

SUBJECT:	Council Tax Support Scheme 2015/2016
REPORT OF:	Nicola Ellis - Head of Customer Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to enable Cabinet to recommend the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016 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.

2. Links to Council Policy Objectives

- 2.1 A Council Tax Support scheme with appropriate protections ensures that vulnerable people are protected from increased Council Tax bills whilst the Councils resources are also optimised.

3. Background

- 3.1 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%.
- 3.2 In responding to that change a number of options were explored in 2012 and the preferred scheme, following consultation, was a reduction of 20% in support for those of working age. Pensioners were protected nationally from any reduction by separate legislation and in South Bucks it was agreed that such protection would also be given to those in receipt of disability benefits.

4. Proposal/Discussion

- 4.1 The proposal is that the scheme remains unchanged for the financial year 2015/16 other than the annual uprating of premiums, allowances, non-dependant deductions and any changes to the national pension age scheme that need to be reflected in the Council's Scheme
- 4.2 The scheme has operated well since it was introduced in April 2013 and keeping it unchanged will bring some stability for current recipients of Council Tax Support as they will know approximately how much Council Tax they will have to pay. There were relatively few queries or complaints in April 2014 when people received their Council Tax demands because people were already familiar with the Council's scheme.
- 4.3 Monitoring of the scheme together with collection performance will continue throughout 2015/16 to assess whether any changes would be required from April 2016 onwards.
- 4.4 A copy of the 2015/2016 scheme is not included in this report due to its size but is available to view in the members room.

5. Resources, Risk and Other Implications

5.1 There are no additional resource implications if the scheme remains the same.

6. Recommendation(s)

6.1 That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16 remains unchanged apart from the minor upratings etc as detailed in para 4.1 of this report

Portfolio Holder	Cllr Duncan Smith
Officer Contact:	Nicola Ellis 01895 837508
Background Papers:	Council Tax Support Scheme 2015.2016