

LBBB

# Equality Impact Assessment Template

tevens  
20/4/2011

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

**Step 1** Decide on the scope of your Equality Impact assessment

**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.

**Step 3 Project plan the process** – arrange a first meeting

- 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.

**Step 4** Send first draft to the E&D team for comments – who in turn will send back any necessary amendments or

**Step 5** Review team to meet to consider comments and make any necessary amendments within an agreed timeframe.

**Step 6** Send to E&D (Group Manager CC&E for final approval

- When approval received your OMT to 'sign off' the document
- Decide on the review date and inform the E&D team.

**Step 7** Monitor the agreed action plan and provide regular monitoring reports to the Departmental Equalities and Diversity

**Version Control**

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

## Signing off when assessment is completed

Sign off by GM Cohesion and Equalities ..... Date

Sign off by OMT/Chair Departmental Equality Group .....Date

Date published on the internet .....

### Review

<p><b>Review date</b>  A date for review is required for this EIA to be refreshed and reviewed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This date will be captured corporately</li> <li>You must ensure that this review is carried out in time to meet this date</li> </ul>	<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 26<sup>th</sup> 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>7. Groups who the piece of work should benefit or apply to, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service users</li> <li>- Staff</li> <li>- Other internal or external stakeholder</li> </ul> <p>(Will the piece of work be delivered in partnership with another agency?)</p>	<p>Council Tax Benefit claimants, their carers and families. Any residents applying for Council Tax Support.</p>
<p>8. Any associated strategies or guidelines i.e. legal/ national /statutory</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"> <li>• <b>Protection of current benefit levels for pensioners.</b> Residents who receive state pension credit (pensioners) must be protected from any cuts so that their benefit is unchanged.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The new scheme should encourage people to work and should not act as a disincentive to working.</b> The Coalition Government is keen to ensure that people of working age are encouraged to work rather than claim benefits.</li> <li>• <b>The impact on the most vulnerable residents should be considered when designing the new scheme.</b> 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.</li> </ul> <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>

## Step 2. Gathering Information

<p>1. Who should be served by the policy / strategy / piece of work?</p> <p>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.</p>
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2 .What relevant information do you have about the people who this piece of work is aimed at? (Please complete the boxes below )

<b>Equality Groups</b>	<b>Information (research / data)</b>	<b>Known or potential inequalities</b>
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? <b>Yes</b> 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)		
2011 Borough Community Mapping Annual population Survey (July 2012 – June 2011) Council Tax Caseload data (13/3/12) Council Tax claimant ethnicity report (14/8/12) Public consultation on proposed Council tax Scheme (26/10/12-18/11/12)		
What consultation activity has taken place / will be taking place on this piece of work and the Equality Impact Assessment? <b>See action plan</b>		

### 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

		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.	
	Disability	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%	
	Sexual Orientation	There is no monitoring data available to distinguish claimants by sexual orientation.	
	Religion and belief	There is no monitoring data available to distinguish claimants by religion or belief.	
	Pregnant and Nursing Mothers	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.	
	Socio economic	As Council Tax is a means tested benefit, all qualifying claimants will be in lower socio-economic categories	
	You may also wish to consider Carers		
2.	Based on the evidence gathered have you identified any potential differential impact for any of the equality groups?		
	Step 2. What are the potential access issues or barriers for people in each of the equality 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

		claimants will be neutral	claimants will be neutral
	Religion and Belief	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. There was no concern expressed that any religious group would be disproportionately affected during the public consultation.
	Sexual Orientation	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. There was no concern expressed during the public consultation that people of any particular sexual orientation would be disproportionately affected.
	Pregnant and nursing mothers	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. 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.
	Socio economic	The changes to the Council Tax Support system will bring no positive changes for this group.	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,

			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.
	Carers	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. 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>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?</p> <p>This includes any measures you've put in place to:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve the accessibility of your service</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Improve the quality of outcomes for people from different groups</p>
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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)										
	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 220 779 260">Ethnicity</td> <td data-bbox="779 220 1984 1034" rowspan="9"> <p>Changes have been publicised to all groups – assistance will be offered by front line offices, Children’s Centres and the Revs &amp; 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> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 260 779 300">Gender</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 300 779 339">Disability</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 339 779 379">Age</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 379 779 419">Religion and belief</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 419 779 459">Sexual orientation</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 459 779 499">Socio economic</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 499 779 539">Pregnant and Nursing Mothers</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="309 539 779 1034">You may also wish to consider Carers</td> </tr> </table>	Ethnicity	<p>Changes have been publicised to all groups – assistance will be offered by front line offices, Children’s Centres and the Revs &amp; 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>	Gender	Disability	Age	Religion and belief	Sexual orientation	Socio economic	Pregnant and Nursing Mothers	You may also wish to consider Carers
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Gender											
Disability											
Age											
Religion and belief											
Sexual orientation											
Socio economic											
Pregnant and Nursing Mothers											
You may also wish to consider Carers											
2.	What further actions are required? <b>See action plan</b>										
3.	How have you consulted on this Equality Impact Assessment? <b>See action plan</b>										
4.	How will the outcomes from this EIA be managed and monitored - all of the proposed equality outcome should be managed through the service plans Ongoing monitoring of claimants making and/or renewing claims										

## Action plan

Date	Activity	Who	Notes
June – September 2012	<b>Phase 1 Awareness Raising Campaign and Initial Consultation</b>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor decision and discussion on LBBDD protection policy and political steer.</li> <li>• Preparation and compilation of case study examples</li> <li>• Preparation of statistics on receipt of benefits</li> <li>• Analysis of impact of Government changes across income groups</li> </ul>	Group and Cabinet  Elevate  Elevate/Policy & Performance  Elevate/Policy & Performance	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial letters sent to all benefits recipients informing them of the changes, with clear language about origin of changes.</li> <li>• 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)</li> </ul>	Elevate/Marketing & Communications	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial PR campaign to commence across multiple channels:-               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The News (including voxpops – Are you Aware?)</li> <li>- Press release</li> <li>- Online comms activity via Facebook and Twitter</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Marketing & Communications	



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

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

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

## 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.