 4th December 2012.

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