

Democratic Services

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Date: 6 September 2016

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To: All Members of the Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Sarah Bevan
Councillor Bob Goodman
Councillor Christopher Pearce
Councillor Jasper Martin Becker
Councillor Colin Barrett
Councillor Chris Dando
Councillor Andrew Furse

Chief Executive and other appropriate officers
Press and Public

Dear Member

Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel: Wednesday, 14th September, 2016

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel**, to be held on **Wednesday, 14th September, 2016** at **4.30 pm** in the **Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath**.

The agenda is set out overleaf.

Yours sincerely



Michaela Gay
for Chief Executive

If you need to access this agenda or any of the supporting reports in an alternative accessible format please contact Democratic Services or the relevant report author whose details are listed at the end of each report.

This Agenda and all accompanying reports are printed on recycled paper

NOTES:

- 1. Inspection of Papers:** Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or a list of the background papers relating to any item on this Agenda should contact Michaela Gay who is available by telephoning Bath 01225 394411 or by calling at the Guildhall Bath (during normal office hours).
- 2. Public Speaking at Meetings:** The Council has a scheme to encourage the public to make their views known at meetings. They may make a statement relevant to what the meeting has power to do. They may also present a petition or a deputation on behalf of a group. Advance notice is required not less than two full working days before the meeting (this means that for meetings held on Wednesdays notice must be received in Democratic Services by 4.30pm the previous Friday)

The public may also ask a question to which a written answer will be given. Questions must be submitted in writing to Democratic Services at least two full working days in advance of the meeting (this means that for meetings held on Wednesdays, notice must be received in Democratic Services by 4.30pm the previous Friday). If an answer cannot be prepared in time for the meeting it will be sent out within five days afterwards. Further details of the scheme can be obtained by contacting Michaela Gay as above.

- 3. Details of Decisions taken at this meeting** can be found in the minutes which will be published as soon as possible after the meeting, and also circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. In the meantime details can be obtained by contacting Michaela Gay as above.

Appendices to reports are available for inspection as follows:-

Public Access points - Reception: Civic Centre - Keynsham, Guildhall - Bath, The Hollies - Midsomer Norton. Bath Central and Midsomer Norton public libraries.

For Councillors and Officers papers may be inspected via Political Group Research Assistants and Group Rooms/Members' Rooms.

- 4. Recording at Meetings:-**

The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 now allows filming and recording by anyone attending a meeting. This is not within the Council's control.

Some of our meetings are webcast. At the start of the meeting, the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is to be filmed. If you would prefer not to be filmed for the webcast, please make yourself known to the camera operators.

To comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, we require the consent of parents or guardians before filming children or young people. For more information, please speak to the camera operator

The Council will broadcast the images and sound live via the internet www.bathnes.gov.uk/webcast An archived recording of the proceedings will also be available for viewing after the meeting. The Council may also use the images/sound recordings on its social media site or share with other organisations, such as broadcasters.

- 5. Attendance Register:** Members should sign the Register which will be circulated at the meeting.

6. THE APPENDED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS ARE IDENTIFIED BY AGENDA ITEM NUMBER.

7. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

When the continuous alarm sounds, you must evacuate the building by one of the designated exits and proceed to the named assembly point. The designated exits are sign-posted.

Arrangements are in place for the safe evacuation of disabled people.

Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel - Wednesday, 14th September, 2016

at 4.30 pm in the Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath

A G E N D A

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair will draw attention to the emergency evacuation procedure as set out under Note 6.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting declarations of interest are received from Members in any of the agenda items under consideration at the meeting. Members are asked to indicate:

(a) The agenda item number in which they have an interest to declare.

(b) The nature of their interest.

(c) Whether their interest is **a disclosable pecuniary interest** *or* **an other interest**,
(as defined in Part 2, A and B of the Code of Conduct and Rules for Registration of Interests)

Any Member who needs to clarify any matters relating to the declaration of interests is recommended to seek advice from the Council's Monitoring Officer or a member of his staff before the meeting to expedite dealing with the item during the meeting.

5. TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

6. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

At the time of publication no notifications had been received.

7. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 12)

8. COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT REVIEW (Pages 13 - 30)
9. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Pages 31 - 34)
10. COMMUNICATIONS (Pages 35 - 38)
11. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member will update the Panel on any relevant issues. Panel members may ask questions on the update provided.

12. PANEL WORKPLAN (Pages 39 - 42)

This report presents the latest workplan for the Panel. Any suggestions for further items or amendments to the current programme will be logged and scheduled in consultation with the Panel's Chair and supporting officers.

The Committee Administrator for this meeting is Michaela Gay who can be contacted on 01225 394411.

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BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday, 27th July, 2016

Present:- Councillors Sarah Bevan (Chair), Bob Goodman (Vice-Chair), Christopher Pearce, Colin Barrett, Chris Dando, Deirdre Horstmann (in place of Jasper Becker) and Will Sandry (in place of Andrew Furse)

12 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

13 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Becker sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Horstmann.

Councillor Furse sent his apologies and was substituted by Councillor Sandry.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Goodman (Item 10) declared that he has clients that have property owned by the Council.

Councillor Barrett (Item 6) declared that he is an honorary member of WWISE

16 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

17 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

Susan Charles – Warm Water Inclusive Swimming and Exercise (WWISE) made a statement (*The statement is attached to the agenda for this meeting*) regarding the plans for a warm water pool at Keynsham Leisure Centre and the equalities implication. She asked the Council and GLL consider their design.

Councillor Sandry asked how many people would use the service and how deep the water has to be. Susan Charles stated that it must be more than 3 feet deep so that people can swim. She explained that there is a warm water pool in Germany and 30/40 people use it at one time.

It was agreed that the Panel refer this statement to Councillor Martin Veal – Cabinet Member for Community Services.

Councillor Charles Gerrish – Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources explained that the leader of the Council is on holiday this week but will seek to meet with Susan Charles along with Councillor Veal.

Dr Gait – Chair of Somerset Care & Repair made a statement (*The statement is attached to the agenda for this meeting*) on the efficient use of resources and asked the Council to produce guidelines for partnership working.

The Chair stated that the Panel scrutinizes ongoing processes and not specific contracts. She asked that Dr Gait speak to the officer – Richard Howroyd Head of Strategic Procurement & Commissioning regarding the details of this issue. Dr Gait explained that the statement was about the efficient use of resources and not a specific case. Andrew Pate – Strategic Director for Resources explained that it is not appropriate to get engaged in a contractual issue in public forum and reiterated that Dr Gait could meet with the officer or submit a complaint to the authority. Dr Gait stated that he did not have a complaint but was asking the Council to investigate. The Panel and the Director noted this.

The Chair referred to a question from Nicolette Boater and noted the answers provided in italic text below

1. Has/will an appointment been/be made to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer position?

Yes, a post has been established and an appointment made to a post of Policy Development & Scrutiny Project Lead Officer within the Council's Resources Directorate.

2. Has/will the person specification and job description relating to this appointment been/be made publically available?

It is not normal Council policy to make job descriptions/person specifications publically available.

18 MINUTES - 25TH MAY 2016

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

19 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY - THINK LOCAL

Richard Howroyd Head of Strategic Procurement & Commissioning gave a presentation to the Panel which covered the following (*The slides for this presentation are attached to the agenda papers for this meeting*):

- Procurement Strategy 2013-2017

- A success story
- Service Plan Priorities
- Horizon Scanning
- Modern Slavery Act
- Requirements
- National Procurement Strategy
- Spend Analysis Opportunities
- Systems Integration
- Portfolio Analysis – Drive for Savings and Efficiency

Panel members made the following points and asked the following questions:

Councillor Barrett asked if there is a target percentage of local providers. The officer explained that this target has moved from 28% to 40%. He explained that there has been a positive response at roadshows. He stated that input from members is welcome.

Councillor Sandry asked how 'social value' is measured. The officer explained that it is a new initiative so guidance is not yet out, social value can be interpreted widely.

Following a query from Councillor Sandry, the officer explained that tenders go through the South West Portal and anything under EU thresholds goes out to tender as pre-qualification cannot now be used. The e-procurement system has just been updated.

Councillor Dando asked the following questions and officers provided answers as shown:

- Can we have an update report that shows some examples of successes? *The officer agreed that examples could be shown and gave a current example of local food for schools where he is working with local farmers and a distribution centre in Keynsham;*
- Is there a cost benefit analysis on what has been brought back into the local community? *The officer noted the point but explained that it is difficult to measure data at the moment but this is being worked on.*
- Have any lessons been learned to feed into the development of the new strategy? *The officer explained that there are now new contract standing orders and another lesson is that it takes time to talk to the community and to provide support to local businesses.*

Councillor Pearce stated that the concept of 'social value' could conflict with other objectives and asked the officer where the line is drawn in order to get the best deal for BANES Council tax payers. The officer responded that he believes that we are getting the best deals and there are examples of contracts have got cheaper due to more efficiency and also money is being put back into the local economy. The Strategic Director added that it is a dilemma between savings and value but that generating growth in local businesses increases business rates and creates local jobs. He explained that the Cabinet can review this policy if it is not working.

20 USE OF CONSULTANTS AND AGENCY STAFF - UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor Barrett asked for this item to be deferred until a later meeting in order that he could review the information more closely. The Strategic Director advised that there is information here to discuss today but that if the report is brought later in the year, there would be more information to report such as information on apprenticeships. Councillor Barrett stated that he would talk to the report author.

It was **RESOLVED** that this report be deferred until a meeting of the Panel later in the year (likely November 2016).

21 COMMERCIAL ESTATE

Councillor Goodman, seconded by Councillor Pearce, proposed the following motion:

'That this item be deferred and the full report be given to the panel and the meeting should be held in closed session if necessary with the Consultant from BNP Paribas in attendance to explain the report and answer question from the Panel '...

There was some discussion on this motion. Councillor Pearce agreed that a full report was needed. Councillor Dando disagreed and explained that he wanted an officer summary and information on the direction of travel, not the full report. The Strategic Director stated that it is his view that there is enough information in this report today to discuss the issue but that equally officers can come back and present a fuller version in private session at a later date.

Panel members voted on Councillor Goodman's motion and:

It was **RESOLVED** that this report be deferred until a meeting of the Panel later in the year (likely November 2016).

(Voting - 4 in favour and 3 against).

22 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources, Councillor Charles Gerrish updated the Panel on what he and his senior officers are currently working on:

- Regarding Property, the view of the Cabinet Member is that the Council should make investments close by where possible. If there are commercial deals, to engage with BNP;

- Adult Care Financial Review – there is a further meeting on this in September;
- Ernst and Young – a constructive meeting, they will bring significant benefit and potential savings;
- Council Tax Benefit – the paper is out for consultation and being reported to this Panel in September.

23 PANEL WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the workplan with two additions for the November meeting deferred from this meeting:

- Use of Consultants and Agency Staff
- Commercial Estate

The meeting ended at 5.55 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Resources Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING DATE:	14th September 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2881
TITLE:	Public Consultation of Preferred Local Council Tax Support Scheme	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Please list all the appendices here, clearly indicating any which are exempt and the reasons for exemption</p> <p>Background document</p> <p>Questionnaire</p>		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Authority is planning to implement a revised scheme for Local Council Tax Support for people of working age from April 2017. A public consultation of a preferred scheme is already underway and concludes in October 2016.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to review and comment on the proposed scheme.
- 2.2 The Panel is asked to consider the responses to date.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 Cost of existing scheme is circa £4,000,000 in terms of reduced Council Tax payments – the reductions were previously known as Council Tax benefits. The administration costs of the (benefits or support) scheme are in the region of £320,000.
- 3.2 The proposed option does not aim to reduce the level of funding available to residents (through reduced council Tax bills). It is intended that some additional funds will instead of being paid as reduced bills will be better targeted to those with the greatest need through Local Welfare Support. Current modelling suggests that around £100,000 additional funds will be available.

3.3 The simplification of the scheme is intended to enable reduced administration costs and should deliver £70,000 of administration savings. The changes by being aligned with the government's new Universal Credit scheme will also help ensure future administration of the council Tax support scheme is more sustainable.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

4.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to set a Local Council Tax Support scheme for working-age customers and it must consult upon its preferred scheme each year.

4.2 An Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the preferred scheme has been carried out.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 Key elements of the proposed scheme are as follows

- (1) Existing claimants will remain on the old scheme until they move on to Universal Credit. Their eligibility will be based on entitlement to Universal Credit.
- (2) The amount of support available is determined by income bands with a maximum working age Council Tax discount of around 90%.
- (3) Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments are not counted as income; all other income is counted, including the housing element of Universal Credit.
- (4) A minimum income equal to the national living wage will be set for self-employed applicants declaring unrealistic earnings.
- (5) People with savings of over £6,000 won't be eligible for Council Tax Support in line with the lower capital limit of Universal Credit.
- (6) There will be no reduction in the overall amount available for support. Any savings achieved by changes in the level of support will be allocated to the Council's Welfare Support Team.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 There are a number of drivers for changing the current Local Council Tax Support scheme including:-

- (1) It has not been updated since it was introduced and has not kept pace with other welfare reforms.
- (2) The current scheme is costly to administer and difficult to understand.
- (3) We need a new scheme to align with Universal Credit.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 The Council has considered a number of proposals for revised Council Tax Support schemes for people of working age, and has already sought views from key stakeholders around the principles of the scheme before deciding upon a preferred option to put forward for public consultation.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The consultation on the new scheme commenced on 8th August 2016 and will end on 16th October 2016. This was authorised by a single member decision. So far we have received 42 questionnaire responses from members of the public summarised below and a more detailed analysis will be provided at the Panel meeting

- (1) The public responded overwhelmingly that more help for those on low incomes and increased funding for Welfare Support were their most important principles and areas of the scheme they agreed with.
- (2) Over half agreed with an income banded scheme and that the maximum discount was set at the right level.
- (3) Nearly 60% also felt that the scheme would be simpler to understand and apply for.
- (4) 85% agree that DLA and PIP should be disregarded as income

8.2 A direct response was also received from the CAB supporting the increase in the maximum discount and commended the investment in the Welfare Support team valuing the excellent service they provide.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	Ian Savigar, 01225 477327
Background papers	<i>List here any background papers not included with this report, and where/how they are available for inspection.</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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Bath & North East Somerset Council

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Background information

Council Tax Support helps people on a low income by reducing the amount of Council Tax they have to pay.

Bath & North East Somerset Council, like every other council, had to put in place a Local Council Tax Support scheme to replace Council Tax Benefit from April 2013.

The Government specified that pensioners should see no changes to their entitlement under the local schemes, but gave Councils the discretion to implement rules applicable to people of working age.

A local scheme, which took into account a reduction in government funding, was implemented in Bath and North East Somerset in April 2013. The rules have remained the same ever since. The scheme currently provides financial support of around £4million a year to working-age claimants.

With further reductions in government funding expected over the coming years, the Council has reviewed the current scheme and is proposing to make some changes from April 2017.

The Council is seeking to reduce the administrative cost of Council Tax Support by implementing a less complicated scheme, which will be easier for claimants to understand and apply for.

The revised scheme will also align with wider Welfare Reforms and the roll out of Universal Credit.

The Council has considered a number of proposals for revised Council Tax Support schemes for people of working age, and has agreed a preferred option to put forward for public consultation.

The consultation will be open for a period of 10 weeks, from 8th August – 16th October 2016.

All local residents, key stakeholders, partner organisations and parish & town councils will have the opportunity to respond and comment on the Council's preferred scheme.

Around 5,500 working-age people across Bath and North East Somerset currently claim Council Tax Support. We will be writing to these people directly to ask them for their views on the proposed scheme.

The proposed scheme looks to spread the impact of the changes and protect those with the lowest incomes, as well as maximising incentives for people to work.

Under the current Council Tax Support scheme people are assessed as vulnerable if they are in receipt of one or more of; the Support component of Employment and Support Allowance, the Enhanced Disability premium, the Disabled Child premium or the Severe Disability premium.

Under the new proposal, an income-banded scheme will assess the maximum level of support available to all working-age claimants equally. This is in line with a large number of Local Authorities in England. Whilst claimants will no longer be classified as vulnerable; Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments will not be counted as household income.

In future, eligibility for Council Tax Support will be linked with a person's entitlement to Universal Credit.

The information held on a person's Universal Credit claim will be used to determine which income band they fall into and the amount of Council Tax Support they are entitled to. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide the Council with this information so a claimant will no longer need to make a separate application for Council Tax Support.

The Council believes that the proposed changes will have little impact on the majority of claimants, and with the upper band limit being increased to 90% a number of claimants will see an increase in support. The reduction in the overall amount of support available to working-age claimants will allow for around an additional £100k to be allocated to the Council's local Welfare Support fund. This will enable the Council to offer more targeted, effective and longer-term assistance to those most in need.

Who will be affected by the proposed changes and how?

- From April 2017, anyone of working age wishing to make a new claim for Council Tax Support will need to apply for Universal Credit first. If they are not awarded Universal Credit they will not be entitled to Council Tax Support.
- Existing working-age claimants who have already moved on to Universal Credit will be automatically transferred to the new Council Tax Support scheme from 1st April 2017.
- Existing working-age claimants who still receive Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit or Housing Benefit, instead of Universal Credit, will only be transferred to the new Council Tax Support scheme once they have moved on to Universal Credit.
- Existing working-age claimants who do not currently receive Universal Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit or Housing Benefit, will stay on the current Council Tax Support scheme until their circumstances change.

Key features of the existing scheme:

The current scheme in Bath and North East Somerset is based on the complex means-tested Council Tax Benefit rules, with certain changes applicable to working age claimants only:

- Maximum support available to the majority of working-age claimants is up to 78% of the Council Tax bill.
- Support is only paid up to the cost of a Band D Council Tax property bill. (This does not mean that people in Band E or above don't get any support – but they can only get up to 78% of the cost of a Band D property bill.)
- Child Benefit and child maintenance are counted as income when calculating support.
- People with capital / savings over £10,000 are not eligible. (This excludes the value of the property they live in.)
- No non-dependant deductions. (This benefits parents with young adults in the household, as their contribution isn't considered when calculating Council Tax Support.)
- No backdating of claims.
- No entitlement to Second Adult Rebate.
- Working-age claimants in receipt of certain disability benefits are automatically protected by the current scheme and are eligible for 100% support.

Key features of the proposed scheme:

- Eligibility is based on entitlement to Universal Credit. (This is the main reason for the proposed changes.)
- Maximum support available to all working-age claimants is up to around 90% of the Council Tax bill. (This is an increase in support for those on the lowest incomes and is supported by organisations that were asked to provide views on the proposal.)
- No blanket protection is provided for households in receipt of disability benefits, but Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments are not counted as household income. (This is in line with Universal Credit rules and common practice in many of the Local Council Tax Support Schemes across England.)
- The maximum amount of support available is determined by income bands. (These are designed to simplify the scheme and minimise the impact of the changes):
 - o 90% discount for weekly incomes of £0 - £99.99
 - o 85% discount for weekly incomes of £100 - £199.99
 - o 80% discount for weekly incomes of £200 - £299.99
 - o 70% discount for weekly incomes of £300 - £349.99
 - o 50% discount for weekly incomes of £350 - £399.99
 - o 0% discount for weekly incomes of £400 and above.

- In order to provide a fair scheme which recognises the additional needs of multi-person households and families, the upper tier of bands is increased as follows:
 - o For couples with no children £25 is added to the band limit.
 - o If there is a child in the household £50 is added to band limit.
 - o If there are two or more children in the household £100 is added to the band limit.
- The housing cost element of Universal Credit is considered as income when calculating support.
- Self-employed applicants declaring unrealistic income are assessed at the national minimum income. (This is in line with Universal Credit rules.)
- The capital / savings limit is reduced to £6,000. This does not include the value of the property you are living in. (This is aligned to the Universal Credit minimum allowance.)
- Savings achieved by any overall reduction in support available will allow for around an additional £100k to be allocated to the Council's local Welfare Support fund, to offer targeted assistance to those most in need. Those most impacted by the changes will be actively encouraged to seek this additional support.

Further information

- To read about the proposed scheme in more detail, please refer to the draft policy document and Equality Impact Assessment:
www.bathnes.gov.uk/ctsconsultation
- Council Tax Support, including the current local policy:
www.bathnes.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport
- Welfare Support Scheme: www.bathnes.gov.uk/welfaresupportscheme
- If you would like more information about what these proposals may mean for you or your family, please contact the Benefits team.
 - o Tel: 01225 47 77 77 (option 4)
 - o Email: benefits@bathnes.gov.uk (quoting 'CTS consultation' as the email subject)
 - o In person: Visit a One Stop Shop in Bath, Keynsham or Midsomer Norton

Public Consultation Questionnaire

Q1. In order for you to provide informed answers, please ensure you have read the background information about the Council Tax Support Scheme and the changes proposed by the Council, available online at www.bathnes.gov.uk/ctsconsultation.

Please confirm that you have reviewed this information.

Yes / No

Key principles underpinning the Council's proposed scheme

There are six key principles underpinning Bath & North East Somerset Council's proposed Council Tax Support Scheme:

1. Everyone of working age should pay something

The fairest way to calculate entitlement is to make everyone subject to the same maximum amount of support, and for eligibility to be calculated based on circumstance and need.

2. The scheme should protect those people with the lowest incomes, with additional funding allocated to the Council's Welfare Support Team to support those experiencing extreme hardship

The Council believes that people on the lowest incomes should receive the most support. We recognise that some of the changes proposed to the current scheme could cause significant hardship for some people. However, the allocation of additional funding to Welfare Support would enable the Council to offer more targeted, effective and longer-term assistance to those most in need.

3. Some income should be ignored when calculating entitlement to Council Tax Support

In order to preserve certain enhancements for disabled claimants; the Council believes that Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, along with the current benefits they replace, should not be counted as income when calculating entitlement to Council Tax Support.

4. The scheme should incentivise work

For example; an income-banded scheme would give some people more flexibility to increase their working hours without affecting their level of support. Setting a minimum income floor for self-employed claimants brings Council Tax Support into line with Universal Credit and incentivises working-age applicants to grow and expand their business.

5. Support should not be given to people with relatively large amounts of savings or capital

The current scheme allows people to receive support if they have up to £10,000 in savings or capital. The Council believes that £6,000 is a suitable maximum limit.

6. The scheme should align with wider Welfare Reforms and the roll out of Universal Credit

Entitlement under the new scheme will be linked to claiming Universal Credit. The revised scheme will only apply to new working-age claimants and existing Council Tax Support claimants who have moved to Universal Credit. Existing claimants will transfer to the new scheme once they start to claim Universal Credit instead of Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit or Housing Benefit.

Q2. Please rank our key principles in order of importance (1 - 6), where 1 is the principle you think is the most important and 6 is the least.

- Everyone of working age should pay something
- The scheme should protect those people with the lowest incomes, with additional funding allocated to the Council's Welfare Support fund to support those experiencing extreme hardship
- Some income should be ignored when calculating entitlement to Council Tax Support
- The scheme should incentivise work
- Support should not be given to people with relatively large amounts of savings or capital
- The scheme should align with wider Welfare Reforms and the roll out of Universal Credit

Please use the space below if you would like to make any further comments about our key principles:

Paying for the scheme

Q3. The basis of the existing Council Tax Support Scheme is that the scheme is 'cost-neutral' so costs the same as currently budgeted for. Do you agree that the Council should continue with a scheme which is, as far as possible, cost-neutral?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q4. If the Council does not continue with a cost-neutral scheme, in future years it may need to find additional funding from other sources. Do you think the Council should adopt any of the following options to help fund the scheme?

- Increase the level of Council Tax
Yes / No / Don't know
- Reduce the funding available for other Council Services
Yes / No / Don't know

Please use the space below to make any other comments about how the Council should fund the scheme:

The proposed changes

The Council is proposing to make some changes to the existing Council Tax Support Scheme which, if implemented, would enable the scheme to continue to be cost-neutral. Set out below are the key changes the Council is proposing to implement from 1st April 2017.

Using income bands to determine the level of support

Under the current scheme the amount of support available is assessed using the old Council Tax Benefit rules, which are complex and require a claimant to provide a lot of information. A fluctuation in income also results in a change to level of support available. The Council is proposing to simplify the scheme by introducing income bands. A person's / household's income will determine which band they fall into and the level of support they are entitled to. Under the proposed scheme we would use the information on a person's Universal Credit claim (which is automatically provided to us by the Department for Work and Pensions) and use that to determine which income band they fall into. The bands allow for fluctuations in income without affecting the level of Council Tax Support. By income we mean all Universal Credit payments plus any other payments or benefits you receive, apart from Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments.

The proposed income bands are as follows:

- Page 23
- 90% discount for weekly incomes of £0 - £99.99
 - 85% discount for weekly incomes of £100 - £199.99
 - 80% discount for weekly incomes of £200 - £299.99
 - 70% discount for weekly incomes of £300 - £349.99
 - 50% discount for weekly incomes of £350 – 399.99
 - 0% discount for weekly incomes above £400.

In order to reflect the additional needs of multi-person households and families, the upper tier of bands is increased as follows:

- For couples with no children £25 is added to the band limit.
- If there is a child in the household £50 is added to band limit.
- If there are two or more children in the household £100 is added to the band limit.

Q5. Do you agree that people with the lowest incomes should receive the most support?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q6. Do you agree with the proposal to move to an income-banded scheme?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q7. Do you agree that the scheme will be simpler for people to understand and apply for?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q8. Do you think the proposed income bands are set at the correct levels?

Yes / No / Don't know

(If No, what do you think the income bands should be?)

Q9. Do you agree with the proposal to increase the upper tier of bands for multi-person households and families?

Yes / No / Don't know

Removing blanket protection for working-age claimants in receipt of certain disability benefits

Under the current scheme working-age people in receipt of certain disability benefits are classified as vulnerable and are therefore automatically awarded a higher level of support. The categorisation of vulnerability applies to those in receipt of one or more of; the Support component of Employment and Support Allowance, the Enhanced Disability premium, the Disabled Child premium or the Severe Disablement premium.

Under the new proposal, an income-banded scheme will assess the maximum level of support available to all working-age claimants equally. Whilst claimants will no longer be classified as vulnerable, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments will not be counted as household income.

Claimants suffering extreme hardship as a result of the proposed changes will have the option to access a wide range of support through the Council's Welfare Support Scheme.

Q10. Do you agree with the proposal that the maximum amount of support available should be the same for everyone of working age?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q11. Do you agree that Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, along with the benefits they replace, should not be counted as income when calculating entitlement to Council Tax Support?

Yes / No / Don't know

To set the maximum amount of support available to 90% of the Council Tax bill

Under the current Council Tax Support Scheme the maximum support available to the majority of working-age claimants is 78% of the Council Tax bill, and claimants in receipt of certain disability benefits are eligible for 100% support. The Council is proposing to set the maximum amount of support available to all working-age people at 90%. This means that everyone of working-age will be expected to pay a minimum of 10% of their Council Tax bill. This is in line with a large number of Local Authorities in England.

Q12. Do you agree with the proposal to set the maximum amount of support available to all working-age claimants at 90% of the Council Tax bill?

Yes / No / Don't know

(If No, what do you think the maximum amount should be?)

The housing costs element of Universal Credit is counted as income

Under the Council's current scheme, the amount of benefit paid to a person to help pay their rent does not affect the level of Council Tax Support they are entitled to. The Council considers this to be unfair to claimants who are homeowners and have mortgage payments to make, as these outgoings are not taken into account when calculating their entitlement to Council Tax Support.

The Council is therefore proposing that the housing cost element of a Universal Credit award (which replaces Housing Benefit) should be counted as income when calculating entitlement to Council Tax Support.

Q13. Do you agree with the proposal that the housing cost element of a Universal Credit award should be counted as income?

Yes / No / Don't know

Setting a minimum income floor for self-employed persons in line with other Welfare Reforms

In order to align the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme with Universal Credit and incentivise working-age applicants to grow and expand their business, the Council proposes to use a minimum earned income figure of 35 hours per week at the national living wage (national minimum wage for people under the age of 25). Any income above this amount would be taken into account based on the actual amounts earned.

Q14. Do you agree with the proposal to set a minimum level of income for self-employed persons claiming Council Tax Support?

Yes / No / Don't know

Reducing the savings / capital limit to £6,000

The current scheme allows people to receive support if they have up to £10,000 in savings or capital. The Council believes that people with relatively large amounts of savings or capital should not receive Council Tax Support. The Council believes that £6,000 is a suitable maximum limit. This amount excludes the value of the property a person lives in.

Q15. Do you agree with the proposal to reduce the savings / capital limit from £10,000 to £6,000?

Yes / No / Don't know

More support will be provided through the Council's Welfare Support Team to help those experiencing extreme hardship

The Council recognises that some of the changes proposed to the current scheme could cause significant hardship for some people and, similarly, some people who are not entitled to support may be unable to make their Council Tax payments without experiencing severe hardship. The allocation of additional funding to the Welfare Support Team would enable the Council to offer more targeted, effective and longer-term assistance to those most in need.

Q16. Do you agree with the proposal to allocate additional funding to the Council's Welfare Support Team to support people suffering particular hardship?

Yes / No / Don't know

About you

Why do we ask these questions? The following questions will aid in informing us about what decision we should take. They will also help us monitor what different groups of people think about the proposed changes to our Council Tax Support Scheme. All information you provide is completely confidential and anonymous. This means that your personal information will not be passed on to anyone or reported alongside your responses.

Q17. Are you responding as a...?

- Bath and North East Somerset resident - if you are a B&NES resident, please provide your postcode (this will be used for analysis purposes only and we will not be able to identify individuals from this information)
- A representative of a public, voluntary or charitable organisation (please tell us which organisation)
- A representative of a housing association (please tell us which housing association)
- A private landlord
- Other (please specify)

Q18. Does your name appear on the Council Tax Bill for your household? Yes / No / Don't know

Q19. Does your household currently receive Council Tax Support? Yes / No / Don't know

Q20. Does your household receive any other benefits? Yes / No / Don't know (if Yes, please specify)

Q21. How many people live in your household?

- Adults
- Children under 18

Q22. Are you receiving a Retirement Pension or Pension Credit? Yes / No

Q23. Which of these best describes your household? (please select one answer only)

- A family with one or two dependent children
- A family with three or more dependent children
- A lone parent household
- A household that includes a carer
- A household with full and/or part time workers
- A household that includes someone who is disabled
- A single person household or a couple without children
- None of the above
- Don't know / Not sure

Q24. Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present? (please select one answer only)

- Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)
- Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)
- Self-employed (full or part-time)
- On a government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship / Training for Work)
- Unemployed and available for work
- Permanently sick / disabled
- Wholly retired from work
- Looking after the family / home
- Full-time education at school, college or university
- Doing something else (please specify)

Q25. Are you?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Prefer not to say

Q26. What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and over

Q27. How would you describe your ethnic background? (please select one answer only) (use standard B&NES equalities approved list)

- White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
- White – Irish
- White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- White - Any other White background
- Mixed / Multiple ethnic group - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed / Multiple ethnic group - White and Black African
- Mixed / Multiple ethnic group - White and Asian
- Mixed / Multiple ethnic group - Any other Mixed / multiple ethnic background
- Asian / Asian British – Indian
- Asian / Asian British – Pakistani
- Asian / Asian British – Bangladeshi
- Asian / Asian British – Chinese
- Asian / Asian British - Any other Asian background
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British – African
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British – Caribbean
- Black / African / Caribbean / Black British - Any other Black / African / Caribbean background
- Arab
- Other ethnic group

Q28. Do you consider yourself to be disabled, or does anyone else in your household?

(The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities). Please select all relevant answers.

- Yes, I do
- Yes, another member of my household
- No

Q29. What is your religion or belief? Please select one answer only.

- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other
- None
- Prefer not to say

Q30. What is your sexual orientation? Please select one answer only.

- Heterosexual or straight
- Gay or Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other
- Prefer not to say

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Next steps

The consultation will close on Sunday 16th October 2016.

A draft report will be presented to Councillors at November's full Council meeting to put forward the result of the consultation. We will listen carefully to what residents and stakeholders tell us, and the consultation results will be considered alongside other evidence and information for the Council to make the final decision about whether to adopt the revised scheme.

Following the decision, the results from the consultation will be available on the Council's website. The new scheme will start on 1st April 2017. We will write to you personally if you are going to be affected when it comes in to force.

The Council will consider the impact of the scheme annually and consult again if it thinks further changes need to be made.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please click on the button below to submit your response.

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
DATE:	14TH September 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E
TITLE:	Organisational Development	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
No attachments		

1 THE ISSUE

This report accompanies a presentation which will be provided at the meeting on the work of the Organisational Development function within the Council.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the presentation and the changes taking place that affect how the Council will apply organisational development to continue to improve efficiency, alignment of the workforce, deliver key priorities and achieve high levels of commitment to support excellent performance.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 There are no resource implications as a direct result of the presentation which is to inform Members of the Panel of the ongoing work of the Council's Organisational Development function.
- 3.2 The OD management role is hosted within HR and compliments both training and development activity together with workforce planning. In recent years there has been a move away from the use of external support thereby saving significant costs. Communications Team.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 What is Organisational Development?

The new focus within Organisational Development (OD) within B&NES will build upon the successful initiatives over the past 4 years with focus on #onecouncil.

The #onecouncil brand describes the increased focus on collaborative working and achievement to continually improve efficiency and empowerment to enable us all to effectively deliver our Corporate Strategy 2016 – 2020.

Our Organisation Development Manager is reviewing the direction and achievements in this area; whilst making recommendations to align projects and areas of work to deliver a sustainable approach to developing all or our staff and organisation. The initial phase of this work is the development of an Organisation Development Plan to work alongside the delivery of the Corporate Strategy 2016 – 2020.

The uncertainty and complexity of change means that we need to be *fleet of foot* as an organisation and to make sure that our customers are at the heart of everything we do to drive successful and sustainable change.

Key opportunities and challenges include:

- Changes to the leadership with the appointment of a new Chief Executive
- The implications of the Council's financial challenge
- The priorities in the corporate plan linked to prevention, business growth, customers, communities, efficiency and income generation together with increased commercialisation of some services.
- The digital agenda
- Changing demands on public services
- Recent successes and the development of a culture that increasingly works across organisational boundaries.

The presentation will set out the proposed next steps.

Now is a good time for the panel to comment as the plan is at an early stage of development.

The proposed next steps are:

- Promoting a shared vision with leaders as role models and ambassadors.
- Producing a prioritised, evolving and sustainable approach to optimise organisational potential.

- Generating new levels of engagement, energy and productivity by continuing to change 'how' we work.
- Preparing our customers (*staff and community*) to take ownership of the challenges and to be ready for today, tomorrow and the future.
- Introducing methods and measures to review our success and to track our progress and improvement.
- Informing and involving elected members ensuring the approach aligns with Council priorities

Contact person	Ticki Toogood ticki_toogood@bathnes.gov.uk 01225 477293
Background papers	N/A
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
DATE:	14TH September 2016	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E
TITLE:	Update on Communications	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<p>List of attachments to this report:</p> <p>Please list all the appendices here, clearly indicating any which are exempt and the reasons for exemption</p>		

1 THE ISSUE

This report accompanies a presentation on the work of the Communications Team and its changing role in a more digital/online landscape.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

- 2.1 Note the presentation and the changes taking place that affect how the Council communicates with the wider community.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 There are no resource implications as a direct result of the presentation which is to inform Members of the Panel of the ongoing work of the Council's Communications Team.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 This is an update report for consideration by the Resources PDS Panel.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 This report sets out the work of the Communications Team and the changes that have been taking place in the media both nationally and locally.

5.2 The internet and social media have made significant changes to the media landscape. 89% of the population nationally have access to the internet with the vast majority of users going online to engage in conversations with friends, colleagues, organisations or the wider community. Facebook has over 37million users in the UK.

5.3 Information is shared widely and citizens have the opportunity to broadcast their views much more widely. This has changed the way that people behave. On average 8 hrs and 41 minutes is spent per day on texting, talking online, gaming, listening or watching. This is more than the average time spent sleeping.

5.4 Online TV has been rapidly growing. Sky TV were the first to screen a news broadcast on Facebook live video, which received 180,000 views, following the tragic incident in Nice.

5.5 The growth of digital media has had an impact on the printed media with a reduction in sales of over 60% of printed newspapers nationally but a doubling of users of newspaper websites and growth in online-only news sites. This is becoming a very competitive area as newspapers work hard to earn income from their online assets.

5.6 In this wider context the Communications Team has significantly changed the way that it works to include:

- Greater use of social media- particularly Twitter. It has now a Twitter reach of over 22 million for the main account only and over 14,000 followers. The Council has a total of 10 Twitter accounts and a range of Facebook accounts so its reach will be that much greater.
- Social media is being used as an integrated part of campaigns to change the way that people behave. Social media was used to encourage greater voter turnout in the referendum, to share safety information about the Bath Bomb and to target audiences that previously were hard to reach through traditional media.
- The Communications Team produces a range of videos for specific use on social media.

5.7 The growth in digital communications presents greater opportunities going forward but also new challenges for the Council. The presentation sets out new ways to:

- Keep people informed about key developments and services in real time.
- To support the recruitment of staff to ensure the Council has the best people to continue to deliver services.
- To support information to increase engagement with the wider community and to support community focused activities such as volunteering.
- To support democratic engagement.

- Develop new channels– for example Snapchat is the fastest growing account used by young people.

5.8 The update presentation also sets out the challenges that the Communications Team face and ways to address them. This includes

- Supporting the 10% of the local population that currently don't have access to the internet
- The increased expectation from citizens for faster responses. People expect a response within an hour when they contact the Council directly on social media.
- Social media continues to change with new channels appearing and the team and the Council needs to adapt to these changes

5.9 The update presentation will set out proposed changes to the website, how a more integrated approach will be effective in providing more information and how the Council is proposing to support community engagement online.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 Members are being asked to note the presentation

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 This is an update report for members and sets out the current approach to provide better information to the community. Information has been taken from national best practice as well as views from across the Council.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The approach to communications has been developed over a six month period as part of changing the way that the Council communicates. As part of this process a wide range of senior officers and members of staff have been consulted and been involved.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	<i>Jonathan Mercer, Communications Manager</i>
Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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RESOURCES PDS FORWARD PLAN

This Forward Plan lists all the items coming to the Panel over the next few months.

Inevitably, some of the published information may change; Government guidance recognises that the plan is a best assessment, at the time of publication, of anticipated decision making. The online Forward Plan is updated regularly and can be seen on the Council's website at:

<http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/mgPlansHome.aspx?bcr=1>

The Forward Plan demonstrates the Council's commitment to openness and participation in decision making. It assists the Panel in planning their input to policy formulation and development, and in reviewing the work of the Cabinet.

Should you wish to make representations, please contact the report author or Michaela Gay, Democratic Services (01225 394411). A formal agenda will be issued 5 clear working days before the meeting.

Agenda papers can be inspected on the Council's website and at the Guildhall (Bath), Hollies (Midsomer Norton), Civic Centre (Keynsham) and at Bath Central, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton public libraries.

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Strategic Director Lead
14TH SEPTEMBER 2016				
14 Sep 2016	Resources PDS	Council Tax Support Review	Ian Savigar Tel: 01225 477327	Strategic Director - Resources
14 Sep 2016	Resources PDS	Training and Development	William Harding, David Trethewey Tel: 01225 477203, Tel: 01225 396353	Strategic Director - Resources
Page 40 14 Sep 2016	Resources PDS	Communications	Jonathan Mercer, David Trethewey Tel: 01225 477449, Tel: 01225 396353	Strategic Director - Resources
23RD NOVEMBER 2016				
23 Nov 2016	Resources PDS	Business Rate Retention - Impact of Government Changes	Tim Richens Tel: 01225 477468	Strategic Director - Resources
23 Nov 2016	Resources PDS	Directorate Plans (title may change)	Andrew Pate Tel: 01225 477300	Strategic Director - Resources
23 Nov 2016	Resources PDS	Commercial Estate	Richard Long, Derek Quilter Tel: 01225 477075, Tel: 01225 477739	Strategic Director - Resources

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Strategic Director Lead
23 Nov 2016	Resources PDS	Use of Consultants and Agency Staff - Update on Task and Finish Group	Richard Howroyd Tel: 01225 477334	Strategic Director - Resources
6TH FEBRUARY 2017				
6 Feb 2017	Resources PDS	Budget Report (title may change)	Tim Richens Tel: 01225 477468	Strategic Director - Resources
29TH MARCH 2017				
ITEMS TO BE SCHEDULED				
Page 41	Resources PDS	Equalities and Performance Impacts of Strategic Spending Review	David Trethewey Tel: 01225 396353	Strategic Director - Resources
	Resources PDS	Digital Strategy - Annual Update	Angela Parratt Tel: 01225 396576	Strategic Director - Resources
The Forward Plan is administered by DEMOCRATIC SERVICES : Michaela Gay 01225 394411 Democratic_Services@bathnes.gov.uk				

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