TO: EXECUTIVE
8 January 2013

LOCAL COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT SCHEME
Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing and Borough Treasurer

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Executive consideration and agreement of the Bracknell Forest Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme (LCTBS) to be referred to full Council for adoption.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Executive agree to establish a Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme based on the following key elements:

2.1.1 That working age households who are in receipt of out of work benefits will receive a maximum of 91.5% of their Council Tax liability funded from the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme.

2.1.2 That working age households who have a household income above their relevant applicable amount (basic needs allowance) will have their local Council Tax Benefit reduced by 21% of their additional weekly income.

2.1.3 That working age households who apply for Local Council Tax Benefit will only be awarded backdated Local Council Tax Benefit for a maximum of three months from date of application if there was good cause as to why they did not make an earlier application.

2.1.4 That the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme will not provide a second adult rebate for working age households.

2.1.5 That the Council makes an application for the Government Localising Support for Council Tax Transitional Grant Scheme to part fund the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme.

2.1.6 That subject to the 2013/14 budget consultation a hardship fund is established for households who have difficulty in meeting their Council Tax liability due to changes in their household circumstances.

2.1.7 As a consequence of the above recommendations the Local Council Tax Benefit Summary Scheme at Appendix A is agreed.

2.1.8 The detailed scheme operation is to be delegated to the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing to finalise.

2.1.9 The Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme is referred to Council on the 23rd January for adoption.

2.1.10 That the local council tax benefit scheme will be reviewed on an annual basis.
3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The recommendations support the Council’s priority to create a borough where people are and feel safe and the medium term objective to support older and vulnerable people by providing targeted financial support for vulnerable households.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. Following abolition of the national Council Tax Benefit Scheme by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing took an Executive Member decision on the 12th July that a draft Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme should be subjected to consultation. The elements that would reduce local Council Tax Benefit for working age households that were subjected to consultation were as follows:-

- End extended payments for those households entering work;
- End backdating of Council Tax Benefit payments;
- End second Adult Rebate;
- Increase non-dependent deductions;
- Reduce the amount of capital a household has whereby Council Tax Benefit is reduced or withdrawn;
- Restrict the maximum Council Tax Benefit to a Council Tax liability band regardless of the band of the house the household lives in;
- Take into account income which was disregarded in calculating household income such as child maintenance payments.

4.2. If the above elements were used to implement the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme then at the highest level of reductions there would be 141 households on passported benefits who would lose all their Council Tax Benefit and 208 standard working households who would lose all their Council Tax Benefit. At the lowest level of the reductions there would be 46 passported benefit households who would lose all their Council Tax Benefit and 58 standard working households who would lose all their Council Tax Benefit. There would be a maximum of 2688 households who would experience a reduction on their Council Tax Benefit and a minimum of 220. The amount of reductions would range from £2.28 a week to losing all the Council Tax Benefit.

4.3. At the end of October the Government offered Councils a Transitional Grant Scheme on the basis that local Council Tax Benefit schemes demonstrated an ability to meet certain key criteria. The scheme provides Bracknell Forest £119,000 (£141,000 including major precepts) for 2013/14 only towards the costs of the local Council Tax Benefit Scheme and thus mitigates the reductions originally proposed.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme funding gap

5.1 The Government signalled its intention to localise Council Tax Support in the 2010 spending review. It stated that it would reduce the expenditure budget by 10%. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 contains provisions for the abolition of Council Tax Benefit thus paving the way for localised schemes. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 makes provision for the localisation of Council Tax Support in England by imposing a duty on all billing authorities to make a localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme by
the 31 January 2013 and to consult with major precepting authorities and such other persons as it considers likely to have an interest in the scheme about the scheme. The Local Government Finance Act prescribes certain classes or groups who must receive reductions. This will include classes of eligible pensioners based on the same factors that have determined pensioner eligibility and award under the Council Tax Benefit System. The proposals contained in this report refer to the local scheme that will affect working age households. The Act also prescribes a default scheme which will take effect if the billing authority has not made a scheme by the 31 January 2013. The new schemes will operate on the basis of providing a discount on the Council Tax liability depending upon the local criteria established in the LCTSS. The Government will no longer provide 100% funding for the Council Tax support, instead it will provide a specific grant to billing and major precepting authorities. The Government has issued a consultation document on the proposed funding allocation.

5.2. The Government published a statement of intent for local Council Tax Support Schemes and an indicative funding consultation at the end of May. The Government have exemplified the future level of funding that each authority will receive, based on the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) estimates of total subsidised Council Tax Benefit (CTB) and the local shares based on 2010/11 Out-turn figures. It is not clear whether the OBR estimates will be updated before 1 April 2013, but the “local-share” distribution will be updated to reflect 2011/12 Out-turn data. This is then compared to Bracknell’s “local-share” of the 2012/13 estimated CTB bill – split into the two categories “Pensioner CTB” and “Working Age CTB” based on the latest estimate of the current split. The following table is based on the forecast CTB expenditure as of the end of November and it is lower than previous estimates by about £ 100,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£’000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CTB Forecast 2012/13</strong></td>
<td>5,926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracknell Forest Council</td>
<td>4,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioner CTB</td>
<td>2,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Age CTB</td>
<td>2,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parishes</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkshire Combined Fire Authority</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thames Valley Police Authority</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As such, taking account of the exemplified funding level of £4.159m as notified in the DCLG funding arrangement consultation, the Council will face a shortfall of £0.580m.

5.3. The provision of the Council Tax freeze grant means that it is not necessary to make a provision to cover the percentage increase in the Council Tax Benefit support to be provided by the scheme.

5.4. The Government believes the provision of a local scheme may lead to an increased take up of local Council Tax Benefit. It has been reported to members previously that increased take up could amount to an additional 10% of Benefit expenditure. Analysis of the caseload for Council Tax Benefit over the past three years shows no discernible pattern. Although there was an increase in caseload in 2008/09 there has been a reduction in the following years. It is recommended that a prudent assumption of increased take up would be 5%. Further to this it has been suggested that an up turn in the economy in 2013/14 would lead to a reduction in the demand for Council
Tax Benefit due to more households returning to work. This has not been factored into the assumptions.

5.5 Based on these assumptions and the associated costs the following base funding gap for the local Council Tax Benefit Scheme emerges:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Implication</th>
<th>2012/13 Base</th>
<th>Uplift Claimants @ 5%</th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£000</td>
<td>£000</td>
<td>£000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensioner CTB</td>
<td>2,071</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>2,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Age CTB</td>
<td>2,668</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>2,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Government funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding gap</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-816</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6 The recommended changes to exemptions and discounts to the Council Tax Scheme if approved will increase the Council tax base by £490,000. This could be used to mitigate the funding gap for the local scheme and if so there will be a net funding gap for the local Council Tax Benefit Scheme of £326,000.

5.7 As mentioned previously following an Executive Member decision on the 12th July a number of elements from which the local council tax benefit scheme could be constructed were subject to consultation. All benefit customers were contacted by QA research an independent research company to establish views on the proposals. Between 23rd July to 26th October there were 679 completed survey responses and a total of forty people were interviewed either individually or as part of a focus group. The following table summarises the preferred options for the Council to take forward to form the local scheme based on customer consultation responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Percentage response in favour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remove backdating of claims for support for council tax</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing capital limits</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removing second adult rebate</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer disregarding income from child maintenance payments</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removing extended payments for those entering work</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing the rates for non-dependent deductions</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limiting council tax support to properties in a lower council tax band</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8 The Government’s Localising Support for Council Tax Transitional Grant Scheme has set three criteria that must be met if the transitional grant funding is to be received. The three criteria are:-

- Those who would be entitled to 100% support under the current Council Tax Benefit arrangements pay between zero and no more than 8.5% of their net Council Tax liability;
• The taper does not increase above 25%;
• There is no sharp reduction in support for those entering work.
• Although not part of the criteria the Government would not expect to see large additional increases in non-dependent deductions.

5.9 Given the availability of the Government transition grant there is a need to balance the original proposals with the national transition grant criteria. Therefore, given support for the removing backdating provision and the fact that it does not prevent access to the transitional grant funding it is included in the proposed new scheme. Changing the capital limits is not included as one of the proposals for the new local council tax benefit scheme as to do so would lead to passported claims potentially losing more than 8.5% of their local council tax benefit and thus denying ability to claim the transitional grant. The removal of second adult rebate is included in proposals for the local scheme. If child maintenance was no longer disregarded there would be a number of passported benefit claims who would lose more than 8.5% of their local council tax benefit and thus this would fall foul of the transitional grant scheme. The removal of extended payments for those entering work would potentially fall foul of the transitional grant criteria that there is no sharp reduction in support for those entering work and thus that is not included in the local scheme proposals. Increasing non-dependent deductions is not expected to take place if transitional grant is applied for and thus is not included in the proposals for the local scheme. Limiting support to a specific council tax band has not been included in the proposed scheme. The proposed local scheme does propose limiting support to a maximum percentage of the Council tax liability but this will provide more local council tax benefit to households than would be the case if limited to a specific band below the band of the home the household lives in.

Recommended options to address the funding gap through the local Council Tax Benefit Scheme

Reducing Council Tax Benefit from 100% to 91.5%

5.10 The first criteria of the national transitional grant scheme can be achieved by reducing the Council Tax liability for working age households currently in receipt of 100% Council Tax Benefit to 91.5%. The current total amount of Council Tax Benefit paid to households who receive 100% Council Tax Benefit is £2.165 million. Thus an 8.5% reduction of that sum will generate a reduction of £184,000 of Local Council Tax Benefit expenditure. This proposal will affect 2160 households but there will be no households who will move out of council tax benefit altogether compared to previous proposals.

Increase taper from 20% to 21% to reduce Council Tax Benefit expenditure

5.11 The previous national Council Tax Benefit Scheme reduced Council Tax Benefit by 20% for the additional income a household received over their applicable amount (basic needs allowance). For example a household of two adults and one child would have an applicable amount of £193.84 per week. If they received income of £250 and their weekly Council Tax liability was £25 they would receive £13.77 Council Tax Benefit under the old national scheme (£250 – £193.84 = £56.16 *0.2 = £11.23, Council Tax of £25 minus £11.23 = £13.76). The national transitional grant scheme enables the Council to increase the taper to a maximum of 25%. For the previous example increasing the taper to 21% would reduce the council tax benefit to £12.64 a
week a reduction of £1.13 a week. Increasing the taper to 22% will generate a total saving of £20,000 on the Local Council Tax Benefit expenditure.

5.12 The previous national Council Tax Benefit Scheme enables working age customers to backdate their claim for Council Tax Benefit for a maximum of 6 months until the point their eligibility began if before the date their claim was made. It was proposed to remove the backdating provision from the local scheme but consultation with stakeholders supported retention of backdating. Customers were not supportive of retaining backdating but it could be argued that existing customers' views should be tempered by those of potential future customers. In the absence of being able to seek views of those who may make an application for council tax benefit in the future the views of stakeholders seem a relevant consideration to take into account. It is recommended that the maximum period that backdating will be allowed if there was good cause as to why a claim was not made is reduced to three months. This will reduce local Council Tax Benefit expenditure by £4,000 a year based on backdating awarded in 2011/12. It is not possible to assess how many local Council Tax Benefit customers this will affect.

5.13 It is recommended that Second Adult Rebate provision is not continued in the LCTBS. This scheme contained in the previous national Council Tax Benefit Scheme was for Council Tax bill payers who had a person in their household who was; not a partner or civil partner, aged 18 or over, or paying rent, not paying Council Tax themselves, and on a low income. The Second Adult Rebate is based on the circumstances of the other household. The maximum Benefit paid is 25% of the Council Tax liability. Removal of this scheme will mean that some household’s liability will increase by the amount of Benefit they are currently receiving and thus it is reasonable to expect the Council Tax bill payers to pass that costs on to the second adult. Removal of this scheme will reduce expenditure on Council Tax support by £9,352 and effect 33 households (average reduction on benefit of £283 a year) based on 2011/12 expenditure. The removal of this provision was supported by the consultation of existing customers as shown above.

5.14 The Government’s National Localising Support for Council Tax Transitional Grant Scheme requires Local authorities to make an application for funding after the 31st January when their scheme has been agreed. The Government has provided indicative funding allocations of £140,610 in 2013/14 of which Bracknell Forest Borough Council will receive £119,023. Thames Valley Police will receive £15,864 and Berkshire Fire and Rescue £5,723. The deadline for applications for the funding is 15th February 2013. The application requires that the Council’s Section 151 officer confirms that the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme is compliant with the national criteria. Paragraph 5.9 above sets out the criteria and it is recommended that the Council makes an application for the funding.

5.15 Consultation on the original proposals for the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme raised concern that there may be occasions where a household’s circumstances change and they incur a Council Tax liability that they will struggle to pay due to a reduction in Local Council Tax Benefit. The previous national Council Tax Benefit Scheme enabled the Council to make short term payments towards Council Tax liability as part of its discretionary housing payment policy but that will not be the case under the local scheme as discretionary housing payments will only be able to be made for hardship in relation to housing costs to avoid homelessness. Therefore, it is recommended that subject to the 2013/14 budget consultation a hardship fund is established in the order of £10,000. The hardship fund would operate on a similar basis as the existing discretionary housing payment policy of providing a short term payment of a maximum of three months council tax liability to enable a household to
address their circumstances and meet their liabilities without ongoing financial support. It should be recognised that the fund will mitigate small amounts of council tax arrears which may prove uneconomic to collect as well as alleviating financial hardship for households. The award of hardship funding will be means tested on the basis of the household’s application providing evidence of their income and expenditure and the change in circumstance that has generated the difficulty in meeting the council tax liability. It would not be paid if the liability was entered into and was not capable of payment from the outset. If members are minded to support this recommendation the council’s discretionary housing payment policy will be amended to accommodate the hardship fund.

5.16 Subject to the recommended changes to support for working age households the expenditure on the Bracknell Forest Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme will be reduced in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£’000’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding gap facing local Council Tax Benefit Scheme</td>
<td>- 816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax Scheme exemptions and discounts</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing maximum Council Tax Benefit to 95% of liability</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing taper from 20 – 21%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing backdating to three months</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removing Second Adult Rebate</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government transitional grant funding</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total reduction in local Council Tax Benefit expenditure</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.17. The Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme summary is included at Appendix A. If members are minded to agree the recommendations in this report and the summary scheme it will be necessary for a detailed explanation of the operation of the scheme and how local Council Tax Benefit is calculated to be drafted. The detailed scheme will be required in the event that a customer appeals against how benefit has been calculated. It is recommended that the detailed operation of the scheme is delegated to the Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing to agree.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

6.1 The duty imposed on local authorities by the Local Government Finance Act 2012 to devise their own local council tax reduction schemes is discussed at paragraph 5.1. The Borough Solicitor has given advice to officers on the requirement for consultation in relation to the establishment of a local scheme. A scheme under the Act must also comply with the requirements of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012.

Borough Treasurer

6.2. The introduction of a Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme presents the Council with a range of significant financial risks. These include the level of central government support, actual take up of benefits and the Council’s ability to collect the Council Tax due. The proposals in this report are based on the most recent financial information. Should the introduction of the Local Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme result in a
different financial outcome this will need to be managed through the contingency
during 2013/14. Given this increased level of risk to the Council's finances the draft
revenue budget proposes a £1m increase in the level of the contingency for 2013/14.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.3 An Equality Impact Assessment will be included as Appendix B.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.4 There are a number of strategic risk management issues facing the Council.

6.5 The Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme has been constructed to address the funding
gap that exists from the funding indications provided by Government in May 2012.
Final funding allocations may be different and if lower this would result in additional
funding requirements from the Council to meet local Council Tax Benefit expenditure.

6.6 Although a provision has been made to address a potential increase in take up of
the Local Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme the risk remains that there may be
an unexpected increase in demand due to change in local economic conditions.
Every 1% increase in demand will result in £47,390 additional expenditure on the
scheme. The forecast expenditure on Local Council Tax Benefit is based on a
snapshot at the end of November. Circumstances can change between the decision
to establish the scheme and the 1st April 2013 when the scheme will be implemented.
The trend of Council Tax Benefit expenditure in the last quarter of the year has not
shown abnormal increases in previous years.

6.7 The scheme includes a provision for bad debts as they may increase due to it being
uneconomic to chase small Council Tax arrears. This risk will be mitigated by the
redesign of the benefit and housing service so that claims are set up as soon as
possible and customers have a dedicated caseworker to provide financial
management advice as well as advice on how household income can be maximised.

6.8 The Council will be required to negotiate with the Parish Councils as to the amount of
precept that will be passed on. As the local parish Council Tax bases will be reduced
due to the local Council Tax Benefit Scheme the risk exists that the Parishes will not
generate the level of precept they anticipated. This will be mitigated by the provision
made in the scheme as well as the provision of tax base information to the parishes
upon which to calculate their precept.

6.9 The implementation of the Local Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme is dependent
upon information on existing Council Tax Benefit customers being available to
calculate new benefit based on the principles of the local scheme as well as the IT
capability to undertake the calculations. The recommended scheme relies upon
existing information and it is not necessary to seek new information from customers.
The Council’s IT supplier has amended the current system and system testing is
currently taking place. Although the recommended scheme can operate through the
IT system it will require substantial manual changes in the system to calculate the
new Council Tax liability. The cost of changes to the system and consultation already
exceed the set up funding provided by the Department of Communities and Local
Government and the purchase of off site processing and overtime for benefit staff to
make the necessary changes to the system will exacerbate this still further.
7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 All Benefit customers were consulted on the original proposals. There were a total of 679 replies. There were 10 replies from residents in Bracknell Forest who were not benefit customers. A targeted sample survey of 300 benefit customers has taken place on the recommended scheme based on employing the Government funding. There were 284 responses of which 146 were from households on passported benefits and 138 were from working households.

7.2 All voluntary organisations operating in the Borough registered with Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action were contacted for their views on the original scheme. The Council did not receive any direct response to the consultation but after following up with CAB the response was made via the online form and is therefore captured in the overall research.

7.3 Registered Social Landlords were consulted as responses were provided to the National Housing Federation.

7.4 Parish Councils were consulted and major precept authorities, Berkshire Fire and Rescue and Thames Valley Police were consulted. Officers met with Bracknell Town Council and also Crowthorne Parish Council.

Method of Consultation

7.5 An independent research company QA Research was commissioned to undertake the consultation with Benefit customers. The consultation was undertaken by direct mails hot to customers and reminders providing them the ability to respond in writing or online. In addition face to face interviews and focus groups were conducted. The consultation on the recommended scheme took place via telephone interviews.

7.6 Consultation with voluntary groups, Registered Social Landlords and major precept authorities was via correspondence.

7.7 Consultation with Parish Councils was via correspondence and meetings.

Representations Received

7.8 Bracknell Forest Homes consultation to the first set of policy options supported the removal of extended payments, ending backdating and ending second adult rebate, they were not supportive of increasing non-dependent deductions and thought the capital limit should be reduced to £5,000 and benefit limited to Band C and they were not supportive of including child maintenance payments. Bracknell Forest Homes responded to the second policy options based on the national scheme with a number of questions of clarification.

7.9 Bracknell Town Council’s response to the first set of policy options was that there was concern about the impact for working families. There were concerned about the knock on effect of benefit reductions on other agencies. There needed to be help for those starting a new job. Arrangements should be in place for households who need to care for family members. Consideration should be given to providing grants for families who need to move to lower banded properties if benefit was limited to a specific band. Concern was expressed that increasing non-dependent charges may lead to people being asked to leave a home. Removing all backdating provision was
seen as unfair and at least a month should be allowed. There should e a tell it once approach in the Council when customers provide information to claim benefit.

7.10 Crowthorne Parish Council supported the first set of policy options proposed by the Council.

7.11 The Bracknell Forest CAB provided a response to the proposals. They were concerned about the reduction in the maximum amount of council tax that can be paid and also any the increase in the taper. They believed both could lead to financial hardship. Out of all of the proposals they favoured removing second adult rebate, removing backdating and taking into account child maintenance when calculating income.

7.12 Thames Valley Police remained neutral on the adoption of the first or second set of policy options but urged the Council to review the scheme during 2013/14 so as to address the grant reductions to local authorities and the Police service announced in the Chancellors Autumn Statement.

7.13 A meeting took place with three members of Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 1st August to discuss the first set of policy options. They made the following comments:

- If extended payments were to be ended then households should be offered flexibility in paying their Council Tax Liability;
- For those households who had no prior experience of the Benefit system backdating of one month should be allowed from when they apply for financial support if financial support is to be limited by restricting to a Council Tax band that should be after an interim period of six months from when the financial support starts based on the actual Council Tax Liability;
- A hardship fund should be established to provide additional financial support for a short period of time;
- If the capital limit is to be reduced whereby households would no longer be eligible for financial support it should not go below £5,000, if non-dependent charges are to be increased for the higher bands of earned income it should lead to the household receiving no financial support rather than generating what could be small Council Tax liabilities;
- If non-dependent charges are to be increased for students that should only be where students have earned income;
- And it was recognised that the scheme would need to be reviewed in its first year of operation and that further changes may be required in the future to address demographic changes or unintended consequences of the design of the scheme.

These comments were reported to and considered by the Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 9th October.

7.14 The Royal British Legion contacted the Council to enquire whether the Council would continue to disregard War Disablement Pensions, War Widow’s Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Payments when calculating income for benefit purposes in the Local Council Tax Benefit Scheme. It was confirmed that the Council’s existing approach in exercising discretion to disregard those sources of income would continue in the local scheme.

7.15 The response from benefit customers to the two surveys undertaken is contained in the Equality Impact Assessment.

Background Papers
Localising Support for Council Tax Transitional Grant Scheme – Department for Communities and Local Government October 2012.
Localisation of Council tax benefit research phase 2 – QA research December 2012.

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