

CABINET OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP
Thursday, 19 October 2017 at 7.30 pm
Council Chamber, Civic Centre

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive any apologies for absence from Councillors.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive Councillors' declarations of interest (if any) in relation to any matters on the agenda.
3. Minutes (Pages 2 - 3)
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 August 2017.
4. Matters arising
Any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.
5. Local Council Tax Support Scheme Proposals 2018/19 (Pages 4 - 38)
6. Community Engagement Strategy - Scoping Report (Pages 39 - 41)
7. Work Plan (Page 42)
To review the Overview Working Group's work plan for the current year.
8. Matters of Urgent Business
Such other business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be received as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances to be specified in the minutes.

**MINUTES OF THE CABINET OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP
HELD ON**

10 August 2017

7.30 - 8.17 pm

PRESENT

Overview Working Group Members

Councillor Ian Beckett (Chair)
Councillor Mark Ingall (Vice-Chair)
Councillor David Carter
Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Michael Garnett
Councillor Maggie Hulcoop
Councillor Stefan Mullard
Councillor Clive Souter
Councillor John Strachan

Officers

Lisa Thornett, Customer Services Officer
Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing
Maureen Pearman, Community, Leisure and Cultural Services Manager

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

None.

5. **HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY - SCOPING REPORT**

The Overview Working Group received a scoping report to review the Council's approach to health and wellbeing and development of the Health and Wellbeing strategy.

Maureen Pearman, Community, Leisure and Cultural Services Manager, gave a brief overview of the report.

Following a discussion it was agreed that a focus group type session of Overview Working Group would be arranged to capture views and ideas about Health and Wellbeing that might inform the strategy. In addition Maureen Pearman agreed to review how disabled people can input into the Health and Wellbeing Board.

RESOLVED that the Overview Working Group agreed the scope of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy go forward for development.

6. **REGENERATION STRATEGY - SCOPING REPORT**

The Overview Working Group received a scoping report to review the Council's development of its new Regeneration Strategy.

Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing, gave a brief overview of the report.

Following a discussion it was agreed that additional stakeholders should be added to the report

RESOLVED that the Overview Working Group agreed the scope of the Regeneration Strategy go forward for development.

7. **WORK PLAN**

It was agreed that that interim reports for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Regeneration Strategy be presented to the group at the meeting to be held on Tuesday 5 December 2017, and final reports at the meeting to be held on Thursday 8 March 2018. The Work Plan has been amended.

8. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW
WORKING GROUP

REPORT TO: CABINET OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP

DATE: 19 OCTOBER 2017

TITLE: LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME PROPOSALS 2018/19

LEAD OFFICER: SIMON FREEMAN, HEAD OF FINANCE (01279) 446228

CONTRIBUTING OFFICER: DONNA BEECHENER, REVENUES AND BENEFITS MANAGER (01279) 446245

RECOMMENDED that the Overview Working Group:

- A** Acknowledges the current position regarding the 2017/18 Local Council Tax Support Scheme and endorses continuing stability within the scheme for 2018/19.
- B** Recommends to Cabinet that, following the results of the consultation process, the scheme is amended with effect from 1 April 2018 as follows:
- (i) To accept documentation from the Department of Works & Pensions as an intention to claim Council Tax Support;
 - (ii) To disregard the new Bereavement Support payments for working age applicants; and
 - (iii) To allow for discretion in regards to Department of Works & Pensions notifications for working age CTS claims.

BACKGROUND

1. In accordance with the Welfare Reform Act 2012, and the Local Government Finance Act 2012, councils are required to implement a Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) annually, and by 31 January each year at the latest for the forthcoming financial year.
2. The Pan Essex Working Group, originally established to consider a county wide approach to the localisation of council tax support, has continued to work very effectively. Having focussed on the development of the local schemes, more recently the work has been looking at those exemptions and discounts awarded to council tax payers. As a result the Group has now implemented a range of measures targeted at ensuring that each Council across Essex undertakes work on a consistent basis to help protect the tax base in each district. Work will continue to be undertaken in 2018/19

to ensure compliance and to check and challenge council tax reductions awarded for which entitlement may have subsequently changed or be no longer appropriate.

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)

3. The national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) Scheme, which was wholly funded by the Government and administered locally by billing authorities, was abolished with effect from 1 April 2013. Each Council was charged with designing and implementing its own local scheme for the 2013/14 financial year against a backdrop of a 10 percent reduction in national funding when compared with CTB. The scheme must be reviewed annually and the Council approved its local scheme for the 2017/18 financial year at its meeting held on 15 December 2017.
4. Prior to the introduction of LCTS there had been no cap on CTB expenditure under the national scheme. However, under LCTS, Government funding was restricted through the introduction of a cash limit in the form of a fixed grant. In addition, the grant was set at a level which was 10 percent less than the previous council tax benefit expenditure estimated from 2012/13. For the Council this represents a reduction in funding of around £1.3 million per annum from April 2013.
5. The grant for LCTS was originally identified specifically within the Council's overall Revenue Support Grant and retained Business Rates income for 2013/14. The level of funding for 2014/15 and future years has not been identified in the same way and has been included in the Council's overall Revenue Support Grant and Retained Business Rates – overall Formula Funding. As a result of this there is no protection for the LCTS funding and it is subject to the wider Government cuts to local government funding. Since the introduction of the scheme, the Councils overall funding has reduced by over 47 percent but there has been no reduction in the Councils support of its LCTS scheme.
6. In order to ensure that Pensionable Age customers should be no worse off under the local scheme, national rules remain in place for this group of claimants. As protection remains in place for those of Pensionable Age, the impact of the reduction in funding has fallen upon Working Age claimants as reported during the implementation of the 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 schemes.
7. The Council is part of a Pan Essex Project Group, with a remit to design an Essex Framework for LCTS. The principles of the framework were reported to Cabinet on 12 July 2012. On 22 November 2012, the Council adopted a LCTSS following public consultation during the summer of 2012 based on these principles, which are detailed below:

- a) The scheme will be cost neutral;
- b) Council tax support will continue to be assessed on a means tested basis;
- c) Council tax support will not be paid above Council tax band H;
- d) Council tax support is capped at 76 percent of council tax liability;
- e) The first £25 of weekly earnings are disregarded in the calculation of support;
- f) There is no entitlement to support where the applicant has capital of over £6,000; and
- g) Second adult rebate and underlying entitlement were abolished to remove the administrative burden of these.

For comparison purposes, the LCTS schemes for the other Essex councils are attached at Appendix A.

8. The Council has ensured that in the development of its local scheme the eligibility criteria for LCTS remains aligned with the previous national council tax benefit scheme, with specific protection for families and persons with disabilities. In addition and despite the reductions in overall Government grant received by the Council the scheme has been supported and maintained without variation to the above principles.
9. 2013/14 scheme was designed to deliver savings of £1,361,235 to ensure that expenditure on LCTS did not exceed the total Government funding allocated for the scheme. At the time of writing this report the LCTS scheme costs for the current and previous financial years are as follows:

LCTS Award	Pensionable Age		Working Age		Total LCTS Award
	Live Case load	LCTS Spend	Live Case load	LCTS Spend	
1 April 2013	3,819	£3,535,031	5,302	£3,810,068	£7,345,099
31 March 2014	3,673	£3,483,230	5,189	£3,741,202	£7,117,494
31 March 2015	3,547	£3,240,964	4,890	£3,363,313	£6,604,277

31 March 2016	3,291	£2,941,981	4.469	£3,184,219	£6,126,200
31 March 2017	3,099	£2,936,255	4,510	£3,068,939	£6,005,195
30 September 2017	3,027	£2,895,860	4,147	£3,144,517	£6,040,377

10. It was estimated that the in-year council tax collection rate for 2013/14 in Harlow would be affected by the introduction of LCTS and could fall by over threepercent compared to the collection rate in 2012/13. Council tax collection atthe end of the second quarter in 2017/18 is reported at 56.45 percent,compared to a collection rate of 56.83 percent for the same period in the 2012/13 financial year.

Date	Council Tax Collection Rate
30 September 2012	56.83%
30 September 2013	56.60%
30 September 2014	56.28%
30 September 2015	56.71%
30 September 2016	56.75%
30 September 2017	56.45%

At the time of writing this report:

- a) Council tax collection rate is currently exceeding original forecasts. The introduction of a 12 month instalment scheme by the Government in 2014 will also be impacting on the collection statistics when compared with prior years with income having been collected predominantly over 10 months;
 - b) The additional funding provided within the agreement with the precepting bodies has enabled employment of extra staff dedicated to workingwith LCTS claimants. This has meant that the normal collection processes on the remaining non LCTS clients has not been compromised; and
 - c) There is continuing good engagement with LCTS claimants meaning that it has been possible to agree payment arrangements with residents at an early stage, and reducing avoiding the need for further recovery action.
11. Recovery action for council tax in LCTS cases has been taken in accordance with legislation with the addition of the specialist advice from the LCTS officers. Of all working age LCTS claimants, including those with closed

LCTS claims, 1,076 (22.24 percent) have received a final notice where a payment has not been received, and 799 (16.51 percent) claimants have been summonsed in the current financial year. Where a summons has been issued, the Council continues to work to engage with those affected to provide support and advice to reach a payment solution wherever possible, subject to the claimant's willingness to disclose relevant information and work with the Council's Officers. The table below provides a comparison with previous years.

Date	Percentage of all working age LCTS claimants receiving a Final Notice in the financial year	Percentage of all working age LCTS claimants receiving a Summons In the financial year
30 October 2013	26.7%	16.6%
30 October 2014	29.8%	18.4%
30 October 2015	25.6%	23.1%
30 September 2016	23.36%	15.34%
30 September 2017	22.24%	16.51%

12. Whilst the collection position is currently higher than expected and the level of support being awarded has fallen overall, recovery of amounts falling due can take several years to collect and it is currently still early in the operation of the new scheme to be able to forecast what the overall final collection position will be for each year.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

13. Officers are keeping the performance of the LCTS scheme under review but as the Council plans for 2018/19 the scheme is still only in its fifth year of operation. Given the complexities of the scheme, the large claimant base and other national factors outside of the Council's control this is still seen as a relatively short period on which to base judgements and future estimates. There are ongoing significant Government led welfare reforms being either proposed or implemented, the impacts of which are difficult to analyse and quantify at this time.
14. Monitoring of the local scheme indicates that it is operating well and that collection of the amounts billed to claimants is being maintained. Engagement with residents impacted by the changes has also been extremely good. In order to maintain certainty for both claimants and the Council, the proposals for the scheme in 2018/19 are to maintain the restriction on the entitlement to support at 24 percent for a sixth year and that the reductions to the Councils core Formula Funding will not be passed on to claimants despite further reductions being forecast for 2018/19 as part of the Government's measures to reduce expenditure.

Public Consultation

15. A public consultation on the LCTSS for 2018/19 was conducted during August and September 2017. Consultation ended on 1 October 2017 and the results are shown at Appendix B. The consultation made three proposals for change to the scheme all of which are intended to simplify its operation and administration. The options and the consultation response to them are set out in the following paragraphs of the report.

Option 1 – The Council wishes to amend its scheme for working age claimants to accept documentation from the Department of Works and Pensions as an intention to claim Council Tax Support.

16. The benefit of this is:

- a) Residents will receive Council Tax Support from the date they would be eligible, minimising the risk of loss of entitlement and simplifying the claiming process for residents.

The drawback of doing this is:

- a) There may be a small increase in expenditure

28 percent of respondents agreed with the proposal, 67 percent responded that they did not know whether they agreed or not.

Option 2 - Disregarding the new Bereavement Support payments for working age applicants

17. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), has introduced a new benefit for working age applicants whose partner dies. This is called Bereavement Support payment and replaces Bereavement Payments, Bereavement Allowance and Widowed Parents Allowance. By making the change the Council will be able to disregard any amounts paid in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction. The payments are currently disregarded in other benefits such as Housing Benefit.

18. The benefits of this are:

- a) It brings the working age Council Tax Support Scheme in line with Housing Benefit changes made by the Government; and
- b) The change will be fairer to applicants who have recently lost a partner.

The drawback of this is:

- a) There may be a small increase in expenditure, but the number of cases will be minimal.

33 percent of respondents agreed with the proposal, 61 percent responded that they did not know whether they agreed or not.

Option 3 – Introduce discretion in regards to Department of Works and Pensions notifications for working age CTS claims

- 19. Council's Revenues and Benefits service currently receives electronic notifications from the Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) when a claimant's income changes. The monthly calculation of Universal Credit means that it is expected that the volumes of referrals received will increase. Each change of income will potentially lead to a change in Council Tax Support and a change in Council Tax liability and instalments.
- 20. This change has been proposed to give the council discretion to ignore minimal changes in income to help to minimise multiple changes, which will both help to reduce confusion and aid in administration.
- 21. The benefits of the Council doing this are:
 - a) Council tax support claims and council tax liability will not be recalculated on a monthly basis where the change in income is minimal.

There are no drawbacks to this change.

44 percent of respondents agreed with the proposal, 56 percent responded that they did not know whether they agreed or not.

- 22. A full equalities impact assessment was carried out on the current 2016/17 scheme. This has been reviewed to take account of the proposed changes to the scheme for 2018/19 and is attached to this report at Appendix C.

CONCLUSIONS

- 23. The LCTSS operated by the Council has performed well in its first five years of operation. Claimants have been very well supported by the dedicated officers appointed utilising the resources provided through the funding agreement with the key precepting bodies.
- 24. Following consultation on the 2018/19 scheme it is again proposed to retain the scheme largely unchanged with the exception of the options set out in the report to accept DWP documentation as an intention to claim LCTS, disregard

Bereavement Payments and introduce discretion in assessing DWP notifications. The changes will improve the administrative arrangements for the scheme, assist customers in claiming and help to align the scheme with Housing Benefit administration.

IMPLICATIONS

Place (includes Sustainability)

No implications specifically arise from the Council Tax Benefit reforms. Welfare Reform more widely will have a range of different impacts on delivery of service objectives.

Author: **Graeme Bloomer, Head of Place**

Finance (Includes ICT)

Financial impacts of the LCTS scheme are being considered as part of the wider budget process and development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Author: **Simon Freeman, Head of Finance**

Housing

None specific.

Author: **Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

Community Wellbeing (includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

As contained within the report at this stage. The implications of the final scheme will be assessed for impact on vulnerable groups, as outlined in the report.

Author: **Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

Governance (includes HR)

The Council must have the LCTSS in place by 31 January 2017 and having carried out a consultation exercise it will minimise the risk of challenges to the Council.

Author: **Brian Keane, Head of Governance**

Background Papers

Harlow Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18 -

<http://www.harlow.gov.uk/council-tax-support-scheme-2017-18pdf>

Government Annual Fraud Indicators -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-fraud-indicator--2>

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

CTB – Council Tax Benefit

LCTS – Local Council Tax Support

Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Essex Schemes 2017/18

Appendix B – LCTS Consultation Results

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment – Local Council Tax Support Scheme

APPENDIX A
Proposed Essex Schemes 2017/18

	Basildon	Braintree	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford	Colchester	Epping Forest	Harlow	Maldon	Rochford	Southeast-on-Sea	Tendring	Thurrock	Uttlesford
Minimum council tax payment?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
% Minimum council tax payment level 2017/18	25	24	0 - 20	32 /34 /35	23	20	25	24	20	28	25	20	25	12.5
Savings limit	16000	16000	16000	6000	6000	6000	6000	6000	6000	6000	6000	16000	6000	16000
Other benefits counted as income?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Second adult rebate reduced or abolished?	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Changes made to non-dependent deductions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Support restricted to a particular council tax band?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Consulting	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Council Tax band support is restricted to	D	D	D	D	D	-	D	H	D	D	D	-	-	-
Introduce minimum council tax support payment?	Yes	No	No	Consulting	No	Consulting	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Minimum weekly council tax support payment	£2.50	-	-	50p -£2	-	-£2	£0.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	£2.00
Taper rate	20%	24%	15 -20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Changes made to conditions around starting work?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Hardship fund	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Mirror all changes in Housing	Yes	N/K	No	Yes	No	no	N/K	consulting	yes	yes	Yes	No	yes	yes

Benefit														
Remove Family Premium	No	yes	No	Yes	No	yes	consulting	consulting	yes	yes	Yes		Yes	yes
Changes to Minimum Income Floor	Yes	yes	Yes	No	Yes	Consulting	yes	yes	yes	yes	No	yes	Yes	yes
Dependents reduced to two	No		No	Yes	No	no		No	yes	Yes	yes		Yes	yes
Changes made to backdating rules to one month	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	No	Yes	yes
Change Temporary Absence rules	No		No	Yes	No	Consulting		Yes	yes	yes	yes		yes	yes
Disregard the new Bereavement Support payments for working age applicants		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	consulting	Consulting	consulting	consulting					
Introduce discretion in regards								Consulting	consulting					

to DWP notification s for working age CTS claims.														
Accept documenta tion from the DWP as an intention to claim Council Tax Support								Consulti ng	Consulti ng					

LCTS Consultation Results

Consultation Closed 1 October 2017

1. I have reviewed the background information about the Council Tax Support Scheme.

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		23	88%
No		0	0%
Total Respondents			23
(skipped this question)			133

2. Should the Council keep the current Council Tax Scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme and have the same level of support as it does at the moment?)

		Response Total	Response Percent
1 response was entered for this question			
Yes		4	21%
No		5	26%
Don't know		10	53%
Total Respondents			19
(skipped this question)			140

3. Please use the space below to make any comments you have on protecting the Council Tax Support Scheme from these changes:

it needs to change to offer help for self-employed people who earn below the minimum wage	
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4. **Option 1 – The Council wishes to amend its scheme for working age claimants to accept documentation from the Department of Works & Pensions as an intention to claim Council Tax Support.**

The benefit of this is:

- Residents will receive Council Tax Support from the date they would be eligible, minimising the risk of loss of entitlement and simplifying the claiming process for residents.

The drawback of doing this is:

- There may be a small increase in expenditure

Do you agree with the proposed change?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		5	28%
No		1	5%
Don't know		12	67%
		Total Respondents	18
		(skipped this question)	141

5. Option 2 - Disregarding the new Bereavement Support payments for working age applicants

The Department for Work and Pensions has introduced a new benefit for working age applicants whose partner dies. This is called Bereavement Support payment and replaces Bereavement Payments, Bereavement Allowance and Widowed Parents Allowance. By making the change the Council will be able to disregard any amounts paid in the calculation of Council Tax Reduction. The payments are currently disregarded in other benefits such as Housing Benefit.

The benefits of this are:

- It brings the working age Council Tax Support Scheme in line with Housing Benefit changes made by Central Government; and
- The change will be fairer to applicants who have recently lost a partner

The drawback of this is:

- There may be a small increase in expenditure, but the number of cases will be minimal.

Do you agree with this change to the scheme?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		6	33%
No		1	6%
Don't know		11	61%
		Total Respondents	18
		(skipped this question)	141

6. Option 3 – Introduce discretion in regards to Department of Works & Pensions notifications for working age CTS claims.

The Council's Revenues and Benefits service currently receives electronic notifications from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) when a claimant's income changes. The monthly calculation of Universal Credit means that it is expected that the volumes of referrals received will increase. Each change of income will potentially lead to a change in Council Tax Support and a change in Council Tax liability and instalments.

This change has been proposed to give the council discretion to ignore minimal changes in income to help to minimise multiple changes, which will both help to reduce confusion and aid in administration.

The benefits of the Council doing this are:

- a) Council tax support claims and council tax liability will not be recalculated on a monthly basis where the change in income is minimal.

There are no drawbacks to this change

Do you agree with this change to the scheme?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		7	44%
No		0	0%
Don't know		9	56%
		Total Respondents	16
		(skipped this question)	143

Alternatives to reducing the amount of help provided by the Council Tax Support Scheme

If the Council keeps the current Council Tax Support scheme, it will be administratively more complex (as it will not align with Housing Benefit which is also administered by the Council) and it will cost taxpayers more. The Council may need to find savings from other services to help meet any increase in costs. The proposals set out in this consultation could deliver savings. The alternatives are set out in the background information

7. Do you think the Council should choose any of the following options rather than the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme? Please select one answer for each source of funding

	Yes	No	Don't know	Response total
Increase the level of council tax	0%(0)	85.71% (6)	14.29% (1)	7
Find savings from cutting other Council Services	42.86% (3)	28.57% (2)	28.57% (2)	7
Total respondents				7
(skipped this question)				152

8. If the Council were to choose these other options to make savings, what would be your order of preference? Please tick your preferred option (one only).

	1	Response total
Increase the level of council tax	0% (0)	0
Reduce funding available for other Council Services	100% (5)	5
Total Respondents		5
(skipped this question)		154

9. Please use the space below to make any other comments on the scheme:

Sell off the Playhouse as it has been a huge drain on council tax payer which can no longer be afforded	
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10. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state):

No responses received.	
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11. If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Council Tax Support Scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use this space below.

No responses received	
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12. Are you, or someone in your household, getting a Council Tax Reduction at this time?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		2	67%
No		1	33%
Don't know		0	0%
Total Respondents		3	

13. Are you...?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Male		1	33%
Female		1	33%
Prefer not to say		1	33%
Total Respondents		3	

14. Age

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
18 - 24		0	0%
25 - 34		0	0%
35 - 44		1	33%
45 - 54		0	0%
55 - 64		1	33%
65 - 74		0	0%
75 - 84		0	0%
85+		0	0%
Prefer not to say		1	33%
Total Respondents		3	

15. Do you consider yourself to have a physical impairment?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		1	33%
No		2	67%
Not Sure		0	0%
Prefer no to say		0	0%
Total Respondents		3	

16. Do you consider yourself to have a sensory impairment?

		Response Total	Response Percent

No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		0	0%
No		3	100%
Not sure		0	0%
Prefer not to say		0	0%
Total Respondents			3

17. Do you consider yourself to have a learning difficulty or disability?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		0	0%
No		3	100%
Not sure		0	0%
Prefer not to say		0	0%
Total Respondents			3

18. Do you consider yourself to have any mental health needs?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
Yes		0	0%
No		2	67%
Not sure		1	33%
Prefer not to say		0	0%
Total Respondents			3

19. What is your ethnic group?

		Response Total	Response Percent
No responses were entered for this question.			
White British		2	67%
White Irish		0	0%
White Other		0	0%

Gypsy / Roma		0	0%
Traveller of Irish Heritage		0	0%
Black or Black British African		0	0%
Black or Black British Caribbean		0	0%
Mixed White / Black African		0	0%
Mixed White / Black Caribbean		0	0%
Black Other		0	0%
Asian or Asian British Pakistani		0	0%
Asian or Asian British Indian		0	0%
Asian or Asian British Other		0	0%
Mixed White / Asian		0	0%
Asian Other		0	0%
Chinese		0	0%
Mixed Other		0	0%
Not Known		0	0%
Prefer not to say		1	33%
Other, please specify		0	0%
Total Respondents		3	

Harlow District Council

Equality Impact Assessment – Local council tax support scheme

Name of service, function or policy being assessed	Localised Council Tax Support Policy 2018-19 This Equality Impact Assessment has been developed considering the following national Equality Impact Assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Finance Bill: Localising support for council tax • Local Government Finance Bill: Technical reforms to council tax • Local Government Finance Bill: Summary impact assessment
Service/Department	Finance / Revenues and Benefits
Names and roles of officers completing the assessment (indicate Lead officer)	Donna Beechener, Revenues and Benefits Manager (Lead Officer)
Contact telephone number of Lead officer	01279 446245
Date assessment completed	6 October 2017

1. Aims of the policy/service/function and how implemented

	Key Questions	Notes
1.1	Is this a new policy/service/function or a review of an existing one?	This is a review of an existing policy and function
1.2	Briefly state the main purpose of the policy/service/function?	To help people with low incomes to afford their Council Tax liability, in line with the Local Government Finance Act 2012.
1.3	Briefly state the main activities of the policy/service/function?	Payment of Council Tax Discounting of Council Tax
1.4	Who are the main beneficiaries? Whose need's is it designed to meet?	Those liable for Council Tax within Harlow. Adults on a low income with low savings Any authority that can levy a Council Tax
1.5	Which staff carry out the policy/service/function?	Revenues And Benefits staff

2. Information Gathering and Data Collection

	Key Questions	Notes	If further data collection is needed – state by whom, when and how is it going to be done?
2.1	<p>What quantitative (numerical) data do you already have (e.g. national and local demographic data, equality monitoring data, employee data, customer profile data etc) about those who use or will use the policy or service? What gaps are there in the data? What else do you need?</p> <p>NB. Attach copies of the relevant data that you are using for this assessment</p>	<p>The scheme was originally modelled based on existing costs, taking account of a potential council tax increase, demand for the scheme and the reduction in Revenue Support Grant. The scheme was originally modelled to be cost neutral, but current estimates are that the scheme costs more than the current level of grant received. .</p>	<p>It is not possible to identify the actual grant received to support the scheme as this has been subsumed into overall formula funding.</p>
2.2	<p>What qualitative data do you already have (e.g. results of customer satisfaction surveys, results of previous consultations, staff surveys, analysis of customer complaints/comments, feedback from community groups or individuals etc) about those who use or will use the policy or service? What gaps are there in the data? What else do you need?</p>	<p>The proposed scheme for 2017/18 working age claimants varies little from the current scheme apart from proposals to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Accept Department of Works & Pensions (DWP) documentation as an intention to claim council tax support. 2) Align with Housing Benefit changes in regards to disregarding bereavement support payments. 3) Introduce discretion in regards to DWP notifications. 	

		<p>The majority of respondents to the consultation agreed that with the concept that all people of working age should have to pay some council tax, currently set at a minimum of 76%, and with the proposals for change</p>	
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3. Consultation

Please state below what formal or informal consultation has taken place or that you are planning to hold with appropriate stakeholders in relation to this policy/function			
	Key Questions	Notes	If further consultations are needed/ planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be done?
3.1	What consultations have been held and with whom did you consult? What were the main issues raised?	A public consultation was conducted for a period of six weeks, commencing on 21 August 2017 and closing on 1 October 2017. The consultation was conducted by way of an online questionnaire. The consultation was publicly announced.	The scheme will be reviewed annually, and if changes are proposed, then further public consultation will be conducted.
3.2	What consultations were held specifically with the equality target groups? What were the main issues raised?	In introducing a local council tax support scheme in 2013, representatives of equality target groups were identified and contacted electronically alerting them to the consultation and asking them to participate. Locally and nationally concerns were raised about the new liabilities created for those unable to work due to disability. We have addressed these by confirming that the current system of applicable amounts which protect these groups will remain in place.	As 3.1

	Key Questions	Notes	If further consultations are needed/ planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be done?
3.3	<p>Is the Council working in Partnership with other organisations to implement this policy/function?</p> <p>Should this be taken into consideration? (E.g. Agreeing the equalities monitoring categories)</p> <p>Should the partnership arrangements have an EIA?</p>	<p>All major precepting authorities in Essex, which work together to devise the support scheme. HDC – Corporate Housing; Resource Management Department for Work and Pensions Department for Communities and Local Government .</p> <p>Each LA participating in the Essex project will conduct their own EQIA. DWP & DCLG have undertaken EQIA's which are publicly available.</p>	As 3.1

Note

- It is a legal requirement that consultation takes place with appropriate stakeholders as part of the EIA process.
- You must ensure that you record all the main areas of concern raised by equality and customer groups during consultations and how you aim to address these concerns.

4. Assessment of Impact

Based on the data you have analysed and provided, and the results of the consultation or research you have undertaken, list below how the policy or function will or does work for each of the following equalities groups.

Identify any differential impact and consider whether the policy/function meets any particular needs identified for each of the six equalities groups.

NB:If you do identify any adverse impact you must:

- a) **Seek appropriate advice as to whether it is highlighting unlawful discrimination or is potentially discriminatory, and**
- b) **Identify steps to mitigate any adverse impact**

Include any examples of how the policy or function helps to promote race, disability, age and/or gender equality.

		State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality
4.1	<p>Gender – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on women, men and transgender people And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
		State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality

4.2	<p>Disability – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on disabled people (ensure consideration of a range of impairments including visual and hearing impairments, mobility impairments, learning disability etc) And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>All Disability Living Allowance Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>The above helps to “advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.”</p>
4.3	<p>Age – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different age groups And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	<p>Older people (Pensionable Age); This group is specifically protected under Government Regulations.</p> <p>Younger people (17-25); 17 year olds may be disadvantaged indirectly if their parents have to pay more as a result of this policy. People over 18 of working age will be required to pay more.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme hardship.</p> <p>Children (0-16); Removing the Family Premium for new claims, may affect those under 16.</p>
4.4	<p>Race – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different black and minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy and Traveller communities And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
		State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality

4.5	<p>Sexual orientation – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on lesbians, gay men, bisexual and heterosexual people</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
4.6	<p>Religion/belief – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on people of different religious/faith groups and also upon those with no faith</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p>	None identified
4.7	<p>Socio-economic disadvantage – identify any impact on those who have a low income, or whose family circumstances/history may affect their ability to access services eg. carers and the cared for; pensioners; single-parents; long-term unemployed; history of abuse/domestic violence; benefits claimants; housebound; chronically ill;</p>	<p>The impact of the proposed scheme will be felt most by those of working age who are not disabled, some of the affects will be mitigated by more generous incentives to work.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme need.</p>

4.8	<p>Any other groups, if appropriate e.g. children leaving care; pregnant or breast-feeding mothers; carers etc</p>	<p>Parents will continue to receive a child allowance. Working parents receive a higher disregard of their earnings reflecting their childcare costs.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme hardship.</p> <p>The above helps to “advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.”</p>
		<p>Notes</p>
4.9	<p>Are there any additional measures that could be adopted to further equality of opportunity in the context of this policy/service/function and to meet the particular needs of equalities groups that you have identified?</p>	<p>None identified.</p>

NB

Please provide a summary overview by completing the Section overleaf, ticking the relevant boxes to confirm the outcome and findings of this assessment process

It is also essential that you complete an action plan based on your assessment (see form EIA.2) and attach this to your Equality Impact Assessment form (EIA.1) form. This is a vital component of the equalities impact assessment process.

Include all of the measures that you will take to improve the policy/function for the different equalities characteristics, e.g. staff training, positive action, revisions to policy, monitoring of your action plan, etc.

Once you have completed the forms EIA.1 and EIA.2 please sign and date and:

- a) Send a copy to your Head of Service for endorsement
- b) Keep a copy as a record of the processes you have been through in carrying out the EIA
- c) Send a PDF copy of the signed and endorsed EIA form plus enclosed action plans to the Corporate Equalities Group via the HDC Community Liaison Officer equalities@harlow.gov.uk

5. Summary Overview of EIA

As a summary overview of information and findings provided in the earlier sections of this Equality Impact Assessment, please tick the relevant boxes as appropriate to denote the OUTCOME of this process for each of the Equality Characteristics.

Equalities category	No adverse impact AND promotes equality and diversity <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>	No adverse impact BUT equality and diversity NOT promoted <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>	Evidence of adverse impact <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i>
Gender and transgender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Age			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Religion and belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Socio-economic disadvantage			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

NB: Tick relevant box as appropriate and based on information provided in section

Note

- If you are unsure of any aspect of this Equality Impact Assessment process you can seek guidance from your service representative on the Corporate Equalities Group or from the HDC Community Liaison Officer who can be contacted on equalities@harlow.gov.uk and extension 6388.
- Once the EIA form has been completed please ensure all enclosures are attached then sign and date the form, ensure it is countersigned by your Head of Service, keep a copy for your records and send a PDF to equalities@harlow.gov.uk

38

Signed Project Manager Countersigned Head of Service

Print Name Print Name

Date Date

Under the Freedom of Information Act, this completed EIA form will be placed on the Harloweb and be available on request to the general public.

REPORT TO: CABINET OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP

DATE: 19OCTOBER2017

TITLE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY – SCOPING REPORT

LEAD OFFICER: JANE GREER, HEAD OF COMMUNITY WELLBEING (01279) 446406

RECOMMENDED that the Overview Working Group confirms the scope of the review of the Council’s approach to the development of a new Community Engagement Strategy.

BACKGROUND

1. The 14 March 2017 meeting of the Scrutiny Committee considered a community engagement toolkit produced by the Campaign Company. This was sponsored by the Local Government Association as part of a national project titled ‘New Conversations’. The aim of the project was to produce a best practice and practical guide to consultation and engagement for local authorities.
2. During the development of the toolkit the Campaign Company undertook considerable amount of consultation with the Council’s stakeholders, the results of which were incorporated into the guide.
3. The Scrutiny Committee recommended that a referral be made to the Overview Working Group with a view to developing a new Community Engagement Strategy which would take into account the toolkit.

The scoping report for the development of a new Community engagement Strategy is set out below.

Review Topic	Community Engagement Strategy
Links to the Council’s priorities	The Strategy will link to all of the Council’s Corporate Priorities
Terms of reference (to include the scope of the review)	<p>To review the Council’s current community engagement activity and to develop a new Community Engagement Strategy and action plan. To achieve this the following activity should take place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider what the Council’s objectives for community engagement should be.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reach conclusions for the priorities for community engagement activity over the one to five year time frame. • To take account of and, if appropriate, incorporate the toolkit produced by the Campaign Company, as part of the 'new Conversations' project into the new Strategy.
Purpose and objective of the review (what the review should achieve)	Produce a new Community Engagement Strategy for the next five years with a clear vision and defined goals which set out the Council's ambitions for community engagement.
Methodology/approach (methods to be used for gathering evidence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desktop analysis of best practice, including benchmarking against other councils and other similar organisations. • An Officers Working Group from across all service areas within the Council to be established to develop the strategy. • A full review of the toolkit and other findings produced by Campaign Company. • An assessment of the likely future needs and requirements of the Council its customers and stakeholders .
Written evidence required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence gained from published presentations and reports.
Potential witnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Holder for Youth & Community. • Relevant individuals and groups not already interviewed by the Campaign Company.
Potential Stakeholder involvement (who are the stakeholders and how will their views be sought)	As above.
Publicity (methods to be used)	Council website, social media, direct e-mail, press releases etc.
Resources (people, expenditure)	Officer time.

Barriers/dangers/risks (any weaknesses or potential pitfalls in the review)	The strategy and any recommendations or actions must be appropriate to the resources available to the Council.
Measures of success (how will the success of the review be measured)	Adoption and implementation of a new Community Strategy.

Cabinet Overview Working Group Work Plan 2017/18

	Meeting dates 2017/18				
Title	Thursday 10 August 2017	Thursday 19 October 2017	Tuesday 5 December 2017	Thursday 11 January 2018	Thursday 8 March 2018
Non Housing Asset Management Strategy			Interim report		
Community Engagement Strategy		Scoping Report			
Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Scoping Report		Interim Report		Final Report
Regeneration Strategy	Scoping Report		Interim Report		Final Report
Local Council Tax Support Scheme		Report			

Agenda Item 7

42