

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

20 June 2012

Report of the Director of Finance

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

A MORE DETAILED SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT ON “LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT” WILL BE CIRCULATED BEFORE THE MEETING ON 20 JUNE.

1 LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT

A ‘holding’ report in respect of the latest developments in the establishment of a local scheme for council tax support for the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council area and proposals for a Kent-wide scheme to be adopted at a local level. A more detailed report will follow.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 As Members are aware, the present, national scheme of council tax benefit will cease to apply as from 1 April 2013. In its place, each billing authority will be required to establish a local scheme of council tax support. Support under the local schemes will be in the form of a discount on the council tax bills for those council tax payers who qualify for support.

1.1.2 Members need to decide upon a scheme to go out to consultation ideally in the summer.

1.1.3 Discussions are continuing with all Kent authorities to see if it is possible to adopt a common scheme.

1.1.4 At the time of writing, discussions are still ongoing and I shall therefore provide a more substantive report in advance of the meeting with the most ‘up-to-date’ position.

1.2 Legal Implications

1.2.1 It is imperative, not least for financial reasons, that the Council adopts a local scheme of council tax support by the end of January 2013 at the very latest. We will be in breach of our statutory duty if we do not consult on our proposed

scheme. To enable sufficient time for consultation, we must formulate a draft scheme by the middle of August this year.

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.3.1 Failure to adopt a local scheme, thereby obliging the Council to operate council tax support under the terms of the default scheme, will force the Council to underwrite the additional costs incurred from its other budgets, thereby necessitating reductions in other Council services

1.4 Risk Assessment

- 1.4.1 There is a considerable risk that deadlines will not be met and that legislation will not be in place early enough to ensure that sufficient funding of any local scheme is assured.

1.5 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.5.1 It is my intention that Members will be presented with the full EqlA, together with the results of the consultation, at its meeting on 10 October, at which point final recommendations will need to be made to Council about the scheme to be adopted.

1.6 Policy Considerations

- 1.6.1 Equalities/Diversity

Background papers:

Nil

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Sharon Shelton

Sharon Shelton
Director of Finance

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The substantive paper will seek Member guidance at this stage. A full equality impact assessment will be completed when firm proposals as to the design of a local scheme have been formulated.

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	N/A	Not applicable at this stage.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		Not applicable at this stage.

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.