

SUPPLEMENTARY 1



THE ASSEMBLY

Monday, 14 January 2013

**Agenda Item 3. Localising Support for Council Tax In England -
Final Scheme (Pages 1 - 48)**

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ASSEMBLY**14 January 2013**

This report is submitted under Agenda Item 3. The Chair will be asked to decide if it can be considered at the meeting under the provisions of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 as a matter of urgency in order for the Council to have its Council Tax Support Scheme in place by 31 January 2013.

Title: Localising Support for Council Tax in England – Final Scheme	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
Report Author: Jonathan Bunt	Contact Details: Tel: 0208 724 8427 E-mail: Jonathan.Bunt@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Divisional Director: Jonathan Bunt, Divisional Director, Finance	
Accountable Director: Graham Farrant, Chief Executive	
<p>Summary:</p> <p>The accompanying report and appendices replace the documents that were published on 4 January 2013 under Agenda Item 3.</p> <p>The original report only considered the receipt of the grant from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) from the Council's perspective and did not factor in the equivalent grant due to the Greater London Authority (GLA). This increases the grant receivable from £375k to £488k for options 1, 3 and 4.</p> <p>Incorporating that additional grant into the modelled options does not change the recommendation to approve option 2 for implementation from 1 April 2013.</p> <p>The revised grant figure is reflected in the accompanying report and is the only change to the original version that was circulated to Members on 4 January. The appendices that were included in the original version are unaffected, but have been included again for completeness.</p>	

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Summary: As part of the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, the Government announced that it would localise support for Council Tax from April 2013 with an expectation that expenditure would be reduced by 10% from the same date. The proposals are part of a wider policy of localism which aims to give Local Authorities increased financial autonomy and part of the reform of the welfare system to improve incentives to work whilst protecting the most vulnerable in society. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit from April 2013 and, in its place, support will take the form of a Council Tax reduction. The Local Government Finance Act contains provisions for the setting up of local support schemes. Council Tax support will be funded by a fixed grant based on current expenditure but it will be reduced by 10% nationally. The grant for Barking & Dagenham from DCLG is £18.4m. Current estimated expenditure for 2013/14 is £20.7m (including £300k of growth in 2013/14), thus a shortfall of £2.3m must be found. Pensioners will be protected by a national scheme meaning they will receive the same amount of help as they do now and it is for local authorities to define the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for those of working age. Due to the fact that pensioners must be protected if the full cut is passed on to claimants, the actual cut to all working age benefit recipients would need to be 15%. Key principles must be adhered to in designing the scheme, with Local Authority duties to the vulnerable and ensuring incentives to work being taken into account. The new scheme must be in place by 31 st January 2013 and, if the Council does not adopt a new scheme by this date, a default scheme, determined by Government, would apply. This would result in the Council having to fund the difference between the fixed grant and the full actual expenditure. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 also laid provisions for technical reforms to Council Tax on empty homes premiums and these will come into force from 1 April 2013.	

This allows Local Authorities greater flexibility on the Council Tax discounts and exemptions that can be awarded on empty properties. It is proposed that the exemption and discount periods on empty homes should be reduced to 30 days and a premium applied to homes that are empty for more than 2 years. The additional debit that would be created would be approximately £890k and it is estimated that £500k could potentially be collected.

In September 2012, the Council commenced an 8 week consultation proposing a scheme that would pass a 15% cut onto all working age benefit claimants.

On 16th October the Government announced that a conditional one year only grant would be made available on application to Council Tax administering authorities to assist in funding the shortfall in expenditure from the new Support Scheme. This funding can be applied for in February 2013 and will be payable in March 2013.

The extra funding available for Barking and Dagenham, including the GLA element, is £488k and is dependent upon the Council's scheme not cutting benefit by more than 8.5%. This would still result in a shortfall in funding.

If this option was taken further consultation must be undertaken for Year 2 of the scheme to increase the cut in benefit to the 15% required as the grant is for 1 year only.

Due to these factors it is recommended that the proposed consulted scheme, with a 15% cut to all working age benefit claimants, is put in place from Year 1. It is also recommended that the changes to exemptions be approved to generate additional income.

This report details the scheme, exemption changes and funding options that are available and the results of the public consultation. Assembly is requested to recommend that the scheme to be used is the 15% cut and to provide approval to amend exemptions on empty homes as detailed.

Recommendation(s)

The Assembly is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the implementation of option 2, whereby a 15% cut is applied to all working age benefit claimants, as the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council Tax Support Scheme from 1 April 2013; and
- (ii) Approve the recommended changes to empty property exemptions from 1 April 2013.

Reason(s)

The Council is required to design and implement a Council Tax Support Scheme from 31st January 2013. Failure to do this will result in the default scheme being imposed and the 10% cut in grant will have to be found from other areas of the Council.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Council Tax Benefit is an income related means tested benefit administered by Local Authorities on behalf of the Department for Work & pensions (DWP). The

benefit is demand led, i.e. if more people apply and are eligible to claim, the overall benefit bill increases. The DWP covers the cost of Council Tax Benefit by giving the local authority subsidy based on the overall amount paid out. It also provides a grant to cover most of the cost of administering the scheme. Current arrangements are such that eligibility for Housing and Council Tax Benefit are determined at the same time on the same application forms and are generally subject to the same calculation criteria in respect of income, capital and earnings.

- 1.2 It was announced in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) that support for Council Tax would be localised from April 2013 and expenditure reduced by 10%. This means that Local Authorities would determine their own schemes based on finance from and guidance by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) rather than the DWP. This announcement was followed in February 2011 by the Welfare Reform Bill which contained provisions to abolish Council Tax Benefit (CTB) paving the way for localised schemes.
- 1.3 The grant from DCLG will be fixed based on past years expenditure. Therefore the actual expenditure for the Council for 2013/14 may be more meaning that the percentage cut is greater than 10%.
- 1.4 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 also laid provisions for technical reforms to Council Tax on empty homes premiums and these will come into force from 1 April 2013, allowing Authorities greater flexibility on exemptions awarded on empty homes.

2. The proposed framework of the scheme

- 2.1 The following are the key components of the Council Tax Support Scheme:
 - Local authorities will be responsible for devising their own local Council Tax Support Scheme to assist working age claimants with their Council Tax.
 - The Council Tax Support Scheme for people receiving the state pension will be a national scheme which will protect them from any reduction in support as a result of the new scheme and the cut of 10% in grant.
 - Local authorities will be paid a grant towards the cost of Council Tax Support rather than the 100% reimbursement of Council Tax benefit at present. The grant will be based on 90% of the previous year's spend on Council Tax Benefit. Local Authorities can devise a local scheme which reduces expenditure to the level of the grant or decide to fund the reduction in grant from other sources.
 - The DCLG have set out in 'Statements of Intent' duties that Local Authorities must consider in designing their schemes. These include protecting vulnerable people and taking work incentives into account.
 - Local Authorities must consult on their proposed Council Tax Support Scheme.
 - Local Authorities must adopt a Council Tax Support Scheme before 31 January 2013 or, if it does not, a default scheme will be imposed. The default scheme is the current Council Tax benefit scheme so the Council would have to fund the 10% cut in expenditure from other areas in the Council.

- Local Authorities will be required each year to consider whether it wishes to revise or replace its scheme.

3. Scheme Design & Consultation

3.1 The guiding principles of the new scheme were to make the scheme as simple and as fair as possible. Consultation was undertaken from September 2012 with the proposed scheme based on the following:

- Apply current Council Tax Benefit rules using the 20% taper of income above Government allowances but the calculation of entitlement would be based on 85% of each claimant's individual Council Tax liability.
- This means that each claimant would have to pay about 15% of their Council Tax liability before any Council Tax Support could be offered. (the percentage is greater than 10% as pensioners must be protected) This will ensure £2.3m can be funded from the collection of this cut. If the shortfall in expenditure is greater than this the percentage cut will need to increase.
- If the full additional charge could be collected this would fund the 10% cut in expenditure.
- Using existing Council Tax Benefit criteria meant that each claim would still be assessed taking into account individual circumstances and needs and thus go some way to protecting vulnerable groups.
- Taking a uniform cut from all working age claimants means that the additional charge for each claimant is the minimum amount required to meet the 10% cut in funding. If some groups are protected the percentage cut for the remaining groups is increased.

3.2 The Government also proposed that Councils use the new legislation on technical changes to empty homes exemptions to allow additional income to be collected to fund the 10% cut in funding.

The table below illustrates the changes that could be made and the additional income, based on actual exemptions awarded in 2011/12 that would be generated if the additional charges are collected in full.

Class	Current	Proposed change	Estimated additional income
Second Homes	A discount of 10% for up to 1 year	A discount of 10% for up to 1 month only	18K
Class A – undergoing major repair	100% exemption for up to 1 year	100% exemption for up to 1 month only	82K
Class C – unoccupied and unfurnished	100% exemption for up to 6 months	100% exemption for up to 1 month only	763K
Long Term Empty Properties	Full Council Tax liability is charged	After 2 years empty a premium of 50% charged	27K
Total			890K

3.3 The full report on the potential additional income that could be collected from amending the current allowances is at Appendix 1.

4. Additional Grant

4.1 The DCLG announced in mid October that a grant would be made available for Year 1 of the scheme but only if the scheme adheres to certain criteria. This grant can only be applied for in February 2013 after the scheme is finalised as of 31 January 2013 and will be payable in March 2013. The Council's share of the available grant is £488K. The criteria is set out below:

- Those who would be entitled to 100% support under current Council Tax Benefit arrangements pay between zero and no more than 8.5% of their net Council tax liability.
- The taper rate does not increase above 25%. (The taper rate is the amount used to calculate benefit entitlement which is applied when a claimant's income is more than the amount the Government allows for them to live on. The taper in the current scheme is 20%)
- There is no sharp reduction in support for those entering work.

5. Scheme Options

Option 1 – Do not pass on the 10% cut to claimants and fund the shortfall from another Council source

Option 2 – Pass on the full cut to all working age claimants resulting in approximately a 15% cut. This is the proposed scheme that has been subject to full consultation.

Option 3 - Use the additional grant funding for year 1 to reduce the percentage cut to 8.5%. This means that there will be a shortfall in funding.

Option 4 – Use the additional grant to reduce the percentage cut to 8.5% and change the taper to 25%. There will be a shortage in funding but less than in option 3. As the option to change the taper was not included in the original consultation, it cannot be implemented without re-opening or issuing a next consultation exercise.

6. Funding implications of each option

Please note – 100% collection has been detailed below to illustrate the differences of each option in a simple way but this will not be the collection rate. The collection rate in 2011/12 was 94.1% and is estimated to be 95.1% in 2012/13.

Please note:

- Based on current estimates for discounts the gap between the grant and the discounts awarded will be £2.3m.
- The currently predicted annual growth of 1.5% will increase this pressure by £300k each year.

- The modelling in the table below is based upon current benefit caseload and actual figures will be dependent on the caseload during 2013/14.
- The pressure and additional income are shared with the Greater London Authority (GLA), of which the share split is 24% to GLA and 76% to LBB.

	Approx expenditure cut	Minimum Ctax payable	Rate of withdrawal of Benefit	Collected from claimants	One-Year Grant	Net gain/loss to at 100% collection
Option 1 – absorb full cut	2,300,000	0	0	0	488,000	-1,812,000
Option 2 – pass on full cut	2,300,000	15%	20%	2,328,102	0	28,898
Option 3 – use grant	2,300,000	8.5%	20%	1,289,403	488,000	-522,597
Option 4 – use grant and taper change	2,300,000	8.5%	25%	1,512,704	488,000	-299,296

6.2 Currently around 35% of claimants on benefit have Rent and/or Council Tax arrears. It is very difficult to predict the collection rate of this new charge on current benefit claimants who have very low incomes. The new scheme will take them below the current means test. Approximately 13,000 that were on full benefit this year will be asked to pay some Council Tax next year. Below illustrates the shortfalls of funding based on different collection rates.

Funding Implications – Models of 75%, 50% and 25% collection from claimants

Cut totals 2,300,000	Minimum Ctax payable	Rate of withdrawal of Benefit	Collected from claimants at 100% collection	One-Year Grant	Net gain/loss at 75% collection	Net gain/loss at 50% collection	Net gain/loss at 25% collection
Option 1 – absorb full cut	0	0	0	488,000	-1,812,000	-1,812,000	-1,812,000
Option 2 – pass on full cut	15%	20%	2,328,102	0	-553,924	-1,135,949	-1,717,975
Option 3 – use grant	8.5%	20%	1,289,403	488,000	-844,948	-1,167,299	-1,489,649

Option 4 – grant and taper change	8.5%	25%	1,512,704	488,000	-677,472	-1,055,648	-1,433,824
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Advantages & Disadvantages of Options

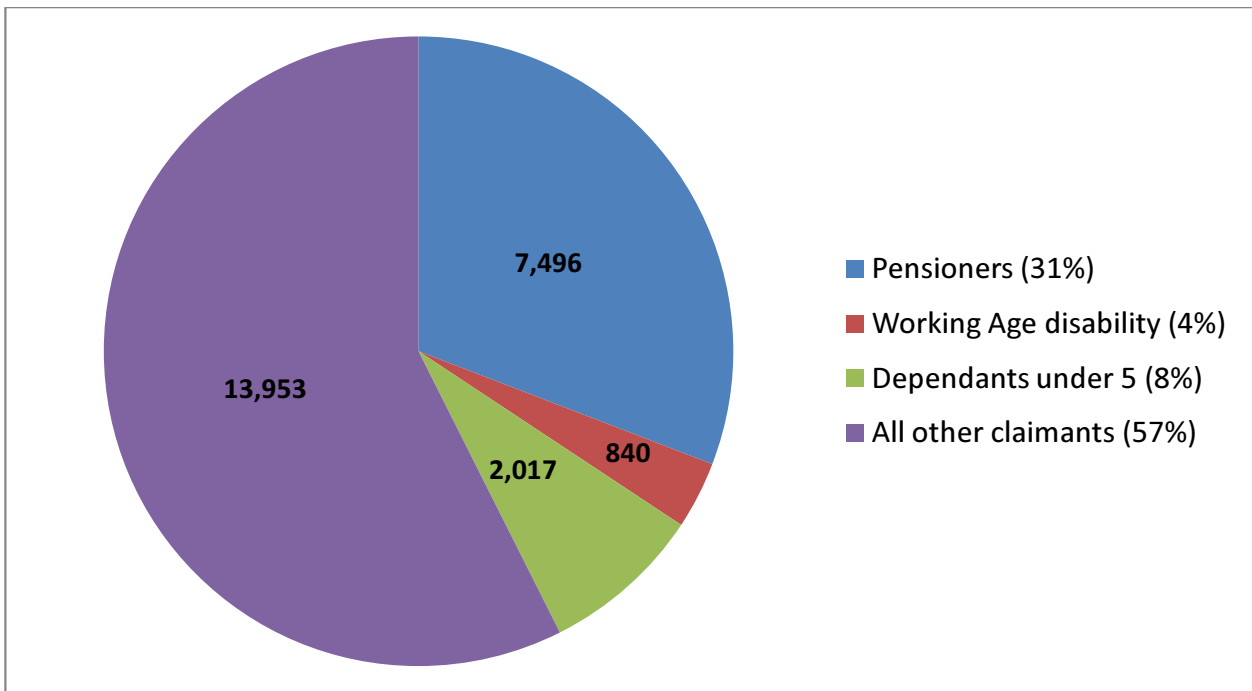
Options	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	Vulnerable are protected	Cut in expenditure must be funded from elsewhere in the Council
2	Simple scheme and fully consulted upon No further consultation is required from year 2 – the same scheme can continue	100% of the cut in funding must be collected from benefit claimants and changes to empty property exemptions All working age claimants must now pay at least 15% of their Council Tax. Open to challenge for not taking the grant to assist vulnerable claimants
3	Grant will provide £488k guaranteed income Claimants more protected as now only pay 8.5% of their Council Tax This option can be chosen without need for further consultation	There will be larger shortfall which can only be funded by changes to empty property exemptions The grant is only for Year 1, further consultation must be undertaken next year to revert back to a 15% reduction
4	Grant will provide £488k guaranteed income Claimants more protected as now only pay 8.5% of their Council Tax	There will be a shortfall which can only be funded by changes to empty property exemptions Claimants are less protected than option 3 as the entitlement taper is changed from 20% to 25% This option cannot be chosen without need for further consultation The grant is only for Year 1, further consultation must be undertaken next year to revert back to a 15% reduction

6.4 It is recommended that option 2 is approved as the final scheme. This has been fully consulted upon and further consultation will not be required for Year 2 of the

scheme. The other options would result in larger shortfalls of funding that could only be met by changes to exemptions on empty properties.

7. Breakdown of caseload

- 7.1 The breakdown of the Council Tax Benefit caseload is as below. All current benefit claimants except pensioners, approximately 16,800 will be required to pay Council Tax. Of these about 13,000 will pay for the first time as they are currently entitled to full benefit. Some claimants who currently receive a small amount of benefit will no longer qualify for any support.



- 7.2 The additional amount each claimant will be required to pay will depend on their personal circumstances and the scheme option. Appendix 2 shows the minimum additional amounts that would need to be paid in each banding for claimants on full benefit based on the 15% cut and the 8.5% cut and include those entitled to a single person discount.
- 7.3 If the additional grant is claimed by the Council, the additional Council Tax required will be less for all claimants.

8. Consultation

An 8 week period of consultation was commenced in September and ended on 18th November 2012.

The results of the consultation are summarised below. The full analysis is at Appendix 3.

- A majority of respondents (64.1%) agreed that the new Council Tax Support Scheme should be 'mainly the same as the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme.'

- 39% of respondents who expressed an opinion agreed that 'every working age adult who receives Council Tax support should pay at least something towards their Council Tax bill.' 45% disagreed and the rest were unsure.
- 33% of respondents who expressed an opinion did not agree 'that the 15% reduction required to cover the Government's cut in our grant should be applied equally to all working age adults.' 43% agreed it should and the rest were unsure.
- When asked to name which groups they thought would be most affected people with a disability (35%) and lone parents (29%) were identified. However there is a strong correlation between the numbers identifying themselves as having a disability or lone parents and those numbers stating that these would be the most affected groups.

9. Financial Implications

Completed by Jonathan Bunt, Divisional Director – Finance

- 9.1 Local Authorities currently receive reimbursement of their expenditure on Council Tax Benefit from the DWP. Local Authorities will now receive a fixed grant and if demand increases the additional expenditure must be found by the Authority in order to continue awarding support.
- 9.2 The grant allocation means the Council will experience a reduction in funding of 11%, as opposed to the 10% headline figure published by Government. This effectively increases the amount of reduction that will be passed onto our CTB claimants.
- 9.3 The requirement to keep pensioners on the same levels of support and design a new scheme for working age will mean that two schemes will need to be run whereas at the moment the Council Tax Benefit is administered as part of Housing benefits and is funded by the DWP. This will increase the cost of administering CTB for the Council.
- 9.4 The Council currently receives an administration grant of £1.965m in respect of running these schemes. There has already been a reduction of £105k on the 2013/14 allocation. It is likely that this grant will be further reduced in the future which will need to be managed as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 9.5 The expected growth in the benefits caseload of 1.5% per year equates to an annual pressure of £300k. The change to the funding by fixed grant means that the Council has to meet this pressure from its budget each year or implement a scheme to pass that cost on.
- 9.6 In addition to managing increases in demand and pressures locally, the Government is proposing possible decreases to the Council Tax support grant in future years due to estimated decreases in demand nationally. This potentially could increase the funding gap if the Council experiences an increase in demand but are is also expected to manage a reduction in funding at the same time.
- 9.7 It is considered likely that Council Tax will be increasingly difficult to collect from affected groups especially if a scheme is viewed as unfair or hits those that have

the least disposable income. For Barking and Dagenham, as an area of significant deprivation, this will have a greater effect on already lower than average collection rates. The Council's draft budget includes a revision to the bad debt provision for Council Tax that is not collected.

10. Legal Implications

Implications completed by Paul Field, Corporate Governance Lawyer

- 10.1 Historically Council Tax Benefit was administered by Councils on behalf of central Government and legislation. The scheme had run for a number of years and its fairness had been tested in law on many occasions. Following the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and further changes by the Local Government Finance Bill the responsibility for establishing support schemes will be at the local level that is to say by the Council. The Council has a legal duty to act as a fiduciary that is to ensure that the budget balances and there is the best prudent management of finances. Furthermore there is a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure in establishing a scheme there is due regard to anyone or groups who may be detrimentally affected by change together coupled a general public law obligation to consult. Even taking these steps there is always a risk of Judicial Review of a local scheme however the risk is minimised by evidence of consultation and due regard of the response.
- 10.2 It is possible that if the Assembly chose not to take advantage of the additional grant for Year 1 of the scheme, it could lead to a challenge that the Council has not taken advantage of all grants available to assist vulnerable claimants however the risk of this being successful is mitigated by the response that for LBBDD the grant's conditions create an additional financial burden on the overall Council Budget that outweigh the value of the grant.

11. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 11.1 Prior to consultation an equalities impact assessment was undertaken. This found that some groups such as claimants' with a disability and lone parents, predominantly women with younger children, may experience a greater impact from these changes than will other groups.
- 11.2 Following consultation the impact assessment was updated and it was found that the above 2 groups formed a higher percentage of those replying to the consultation. The results showed that a higher percentage of respondents felt that these 2 groups should have greater protection from the cuts. It may be seen that there is a correlation between the higher numbers of replies from these 2 groups and the fact that these were the groups that a higher percentage felt should be protected.
- 11.3 In using, as the basis of the scheme, the same rules as applied to Council Tax Benefit, the above 2 groups are protected to a greater degree than others as their 'applicable amounts' are higher – this is the amount the Government allows to live on.
- 11.4 Joint working with the CAB, voluntary groups and the Credit Union will continue to signpost claimants to help in managing the transition to this scheme. The impact of the scheme must be measured after implementation and impacts taken into account

in the implementation of year 2 of the scheme. The equalities impact assessment can be found at Appendix 4.

List of appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Technical changes report
- Appendix 2 - Additional Council Tax required by Band
- Appendix 3 - Consultation Responses
- Appendix 4 – Equalities Impact Assessment

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Technical Reforms of Council Tax

Background

The Coalition Government has proposed and consulted on making changes to the council tax system, including giving local authorities more flexibility on which discounts they can charge on second homes and certain empty properties. This is part of the Government's drive to decentralise control over local government finance, giving local authorities more local control to help them keep council tax down and provide stronger levers to make sure that the housing stock is effectively utilised.

The Technical Reforms proposed from 2013/14 are set out below. It is up to local council's to decide which changes they want to implement locally. The below analysis illustrates possible changes and the resulting approximate increase to the Council Tax net collectable debit based on current awards. This can be seen as additional income if the debt can be collected in full.

Proposed Changes

- Second homes may be granted a discount of between zero and 100%.
- A property undergoing major repair (Class A exemption) – the council may charge up to 100%.
- If your property is unoccupied and is substantially unfurnished, the council may grant a discount of between zero and 100% known as class C.
- Long term empty properties may be charged a premium of up to 50%

Summary Table of Estimated Additional Income if all current exemptions and discounts are set at 100% for 30 days and then set at zero from day 31:

Proposed Change	Potential Additional Income
Second Homes	18k
Class A – undergoing major repair	82k
Class C – unoccupied and unfurnished	763k
Long Term Empty Properties	27k

Second home discounts

The Government confirms its intention to amend secondary legislation to allow billing authorities to levy up to 100% of council tax on second homes.¹ Currently a 10% discount is granted for these properties. There are 413 properties granted a second home discount in Barking and Dagenham. This represents a small percentage of the overall property base (0.3%). Therefore any change has a minimal impact. It is estimated that £18K could be raised if the 10% discount was granted for 30 days and then removed. If this decision was made by LBBDD then Elevate would need to write to all current recipients of the discount and the award ended automatically on the 30 March 2013. Cost of additional letter would be approximately £500. The additional charge must then be collected.

Empty property undergoing major repairs - Class A exemptions

The government confirmed its intention to abolish the existing Class A exemption and replace it with a discount that local authorities could set between zero and 100%. The maximum period for which the discount may apply will be one year and there will be no discretion allowing a local authority to extend the time period.

There are 124 properties with a Class A exemption with a total value of £83k. If the exemption is limited to 30 days and then removed an estimated £82k in potential additional income would be seen.

If Barking and Dagenham chose to amend this discount to 30 days all current recipients will be written to and the exemption ended on the 31 March 2013. Currently properties that are under refurbishment are visited by Elevate which will no longer be required. This will reduce administrative overheads but the additional charge must be collected which will offset these savings.

As one of the Council's objectives is to supply the borough with more affordable housing for local residents, with a particular focus on family-sized houses, it is recommended that the new discount be set to zero after 30 days encouraging landlords to bring their properties back into use in the shortest period of time, maximising potential income for the Council and reducing administrative costs of visiting exempt properties.

If all exemptions and discounts were removed under these changes then it could be argued that landlords would be encouraged to rent out or live in properties in the borough, reducing the number of empty homes, as there will be no benefit in leaving homes empty from a Council Tax view point.

¹ The second home discount was originally set by legislation at 50% and Authorities were given the power to reduce to 10% in 2003. The discount was set at a minimum of 10% in barking and Dagenham as it was felt that if no discount existed then there would be no incentive for residents to inform the council of their second home.

Vacant dwellings Class C exemptions

Currently properties that are left empty and unfurnished qualify for a 6 month exemption. If the property remains empty after this period it attracts an empty discount which is 10% in Barking and Dagenham.

The total number of properties within Barking and Dagenham that received this exemption is 2,662 with a total value of £763K. LBBD properties accounts for £185,520 of this value.

The Government is proposing to abolish this exemption and replace it with a discount of up to 100%. It is proposed that this exemption be replaced with a 100% discount for 30 days with an estimated £746k in potential additional income

Currently all empty properties are visited by Elevate on a quarterly basis to ensure that any new liable occupants are identified as early as possible. Should the exemption be replaced with a discount for 30 days it will no longer be necessary to identify and subsequently visit these properties. The owner will be charged and it will be in their best interest to advise Elevate of new occupants. Elevate currently employ an inspector to carry out these visits and this resource could be utilised elsewhere. Also the reduction in applications for this exemption will reduce the administrative burden on the service.

Empty homes premium

The Government proposes to allow local authorities to charge a premium of up to 50% for properties left empty for over 2 years.

The total number of properties classed as long term empty within the borough is 86 with a value of £27K.

Although the number of potential properties affected will be relatively low, there will be a requirement for Elevate to identify empty properties and collect the premium. There may also be additional appeals to the Valuation Tribunal, requiring further work.

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Maximum CTS				
Council Tax Property Band	Number of Claimants	Annual Charge	8.5%	15%
A	2639	£884.15		
Weekly Additional Charge			£1.44	£2.54
Annual Additional Charge			£75.15	£132.62
A SPD		£663.11		
Weekly Additional Charge			£1.08	£1.91
Annual Additional Charge			£56.36	£99.47
B	3424	£1,031.50		
Weekly Additional Charge			£1.68	£2.97
Annual Additional Charge			£87.68	£154.73
B SPD		£773.63		
Weekly Additional Charge			£1.26	£2.23
Annual Additional Charge			£65.52	£116.04
C	9317	£1,178.87		
Weekly Additional Charge			£1.92	£3.39
Annual Additional Charge			£100.20	£176.83
C SPD		£884.15		
Weekly Additional Charge			£1.44	£2.54
Annual Additional Charge			£75.15	£132.62
D	1206	£1,326.22		
Weekly Additional Charge			£2.16	£3.82
Annual Additional Charge			£112.73	£198.93
D SPD		£994.67		
Weekly Additional Charge			£1.62	£2.86
Annual Additional Charge			£84.55	£149.20
E	202	£1,620.94		
Weekly Additional Charge			£2.64	£4.66
Annual Additional Charge			£137.78	£243.14
E SPD		£1,215.71		
Weekly Additional Charge			£1.98	£3.50
Annual Additional Charge			£103.33	£182.36

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Summary of Results

Introduction

As part of national welfare benefits reform, from 1st April the Coalition Government is ending Council Tax Benefit (CTB), and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD) is required to design a new scheme, known as Council Tax Support (CTS). The new scheme will not be fully funded by the government, and there will be a shortfall of £2 million if LBBD continues to run CTB in its current form. LBBD is not able to absorb this loss in funding, and it has been proposed that payment support for Council Tax liability be reduced from 100% to 85% for all working age adult claimants.

Consultation Aims

LBBD aimed to consult with residents, particularly benefit claimants who will be directly affected by the changes, in order to identify groups that may be particularly badly affected by the changes.

What we did

From 2nd October 2012 LBBD sent letters to the 16,375 benefit claimants in the borough of working age, stating that they would be affected by changes to CTB from 1st April 2013, and inviting them to participate in an online survey about the changes. Other residents were informed via the council newspaper 'The News,' and a prominent link to both information on the changes and the survey on the homepage of the council website. In addition two public consultation meetings were held, on Thursday 11th and Monday 15th October, which were attended in total by over 100 residents. Attendees were asked to fill in a paper copy of the same survey, which have been collated with the online results analysed in this summary.

The consultation was open from 2nd October to 18th November 2012, and asked respondents whether they considered the proposals for a new scheme fair. In particular respondents were asked whether they thought the new scheme should be 'mainly the same' as the current scheme, whether every working age adult should contribute, and whether all working age adults should be affected equally. Respondents were then asked to identify groups which they thought would be more affected than others by the changes, and to contribute any other comments about the draft scheme.

Results Summary

Survey results showed overall support for the principles of the scheme, with the majority agreeing that the new Council Tax Support Scheme should be similar to the current Council Tax Benefit scheme, and that every working age adult who currently receives support should pay some Council Tax. There were concerns expressed that some groups may be more affected than others, though some self selection may be evident in these results. 323 people completed the survey.

Survey Results

(1) A majority of respondents (63.2%) agreed that the new Council Tax Support Scheme should be 'mainly the same as the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme.'

Strongly Agree	37.5%	(121)	Agreed or Disagreed		
Agree	25.7%	(83)	Agree	63.2%	(204)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	12.4%	(40)			
Disagree	8.7%	(28)	Disagree	17.0%	(55)
Strongly Disagree	8.4%	(27)			
Don't Know	7.4%	(24)			
Total		(323)			

(2) A small majority of respondents who expressed an opinion agreed that 'every working age adult who receives Council Tax support should pay at least something towards their Council Tax bill.'

Strongly Agree	12.7%	(40)	Agreed or Disagreed		
Agree	32.0%	(101)	Agree	44.6%	(141)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	13.3%	(42)			
Disagree	20.6%	(65)	Disagree	39.2%	(124)
Strongly Disagree	18.7%	(59)			
Don't Know	2.8%	(9)			
Total		(316)			

(3) A small majority of respondents who expressed an opinion did not agree 'that the 15% reduction required to cover the Government's cut in our grant should be applied equally to all working age adults.'

Strongly Agree	9.8%	(30)	Agreed or Disagreed		
Agree	26.7%	(82)	Agree	36.5%	(112)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	15.6%	(48)			
Disagree	21.2%	(65)	Disagree	40.7%	(125)
Strongly Disagree	19.5%	(60)			
Don't Know	7.2%	(22)			
Total		(307)			

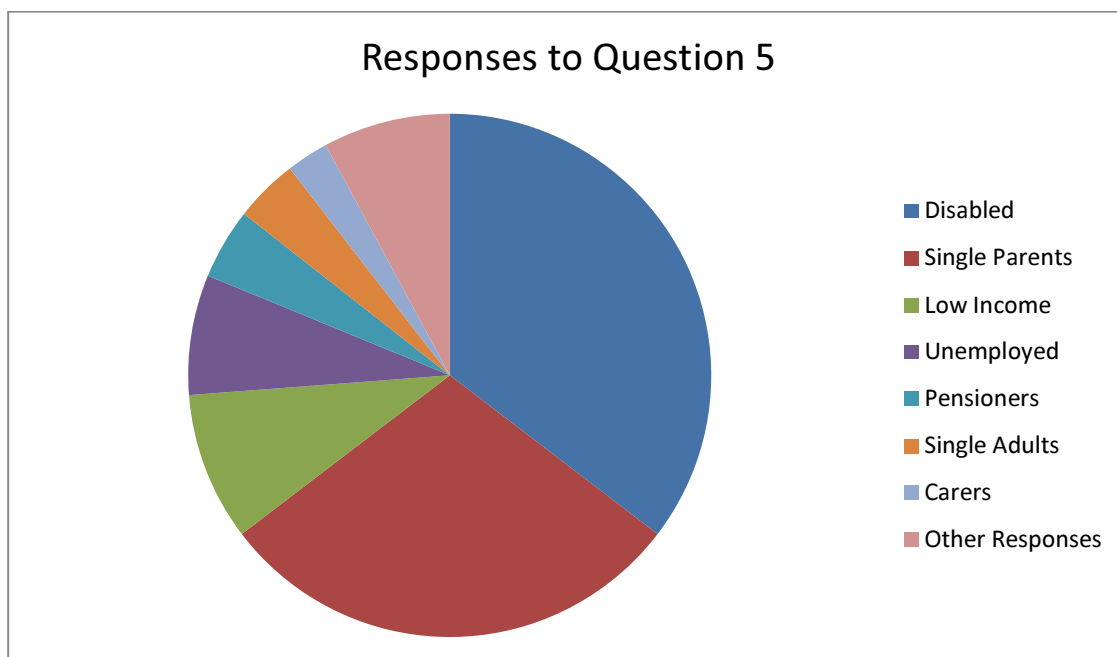
(4) A majority thought that ‘there are groups of people in the community who would be affected more than others by these changes.’

Yes	69.5%	(207)
No	10.7%	(32)
Don't Know	19.8%	(59)
Total		(298)

(5) When asked to name which groups they thought would be most affected 175 responded, some giving multiple answers, to give 223 responses.

Group	Number of Responses	Percentage of responses	Responses as a proportion of total surveys
Disabled People	81	35.5%	25.1%
Single Parents	67	29.4%	20.7%
Those on a Low Income	21	9.2%	6.5%
Unemployed	17	7.5%	5.3%
Pensioners	10	4.4%	3.1%
Single Adults	9	4.0%	2.8%
Carers	6	2.6%	1.9%
Families	4	1.8%	1.2%
Parents with Disabled Children	3	1.3%	0.9%
Women	3	1.3%	0.9%
Students	2	0.9%	0.6%
Did not answer	148	n/a	45.8%

Those with dependents, the self-employed, women with young children, homeowners on Job Seeker's Allowance, and couples without children each received one response, or 0.48% of the total responses.



Disabled people (35.5%) and single parents (29.4%) were therefore the groups which most respondents were concerned about. However, 19.4% of respondents identified themselves as disabled, and 15.9% responded that they lived in a household with a disabled person (it was not stated whether this should include the respondent or not). Similarly, while 29.4% of responses identified single parents as a group at risk, 19.3% of respondents were themselves single parents. When the number of responses for these groups is compared to the number of surveys completed instead of people that answered the question, the percentages from a certain group, and answering that the same group was particularly at risk are very close.

Group	Percentage (and number) of Answers	Answers/Total Surveys	Proportion of Respondents
Disabled People	35.5% (81)	25.1%	19.4%
Single Parents	29.4% (67)	20.7%	19.3%

These results may therefore suggest self-selection, and may not translate to a widespread concern that any particular group will be more adversely affected than any other by the proposed scheme.

(6) Question 6 asked for any additional comments about the scheme, these responses have been summarised in the FAQ document.

Who was consulted

In total the council received 323 responses to the survey, a relatively small sample of benefit claimants, and of the borough as a whole. Though respondents were not asked to identify whether they received benefits, it may be presumed from the targeted publicity that a majority of respondents were benefit claimants.

(7) The vast majority of respondents were individuals living in Barking and Dagenham:

Individuals living in Barking and Dagenham	94.7%	(267)
Individuals or organisations supporting local people	3.5%	(10)
Individuals or organisations representing local people	1.8%	(5)
Did not answer		(41)

(8) The majority of respondents (52.3%) lived in families with children, though there were substantial numbers of households that included a disabled person and households with no children:

Families with 1-2 dependent children	23.0%	(62)
Families with 3+ dependent children	10.0%	(27)
Lone parent households	19.3%	(52)
A household with full and/or part-time workers	7.0%	(19)
Households with a disabled person	15.9%	(43)
Single person households, or couples with no children	20.0%	(54)
Did not identify with any of the above categories	4.8%	(13)
Did not answer		(53)

(9) 31.3% of respondents considered themselves carers, whether of children, disabled family members or older family members:

Carers	31.3%	(80)
Non-Carers	68.8%	(176)
Skipped Question		(67)

(10) The highest number claiming to be carers cared for children under 14, more people answered this question than said that they were carers in the previous question.

Caring for:	A child or children under 14	60.0%	(57)
	A disabled person within the family	36.8%	(35)
	An older family member	12.6%	(12)
Did not answer			(219)

APPENDIX 3

- (11) Almost all respondents were of working age, with 95% between 20 and 59.

Under 20	0.7%	(2)
20-39	39.9%	(106)
40-59	55.1%	(150)
60-65	2.9%	(8)
66-75	2.2%	(6)
75 +	0.0%	(0)
Did not answer		(51)

- (12) There were almost twice as many female respondents (63.9%, 172) as male (36.1%, 97), 54 did not answer the question.

- (13) 4 respondents (1.8%) said that they have at some point in their lives identified as transgender.

- (14-18) The majority of respondents identified themselves as white, although a large number did not answer:

White	75.9%	(211)
Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups	4.3%	(12)
Asian/Asian British	8.3%	(23)
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	11.2%	(31)
Other	0.4%	(1)
Did not answer		(45)

- (19) Of the 258 (79.9%) who answered the question, 50 (19.4%) respondents considered themselves disabled.

LBBB

Equality Impact Assessment Template

tevans
20/4/2011

A quick guide to the stages of the Equality Impact Assessment process

<p>Step 1 Decide on the scope of your Equality Impact assessment</p>
<p>Step 2 Identify your team. Consider having a review team comprising of both managers, performance officers and where appropriate front line staff; Use the Equality and Diversity team as a critical friend and where appropriate invite members of the community to be part of the team. Use the guidance notes that come with this template.</p>
<p>Step 3 Project plan the process – arrange a first meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decide on what information you have and what you might need to find out and identify key dates that you will be able to work to.• Inform the Equality and Diversity team of the agreed dates• Send progress reports to the E&D team at each milestone date.
<p>Step 4 Send first draft to the E&D team for comments – who in turn will send back any necessary amendments or</p>
<p>Step 5 Review team to meet to consider comments and make any necessary amendments within an agreed timeframe.</p>
<p>Step 6 Send to E&D (Group Manager CC&E for final approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When approval received your OMT to ‘sign off’ the document• Decide on the review date and inform the E&D team.
<p>Step 7 Monitor the agreed action plan and provide regular monitoring reports to the Departmental Equalities and Diversity</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Version Control</p>

Doc. Name	Local Council Tax Support Scheme		
Doc. location:			
Author:	Owner:	Approving Officer	
Vince Waddams			
Date:	Version:	Amended by:	Change / Reason for Change:
27/11/2012	1.2	Andrew Marsh	Update following consultation.
			Approval status:
			Draft

Signing off when assessment is completed

Sign off by GM Cohesion and Equalities Date

Sign off by OMT/Chair Departmental Equality GroupDate
Date published on the internet

Review

<p>Review date</p> <p>A date for review is required for this EIA to be refreshed and reviewed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This date will be captured corporately • You must ensure that this review is carried out in time to meet this date 	<p>Please indicate date below</p> <p>July 2013</p>
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A guide to completing the form

Stage 1: Description of Policy/function /service

The description should include:

- a summary of the policy's/ function /service aims
- intended outcomes
- An explanation of how the policy fits into the Corporate strategic objectives

Stage 2:

- Reviews
- Academic /national research
- Other Authorities
- Databases
- Feedback from previous inspection
- Customer complaints /ombudsman findings

If there is little or no evidence, say what you will do to find some evidence and give examples of the types of evidence you might find. Scope this into your action plan (e.g. improving data collection or analysis to provide more detailed information]

Stage 3 Assessing Impact

In the assessment of your policy /function /service What measures does the policy include, or what could it include, to address possible existing /potential **discrimination, harassment or inequality?**

- **Identify best practice.** In relation to the Policy, / service/ function what are we proud of achieving which contributes to providing equal access to individuals from different equality groups?
- Remember when identifying potential discrimination an individual may face multiple discrimination (facing discrimination on more than one ground e.g. as disabled woman) it will be important to recognise this and address this potential.
- Taking into account the evidence that you have gathered how will you develop the policy/ service / function to make the required improvements? Scope into your action plan.

Stage 4. Promoting equality

– consider all the information that you have gathered about individual groups

Identify areas where more information may be needed, is there any information that you do not collect or have access to, that would help you to improve your knowledge of your customers and their needs.

Identify what action will be taken to fill this gap; including short term measures to be taken to provide a baseline where little or no information is available

What **practical changes** will help reduce any adverse or potential adverse impact on particular groups?

What will be done to **improve access** to, and **take-up** of, services and **understanding the policy**?

What will you do to **promote equality** and **eliminate discrimination** when you procure / commission for goods and service?

Stage 1 – Scope of the equality Impact Assessments about your piece of work

1. Directorate	Finance and Resources
2. Policy / Strategy / Service to be assessed:	Local Council Tax Support Scheme
3. Lead Officer:	Annette Cardy
4. Equality Impact Assessment Person / Team:	Vince Waddams
5. Date of Assessment:	
6. The main purpose and outcomes of policy/strategy / service to be assessed	<p>The Coalition Government is abolishing Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from April 2013 and Councils must replace it with a local Council Tax Support Scheme and save 10% from current expenditure on CTB. This means there will be less money for councils to pay out in benefits. For Barking and Dagenham this figure is approximately £2million.</p> <p>Barking and Dagenham Council has consulted on the principles of a draft local scheme to begin from 1 April 2013. From 2nd October to 18 November 2012 LBBDD sent letters to the 16,375 benefit claimants in the borough of working age, stating that they would be affected by changes to Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 1st April 2013, and inviting them to participate in an online survey about the changes. Other residents were informed via the council newspaper 'The News,' and a prominent link to both information on the changes and the survey on the homepage of the council website. In addition two public consultation meetings were held, on Thursday 11th and Monday 15th</p>

<p>October, which were attended in total by over 100 residents. Attendees were asked to fill in a paper copy of the same survey, which have been collated with the online results received as of 26th October, which are analysed in this assessment. In total 323 consultation responses were received, and the results compiled and considered in the decision making process. Overall the consultation results were supportive of LBBB's approach of sharing the burden equally across working age claimants and keeping the scheme broadly the same as Council Tax Benefit. Some concern was expressed about the impact on particular groups, especially the disabled and single parents. However this was roughly in line with the proportion from those groups that responded to the consultation, perhaps indicating some self-selection, and was outweighed by the overwhelming support for an even sharing of the shortfall.</p>	
<p>Council Tax Benefit claimants, their carers and families. Any residents applying for Council Tax Support.</p>	<p>7. Groups who the piece of work should benefit or apply to, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service users - Staff - Other internal or external stakeholder <p>(Will the piece of work be delivered in partnership with another agency?)</p>
<p>As part of the Spending Review 2010, the Coalition Government announced that it intends to abolish CTB and replace it with a local support scheme from 1 April 2013. The Government has stated that local Council Tax Support schemes must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of current benefit levels for pensioners. Residents who receive state pension credit (pensioners) must be protected from any cuts so that their benefit is unchanged. 	<p>8. Any associated strategies or guidelines i.e. legal/ national /statutory</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new scheme should encourage people to work and should not act as a disincentive to working. The Coalition Government is keen to ensure that people of working age are encouraged to work rather than claim benefits. • The impact on the most vulnerable residents should be considered when designing the new scheme. This means that the council has discretion to design a scheme that protects some additional groups from cuts but this will result in unprotected groups having to suffer bigger cuts to their benefit, or else cuts would need to be made to front-line services. <p>In mid-October 2012 the Coalition Government also announced that a one-off fund, worth £375,000 to LBBB would be available if Council Tax Support Liability was not set lower than 91.5% of the value of the Council Tax bill, and the taper rate on excess income was not set above 25%. These requirements are not mandatory, and apply only if LBBB chooses to pursue this additional funding.</p>	
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Step 2. Gathering Information

1. Who should be served by the policy / strategy / piece of work?

The main stakeholders are the local residents currently entitled or who become entitled to CTB, groups include the disabled, young and single mothers, children and teenagers in families receiving CTB, unemployed and low income households.

2 .What relevant information do you have about the people who this piece of work is aimed at? (Please complete the boxes below)		
Equality Groups	Information (research / data)	Known or potential inequalities
Ethnicity	2011 Borough Community Mapping	Community Mapping shows that residents of the borough consider themselves as; White - 65.56%; Asian - 15.26%; and Black – 17.63%.
Gender (including Transgender)	2011 Borough Community Mapping	In 2011 there were approximately 95,000 females and 89,000 males in the borough showing that females make 51.6% of the population
Disability	Annual population survey (Jul 2010-Jun 2011)	27,300 residents have a stated disability representing 23.5% of the population. This is higher than the London-wide figure of 17.4% of the population.
Age	2011 Borough Community Mapping	The 5-19 age group represents 21.4% of the population (London average 17.3); 20-64 year olds represent 58.2% (London Average 64.4%); 65+ represent 10.4% (London average 10.7%)
Religion and Belief	2011 Borough Community Mapping	Christianity is the predominate religion of the borough covering 69% of residents. Muslims make up 4.4% and Sikhs and Hindus make up 1.1% each. 15.3% state they have no religion while 8.4% did not say.
Sexual Orientation	2011 Borough Community Mapping	It is estimated that between 5-7% of the population identifies themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
Maternity and Nursing Mothers	2011 Borough Community Mapping	The borough had 3,729 pregnant or nursing mothers in 2010 representing

	2.07% of the population.
You may also wish to consider Carers	
Do you have enough information about the different groups to inform an equality impact assessment? Yes If not, this area should be addressed in your action plan	
3 . Do you have monitoring data or consultation findings specific to your area of work? If yes list the sources of evidence here & go to Step 3, if No list the actions required to get more data.(which should be included in the action plan)	
<p>2011 Borough Community Mapping</p> <p>Annual population Survey (July 2012 – June 2011)</p> <p>Council Tax Caseload data (13/3/12)</p> <p>Council Tax claimant ethnicity report (14/8/12)</p> <p>Public consultation on proposed Council tax Scheme (26/10/12-18/11/12)</p>	
What consultation activity has taken place / will be taking place on this piece of work and the Equality Impact Assessment? See action plan	

Step 3. Assessing Impact

1.	What does your monitoring data on your service users tell you? Are any groups under or over represented compared to what you would expect to see. Please give details below.
	Ethnicity The number of claimants declining to give details of ethnicity is very high at over 80%. Those that did indicate an ethnic origin were; White 9.6%; Asian 2%; Black 5.2%
	Gender (including transgender) There are 16,113 claimants recorded as female representing 66% of the total claimant caseload. This is 14.4% higher than the population average of 51.6%
	Age Pensioners account for 32% of claimants which is higher than the population average of 10.4%. However, the Government has stated that claimants who receive state

	<p>pension credit (pensioners) must be protected from any cuts so that their benefit is unchanged. Therefore there will be no adverse affect on this group of claimants when implementing a Local Council Tax Support scheme.</p> <p>Disability</p> <p>5,626 of current claimants state they have a disability. However, 3,515 of these are over pensionable age so are protected from any cuts. The remaining 2,111 represent 12.8% of the adjusted claimant case load which is lower than the population average of 23.5%</p> <p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p>There is no monitoring data available to distinguish claimants by sexual orientation.</p> <p>Religion and belief</p> <p>There is no monitoring data available to distinguish claimants by religion or belief.</p> <p>Pregnant and Nursing Mothers</p> <p>There is no monitoring data available to distinguish claimants by pregnant and nursing mothers however those with children under the age of 5 are recorded. There are 2900 lone parents of working age with children under the age of 5 representing 23% of claimants.</p> <p>Socio economic</p> <p>As Council Tax is a means tested benefit, all qualifying claimants will be in lower socio-economic categories</p> <p>You may also wish to consider Carers</p>						
2.	<p>Based on the evidence gathered have you identified any potential differential impact for any of the equality groups?</p> <p>Step 2. What are the potential access issues or barriers for people in each of the equality groups</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td>Positive</td> <td>Negative</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ethnicity</td> <td>The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.</td> <td>The negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support system should have no disproportionate impact on this group. As over 80% of claimants declined to provide information on their ethnicity it is impossible to analyse the impact on different ethnic groups.</td> </tr> </table>		Positive	Negative	Ethnicity	The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.	The negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support system should have no disproportionate impact on this group. As over 80% of claimants declined to provide information on their ethnicity it is impossible to analyse the impact on different ethnic groups.
	Positive	Negative					
Ethnicity	The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.	The negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support system should have no disproportionate impact on this group. As over 80% of claimants declined to provide information on their ethnicity it is impossible to analyse the impact on different ethnic groups.					

	Gender (including transgender)	The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.	The negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support has a greater impact on this group which is over represented by 14.4%, however consultation showed little concern for a disproportionate impact across gender, as only 1.5% of responses wrote that women were likely to be negatively impacted as a group.
Disability		The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.	Public consultation showed disproportionate concern for the impact on disabled people. Despite just 12.8% of claimants being disabled and of working age (23.5% of all adult claimants, including pensioners), 21.2% of respondents named disabled people as a group of concern under the proposed changes. Written responses highlighted that this was because they could not work, or found it harder to do so, and so were more dependent on council support. However, the negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support system should have no disproportionate impact on this group over claimants that are fully dependent on benefit support. There may be a disproportionate impact when considering other welfare benefit changes under Universal Credit but the detail of this is not known at present.
Age		The impact on pensionable age	The impact on pensionable age

		<p>claimants will be neutral</p> <p>The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.</p>	<p>claimants will be neutral</p> <p>The negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support system should have no disproportionate impact on this group. There was no concern expressed that any religious group would be disproportionately affected during the public consultation.</p>
Sexual Orientation		<p>The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.</p>	<p>The negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support system should have no disproportionate impact on this group. There was no concern expressed during the public consultation that people of any particular sexual orientation would be disproportionately affected.</p>
Pregnant and nursing mothers		<p>The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.</p>	<p>The negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support system should have no disproportionate impact on this group. It may have a disproportionate impact on lone parents with children under 5 when taking into account other welfare benefit changes such as reductions in tax credits. There was no concern expressed during the public consultation that pregnant or nursing mothers would be disproportionately affected.</p>
Socio economic		<p>The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.</p>	<p>As Council Tax Support is a means-tested benefit, there will be a disproportionate impact across socio economic groups. This concern was expressed during public consultation,</p>

			<p>with 6.6% of respondents naming those on low income as a group at particular risk. As changes are being forced by central government to a means tested benefit this is unavoidable, but the council is limiting the negative impact as far as serious budget constraints allow.</p>
Carers		<p>The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.</p>	<p>The negative impact of the changes to the Council Tax Support system should have no disproportionate impact on this group. Only 2.1% expressed a concern that carers would be disproportionately affected by the proposed changes, despite 30.4% of respondents identifying themselves as carers.</p>
<p>Is the differential impact as a result of indirect or direct discrimination? No</p> <p>Can any differential impact be justified or proportionate in meeting a legitimate aim if yes please provide details?</p> <p>If these changes are not made the saving required will need to be found by cutting other services. It is arguable that ensuring a small reduction is made from these groups is 'fairer' overall.</p>			

4. Promoting Equality

1.	<p>What has been done to promote equality in this piece of work? This includes any measures you've put in place to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Improve the accessibility of your service <input type="checkbox"/> Improve the quality of outcomes for people from different groups
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	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Make your service/policy/strategy more inclusive <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure staff are trained appropriately <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Promote community cohesion or good relationships between different groups of people. (Think about physical access, communications needs, staff awareness, partnership working)
Ethnicity Gender Disability Age Religion and belief Sexual orientation Socio economic Pregnant and Nursing Mothers You may also wish to consider Carers	<p>Changes have been publicised to all groups – assistance will be offered by front line offices, Children’s Centres and the Revs & Bens service.</p> <p>Examples of help are payment arrangements to help clear outstanding debt, signposting to skills training or job opportunities and debt advice.</p> <p>Disabled people were identified as a group of concern in the consultation process. Possibly directly inform organisations relevant to disabled people in the borough so that they are able to understand the changes, and help disabled people to understand the transition if they are asked. Similarly it may be helpful to send information to relevant community groups e.g. voluntary, children’s, or faith organisations, as they are used to acting as a point of contact for individuals who may not be in regular contact with the council.</p>
2.	What further actions are required? See action plan
3.	How have you consulted on this Equality Impact Assessment? See action plan
4.	<p>How will the outcomes from this EIA be managed and monitored - all of the proposed equality outcome should be managed through the service plans</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of claimants making and/or renewing claims</p>

Action plan

Date	Activity	Who	Notes
June – September 2012	<p>Phase 1 Awareness Raising Campaign and Initial Consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor decision and discussion on LBBD protection policy and political steer. • Preparation and compilation of case study examples • Preparation of statistics on receipt of benefits • Analysis of impact of Government changes across income groups 	<p>Group and Cabinet</p> <p>Elevate</p> <p>Elevate/Policy & Performance</p> <p>Elevate/Policy & Performance</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial letters sent to all benefits recipients informing them of the changes, with clear language about origin of changes. • A copy of the letter will be provided to Councillors to ensure that they can see the information their constituents have received (as requested at the May Local Strategic Partnership board) 	<p>Elevate/Marketing & Communications</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial PR campaign to commence across multiple channels:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The News (including voxpops – Are you Aware?) - Press release - Online comms activity via Facebook and Twitter 	<p>Marketing & Communications</p>	

Date	Activity	Who	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilise Partners websites and e-mechanisms e.g. the CVS or RAMFEL newsletters - Access specific communities within the borough via the equality fora e.g. Older People, Disability Equality Forum 	<p>Communications Network</p> <p>Marketing & Communications</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing and contact with partner agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are they aware of the changes? - What advice is being given? - Is it consistent with the messages from the Council? - Are they making clear these are Govt changes? 	<p>Elevate Policy & Performance Marketing & Communications</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Briefing for Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Q&As for constituency casework prepared - 'Lines to take' 	<p>Marketing & Comms Policy & Performance</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch consultation –online survey etc. 	<p>Marketing & Comms Policy & Performance</p>	
<p>October 2012 – January 2013</p>	<p>Phase 2 Facts, Figures, Plan Your Budget</p>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written collateral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PR support, downloadable leaflets - Plan Your Budget? - Supporting People in Tough Times – How you can make your money go further/budgeting. - Supporting people in Tough Times – package of support from Your Council. 	<p>Marketing & Comms Elevate Policy & Perf</p>	<p>Plain English check</p>

Date	Activity	Who	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner agency briefing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Details on Council approach - Which groups we are protecting and why - Provide access to the written collateral for wider distribution to their contacts in the borough 	Elevate	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member and MP Briefings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extended Q&As for casework queries. - Facts and figures on which benefits are affected, the numbers of people who are expected to suffer financially and the amounts a typical household will lose (based on case studies). 	Elevate Marketing & Comms	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pensioner events and communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bespoke events and communications messages for older people, explaining the proposals from Government and explaining why LBBDD has acted to protect them in partnership with the Older People's Forum and the Adult Social Care Team - Will include press, PR and a potential Leader's Meeting with older people in the borough. 	Leader Marketing & Comms	<i>Will need to liaise with local Age UK and older people's groups</i>
January 2013 – April 2013	Phase 3 The Time is Now		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poster and high-profile PR campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus will be on encouraging people to pay their rent first and foremost. - Budget planning - More prompts for Supporting People in Tough Times initiative - Key message: this is a Coalition Government change. 	Marketing & Comms	<i>Supported by digital comms, Facebook and Twitter</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued key influencer media work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feature articles in local media, local government media and public affairs blogs. - By-lined for Leader and Deputy Leader. 	Marketing & Comms	

Date	Activity	Who	Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will require data on the real impact of the changes on constituents and the people of the borough. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax booklet re-design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hard hitting, key messages in Leader's Foreword about changes forced on the Council by Government - Promotion of Ready Reckoner - Promotion of budgeting - Promotion of Supporting people in Tough Times initiative 	Elevate Marketing & Comms	Will require new design for CT booklet in 2013 – will need to look much more slick and hard-hitting.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Centre and B&D Direct Scripts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elevate and M&C to prepare Plain English scripts for caller queries (especially after annual Council Tax bills are sent) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member and MP Briefings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-depth Q&As for casework queries - To include sign-post information: Credit Union and CABx - Anti Pay-Day-Loan shop messaging and debt advice 		Will require liaison with Credit Union, CABx and CVS orgs

Summary

Please provide a summary document / storyboard of the findings of your EIA (including best practice what we do well, our challenges , our opportunities and what we planned to do This will be used for publication on the internet

What is changing?

Over 16,000 households across Barking and Dagenham are facing cuts in their income as the Coalition Government reduces

entitlement to Council Tax Benefit in 2013.

Many people on low incomes can currently claim and get Council Tax Benefit to help them pay their Council Tax bill. Although residents make the claim through their local council, the money for the scheme comes from the Government. The current system of funding from the Government will end on 31 March 2013 as part of the welfare benefits reform.

Each council is expected to put a new scheme in place for working age people to continue to offer some support to those in need. Barking and Dagenham Council will lose about £2 million Government funding for Council Tax Benefit next year. The Council's budget does not provide for this loss of funding and if we were to protect people from this change, cuts would need to be made to front-line services. We need to find a way to save this amount from the new scheme. It is also possible that further savings will be required over the next few years, if more residents require help to pay their Council Tax and /or the level of funding from the Government reduces even further.

We predict that those residents currently entitled to Council Tax benefit will see it taken away or reduced. This could mean an average loss of £150 over the course of a year leaving people £10-15 worse off a month but actual amounts are dependent upon a claimant's individual circumstances.

Only pensioners will be protected from these new changes. 7,800 pensioner households in the borough will continue to receive Council Tax Benefit under the new scheme.

We have prepared a draft new local scheme and this has not been easy. We recognise that these are challenging times and the reduction in benefit available will impact on some of our most vulnerable residents.

Our draft scheme

We are proposing to use the majority of the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme for working age people as the basis for our new local Council Tax Support scheme from 1 April 2013. This will include some changes to make up the losses from the reduction in subsidy from the Government.

The current scheme is already widely understood by residents, professional and voluntary organisations and other service users. This will hopefully make the changes easier to understand.

Our draft scheme:

Revise the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme to create a new local Council Tax Support scheme which reduces the maximum level of support available for working age people to 85% of their eligible Council Tax

The changes we are proposing in our draft scheme are based on the following principles:

Principle 1: The core of the new local Council Tax Support Scheme will remain the same as the current Council Tax Benefit scheme

Principle 2: Every working age adult should pay something and therefore the approximate 15% reduction in entitlement required to cover the Government's cut should be applied equally

Principle 3: There is no change for pensioners as instructed by Government

Principle 4: The scheme should incentivise work

Principle 5: A Discretionary Fund should be created to help protect the most vulnerable

Currently we are able to give people on the lowest incomes help to pay their Council Tax. Under this new support scheme everyone that currently receives Council Tax Benefit **other than pensioners** would have to pay more of their Council Tax bill. This means that anyone who currently receives full Council Tax Benefit and does not pay any Council Tax would have to pay something towards their bill. This scheme shares the burden of these changes across all working age people in receipt of support. The extra amount that each person would have to pay depends on the Council Tax band that their property is in and their individual circumstances affecting the amount of Council Tax Benefit they receive. Those living in higher band properties will pay more.

Currently Council Tax Benefit is a means tested benefit so the amount of help someone gets depends on their family size, their weekly income, and any savings. Each year the government publish standard weekly rates to show what individuals and families could reasonably be expected to live on. These figures are known as applicable amounts or a needs allowance.

To work out how much benefit someone should get we compare their actual weekly income and savings to the published applicable amounts. If their income is the same as (or less than) the applicable amount; that person will get the maximum help that applies to

their circumstances. If their income plus savings income (as calculated according to government guidelines) is higher than the applicable amount, we charge them 20% of the extra income they have above the maximum amount of help that would apply to their circumstances. If 20% of their excess income is higher than their applicable amount they would not receive any Council Tax Benefit.

Under the proposed new support scheme we would calculate someone's entitlement in the same way but the benefit will be based on 85% of the amount of Council Tax they are due to pay and therefore they will have to pay the first 15% themselves before we calculate any Council Tax Support.