

SUBJECT:	<i>Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/2017</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Resources Portfolio Holder – Councillor Fred Wilson</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Head of Customer Services - Nicola Ellis</i>
REPORT AUTHOR	<i>Ed Bowen 01494 732253 ebowen@chiltern.gov.uk</i>
WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

To enable Cabinet to recommend the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/2017 to full Council.

Whilst there are no legal requirements to obtain the approval of members if no substantial changes are planned to the current scheme, it is considered good practice.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/2017 remains unchanged other than the annual uprating of premiums, allowances, non-dependant deductions to the national pension age scheme that need to be reflected in the Council's scheme.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

The current scheme has operated well since it was introduced in April 2013 and keeping it unchanged maintains stability for current recipients of Council Tax Support as they will know approximately how much Council Tax they will have to pay.

There have been relatively few queries or complaints in the years the current scheme has operated.

Whilst there may be a need to amend the scheme in future years, current uncertainty over future changes to welfare and the need to consult fully on any changes means that at the current time change would not be appropriate for 2016/2017.

The scheme was reviewed by the Customer Services PAG on 22nd July 2015 and recommended that no changes be made in 2016/2017.

3. Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/2017

As part of the changes introduced through the Welfare Reform Act, the national scheme for council tax benefit was abolished from 31 March 2013 and replaced by a requirement to determine a local discount scheme. Funding for providing support to residents was also reduced by 10%.

In responding to that change a number of options were explored. In Chiltern it was agreed for those of working age, that there would be two levels of maximum entitlement:

- Working Age: Maximum entitlement of 80%, restricted to Council Tax Band D
- Protected Working Age: Maximum entitlement of 90%, restricted to Council Tax Band D for those in receipt of disability benefits, carers and lone parents with children less than five years of age.

Pensioners remain protected nationally from any reduction by separate legislation.

The proposal is that the scheme remains unchanged for the financial year 2016/17 other than the annual uprating of premiums, allowances, non-dependant deductions to the national pension age scheme that need to be reflected in the Council's scheme.

Monitoring of the scheme will continue throughout 2016/2017 together with regular assessment of the impacts which wider welfare reforms may have on the scheme in future years.

A copy of the 2016/2017 scheme is not included in this report due to its size but is available to view in the member's room.

4. Consultation

Not applicable at the current time as there is no change

5. Options

The recommendation is for no change for 2016/2017. Options for changes to the scheme in future years will be considered in light of monitoring and the impact of wider welfare reform changes

6. Corporate Implications

There are no financial or legal implications if the scheme remains unchanged

7 Links to Council Policy Objectives

A Council Tax Support Scheme with appropriate protections ensures that vulnerable people are protected from increased Council Tax bills whilst the Council's resources are also optimised.

8. Next Step

Calculations of Council Tax Support will be based on the agreed scheme and bills issued in March 2016.

Background Papers:	Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/2017
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