

Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

Date: Tuesday, 19th September, 2023

Time: 4.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber - Guildhall, Bath

Councillors: Robin Moss, Lucy Hodge, Ian Halsall, Oli Henman, Hal MacFie,
Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Malcolm Treby and Colin Blackburn



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NOTES:

1. **Inspection of Papers:** Papers are available for inspection as follows:

Council's website: <https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

2. **Details of decisions taken at this meeting** can be found in the minutes which will be circulated with the agenda for the next meeting. In the meantime, details can be obtained by contacting as above.

3. **Recording at Meetings:-**

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Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel - Tuesday, 19th September, 2023

at 4.00 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 4.4 Appendix 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 STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING
7. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 14)
8. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

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

There will be a presentation on this item at the meeting
10. UPDATE ON COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME (Pages 15 - 46)
11. UPDATE ON 'FIX MY STREET' (Pages 47 - 50)

The report is attached.

12. PANEL WORKPLAN (Pages 51 - 52)

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 michaela_gay@bathnes.gov.uk, 01225 394411.

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Tuesday, 11th July, 2023

Present:- **Councillors** Robin Moss, Lucy Hodge, Ian Halsall, Hal MacFie, Onkar Saini, Toby Simon, Malcolm Treby and Colin Blackburn

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Oli Henman

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chair drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Oli Henman sent his apologies.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

6 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meetings (13th March 2023 3rd April 2023) as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chair.

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

Councillor Eleanor Jackson made a statement in support of the Call in of E3453 - Entry Hill Depot Site (*a copy of this statement is attached to these minutes*).

Councillor Shaun Hughes made a statement in support of the Call in of E3453 - Entry Hill Depot Site (*a copy of this statement is attached to these minutes*).

8 CALL IN - E3453 ENTRY HILL DEPOT SITE

The Chair invited Councillor Heijltjes (Call in Lead Councillor) and Councillor Roper (Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development) to address the Panel.

Councillor Heijltjes (Call in Lead Councillor – as substitute for Councillor Wright)

Councillor Heijltjes made a statement explaining the reasons for the call in (*a copy is attached to these minutes*)

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

Councillor Blackburn referred to the environmental impact assessment which is requested as part of the Call in. He asked how long this would take and what the cost would be. Councillor Jackson commented that this could take up to a year as species have to be observed, she further explained that a snapshot could be taken which meant that it would not take as long as a year. She was not sure on the costs.

Councillor Hodge asked what the constraints were on the site considering the ash. Councillor Heijltjes stated that she was not an expert but as the company plans include some building on the site, other building work would be possible. Councillor Jackson stated that contamination is not a deterrent as long as the proper scientific tests are carried out.

Councillor Halsall stated that the site is allocated for employment in the Local Plan and asked if Councillor Hughes was suggesting that the Council should wait for the Local Plan review. Councillor Hughes stated that he felt that the Council needed to decide on the best use of the site for the Council and community regardless of the timescales. He stated that housing should not be dismissed especially considering the lack of affordable housing in the area. He stated that he struggled to see why the 'red book' valuation was taken. He stated that the site is described as rare and desirable which implies it has a worth and we should get the best price.

Councillor Blackburn asked how residential use versus industrial use compare regarding biodiversity net gain. Councillor Heijltjes stated that she understood that this was not impossible with residential use.

Councillor Roper – Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development

Councillor Roper made a statement regarding the decision made by former Councillor Richard Samuel (*a copy is attached to these minutes*).

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

Councillor Simon stated that the red book valuation for residential use was substantially higher than for industrial use. If asked if this took account of remedial costs. The Cabinet Member stated that the residential valuation excludes any remedial works.

Councillor Simon asked how long the overage liability be would retained. The Cabinet Member stated that draft heads of terms had been agreed and any overage would be in perpetuity.

Councillor Blackburn asked why the site had been empty for so long and not considered in the Local Plan for social housing. The Cabinet Member stated that a feasibility report was carried out in 2017 and ADL rejected the opportunity to bring the site forward for development.

Councillor Blackburn stated that he was concerned about the use of ADL and asked if this was in the best interests of the Council or would it be better to get another valuation. The Cabinet Member stated that ADL is not the focus of this discussion.

Councillor Hodge asked if ADL's analysis provided a breakdown of the valuation. The Cabinet Member stated that there were no specific figures on the issue of fuel ash.

Councillor Hodge referred to the report stating the Cross England may locate outside BANES, she asked if there was any evidence for the this. The Cabinet Member stated that it is impossible to enquire if a business is serious about relocating or not.

Councillor Halsall stated that if the land is leased for 3 years, there would be a planning application in that time and should the Council decide not to carry on with the lease after 3 years and the Local Plan was amended regarding housing – would the Council benefit? He also asked that, if there was an immediate sale and use of the land changed – would the Council benefit from that. The Cabinet Member explained that the lease term was discussed initially with the lessee having the right to buy after 3 years.

Councillor MacFie asked why the land was not just put up for sale to gauge the value. The Cabinet Member explained that there had been an unsolicited approach from Cross.

Councillor Treby asked if Cross could sell the land in a few years. The Cabinet Member explained that Cross want to use the land for external storage initially and the company do not build houses, they are also taking a risk on buying the land as they do not have planning permission. If they did apply for housing, they would face a number of hurdles including the 5 metres of fuel ash and it being an industrial site. The overage provision would claw back money for the Council in any case.

- In his closing statement, Councillor Roper stated that Cross is a third-generation family business of world class precision engineering and are worthy of support. They will be buying at red book value and the risk is theirs.
- In her closing statement, Councillor Heijltjes stated that the Council has declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. Tackling this is part of their core policy along with letting people have their say. The decision to sell this land without an ecological impact assessment and without consultation is failing the local residents.

Panel debate

Councillor Simon stated that the Cabinet Member had put forward a powerful case for the decision and there is a need to support local industries and high quality manufacturing. He stated that if housing was ever considered for this site there would be many risks, he noted that ADL had decided that this would not work. Councillor Simon stated that it is important that environmental questions are raised and that this would be for the planning application process to address.

Councillor Halsall stated that the Council did not market the land but had an approach from a renowned employer for a site designated for employment. There is a safeguard if the land was ever used for residential from which the Council would benefit.

Councillor Blackburn stated that it was good to hear that the Cabinet Member was supporting business but in this case it was not best value and due process was not followed. This should have been put to the market.

Councillor Moss stated that this was not clear cut. He heard the points regarding the ecological impacts. He asked why the site was not marketed in the past and stated that the circumstances might be different if this was looked at earlier. Outcomes are not just about monetary value. He stated that he was glad to hear that, if there was to be a change of use in the future, the Council will benefit. There is a discussion across BANES regarding the tipping point around employment and housing sites. He stated that this represented support for a local business.

Following a motion from Councillor Simon and seconded by Councillor Halsall:

The Panel **RESOLVED** to dismiss the call-in: the decision shall then take effect immediately

(7 for, 1 against and 0 abstained)

Councillor Moss thanked all for attending and asked that the Cabinet Member take the concerns expressed at the meeting in to account.

9 CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Chair invited Councillor Dave Wood, Cabinet Member for Council Priorities and Delivery, to introduce the item. Councillor Wood explained that the Corporate Strategy sets out what the administration hopes to achieve and its priorities over the next 4 years. The Chief Executive, Will Godfrey added that it is important for him to have this operational framework so he and officers can translate the political priorities into delivery over the next 4 years.

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

Councillor Hodge asked if another priority could be added regarding the cost of living to give a clear message to residents that the Council will support them. Councillor Simon agreed that the Council need to think about the impact of policies.

The Cabinet Member stated that cost of living issues are a permanent feature in the lives of many residents – inequality is generational. The officer added that ‘prevention’ is important and building on things that are already in place. He explained that the community wellbeing hub has had nearly 2,000 referrals addressing cost of living issues. He also stated that building on the success of the Welfare Support Team is important. The Panel were reassured that cost of living issues will be embedded and are addressed in the priorities such as ‘prevention’ which is crucial in tackling inequality.

Councillor Saini asked what the mechanisms for people to ‘have their say’. The Cabinet Member explained that there are area forums, consultations, parish liaison meetings and other mechanisms for people to engage. He added that we can also engage with the public in new ways and with different community groups and geographical groups which can give people their say on the priorities in their area.

Councillor Saini asked what strategies are in place regarding the delivery of services. The Cabinet Member explained that there are 3-year service and delivery plans that are monitored by a range of methods.

Councillor MacFie stated that big strides had been made in listening but not all forums are well attended. He suggested that we could do something different and more popular such as events where people can vote/interact. After listening, the concerns must be addressed. The Cabinet Member agreed that the interactive approach was a good form of public engagement.

Councillor Treby asked how the priority of ‘good jobs’ will be met. The officer pointed to the economic strategy with regard to the emphasis on good jobs with high skills.

Councillor Hodge commended the officers on the Corporate Strategy. She asked about pages 7-8 (bracketed information on social and economic foundation) and what this adds as a public facing document. The officer explained that this set out the framework (purpose, values, policy, principles) so that our staff understand the purpose. It was suggested that the Panel may wish to look at delivery programmes and mechanisms in their ongoing workplan. It was further explained that Section 5 sets out why those words are used and also explained the ‘decision wheel’ which can be used to test if decisions fit the strategy.

Councillor Moss stated that the Corporate Strategy is looking internally at what the Council can do but we must also be mindful of the effect of external events such as Covid, the cost-of-living crisis etc. External horizon scanning is important. Also there will potentially be a new government during this administration which we will work alongside. The Cabinet Member agreed with the point on unforeseen events, he stated that the Council had responded to Covid, industrial action, economic shock and inflation. He explained that the Councillor and officer team is adaptable. The Chief Executive added that Covid had been a big test and this Council dealt with it better than many others. He explained that the Corporate Strategy sets the framework for activity, and it is very important to get this agreed at an early stage to align resources to delivery.

Councillor Moss raised the issue of inflation and its effect, he asked what inflation model we use. The Chief Finance officer agreed that inflation had not gone down and levers in the budget needed to be adjusted. He explained that there had been accurate modelling in the last budgets. He added that different scenarios (red/green) are modelled.

The Chair thanked that Cabinet Member and officers and explained that the Panel's comments would be fed into the Cabinet consideration of the Corporate Strategy at it's meeting on 13th July 2023.

10 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

Councillor Elliott, Cabinet Member for Resources, gave the following update:

- There are a number of finance management reports on the agenda for the meeting of the Cabinet on 13th July 2023
- He commended that work of his predecessors and officers in managing the budget with a larger than expected pay settlement along with pressure from Children's Services.
- The Christmas Market was very successful.
- The Roman Baths remain busy which is encouraging
- First Quarter – there are challenges regarding Children's Services and significant financial pressures across the board.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member.

11 PANEL WORKPLAN

Panel members noted the future workplan and suggestions for future items:

- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Councillor Simon) – task and finish group to report back to 19th September 2023 meeting of the Panel.
- Planning Enforcement backlog (Councillor MacFie)
- Property Services – how it is working/how assets are dealt with. Possible supplementary briefing.
- Highways - benchmarking, cost of infrastructure compared to other authorities

Councillor Simon asked for a list of actions and follow up for each meeting.

The meeting ended at 6.03 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

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Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	19th September 2023	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: N/A
TITLE:	Local Council Tax Support Scheme review and proposed changes	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		

1 THE ISSUE

A review of the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) and proposed changes from April 2024.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to note the findings of the report and to comment on options detailed in section 3.7 for proposed scheme changes to be put forward for public consultation.

Option 1. The current rules of the scheme are retained.

Option 2. The current income thresholds and reduction rates are retained but the Housing and Childcare elements of Universal Credit are disregarded.

Option 3. The current income thresholds and reduction rates are changed as detailed in section 3.7, and the Housing and Childcare elements of Universal Credit are disregarded.

Option 4. The current income thresholds and reduction rates are changed as detailed in section 3.7, and the Housing and Childcare elements of Universal Credit are disregarded.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 Background Information.

Local Council Tax Support is a support scheme for low-income households to help with council tax charges. The council has operated its current scheme since 2017 and it comprises four different sets of rules to determine the level of support, depending on the household and personal circumstances of the applicant. The rules which apply to Pensioners are set out in statute and the council is limited in changes it can make for this group of residents. The council has more discretion in setting the scheme rules for working age residents, and can decide on the amount each applicant may receive depending on their household and financial circumstances.

PENSIONERS

This group of residents receive up to 100% support with their council tax liability and each applicant undergoes a means test where their household income is compared to set “applicable” amounts, and a taper of 20% is applied to their excess income, thereby calculating the level of support provided. There are no proposals to introduce changes for this group of residents.

VULNERABLE

This group of residents are of working age and receive up to 100% support. They are effectively treated as Pensioners and the same calculation rules apply. To qualify as vulnerable the applicant or their partner or dependants must receive certain disability benefits. There are no proposals to introduce changes for this group of residents.

WORKING AGE OTHER

This group of residents includes all working age residents who do not qualify for the vulnerable scheme. They can receive up to 78% support for their council tax liability, limited to a band D equivalent for the area in which they live. The calculation rules which apply to this group are broadly the same as with the Vulnerable and Pensioner groups. There are no proposals to introduce changes for this group of residents.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

This group of residents includes any household where the applicant or their partner receives Universal Credit or would receive Universal Credit but for deductions applied to their entitlement for repayment of advance payments, debts, sanctions, or managed payments to landlords. Entitlement to support for this group is determined by where the applicant’s total income falls between certain ranges or income bands as shown below.

Basic weekly income allowance	Discount
£0.00 to £110.09	90%
£110.10 to £220.19	85%
£220.20 to £330.29	80%
£330.30 to £385.34	70%
£385.35 to £440.39	50%
£440.40	0%

The basic income allowance is increased by £25 per week where the applicant has a partner and £50 per week for each child, subject to a maximum increase for two children. It is important to note that for this group, all of the applicant's Universal Credit income is taken into account, including their Housing Costs Element (which is predominantly related to rental costs) and their Childcare Element. The proposals which the panel are asked to consider, which will be put forwards for public consultation relate to this group of residents.

3.2 The council has operated its current LCTS scheme since 2017, following the introduction of Universal Credit Full Service in the area. The income bands were set at intervals of £100, from £100 to £400, but this was increased from April 2023 in line with other social security benefit rates. The income banded approach was taken to mitigate the effect of frequent changes in income which are common to Universal Credit recipients. Under the previous LCTS rules each monthly change to Universal Credit would mean a new bill was generated, which was undesirable for residents and the council. When the income banded scheme was introduced the council decided to use all of the applicant's income for the purpose of the entitlement calculation. This approach was taken on the grounds that it created a simpler framework which would be easy for residents to understand and accept, and it promoted financial accountability for households in line with the underlying concept of Universal Credit, that households would receive one overall payment of social assistance and would manage their household finances from this budget.

3.3 The case for change.

Officers have conducted a review into the current scheme as it applies to Universal Credit recipients. Sample checks were carried out on 650 cases to determine the effectiveness of the current scheme, with a focus on claimants who receive the Housing Cost Element and Childcare Element of Universal Credit. A summary of the findings is as follows.

- **There are a significant proportion of claimants in council tax arrears across the range of income bands.**

Discount amount	Percentage with arrears
90%	23
85%	33
80%	29
70%	27
50%	49

- **The average amount of arrears is higher for applicants who receive less support.**

Discount amount	Average amount of arrears
90%	£394
85%	£574
80%	£427
70%	£756
50%	£882

- **If the amount of arrears were extrapolated across the caseload it would account for £812K of current council tax arrears**

- **34% of sampled claimants who receive the Housing Cost Element have approached the council's Welfare Support Team for assistance. Some households had sought assistance multiple times.**
- **5% had received a Discretionary Housing Payment**
- **Of the claimants who receive the Housing Costs Element, those who fell into the 50% band received a higher amount of support for their rental costs.**
- **28% of claimants who received the Childcare Element had approached the council's Welfare Support Team for assistance (100% of known cases were tested).**
- **97% of LCTS claimants who receive the Childcare Element are single parents.**
- **97% of claimants who qualify for the most support do not receive the housing costs element because they own their home.**

The work carried out as part of the review suggests that many residents who receive Universal Credit and LCTS are struggling to keep up to date with their council tax, and this will in turn generate more collection costs for the council. Many households who receive the Housing Costs Element of Universal Credit have also sought help from the council's Welfare Support Team, which supports families in Financial Crisis

If the findings of the sample checks were extrapolated across the applicable LCTS caseload this would account for an additional 1323 accounts, requiring contact with under pressure council tax and recovery teams.

- 3.4 By counting the Housing Cost Element as income, the council has become an outlier amongst peer local authorities. According to Entitled To's *Review of Council Tax Reduction schemes in 2023/24*, there are 90 income banded LCTS schemes in operation in England, and of these 61 disregard the Housing costs element, and 15 disregard the Childcare element.
- 3.5 38 councils surveyed by Entitled To operate an income banded scheme which offers a 100% reduction in certain circumstances, mainly to resident's whose income is set below a figure of £85-£95 per week. These income thresholds are largely based on the Standard Allowance of Universal Credit.
- 3.6 Since the introduction of the scheme feedback from staff, residents and Welfare Rights organisations has identified that using the Housing Costs Element and Childcare Element in the assessment of the claimant's income has negative effects on LCTS recipients. The Housing Costs Element is intended to be primarily used to pay rent, which is considered by Welfare Rights organisations, including Citizens Advice as a priority debt. By counting this as income for LCTS purposes this implies that residents should use that income to pay their council tax. This has potentially negative consequences for residents who may fall into arrears with their rent and could eventually be at risk of losing their homes. It also sends the wrong message to residents that there are situations where it is acceptable not to pay their rent.
- 3.7 The Childcare Element of Universal Credit is intended to partially reimburse residents who have had to pay childcare costs upfront in order to enable them to work. Counting this as income contradicts the policy intention of central government of helping parents return to work more easily through changes to the

Universal Credit childcare cap and upfront payments announced in the 2023 Budget statement.

- 3.8 The council has received some feedback from staff and customers that the reduction amounts are arranged in a way which is not linear. Residents whose weekly income increases from the £385.35 - £440.39 bracket to over £440.39 will see a drop in support from 50% to nil. This can create a significant disincentive for residents to increase their income over this level and can cause immediate financial difficulties for households whose income may have only increased by a small amount, but enough to push them over the income threshold where they lose all support.
- 3.9 Many councils have introduced an income band which attracts a 100% reduction. This is partly because of the difficulties involved in trying to collect council tax from households who do not have the means to pay. The introduction of Universal Credit has affected council tax recovery because the rules which apply to attachment to benefits, which would previously have been employed as a mechanism for recovering outstanding council tax now prioritise the recovery of other debts such as rent arrears and advance payments of Universal Credit over council tax. This means that in some cases the council has little option but to refer the debt to enforcement agents. This can happen where the debts owed are comparatively small but may increase substantially when additional recovery and enforcement fees are added.

3.7 Scheme Options

Options for possible changes to the income-banded scheme have been modelled by Officers, which include measures to mitigate some of the issues associated with the current scheme and align the rules with other council's income-banded schemes. The priority is to make the scheme fairer, and to recognise that some residents have other living costs which are of equal priority to their council tax liabilities. The possible changes which could be introduced include the following.

- **A disregard of the Housing Cost Element and Childcare Element of Universal Credit.**
- **The introduction of a discount band for the poorest which would provide a 100% reduction in council tax liability.**
- **Setting the lowest income threshold at a level which is relative to the standard allowance of Universal Credit**
- **The re-alignment of reduction amounts to ensure that these reduce more smoothly as income increases.**

The costs of implementing these changes would largely be met through realigning the amount of support provided to other claimants through the income banded scheme.

Option 1. Do nothing.

The council does not have to implement any of these changes and may decide to stick with the current scheme. There are risks involved in making alterations to the council tax support scheme. Officers have carefully modelled the financial impacts of making changes to the current rules, but these are an estimate based on the current caseload. Eligibility to LCTS will change as claimant's circumstances change, and there is an inherent uncertainty in determining rules which will apply prospectively more than a year

in advance. Nonetheless, the fieldwork which officers carried out and comparisons with other council schemes suggests that there are issues with the current scheme. Universal Credit Managed Migration is due to increase in scope from 2024 and more households in B&NES will start to receive this benefit and fall into the income-band scheme.

Option 2.

The Housing Costs and Childcare Elements of Universal Credit are disregarded, and the current income bands and discount amounts are retained. Note that where an applicant has a partner as a member of their household that the weekly income bands are increased by £25, and by £50 per child, subject to a 2-child maximum.

Single person			Couple		
Income From	Income To	Discount	Income From	Income To	Discount
0	110.09	90%	0	135.09	90%
110.1	220.19	85%	135.1	245.19	85%
220.2	330.29	80%	245.2	355.29	80%
330.3	385.34	70%	355.3	410.34	70%
385.35	440.39	50%	410.35	465.39	50%
440.4		0%	465.4		0%

This is estimated to cost an additional £1.04M

Due to the additional costs, which would be an additional budget requirement to be funded by the collection of council tax, this option may be unfeasible.

Option 3.

The Housing Cost and Childcare Elements of Universal Credit are disregarded as income, the discount percentage amounts are altered to include a band where a 100% reduction applies, and the income thresholds are altered to start at a rate for a single person and couple rate which is set at the same amount as the Universal Credit Standard Allowance of £368.74 or £578.82 per month respectively.

Single person			Couple		
Income From	Income To	Discount	Income From	Income To	Discount
0	85.09	100%	0	133.57	100%
85.1	185.09	80%	133.58	233.57	80%
185.1	285.09	60%	233.58	333.57	60%
285.1	335.09	40%	333.58	383.57	40%
335.1	385.09	20%	383.58	433.57	20%
385.1		0%	433.58		0%

This is estimated to cost an additional £130,986.00.

Although there would be an additional cost with this option, which would be a budget requirement and factored into the setting of the council tax base, the majority of the

scheme costs would be met through adjusting the discount percentage amounts. Support would be reduced for some households and increased for others.

The income bands for this option are arranged in thresholds of £100 per week, as was the case with the current scheme when it was introduced in 2017. This will continue to prevent situations where frequent changes in claimant income would mean a change in entitlement which would require a new bill to be issued. The reduction in discount amounts is also more linear with this option and would mean a fairer distribution of the amount of support provided to residents across the range of income thresholds.

Option 4.

This option is exactly the same as option 3, however the proposed percentage reduction in the second income band would be set at 85% instead of 80%.

Single person			Couple		
Income From	Income To	Discount	Income From	Income To	Discount
0	85.09	100%	0	133.57	100%
85.1	185.09	80%	133.58	233.57	85%
185.1	285.09	60%	233.58	333.57	60%
285.1	335.09	40%	333.58	383.57	40%
335.1	385.09	20%	383.58	433.57	20%
385.1		0%	433.58		0%

This is estimated to cost an additional £224,251.00.

In both options 3 and 4 the weekly income bands are increased by £50 per child, subject to a 2-child maximum.

The key difference between options 3 and 4 are the number of residents who will be positively or negatively impacted by the changes.

- 3.8 Changes to the scheme under options 3 and 4 will mean that some applicants lose out on the level of support which they currently receive. The following table shows the outcomes for residents compared to the level of support they receive under the current scheme.

Outcome	Option 3	Option 4
Households who will receive less entitlement	1581	1264
Households who will see no change	991	367
Households who will receive more entitlement	1681	2622
Households who currently do not qualify but will under the proposed scheme changes	511	511

Although option 4 would mean that there are significantly more residents who would not be negatively impacted by these changes, there would still be a significant number of residents who would have to pay more council tax as a result of these changes. These residents primarily fall into the 50% band of the current scheme and will instead fall into the 40 or 20% band. In addition, there are estimated to be 68 residents who will lose all entitlement to Council Tax Support under the new rules.

Households who cannot afford to pay their increased liabilities will be signposted to the Welfare Support Team, where they can apply for discretionary financial support for their council tax, along with additional support provided by the team, including help with household bills, food and clothing and furniture and white goods.

- 3.9 The council is required by legislation to carry out a public consultation when making any changes to the existing Council Tax Support scheme. This will be done over a period of 5-6 weeks commencing the end of September. The consultation will seek to gather views from the public on its preferred option for changes to the scheme from 1st April 2024. This will include writing to the claimants affected and setting out the possible changes to their award under the proposed changes.
- 3.10 The Panel is asked to comment on the options proposed in this report for the responsible cabinet member to decide which option should be put forward for public consultation. To assist the Panel in understanding the implications of the proposed changes, Case studies have been developed which show how the impacts would be felt on a number of real-life cases. This, together with a comparison of income banded schemes from neighbouring councils is shown in the appendix to this report.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

The primary legislation which covers LCTS schemes is S13 A (1) (a) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

Local Council Tax Support is funded through an adjustment to the council tax base which is used to set the council tax. The budgeted amount for 2023/24 is **£10,258,961**. Full Council would need make the final decision on whether any changes are made to the LCTS Scheme for 2024/25 at its meeting in November, taking into account the consultation. The financial impact of any changes would be included in the Council Tax base and Council Tax income calculations for the 2024/25 Budget.

Although the increased amount of support provided to residents in options 3 and 4 will coincide with reductions in support for other claimants, the net cost of these changes is estimated to be an additional **£130,986** for option 3 and **£224,251** for option 4. It must be understood by the panel that the cost of the LCTS scheme changes over time, as the circumstances and entitlement of claimants change, so the estimated costs of the proposed changes have been calculated based on a snapshot of the existing caseload as of a particular date, in this case on 18th August 2023. It is not possible to accurately predict the future entitlement of residents beyond this limit, however this method is employed by councils every year when the council tax base is determined.

There will also be additional administrative costs to the council of around **£4,000**, which will cover software changes, consultancy fees and consultation costs.

6 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. In this case, the main risk is that the panel comment on proposed options without having full knowledge of the implications of proposed changes. This will be mitigated through the content of this report, and commitment of the report author to guide members through the different options and to answer any questions arising. A meeting has already been undertaken with members of the panel to give an overview of the issues to be considered.

7 EQUALITIES

At this point an Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out because the proposed option for public consultation has not been decided. Once this is known, a full impact assessment will be carried out, including scrutiny of cases where current claimants will receive less support.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

This issue does not impact on climate change/carbon neutrality.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None. The panel is asked to comment on options for proposed changes, however one option will be to retain the current rules of the scheme. This will be a decision in its own right.

10 CONSULTATION

S151 Officer, Citizens Advice Bath and North East Somerset Council, Staff.

Contact person	Damian Peak 01225 396613
Background papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Review of Council Tax Reduction schemes in 2023/24 – Entitled To.- Appendix – Case studies and scheme comparison.
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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Case studies and scheme comparison

The following case studies are based on real life examples of current Council Tax support claimants. Names have been changed but income details are as declared to the council.

Monika green works full time and has two children in secondary school. She owns her home and currently qualifies for a 50% reduction in her council tax, which is £9.60 per week.

Earnings - £382.08

Universal Credit - £89.93

Child Benefit - £39.90.

Total - £511.91

This is between the current 50% threshold of **£485.35 and £540.39**.

Under the proposed rules for options 3 and 4 she would not qualify for any help at all as her income is above the weekly amount of **£433.58**.

If Monika could not afford her new council tax instalments, she would be advised to apply for a discretionary reduction from the Welfare Support team.

Gracie works 30 hours per week and has a 2-year-old, whose nursery care costs £211 per month. She rents a 2-bedroom property in Keynsham for £825. Currently she does not receive any help with her council tax.

Earnings - £224.98

Universal Credit - £281.40 (includes £190.38 Housing costs element and £48.69 Childcare element)

Child Benefit - £24.00

Total - £530.38

This is above the current 50% threshold which applies in Gracie's case of **£490.40**, so she does not qualify for any help.

Under the proposed rules for options 3 and 4 the Housing Costs and Childcare Elements of Universal Credit would be deducted and so her total income would be

Earnings - £224.98

Universal Credit - £42.33

Child Benefit - £24.00

Total - £291.31

This means that her income would fall into the range of **£285.10 and £335.09** and she would be entitled to a **40%** reduction in her council tax bill.

Andy has 4 children aged 2 to 5. He rents his 4-bedroom home from Curo in Midsomer Norton. He currently receives an 80% reduction in his council tax. He is also affected by the Benefit cap.

Universal Credit £351.76 per week (includes £177.96 Housing Costs element)

Child Benefit - £71.70

Total - £423.46

This is between the range of **£320.20 and £430.29** and so he qualifies for an 80% reduction under the current rules.

Under the proposed rules for options 3 and 4 the Housing costs element would be deducted from his Universal Credit entitlement so his total income would be

Universal Credit - £173.80

Child Benefit - £71.70

Total - £245.50.

This is between the income range of **£233.58 – £333.57** and he would remain on an 80% reduction under option 3 or move to an 85% reduction under option 4.

Clive lives with his adult son (30 years old). They rent a 2-bedroom house in Weston in Bath. He currently receives an 80% reduction on his bill.

Universal Credit - £235.09 (includes £150 Housing costs Element).

This is between the range of £220.20 and £330.29 and so he receives an 80% reduction.

Under the proposed rules for options 3 and 4 the Housing costs element would be deducted from his Universal Credit entitlement so his total income would be

Universal Credit - £85.09.

This is below the range of **£85.10 to £185.09** and so he would qualify for a 100% reduction in his bill.

Zoe (47) lives on her own in Timsbury and rents a flat from a private landlord for £650. She currently receives an 80% reduction in her bill.

Universal Credit - £235.10 (includes £150 Housing Costs Element).

This is between the range of £220.20 and £330.29 and so she receives an 80% reduction.

Under the proposed rules for options 3 and 4 the Housing costs element would be deducted from her Universal Credit entitlement so her total income would be

Universal Credit - £85.09.

This is below the range of **£85.10 to £185.09** and so she would qualify for a 100% reduction in her bill.

Other councils

Neighbouring councils to B&NES which operate income banded LCTS schemes include **South Gloucestershire** council, which has a 20% minimum payment amount. This scheme applies to all working age applicants and where the claimant receives an income related benefit or Maximum Universal Credit, they are automatically placed within the 80% reduction bracket.

<i><u>Income band</u></i>	<i><u>Weekly Income Range £</u></i>	<i><u>Percentage</u></i>
1	0 to 120	80
2	120.01 to 150	50
3	150.01 to 200	30
4	200.01 to 250	20
5	250.01 to 300	10
6	300.01 and over	0

If the circumstances of the case study examples were used in this scheme, Monika would not qualify for any help at all, Gracie would qualify for a 10% reduction and Andy, Clive and Zoe would qualify for an 80% reduction.

The newly formed County Unitary **Somerset** council also operates an income banded LCTS scheme, which was introduced from April 2023. They have included a 100% reduction band, as is proposed under options 3 and 4. The Housing Cost element is also disregarded as are certain other income types. This scheme also includes increased income thresholds for couple households and households with children.

Discount	Single Person	Single Person one child	Single Person 2 or more children	Couple	Couple with one child	Couple with two or more children
100%	£0-£95.00	£0-£160.00	£0-£220.00	£0-£140.00	£0-£200.00	£0-£260.00
75%	£95.01-£155.00	£160.01-£220.00	£220.01-£290.00	£140.01-£210.00	£200.01-£260.00	£260.01-£330.00
40%	£155.01-£190.00	£220.01-£255.00	£290.01-£370.00	£210.01-£260.00	£260.01-£295.00	£330.01-£410.00
25%	£190.01-£235.00	£255.01-£290.00	£370.01-£480.00	£260.01-£310.00	£295.01-£330.00	£410.01-£520.00

Under the rules of this scheme Monika for a 40% reduction, Gracie would qualify for a 25% reduction, and Andy, Clive and Zoe would qualify for a 100% reduction. A summary of scheme comparisons is below.

Persona	B&NES Current scheme	B&NES proposed options 3 and 4	South Gloucestershire	Somerset
Monika	50%	0	0	40%
Gracie	0	40%	10%	25%
Andy	80%	80/85%	80%	100%
Clive	80%	100%	80%	100%
Zoe	80%	100%	100%	100%

REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEMES IN 2023/24

Page 27

entitledto
independent | accurate | reliable

May 2023

Introduction

- Ten years ago, in April 2013, help for low-income households with paying their Council Tax bills moved from a single national scheme to a devolved system. Local authorities (LAs) in England now run their own local Council Tax Reduction (CTR) schemes, paying the costs of, administering and setting the rules for help for local citizens.
- Over the past ten years a wide variety of different local rules have been adopted. This report looks at the changes English LAs have made to their CTR schemes for 2023/24. It draws comparisons with previous survey results to discover trends in the type of CTR schemes being introduced by LAs.
- In setting CTR schemes for 2023/24, LAs have had to balance the competing claims of protecting their own council budget with protecting citizens in troubled times. On the one hand, real terms reductions in government funding and increased demand for LA-funded care mean there is a tendency for other council services to be squeezed, which in the case of CTR can only come about through changing scheme rules to cut awards.
- On the other hand, the effect of the cost-of-living crisis on low-income households dominated most council's agendas this year, and one way of helping them is through making the CTR scheme more generous. Moreover, Council Tax bills rose by 5.7% on average in 2023/24, and protecting the existing CTR scheme prevents claimants facing the full effect of rising bills.

Summary

Around 13% of local authorities in England changed how they calculate Council Tax Reduction for 2023/24 (39 local authorities).

The most common change was to increase the maximum support available for the poorest households (29 local authorities). Only one local authority reduced their maximum support.

The second most common change was to introduce an income-banded scheme (12 local authorities). Around 30% of Council Tax Reduction schemes are now income-banded.

We've seen 11 other changes which make schemes more generous by way of capital rule changes, extra income disregards, removal of band caps and reduction of minimum awards.

Changes to CTR schemes in April 2023

As has been the case for the past couple of years, there have been relatively few LAs changing their CTR schemes for 2023/24. Out of 296 LAs in England (a drop from 309 in 2022/23 due to mergers), 39 made changes to the way they calculate CTR in April 2023.

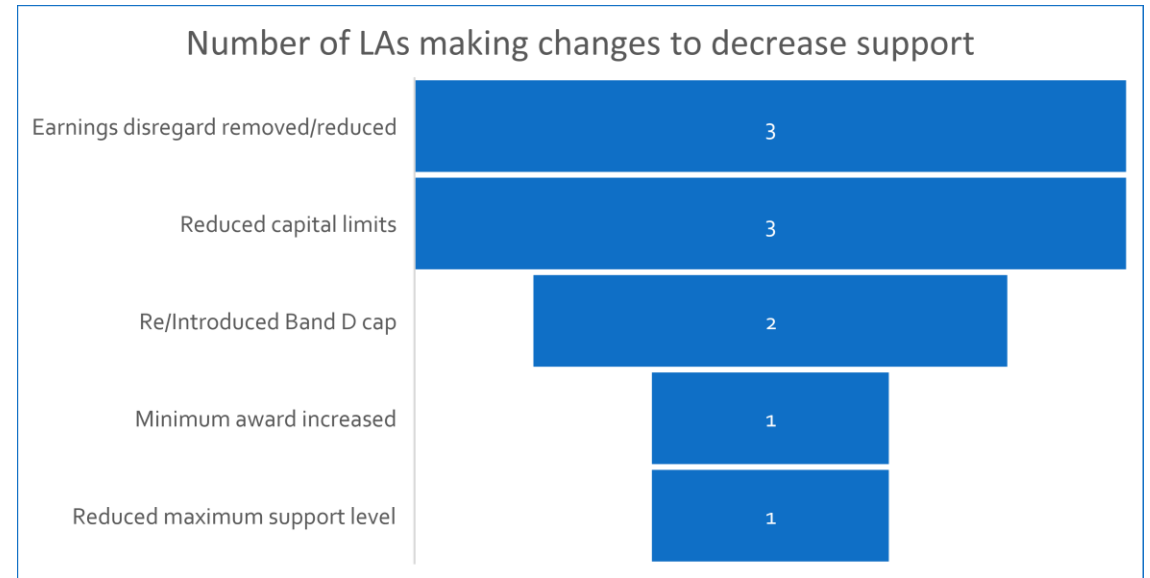
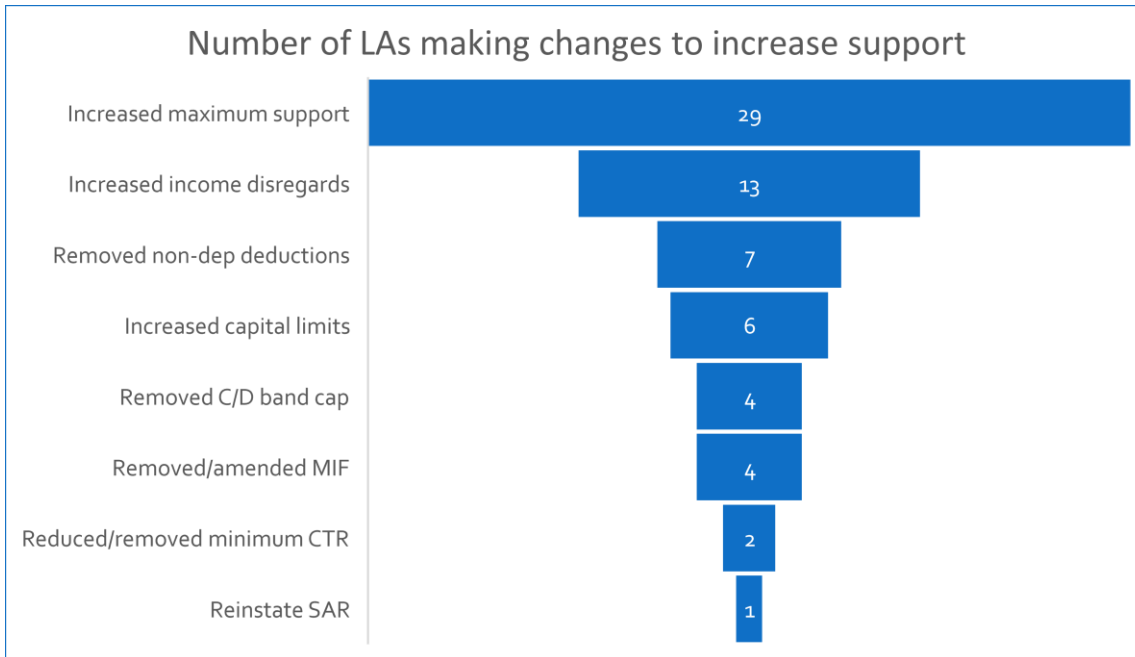
Another year of increasing support for those in need

Last year we found that most of those making changes to their schemes moved towards making them more generous and this is again the case for 2023/24. Ten LAs with non-banded schemes have increased the maximum support available, with eight of these now offering up to 100% support. In comparison, only one LA has reduced the maximum support available.

Nine of the LAs moving to income-banded schemes this year have taken the opportunity to offer 100% support in their lowest band. 11 LAs with existing income-banded schemes increased the support levels they offer in band 1, with four increasing this to 100%. Four went further, increasing the support offered in every band, not just band 1.

Changes to CTR schemes in April 2023

Other changes seen this year also predominantly make for more generous schemes, with few making changes which lead to a decrease in support. Also, with 7 LAs removing non-dependant deductions, 3 removing tariff income and at least 1 new de minimis rule, we are still seeing changes to simplify administration.

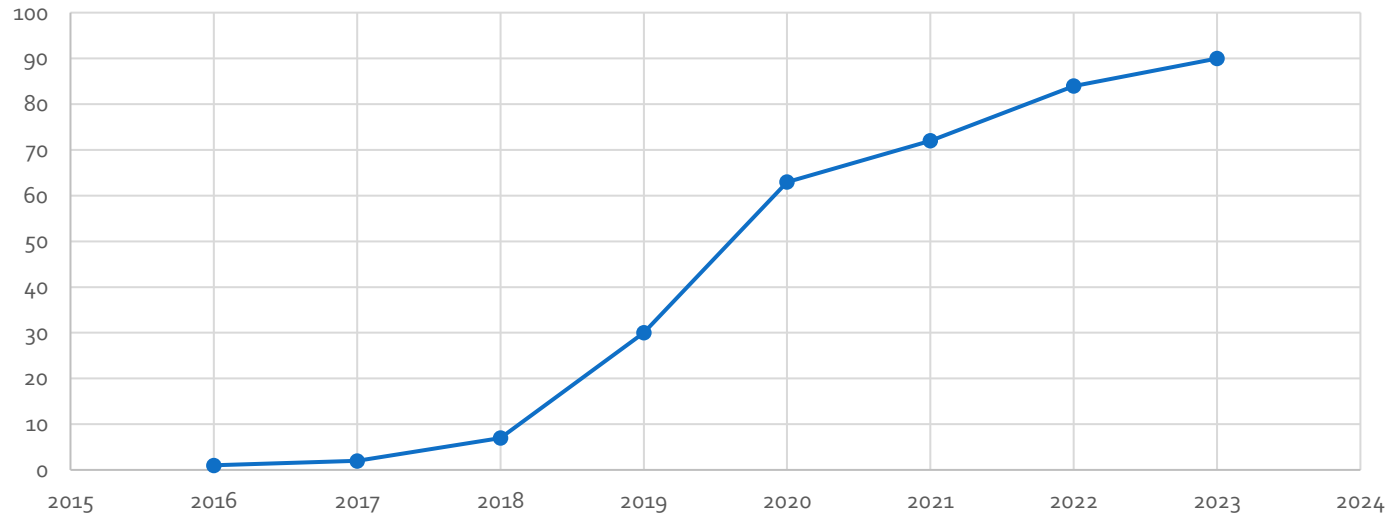


New income-banded schemes

This year has seen the introduction of 12 new income-banded schemes, taking the total to 90 (approx. 30% of all CTR schemes). Of the 90, 15 are for UC claimants only with the previous scheme being retained alongside it for non-UC claimants. Since the number of income-banded schemes doubled from 30 in 2019, to 63 in 2020, we have seen the pace of new income-banded schemes being introduced slowing.

Note: This year's total only shows an increase of 6 banded schemes because 6 schemes were also removed in 2023 due to Local Authority mergers.

Number of income banded schemes



Income-banded CTR schemes in detail

Number of household types

In 2023/24, the most common format for income-banded schemes, for the first time, is to have different income bands for single people, couples, single people with 1 child, single people with 2+ children, couples with 1 child and couples with 2+ children, reflecting the different needs of six different household types. This approach has been adopted by 25 LAs – including 5 new this year - and helps target support specifically toward lone parent households.

23 LAs – including three new this year - have different income bands for single people, couples, families with 1 child and families with 2+ children. This format allows for larger households to retain the same level of support at higher income levels than smaller households but doesn't accommodate the different support needs of lone parent and two parent families.

20 LAs – including three new this year – have one set of income bands and associated support for all claimants, meaning the scheme can be kept simple but other measures may be needed to ensure protection of vulnerable claimants. For this reason, this format best lends itself to an earnings-only scheme (of which 10 of these are) or an excess income scheme (which accounts for 3 of these).

2023/24 saw two LAs with existing banded schemes change the type they operate. One LA changed from a 4 household income-banded scheme to a 6 household income scheme, and one LA changed from a 6 household income-banded scheme to an earnings only scheme with one set of income bands for all claimants.

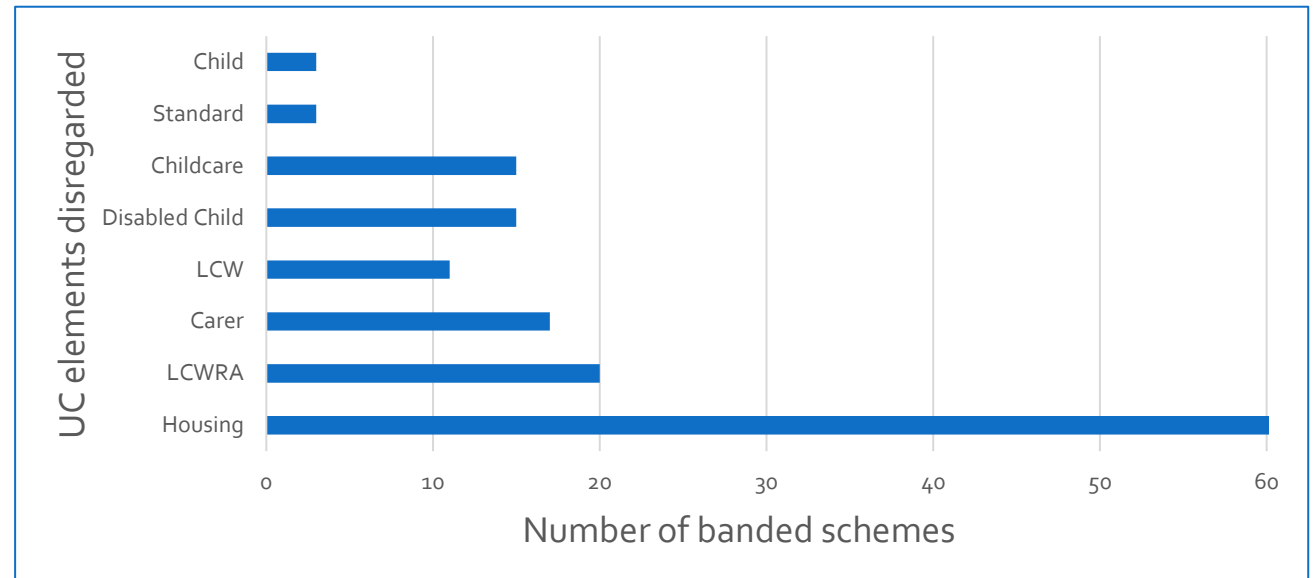
Income taken into account

Four of the new income-banded schemes only take into account earnings, this means 16 LAs in total for 2023/24 now take this approach to assessing income for their banded schemes.

There are 6 LAs calculating excess income in the traditional way using applicable amounts, before comparing the excess income to their income bands, but the vast majority (67 LAs, including 8 new ones) are still assessing income in much the same way as non-banded schemes, before comparing this income against the appropriate bands for the household to determine the level of support to be awarded. The main difference seen with LAs taking this approach is how much of the UC award they count as income and how much they disregard, as shown by the chart below.

Where some of the UC award is disregarded it is most likely to be the housing costs element, with 61 LAs aligning this with the disregard of Housing Benefit.

We have seen 4 LAs with existing banded schemes disregarding additional UC elements this year, and all of the new banded schemes (which aren't earnings only) disregard at least the housing element with over half disregarding other elements as well.



Loss of protection when migrating from legacy benefits to UC – a banded scheme problem

An issue highlighted last year - and which still persists - is that people receiving their maximum UC award with no other income are being overlooked when protection is put in place for households on legacy benefits: Income Support (IS), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (irESA) and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (ibJSA). While on legacy benefits these claimants are often automatically put into band 1 to receive the maximum support available, but when they migrate to UC they lose this protection.

In fact, of the 64 banded schemes assessing at least some part of the UC award as income, 52 schemes protect those on IS, irESA and ibJSA by placing them in band 1, while **only 4 scheme protect those on maximum UC** with no other income, so they too can receive the maximum support available.

The problem here comes back to how much of the UC award will be taken into account as income. As we've shown, this varies greatly from scheme to scheme and with no consensus on which elements to include and which to disregard, those being migrated to UC from IS, irESA or ibJSA are likely to find themselves no longer protected in band 1 and potentially climbing the income bands to lower levels of support - even though their circumstances have otherwise not changed. As managed migration picks up pace it is important for all LAs with income-banded schemes to consider how UC award income is taken into account, compared to the legacy benefits it replaces, and the effect on claimant awards of migrating to UC.

Loss of protection when migrating from legacy benefits to UC – a banded scheme problem

Current System
Universal Credit

Total benefits entitlement
(Under the current system) **£197.75 / weekly**

Our estimate is based on the information you have entered and does not guarantee entitlement. It uses 2023/24 benefit and tax rates.

If you are making a new claim for benefits you will need to claim Universal Credit instead of the benefits below. Click the Universal Credit tab above for more details.

You may also need to claim Universal Credit if you experience a change in circumstances. For more information see our guide to [what triggers a move to Universal Credit](#).

Jobseeker's Allowance

£84.80 / weekly

Your entitlement is made up of £84.80 in income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

[More information](#) [How we worked it out](#)

[How to claim?](#)

Council Tax Support

£22.95 / weekly

Your full Council Tax bill of £28.69 per week will be reduced to £5.74 per week because of your entitlement to Council Tax Support.

[More information](#) [How we worked it out](#)

[How to claim?](#)

Housing Benefit

£90.00 / weekly

[More information](#) [How we worked it out](#)

[How to claim?](#)

This example shows a single claimant having band 1 of this income-banded CTR scheme applied, because they are claiming JSA (ib). They get the maximum support so have to pay 20% of their Council Tax liability, £5.74 per week.

Banded Scheme details

Claims IS, JSA or ESA - band 1 applied

Single with no dependant	
Assessed Income Without Elements Of UC Excluding - UC Carer Element, UC LCW/LCWWRRA Element	Discount (%)
£0.00-£112.39	80.0%
£112.40-£171.55	60.0%
£171.56-£230.72	40.0%
£230.73-£289.90	20.0%
£289.91 and above	.0%

Loss of protection when migrating from legacy benefits to UC – a banded scheme problem

Current System | **Universal Credit**

Total benefits entitlement
(Under Universal Credit) **£186.57 / weekly**

Our estimate is based on the information you have entered and does not guarantee entitlement. It uses 2023/24 benefit and tax rates.
Find out more about Universal Credit below.

Universal Credit

£175.09 / weekly

We estimate your monthly Universal Credit award will be £758.74.

[Help to Claim service](#) [How we worked it out](#)
[More information](#)

New style Job Seeker's Allowance

£0.00 / weekly

On the basis of the data entered you are not entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance. However in some circumstances it may be worth claiming to qualify for other benefits.

[More information](#)
[How to claim?](#)

Council Tax Support

£11.48 / weekly

Your full Council Tax bill of £28.69 per week will be reduced to £17.21 per week because of your entitlement to Council Tax Support.

[More information](#) [How we worked it out](#)
[How to claim?](#)

When the same single claimant migrates to Universal Credit, they are not protected in band 1 and their full UC award is taken into account as income. They therefore fall into band 3 of this scheme and only get support with 40% of their Council Tax liability. Their situation is otherwise unchanged but they now have to pay £17.21 per week.

Banded Scheme details

Single with no dependant.	
Assessed Income Without Elements Of UC Excluding - UC Carer Element, UC LCW/LCW/WRA Element	Discount (%)
£0.00-£112.39	80.0%
£112.40-£171.55	60.0%
£171.56-£230.72	40.0%
£230.73-£289.90	20.0%
£289.91 and above	.0%

CTR schemes offering up to 100% support in 2023/24

This year has seen a push toward offering up to 100% support for claimants from those LAs changing their scheme. However, there remains a great deal of variation across England. In some LAs low-income households are still being required to pay up to 50% of their Council Tax bill.

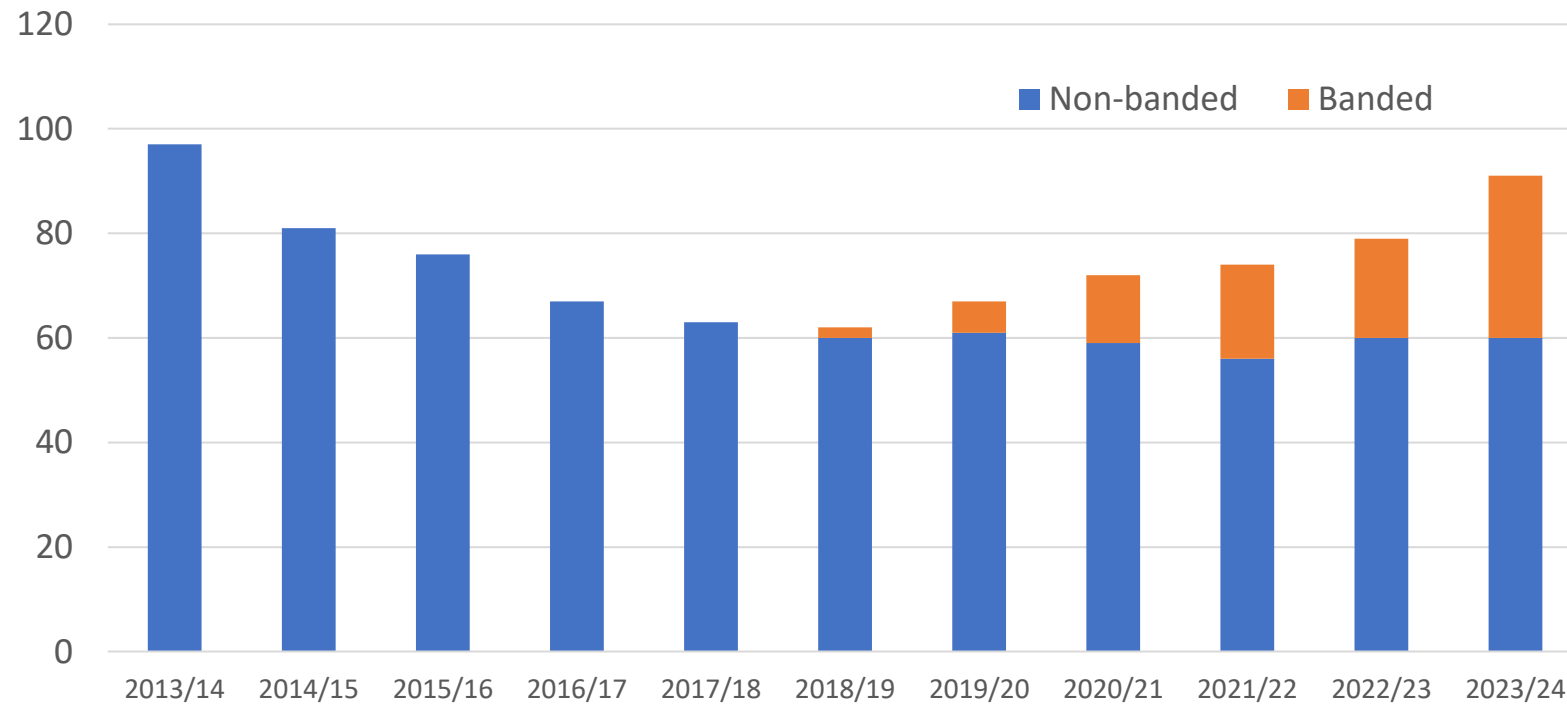
Six LAs this year removed their minimum payment, effectively reverting back to Council Tax Benefit, although two stated this is for one year only. There are now 47 of 221 non-income banded schemes (21%) who have neither a minimum payment, nor a band cap – so still offer up to 100% support. This is up from 19% last year.

24 out of 90 income-banded schemes (26%) now offer 100% support to those in the lowest income band and don't have a band cap – so still offer up to 100% support to those on the lowest incomes. This includes 9 of the 12 new schemes this year and compares to 18% of banded schemes offering up to 100% support last year.

However, the income threshold to access the maximum support in an income-banded scheme varies widely. If, for example, we look at schemes with the most popular format of 6 household types, and comparable income is taken into account, for a couple with 2+ children the maximum income to be placed into band 1 is £234.99pw at its lowest and £330pw at its highest. Looking at those schemes with one set of income bands for all claimants and comparable assessed income, the threshold to be placed in band 1 is £80 per week at its lowest and £202.99 per week at its highest.

The chart below shows the change in the number of CTR schemes with no minimum payment, so offering up to 100% support, since 2013/14. This chart only includes schemes that have no minimum payment for non-protected claimants. From a low point in 2018/19 when only 62 schemes had no minimum payment, this number has increased to 91 in 2023/24 which represents about 30% of CTR schemes, almost returning to the peak of 97 schemes in 2013 when CTR was first localised.

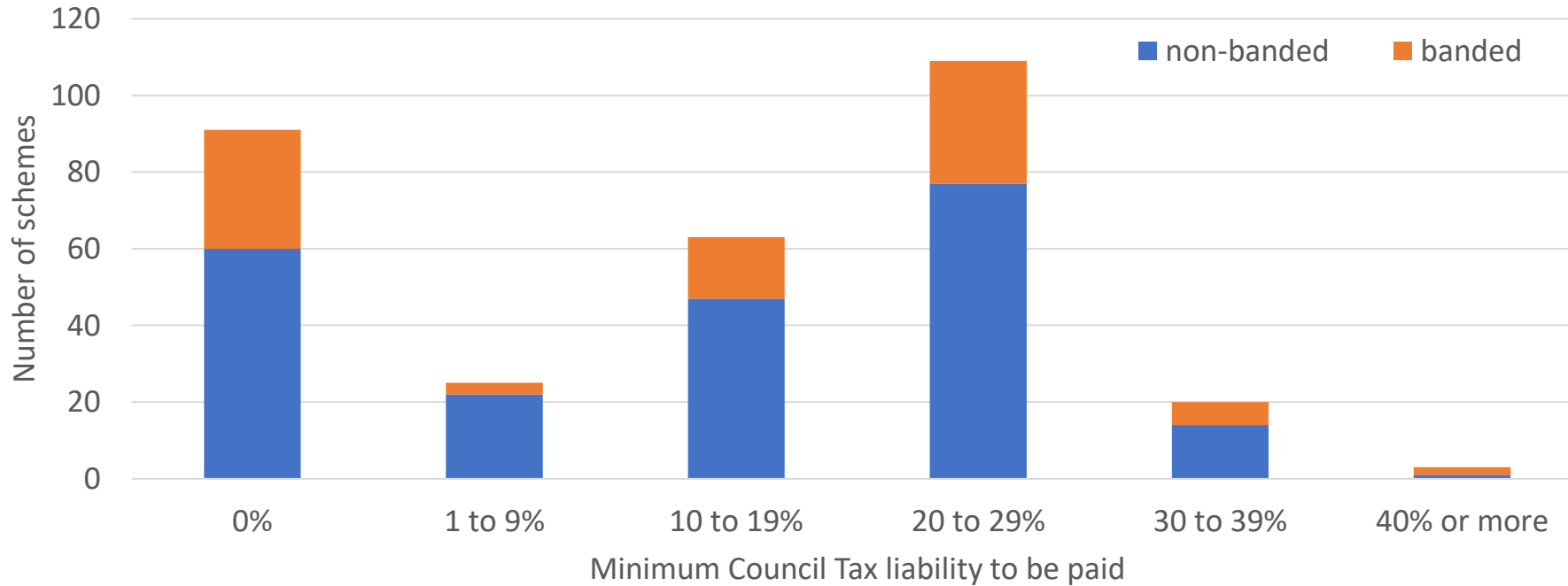
CTR schemes without a minimum payment since localisation



Minimum payments by size in 2023/24

The chart below shows the prevalence of minimum payments by size. The lowest minimum payment in each scheme for non-protected claimants has been used. Although the number of schemes with no minimum payment has been increasing over the last four years, the most common minimum payment group remains 20 to 29%, with 109 schemes in that group. There are only 23 LAs with a minimum payment of 30% or more.

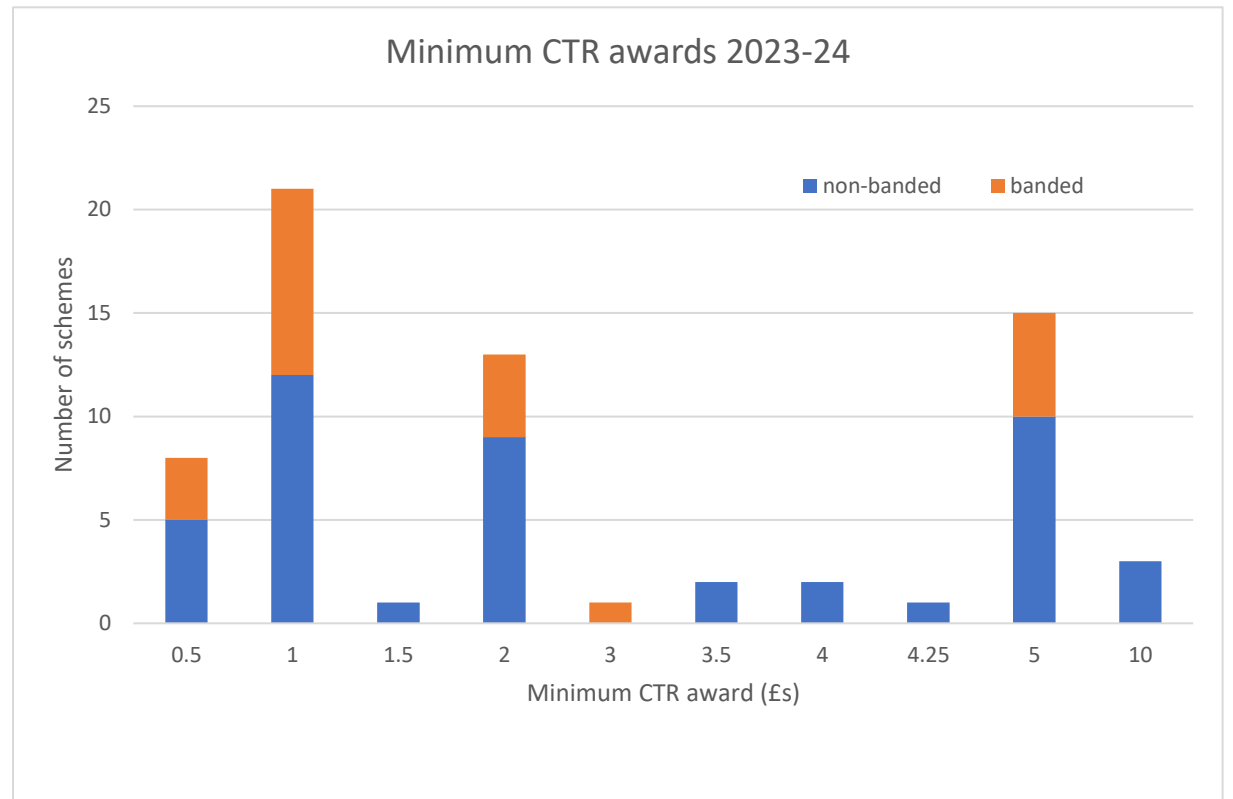
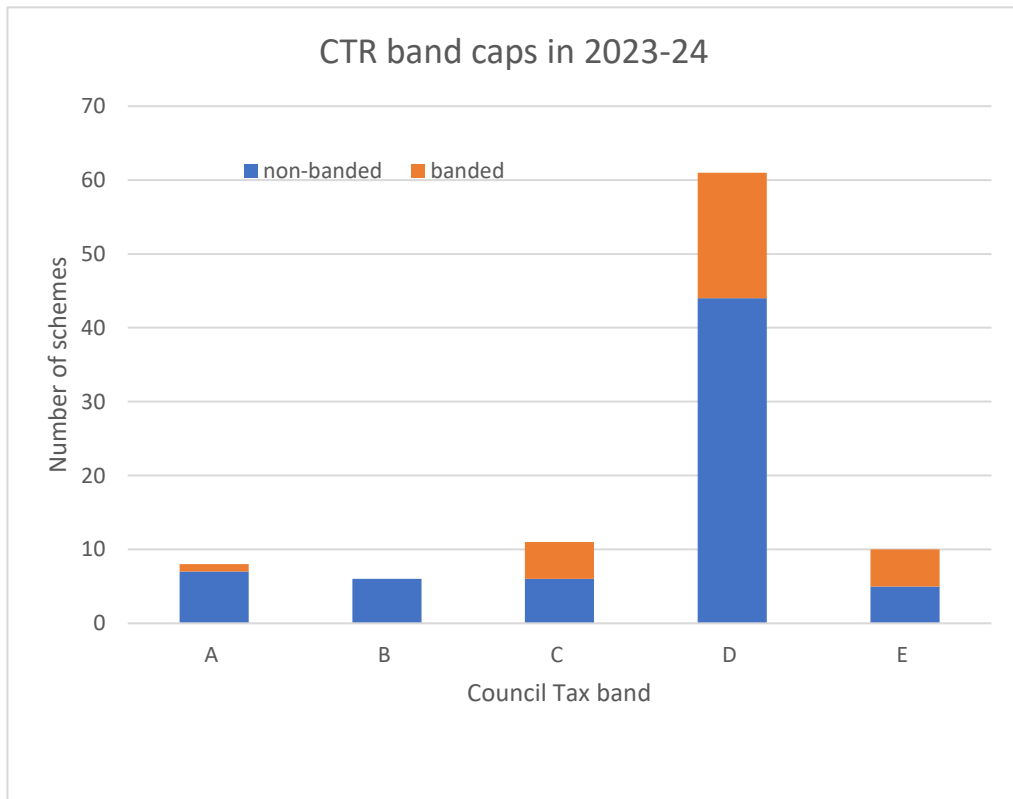
Minimum payments by size 2023-24



Other features of CTR schemes in 2023/24

There are 96 schemes (31%) with band caps in 2023/24, with the most prevalent by far being a band D cap.

There are 67 schemes (21.5%) with minimum CTR awards in 2023/24, with the most prevalent being £1.



Are you thinking of changing your CTR scheme?

Whether you are thinking of moving to an income-banded scheme or an alternative type of scheme we can help you in one of three ways:

Monitoring the market: Providing details of what other LAs are doing so you can see which policy options, if any, may be appropriate for your council.

Evaluating alternatives: Assisting you in setting up policy options for alternative schemes in our Council Tax Support calculator. You can use existing schemes from other LAs or create unique new schemes. You can then run either hypothetical or real case examples through the calculator to see entitlements under the proposed schemes.

Modelling your data: By combining our calculation engine with your LA data we can estimate the cost/distributional effect of reform options, be that adopting another LA's scheme or a new design, for both your authority and residents.

Who are entitled to?

We are one of the leading providers of online benefit calculators in the UK today. We help people determine what they can claim from national and local government via our self-serve or adviser-led calculators.

Our calculators are authoritative and accurate and we are entirely independent of government. We provide a reliable estimate of benefit entitlements based on our in-depth knowledge of the UK's social security system. By using our online benefits calculators, users can determine whether they are receiving the right amount of money in their benefit claims, whether they are eligible for other types of benefits, as well as understand what their position will be as Government welfare reforms take effect.

We believe that everyone living in the UK should be able to understand what their legitimate entitlements are and honestly claim that amount from government - social security is a key aspect of our society and a vital part of our modern communities.

We have been operating since 2000 and we provide our calculators to numerous Local Authorities, Housing Associations and charities who provide benefit support to their users.

GET IN TOUCH

We'd like to hear from you.

Email: hello@entitledto.co.uk

Visit: www.entitledto.co.uk/organisations

Call: 0161 980 6276

Contact us today if you need help with changing your CTR scheme

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Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	19th September 2023	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E
TITLE:	Improvements to Fix My Street	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
A presentation will be given at the meeting indicating the improvement for the customers when using Fix My Street		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 B&NES Highway Network consist of:

- (1) 1,102km of carriageways
- (2) 885km of footways
- (3) 16,320 Street Lights
- (4) 159 bridges and structures

1.2 Repair and maintenance works are identified through regular Highway inspections that form part of the asset management process. Customers can also report faults using the online system Fix My Street (FMS). The FMS reports are linked to the asset management system enabling the Highway Inspectors to review reports on their hand-held devices and instigate the actions including ordering works and updating the FMS.

1.3 The FMS system has not had any major changes since 2018. Feedback from Parish and Council Members was mixed, and it was noted there were aspects that could be improved. In mid-2022 the Councils Service Redesign Team working with the Highway Service reviewed FMS and identified a number of opportunities for improvement. A programme of improvements started in late 2022.

2 IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

- 2.1 FMS is a National System provided by Society Works, Local Authorities can make limited changes to feedback, but the key functionality remains part of the national system. The Team have worked with Society Works to review and implement changes, these include:
- 2.2 B&NES Web content improved to provide clear easy steps for customers information and to report issues or signpost to a third party.
- 2.3 Improvements to the Opening FMS page.
- 2.4 Improvements to maps Layers.
- 2.5 Improvement to Curo map Layer.
- 2.6 Reduced clutter on maps by undertaking a data cleanse and clearing closed messages.
- 2.7 Improvement to the Automated responses, some responses were vague and not help full. Customer are given more information, and improved links to the new web site.
- 2.8 Improved option for feedback to include SMS option for feedback.

3 ISSUES AND PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1 The improvements have been successfully implemented and tested with support from members. The improvements have improved the customer journey from the initial report to the completion of works. Feedback from the Parish Liaison meeting on 19th June 2023 was positive which has been reiterated by members who have regular engagement with our customers. There has been a significant increase in usage of the FMS from 638 reports per month in 2022 to 875 reports per month in 2023 which coincide with the improvement that have been made.
- 3.2 Work continues in Service to identify further areas where feedback can be improved. This will be led by a user group who review performance and identify opportunities for improvements.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Updated report on current operational improvements.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 Improvement are funded within current budgets.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The FMS improves communications and fault reporting, reducing the risk of harm from faults.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 The report identifies improvement to an existing operational system.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 FMS support repairs to the Highway Network which is important in supporting sustainable travel.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 Director of Place

Contact person	
Background papers	No background papers
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

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CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

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>

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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, Democratic Services . A formal agenda will be issued 5 clear working days before the meeting.

Agenda papers can be inspected on the Council's website.

Ref Date	Decision Maker/s	Title	Report Author Contact	Director Lead
19TH SEPTEMBER 2023				
19 Sep 2023	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Update on Council Tax Support Scheme		Chief Finance Officer (S151)
19 Sep 2023	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Update on 'Fix My Street'		Chief Operating Officer
19 Sep 2023 Page 50	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Key Performance Update		Chief Operating Officer
14TH NOVEMBER 2023				
14 Nov 2023	Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	Budget Update		Chief Finance Officer (S151)
The Forward Plan is administered by DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: Democratic_Services@bathnes.gov.uk				