

APPENDIX E

Council Tax Support Exceptional Hardship Fund - Principles

Targeted assistance

- Given that pension age claimants are protected under the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012, which broadly replicate the existing Council Tax Benefit schemes, it is proposed that the exceptional hardship fund only be available to working age claimants.
- By limiting applications to the working age group, the Authority will be able to target additional assistance to those most in need.

Long term / short term

- The approach to be taken with the fund is not just to pay additional levels of support to taxpayers (thereby enhancing the proposed Local Council Tax Support schemes) but to aid and assist the most impoverished families.
- A key element of the fund will therefore be that support will only be given to taxpayers who qualify, for a short period of time. It is not intended that the fund will be a long-term solution to the overall reduction in Council Tax Support.
- Where taxpayers are unable to meet their liabilities in the longer term, they will be encouraged to take actions, which will reduce their council tax liabilities such as by moving to smaller or less expensive premises.

Criteria

- Any person claiming against the fund will be required to go through a process that will not only establish their eligibility for any payment but would allow them to more adequately manage their finances in the future.
- It is proposed that **before** making any payments, the Authority will require the council taxpayer to undertake the following;
 1. Make a separate application for assistance;
 2. Provide full details of their income and expenditure;
 3. Accept assistance from either the Authority or third parties such as the CAB or similar organisations to enable them to manage their finances more effectively including the termination of non essential expenditure;
 4. Identify potential changes in payment methods and arrangements to assist the taxpayer;
 5. Assist the Authority to minimise liability by ensuring that all discounts, exemptions and reductions are properly granted; and
 6. Maximising income through the application for other welfare benefits and identifying the most economical tariffs for the supply of utilities.

At any time the Authority feels that additional support is not appropriate, no payment would be made. However where it is clearly identified that the taxpayer is suffering '**exceptional hardship**' then the Authority would be free to grant additional support up to a total of 100% of the total liability for Council Tax.

Priority will be given to those cases, which are identified as particularly vulnerable.