

Cabinet

11 February 2025

Part 1 - Public

Recommendation to Council



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Cabinet Member	Cllr. Kim Tanner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing
Responsible Officer	Sharon Shelton, Director of Finance and Transformation
Report Author	William Waight, Benefits and Welfare Manager

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 A report providing the proposed Tonbridge & Malling Working-Age Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26, requesting Cabinet Members to approve and recommend the updated Scheme to Full Council.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 The Council's Local Council Tax Reduction scheme provides essential support to residents who are on a low income and, where applicable, provides a reduction based on the personal circumstances of each applicant.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet is requested to **RECOMMEND** the draft Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26 to Full Council.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 Each year, Members should approve a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme at Full Council prior to the beginning of the financial year for which the Scheme is to be effective. Schemes are in two parts: for working-age and pension-age households.
- 4.2 Government sets a prescribed Scheme for pension-age households, which, by default, becomes the annual scheme. Government prescribes a maximum level of support for pension-age households up to 100% of the Council Tax liability.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 For the 2025/26 working-age scheme, changes have been made to bring it in line with statutory prescribed requirements from Government national benefit rates. The scheme has also been uplifted in line with new rates of National Living Wage (NLW) where NLW is used as a factor in calculating income discount bands. The draft scheme is attached at **Annex 1** and the income band table can be found at p104 of the Scheme.
- 5.2 From April 2025, the National Living Wage will increase from £11.44 per hour to £12.21. This increase – around 6.7% – was based on a recommendation of the Low Pay Commission to Government. Were the Council to increase the Local Council Tax Reduction income bands by a lower amount or not at all, it would effectively penalise those households earning NLW rates of pay. It would be a counter-intuitive approach, when Government has introduced measures aimed at easing the impact of rising costs and living for households with low incomes.

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 6.1 Financial effectiveness and cost of the Scheme will be monitored during the coming year.

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 The draft 2025/26 Scheme sets out how the Council will operate its discretionary powers to reduce the risk of legal challenge and provide greater equality in the application of the scheme.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 A scheme must be considered and agreed by 11th March prior to the financial year of operation.

9 Consultation and Communications

- 9.1 A formal public consultation is not required in order to adopt this scheme as there are no underlying changes to its operation. It has simply been updated to reflect the increase in NLW and other national benefit rates.
- 9.2 Once adopted the Scheme will be publicised on the Council's website, where it will be available for residents to view.

10 Cross Cutting Issues

10.1 Equalities and Diversity

- 10.1.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 – Local CTR Scheme for 25/26