

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**RECORD OF DECISION**

**Decision Taken By: Cabinet**

**Decision No: D160037CAB**

**Date: 20 April 2016**

**Decision(s) and Reason(s)**

**Review of Funding Arrangements with Parish Councils**

**(Report of Management Team)**

**Further to Minute CB 16/35 the report, illustrated by a full presentation at the meeting, set out the findings of the detailed research into funding for parish councils as commissioned by the Cabinet on 11 February. Attention was drawn to the key objectives of the review: to make savings in the Borough Council's revenue budget and to promote 'equity' across the Borough in terms of how much residents of different areas had to pay towards the cost of services. The comprehensive research paper annexed to the report suggested that a scheme of special expenses in place of the current Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils scheme would meet both of those objectives. Reference was also made to a review of the current arrangements for passing on Council Tax Reduction Scheme grants to parish councils.**

**Consideration was given to the research findings and arrangements for commencing two consultations within the context of an updated timetable (including special meetings of Tonbridge Forum and Parish Partnership Panel on 12 and 18 May and an extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet on 28 July 2016), together with agreement of delegations for all detailed aspects of the consultation programme.**

**The Cabinet thanked staff involved in all the work undertaken to date in the review.**

The Cabinet resolved that:

- (1) the updated timetable set out at paragraph 1.5.2 of the report be endorsed and authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Transformation to set up any special meetings as required;
- (2) the launch of a consultation with parish councils be endorsed regarding the potential cessation of grant funding in respect of the Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils Scheme and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from the financial year 2017/18;
- (3) the launch of a consultation with the public, parish councils and other

relevant stakeholders be endorsed regarding the potential introduction of a Special Expenses Scheme with effect from the financial year 2017/18; and

- (4) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Transformation, in liaison with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property, to agree all detailed aspects of the consultation programmes and associated publicity materials.

Reasons: As set out in the report of the Management Team.

Signed Chief Executive: J Beilby

Date of publication: 22 April 2016

This decision will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of 5 working days after publication unless it is called in.

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**Decision(s) and Reason(s)**

**Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

**(Report of Director of Finance and Transformation)**

**Further to Decision No D150083CAB, the report provided an update on progress on the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme being undertaken in liaison with other Kent authorities. Details were presented of the outcome of a full options appraisal for potential change having regard to the objectives collectively agreed and the 'suitability' for Kent. Consideration was given to the public consultation process and a mechanism for finalising the consultation material.**

**A first stage Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was annexed to the report. Additional information was provided at the meeting on the initial findings from analysis of data indicating potential impacts on the protected characteristics of age, sex and disability (including carers). It was noted that decisions about modifications to the scheme would be taken after the consultation so it was not possible at this stage to identify any mitigating actions required. A full EQIA would be completed and results reported to the Cabinet following the consultation.**

The Cabinet resolved that:

- (1) the work undertaken thus far within Kent collectively be noted including the resultant Options Appraisal set out in Annex 1 to the report and the Kent Finance Officers' group recommendation that any new Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme should be based on the current scheme but with a series of potential modifications upon which the Council should consult;
- (2) a consultation be launched on the potential introduction of a range of modifications to the current CTR scheme for working age claimants as follows:
  - a. increasing the minimum contribution rate for working age claimants to 20% or (up to) 25%;
  - b. introducing a band cap at a band D;
  - c. removing Second Adult Rebate;

- d. reducing the capital limit to £6,000;
  - e. including Child Benefit and Child Maintenance in the assessment of income;
  - f. introducing a standard non-dependant deduction of £10 per week;
  - g. introducing a Minimum Income Floor for self-employed claimants (based upon the living wage at 35 hours per week for full time or 16 hours a week for part-time workers); and
  - h. aligning regulations of the current CTR scheme with Housing Benefit and (prescribed) Pension Age CTR scheme;
- (3) through the consultation views be sought as to whether an Exceptional Hardship Policy should be incorporated as part of the scheme;
- (4) through the consultation views be sought on other ways of meeting the demands highlighted through the report other than changing the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme (as set out in paragraph 1.4.6 thereto);
- (5) the 'first stage' Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) be noted together with the detailed analysis setting out the potential impacts on protected characteristics and it be confirmed that a full EQIA will be prepared and considered prior to any final decisions being taken; and
- (6) the proposed arrangements in respect of consultation be endorsed and, subject to there being no significant changes required to the above proposals following the outcome of approvals by other Kent district councils, authority be delegated to the Director of Finance and Transformation to finalise the consultation material in liaison with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property.

Reasons: As set out in the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation.

Signed Chief Executive: J Beilby

Date of publication: 22 April 2016

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