

## **CO-OPERATIVE & COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2012 at 6.00pm in the Scrutiny Meeting Room, Civic Offices, Telford**

**PRESENT:** Councillors A. McClements, N. England, T. Hope, A. Jhawar, J. Loveridge, G. Reynolds, K. Tomlinson.

Also attending: Cllr. S. Davies, Cabinet Member Neighbourhood Services & Co-operative Council; F. Mercer, Policy & Strategy Manager, and D. Byle, Project Officer, Co-operative Council Delivery Team; S. Jones, Scrutiny Officer.

#### **CCSC-1 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** – that the minutes of the meeting of the Co-operative & Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **CCSC-2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr. J. Greenaway.

#### **CCSC-3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

#### **CCSC-4 CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL UPDATES**

The Chairman welcomed members to the first meeting of the Committee of the municipal year and welcomed new members to the group. The Cabinet member and officers had been invited to the meeting to provide a short update on the Co-operative Council work-streams, to answer questions and to help the Committee identify areas of work where scrutiny could add value through its work programme. The Co-operative Council Update Cabinet report had been circulated to members prior to the meeting by way of background information and a short summary presentation was tabled at the meeting. The key points highlighted from the presentation were:

- The essence of being a Co-operative Council was to develop a new relationship with residents, partners and local organisations so that there was collective involvement in the planning, running and resourcing of services so that people get what they need at the right time and the right place.
- The Co-operative Values (Ownership, Openness & Honesty, Involvement, Fairness & Respect) developed by the Co-operative Commission's Values &

Communications Sub-group had been endorsed by Council in May. The values underpinned how the Council and its employees would behave, and work would be done over the next 12 months to embed and bring the values to life, starting with employees and then moving outward. The Commission Sub-group had recognised that there was a role for scrutiny to be involved in reviewing and monitoring progress.

- The presentation summarised the key achievements to date on the implementation of the Adopter projects and the recommendations of the Co-operative and Employee Commissions which were set out in more detail in the Cabinet report.

There was then a discussion and questions about the report during which the following points were made:

- Referring to the suggestions for the work programme, shown in Appendix 1 of the report circulated as Appendix B, the Chairman suggested that should the Committee choose to include a review of the Employee Commission in the work programme, this could be joined up with reviewing how the Co-operative Values are being embedded with employees across the organisation. Cllr. McClements also suggested that as the Committee had already met members of the Employee Commission who were very positive and committed, a review should also hear from staff who had not joined the Commission to hear their views. Officers pointed out that it had been a specific recommendation of the Commission's Sub-group that scrutiny should provide an independent view on the implementation of the Co-operative Values.
- Cllr. Hope asked whether the Environmental Action Team project would be rolled out to other wards. Cllr. Davies explained that this was a match-funded scheme with the Town & Parish Councils (TPCs). All TPCs had been invited to express an interest and three had initially come forward. Teams had been set up in Madeley, Great Dawley, St. George's and Priorslee. Further announcements would be made about the extension of the scheme and solutions were being sought for smaller TPCs less able to resource a scheme. Cllr. Davies invited members who were also elected onto Town & Parish Councils to raise this locally and contact him with any expressions of interest.
- Replying to a question about how local people had been involved and how they had influenced projects, Cllr. Davies gave some specific examples such as the devolution of Ward Co-operative Fund (previously known as Your Money, Your Projects) to local level, the Street Champions and Snow Wardens projects, and the extensive consultation involving over 3,000 people on the budget proposals.
- Cllr. Davies explained that the Street Champions were volunteers involved in environmental projects. In Brookside, volunteers had been involved in delivering materials which helped to engage more people locally as well as saving money. In the Nedge, volunteers were taking responsibility for looking after green space which engaged local people and helped to save money on the Council's maintenance contract. Cllr. Tomlinson asked whether there was scope to expand

the Street Champions' role – or to develop a similar project – as a co-operative “Neighbourhood Watch” type scheme as these had lapsed following the move of the police contact to Shropshire. Cllr. Davies replied that this was a good idea but would depend on having the necessary resources.

- There was a lengthy discussion about how members could explain to residents what being a “Co-operative Council” meant. It was suggested that the best way was to give practical examples of co-operative working of which there were numerous examples such as litter-picking schemes, the projects discussed earlier, the small business loans fund though which £75k had already been lent to small local businesses, the involvement of external people in the Co-operative Commission, and the development of a new settlement with the community and voluntary sector. The co-operative movement was not new, and the present context for co-operative working was reduced budgets and the need to work with TPCs, partners and residents to encourage collaborative working and self-help to mitigate the impact of cuts. It was also about people seeing what the Council is doing and there were regular press releases and updates in Your Voice.

The network of Co-operative Councils had grown from 13 original members to 21 and was on the increase with some large authorities such as Lambeth, Liverpool, Newcastle, Oldham, Stoke and Sunderland as members. Within the network, Telford & Wrekin was in a minority of Councils which had positively branded itself as “Co-operative”. Other authorities had adopted co-operative ways of working without using the “co-operative” banner – it was about the reality of how they work and what they do for local people and not about whether people recognised the co-operative label.

The Cabinet member said that the Co-operative Commissioners wanted to see how the Council is delivering on its values after 12 months, what difference it has made, and how the Council is held to account for its performance. It was suggested that scrutiny could usefully carry out an independent review, and perhaps find out how other authorities in the Co-operative network are looking at this, or opportunities for Telford & Wrekin to share its good practice with other authorities as an exemplar of co-operative working.

- Regarding the Supporting Families task force, this was about targeting early intervention support at the most troubled families to prevent breakdown and crisis which may then require expensive interventions. The approach was based on research which showed that peer support and peer mentoring could be more effective than intervention solely by professionals. The aim was for professionals to work with and support residents who could help break down barriers and support struggling families. Many of these families were already known to the Council, and the challenge now was to identify local volunteers with whom the Council could work to support them.

There was a discussion about volunteers, and Cllr. Hope wanted to find out what training and support the Council provided to volunteers. Cllr. Reynolds informed members that she was the Commission Councillor on the Civic Pride and

Volunteering and the Employee Volunteering working groups which were overseeing the implementation of the Commissions' sub-groups' recommendations. Cllr. England was the Member sponsor on the Employee Commission's Social Responsibility sub-group. Both these groups were involved in volunteering and would be looking at the issues raised by Cllr. Hope. The Commissions' working groups made two-weekly reports to the Senior Management Team and to Cabinet in Update reports. Information was also available on the intranet. Additionally, Cllr. Davies told members that the Co-operative and Employee Commissions would meet again on 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October respectively to monitor progress on implementing their recommendations and to take stock of their future roles. Scrutiny members were invited to attend the meetings to hear the discussions and ask questions, and may wish to offer an independent view on the future role of the Commissions.

Details of the governance arrangements and member/officer leads for the Commissions' working groups would be circulated to the Committee after the meeting, and the Project Officer offered to help members scope work around the Commissions should this be included in the work programme.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet member and officers for attending the meeting and providing information to the Committee.

## **CCSC-5      2012/14 WORK PROGRAMME**

This part of the meeting was for members to agree topics for the work programme in the light of the previous discussion.

The Scrutiny Officer summarised the key points in the report on the 2012/14 Work Programme which had been circulated as Appendix B. Members noted the decisions made by the Scrutiny Management Board on 4<sup>th</sup> July regarding the allocation of suggestions and resources to the Scrutiny Committees and the recommendation that the Committees should focus on a small number of topics to review in-depth so that scrutiny remains focused and has greater impact. Appendix 1 of the report set out the suggestions with comments and issues for the Committee to consider and the Chairman's preferred topics.

The Chairman invited views from the Committee on her recommended topics and method of scrutiny which were:

- The welfare benefit reforms which was strongly recommended for in-depth review.
- The Employee Commission incorporating how the Co-operative Values were being embedded with employees as an in-depth review and including hearing the views of staff in outreach locations and satellite offices.
- First Point for Business and changes to the leisure concessions policy as update reports at a Committee meeting.

Members agreed with the inclusion of these items in the work programme and made the following points during the discussion:

- Cllr. Reynolds suggested the review of the Employee Commission should include looking at the concentration of employee members from across the Council, representation of staff in outreach locations and issues for staff without PCs or Council log-ins and whether there were disadvantages pockets across the organisation.
- Cllr. Hope wanted to look at support for volunteers, particularly around environmental projects, and it was agreed that members could in the first instance receive reports of the Civic Pride & Volunteering working group which was working with the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust to create a model of best practice for volunteers. It was agreed the Committee would review reports on this on-going work before deciding whether this would be added to the work programme for further scrutiny as members should be mindful of duplicating work that is already being done.
- The Chairman noted that work was on-going to develop a Customer Care Strategy and Action Plan, and this could be something the Committee might want to monitor in future but in the light of other priorities suggested that should not be included in the work programme at this stage.
- The Scrutiny Officer noted the suggestion to look at Social Deprivation could potentially overlap with work agreed by the Children & Young People (CYP) Scrutiny Committee on the impact of early intervention programmes, Strengthening Families and Family Connect, and members of this Committee could attend the CYP meetings rather than duplicate work.
- The suggestion about funding for the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) was discussed and it was agreed that a review could not focus on one organisation but would need to be a broader review of funding for the voluntary sector. Work was on-going by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) working group to implement the Commission sub-group's recommendations to develop a revised approach to how the Council works with and spends with the VCS. It was therefore agreed that this would not be included in the work programme, although the Committee could receive the group's reports. It was also agreed that the CAB and other relevant organisations would be consulted as part of the review of the welfare reforms.
- Regarding the Welfare Benefit reforms, the committee noted that the options for the Telford & Wrekin Council Tax support scheme would be developed by mid-August, and agreed that a meeting would be held at the beginning of September early on in the consultation period to review the options. The Scrutiny Officer would circulate date options to the Committee.
- The Commercial opportunities (possible new income streams) had been put forward as a suggestion, but the Chairman felt that this may be a matter for the Scrutiny Management Board as the future direction of the Council as a more commercially driven organisation was a key strategic issue, and individual ideas for income streams could come from service area within the remit of the other Scrutiny Committees. This was therefore not included in the work programme.
- The suggestion about working with Town & Parish Councils was discussed, but this was not included in the work programme because there was already on-going work on the development of the Parish Charter and review of the Parish Forum.
- The Scrutiny Officer explained to Cllr. Tomlinson that suggestions about Alley

Gating and the Adoption of Unadopted Estates had been allocated to the Housing, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee to consider for the work programme.

- The suggestion to look at support for victims of Domestic Abuse had been allocated to the Scrutiny Management Board as this was the designated body for scrutiny of the Safer Communities Partnership, and the topic would fit within the scope of this wider work. Cllrs. Tomlinson and McClements had taken part in an earlier review of support for Domestic Violence which highlighted issues including support for the children of victims and the need to work with private landlords on security issues and wanted to see these picked up as part of the review. Cllr. Tomlinson expressed the strong view that this highlighted the need for scrutiny to follow-up on previous work.

At the end of the discussion, it was agreed the Scrutiny Officer would draft a work programme based on what had been agreed to circulate to the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

The meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.

**Chairman:**.....

**Date:**.....



# Council Tax Support



## Council Tax Benefit is changing; have your say



Dear Resident,

The Government is abolishing the Council Tax Benefit scheme from 1 April 2013 and is asking every council to replace it with a local support scheme, called Council Tax Support.

Under the Government's proposals, Telford & Wrekin will receive at least 10% less than currently spent on Council Tax Benefit as the Government is making no allowance for inflation and assumes the economy is improving so that the number of claimants will reduce. There is no evidence locally to support this.

The impact of all this is estimated to be the same as a £3.1 million cut for Telford & Wrekin in the first year. This potentially affects the funding for the Fire and Police services as well as the Council. The shortfall in funding could increase in future if for example, the number of people requiring support continues to rise.

Council Tax Benefit is paid to a wide range of people, including the elderly, long term unemployed, and those that are unable to work because of disability or ill health. It's also paid to working families in low paid employment, or people who find themselves unemployed for short periods because of redundancy.

The Government has specified that pensioners must be protected and so will see no changes to their entitlement.

If you're of working age, then any Council Tax Benefit you now receive may reduce by as much as a quarter. If you own a second home or a home that is empty, you may lose the Council Tax discounts you currently receive. Where these changes apply, you will have to pay the difference.

This leaves the Council with some very hard choices about how the Council Tax Support scheme that we have to introduce by April 2013 will address the £3.1 million funding gap.

I am committed to providing a Council Tax Support scheme which is fair, encourages people to work and remain in work, and reduces the impact on the most vulnerable citizens where possible. To achieve this, we are consulting on a number of possible changes to the current scheme based on a set of key principals.

I encourage you to take part in this important consultation and give me your views. These will be key in helping Councillors to decide on the final scheme.

Yours faithfully,

**Councillor Kuldip Sahota**  
Leader of the Council

## Introduction

From **April 2013** Council Tax Benefit, which helps people on low incomes pay their Council Tax, will be abolished and the Government has asked each council to replace it with their own local scheme called Council Tax Support.

Under the current Council Tax Benefit scheme, the Council receives funding from the Government to meet the cost of paying Council Tax Benefit. However from next April, the Council will receive a fixed grant of at least 10% less than the Council will pay in Council Tax Benefit this year. This is estimated to be equal to a £3.1 million cut for Telford & Wrekin.

If we continue to pay Council Tax Benefit at the same rate as we do now, the Council would need to find an additional £3.1 million savings on top of the £13 million it expects to have to save next year. This would mean cuts to other services.

Instead, the Council is proposing to apply the funding cut to awards of Council Tax Support in a way that is fairest to the widest range of claimants. We are keen to give everyone, whether they claim Council Tax Benefit or not, the opportunity to have their say on our proposals before the new scheme is finalised.

The Council is consulting on the proposed Council Tax Support scheme until **Friday 26 October 2012**.

## Who will be affected?

Everyone of working age who currently claims Council Tax Benefit will be directly affected by these proposed changes, as well as anyone who may need to claim in the future, so it's important to have your say. The changes will affect people both in and out of work.

The Government has said that pensioners must be protected from the impact of the cuts.



## Telford & Wrekin Council proposal

For all working age claimants, Telford & Wrekin Council has considered the option of continuing the existing national Council Tax Benefit scheme rules and the impact of funding this by finding savings elsewhere within its budget, principally by making cuts to other services. However, we are proposing to meet the shortage in government funding through reductions within the Council Tax Support scheme.

In designing the scheme, the Council has been guided by a number of key principles which are detailed on page 5. Our proposed scheme is broadly based on the current Council Tax Benefit scheme for working age claimants with a number of variations to meet the reduction in funding. These are set out as new features which are detailed on page 6. We would like to know your views on both the key principles and new features to help us decide on the final scheme.

The Government says that the new local scheme should achieve the following objectives:

- Support more people into work by ensuring that work always pays;
- Protect the most vulnerable people; and
- Deliver fairness to those claiming benefit and the taxpayer.

You can read more about the Government's proposals by visiting our website [www.telford.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport](http://www.telford.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport)

### Before completing the survey

- Please read the consultation document in full before answering the survey
- You can complete the survey online at [www.telford.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport](http://www.telford.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport)
- If you are filling in a hard copy survey, please hand this in at our First Point offices in Civic Offices or Wellington Civic & Leisure Centre, or send to the FREEPOST address below.

You can also give your views by:

- attending our public information event on 26 September at Civic Offices at 6pm. Please call **01952 384957** to reserve a place.
- email us at [yourviewsmatter@telford.gov.uk](mailto:yourviewsmatter@telford.gov.uk) for further information.
- writing to **Delivery & Planning, Telford & Wrekin Council, FREEPOST SY1154, Telford, Shropshire, TF3 4ZZ**

We recommend that you read Appendix A, B and C at the end of this consultation document before completing the survey.

## The principles of the proposed draft scheme are:

### Principle 1:

#### **The cut in funding should not mean cuts to other Council services**

If the Council kept the current Council Tax Benefit scheme it would need to fund the extra cost itself by cutting other Council services. The new working age local Council Tax Support scheme should address the full funding cut.

### Principle 2:

#### **The impact of the cut should be shared equally across all working age claimants**

The Council will seek to spread the impact of this cut as fairly as possible.

Current Council Tax Benefit rules mean that working age claimants who are in receipt of Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance (income based), Employment Support Allowance (income related) and other claimants with an income below the required level for their basic living needs generally receive 100% Council Tax Benefit and therefore do not pay any Council Tax.

Under these new proposals, all working age claimants including those in receipt of the benefits listed above (unless they are defined as vulnerable) will be required to pay a contribution towards their Council Tax.

### Principle 3:

#### **Vulnerable claimants should be protected from changes**

We propose to define severely disabled claimants as vulnerable and protect their payments. The Council recognises that severely disabled claimants often face additional challenges that affect their income and capacity to pay Council Tax through higher disability related living costs and in some cases, a limited ability to work.

### Principle 4:

#### **The needs of those with children or caring responsibilities should be recognised**

The Council has recognised the needs of claimants with children and caring responsibilities and will continue to include all of the specific features of the Council Tax Benefit scheme that are aimed at benefiting families or claimants with childcare and caring responsibilities. However the cut will still apply to those claimants not classified as vulnerable.

### Principle 5:

#### **The new scheme should not discourage claimants from retaining or starting low paid employment**

All of the current features of the scheme that are intended to give specific incentives to those Council Tax Benefit claimants that are in employment, or are considering taking on employment, will be retained. This is to ensure that our scheme supports the concept that 'work pays'.

## The key features of our proposed draft scheme are:



### Applying the cut in government funding equally to all working age customers:

We propose to apply an equal percentage cut to the amount of Council Tax Support paid to all working age customers (unless they are classed as vulnerable). In our draft scheme, this is set at between 21% and 25%.

### Protecting the severely disabled and those receiving specific types of income from the impact of the cuts:

Taxpayers and their partners who are currently entitled to a severe disability premium or an enhanced disability premium and those who have a dependant with an enhanced disability premium will be defined as 'vulnerable' and protected from the impact of the changes. In addition, those who receive a support component within their benefit award of Employment and Support Allowance and those in receipt of War Disablement Pension or a War Widow's/ Widower's Pension will also be protected

### Removing the current Council Tax exemptions and discounts for empty properties and second homes:

We propose to end the Council Tax reductions for properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished for up to 6 months (Class C), properties needing or undergoing major structural repairs for up to 12 months (Class A) and second homes which are given a discount of 10%. These exemptions and discounts are currently awarded regardless of the financial status of the taxpayer. Ending these will allow us to collect up to a further £1.2 million in Council Tax

### Introducing an empty homes premium on properties left empty for longer than two years:

Empty properties can become targets for crime, squatters and general anti-social behaviour. We are proposing to charge a 50% council tax premium, making the total liability 150% on properties which are left empty for more than two years. The aim is to persuade owners to take steps to get these properties back into use

### Reducing savings and capital limits to £6,000:

Currently, claimants with savings and capital of more than £16,000 are not entitled to Council Tax Benefit. We are proposing to reduce this level to a maximum of £6,000





### Limiting claims for backdated benefit to one month:

Under the current Council Tax Benefit rules, claimants who have good reason for failing to apply for benefit sooner can have their award backdated for up to six months. We are proposing to limit the period of a backdated award to a maximum of one month

### Introducing a £2.50 minimum award level:

Some customers currently receive a very low level of support under the Council Tax Benefit rules. We propose to end entitlement for anyone receiving less than a minimum level of £2.50 per week for Council Tax Support

### Removing the Second Adult Rebate for working age customers:

At the moment, if you are the only person in your household liable to pay Council Tax, but you have another adult in your household who has a low income, you may be able to receive Council Tax Benefit of up to 25%. However, the taxpayer often has sufficient income to pay their Council Tax in full so we are proposing to stop this particular rebate

### Introducing a limited discretionary scheme to deal with extreme financial hardship:

We are proposing to set aside a limited discretionary fund to award additional Council Tax Support to individual customers who are experiencing extreme financial hardship



## Surveys must be returned by Friday 26 October 2012

Please complete our survey at [www.telford.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport](http://www.telford.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport)

Alternatively you can hand your completed survey to a member of staff at our First Point offices in Civic Offices or Wellington Civic & Leisure Centre, or send to the FREEPOST address on the survey.

We are holding a public information event on 26 September at 6pm at Civic Offices where you can give your views or find out more about our proposals. To reserve a place please call **01952 384957** or email [yourviewsmatter@telford.gov.uk](mailto:yourviewsmatter@telford.gov.uk)

## How will the information be used?

The information from this consultation will be used by the Council to assist in making its decision on the final Council Tax Support scheme. The results from the consultation will be published on our website later this year. The decision on the final Council Tax Support scheme will be made no later than 31 January 2013.

## Appendix A - Frequently asked questions

### What is Council Tax?

Council Tax is a local tax set by the Council, based on the valuation band of your property. Your home is placed in one of eight valuation bands based on its value as at 1 April 1991. The Council is responsible for collecting Council Tax and this money funds about 20% of local public services, including refuse collection, adult and children's services, environmental health and education. Some of the money is used to help fund police, fire and public transport services.

### What is Council Tax Benefit?

Council Tax Benefit helps people on low incomes to pay their Council Tax. The Government currently gives the Council all of the money we need to fund Council Tax Benefit and sets the rules regarding who can claim Council Tax Benefit. If someone meets the criteria they will receive help towards their Council Tax bill. In Telford and Wrekin last year (2011-12) £14.7 million was spent on Council Tax Benefit. Over the past five years, the amount of Council Tax Benefit paid has risen each year because more people are claiming.

### Who will be affected by the changes to Council Tax Benefit?

Under the Government's proposals, pensioners will not be affected by this cut in spending and people who have reached the age for state pension credit will be assessed under a national scheme which will be similar to the current Council Tax Benefit scheme. Everyone of working age who currently claims Council Tax Benefit, and anyone who may need to claim in the future, will be directly affected by the changes. Due to the level of savings we need to make we are proposing that everyone under pension age (unless they are in classed as vulnerable) will have to pay something towards their council tax bill. We will consider ways of protecting the most vulnerable and those in the most difficult circumstances when designing our final local scheme. We will also be looking at how the features of the scheme support people into work.

### Who will be able to get the new Council Tax Support?

Anyone who currently receives Council Tax Benefit will be automatically assessed for the new Council Tax Support. It is likely that most people who qualify for Council Tax Benefit will get some Council Tax Support. Anyone liable to pay Council Tax can apply for Council Tax Support and they will be assessed in the same way as current claimants are for Council Tax Benefit.

### How much will I have to pay?

Depending on how the final scheme is designed, it is likely that most working age people who qualify for Council Tax Support will have to pay more than they do now or they would have done under Council Tax Benefit. Under our proposed scheme working age claimants who are not classed as vulnerable will have to pay a minimum contribution of between **21% and 25%** towards their Council Tax bill but the outcome of this consultation will help to determine exactly how much more people in different groups will have to pay. **Pensioners will not have to pay more than they do under the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme.**




## Will I have to re-apply for Council Tax Support?

If you currently receive Council Tax Benefit you will not have to re-apply under the new scheme. You will automatically be re-assessed using the new rules. Your award may be reviewed once you have moved across to the new benefit. New customers will have to apply in the same way as customers currently do for Council Tax Benefit

## Appendix B - Proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions from 1 April 2013

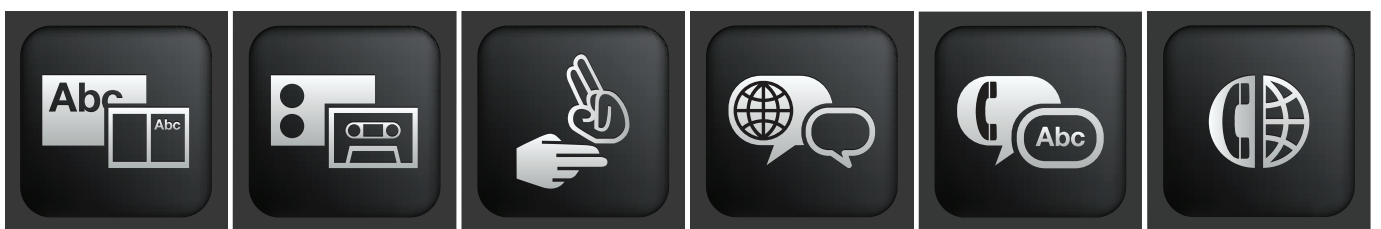
Proposals	Current regulation	Government proposal	Council proposal
Remove the Council Tax discount for properties not occupied as a main home (Second Home Discount)	Between 10% and 50% discount (Telford & Wrekin currently award 10% discount)	Allow councils to reduce the discount to 0%	To reduce the discount to 0%
Remove the Council Tax six month exemption for unoccupied and unfurnished properties	Up to 6 months exemption Class C exemption	Abolish this exemption and allow councils to give a discount between 0% and 100%	To reduce the discount to 0% for the 6 month period
Remove the Council Tax exemption on empty properties undergoing repair or major structural alteration	Up to 12 months exemption Class A exemption	Abolish the exemption and allow councils to grant a discount between 0% and 100%	To reduce the discount to 0% for the 12 month period
Charging an empty homes premium on properties left empty for long periods	New power	Allow councils to levy an empty homes premium of up to 50% on properties left empty for longer than two years	To charge a premium of 50% after two years, making the total liability 150%

## Appendix C - Illustrative impact of Telford & Wrekin Council's proposed Council Tax Support Scheme

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Single person</li> <li>■ Income-based Jobseekers Allowance</li> <li>■ Lives in Band A property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Couple with two children. One adult working taking home £276 per week</li> <li>■ Additional income per week £86 tax credit</li> <li>■ Savings £4,500</li> <li>■ Lives in Band C property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Single parent with one child. Taking home £167 per week</li> <li>■ Additional income per week £120 Tax Credit</li> <li>■ Lives in Band B property</li> </ul>
<p><b>Full 2012 Council Tax Bill</b> £955.90 (£716.92 after single person discount)</p>	<p><b>Full 2012 Council Tax Bill</b> £1273.32</p>	<p><b>Full 2012 Council Tax Bill</b> £1106 (£829.50 after single person discount)</p>
<p><b>Current amount of Council Tax Benefit</b> £716.92</p>	<p><b>Current amount of Council Tax Benefit</b> £886.95</p>	<p><b>Current amount of Council Tax Benefit</b> £86.61</p>
<p><b>Potential amount of Council Tax Support* paid from April next year:</b> £537.69</p>	<p><b>Potential amount of Council Tax Support* paid from April next year:</b> £665.22</p>	<p><b>Potential amount of Council Tax Support* paid from April next year:</b> £0</p>
<p><b>The extra you would have to pay:</b> £17.92 per month over 10 months</p>	<p><b>The extra you would have to pay:</b> £22.17 per month over 10 months</p>	<p><b>The extra you would have to pay:</b> £8.66 per month over 10 months</p>

\*Figures for next year based on reduction in Council Tax Support being set at 25%





Large print

Audio and Braille

British sign  
language

Interpretation and  
translation

Text relay

Telephone  
interpretation

**Council Tax Support**  
**A summary of the scheme for Pension Credit Age persons and**  
**the draft scheme for Working Age claimants**

Council Tax Support - A summary of the scheme for Pension Credit Age persons and the draft scheme for Working Age claimants .....	1
Introduction .....	4
The Council Tax Support scheme for Pensioners (persons who have reached the age at which pension credit can be claimed) .....	5
The Council Tax Support scheme for Pensioners (persons who have reached the age at which pension credit can be claimed) .....	6
Class A.....	6
Class B.....	6
Class C.....	6
What Council Tax Support will be payable to Pension Age persons? .....	6
The draft Council Tax Support scheme for working age persons.....	8
The draft Council Tax Support scheme for working age persons .....	9
Class A.....	9
Class B.....	9
What Council Tax Support will be payable to working age person? .....	9
How Council Tax Support works .....	12
Who can claim?.....	12
How much Council Tax Support can I get?.....	12
How is maximum Council Tax Support calculated for the Pension Age Scheme?.....	12
How is maximum Council Tax Support calculated for the Working Age Scheme?.....	12
Extended Payments.....	12
If you do not get Pension Credit Guarantee, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance.....	13
Capital.....	13
Absences from home .....	13
Going away.....	14
How to claim.....	14
Appointees .....	14
Information and evidence.....	14
How long will it take to decide your claim for Council Tax Support .....	15
Date of claim.....	15
If you change your address.....	15
Backdating a claim.....	15
Start of Council Tax Support .....	15
Start of Council Tax support where a claimant acquires a partner .....	15
End of Council Tax Support.....	15
End of Pension Credit Guarantee, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance entitlement.....	15
People who live with you - non-dependants .....	16
Non-dependant deductions.....	16
Non-dependant deductions from Council Tax Support .....	16
Working out the amount of Council Tax Support .....	17
How is maximum Council Tax Support calculated for the Pension Age Scheme .....	17
How is maximum Council Tax Support calculated for the Working Age Scheme .....	17
For the Working Age the maximum Council Tax Support is set by the Council as up to 100% of the council tax you are liable to pay less any non dependant deductions (see non dependant deductions later in this document). However once your support is calculated, the Council has decided that all working age claimants will have their support reduced a percentage deduction (based on current estimates will be between 20% and 25%).....	17
Are there any people who will be protected from the cut in support?.....	17
What if I do not receive Pension Credit Guarantee, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance? .....	17
Income less than applicable amount.....	17
Income greater than applicable amount.....	18
Calculating your needs.....	18
Living Allowances or Applicable Amounts.....	18
Calculating your resources .....	20

Income.....	20
Capital.....	24
How Council Tax Support is paid.....	27
How you will be notified about your Council Tax Support.....	27
How can I appeal?.....	27
Changes of circumstances.....	27
Students.....	27
Information and information sharing.....	29
Counter Fraud and Compliance.....	29

TELFORD - DRAFT

## Introduction

As part of the major changes to the Welfare Benefits system, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 Council Tax Benefit will end and is to be replaced by a new scheme called Localised Support for Council Tax or Council Tax Support. Both systems are means tested which means that they compare your income and capital against an assessment of your needs.

The new scheme will largely be decided by each Council rather than nationally by Central Government. The monies available to each Council have been reduced and if you are of working age the amount of help you receive may be less than under the current scheme (Council Tax Benefit).

Central Government has decided to protect pensioners (persons who are of an age where they can claim pension credit) and therefore if you are a pensioner and are currently receiving Council Tax Benefit, then the amount of help you receive under the new Council Tax Support scheme will be broadly the same and operate in a similar way to the current Council Tax Benefit system.

The rules of the Council Tax Support scheme divide the persons who can claim support into various classes. The classes or groups are set by Central Government for pensioners and the classes or groups for working age applicants are set by the Council. The following section shows the classes that are to be in place from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013:

**The Council Tax Support scheme for Pensioners (persons who have reached the age at which pension credit can be claimed)**

## The Council Tax Support scheme for Pensioners (persons who have reached the age at which pension credit can be claimed)

The Government has created three classes and the Council will decide which class each applicant is in. The class will determine the level of Council Tax Support that can be provided:

### Class A

To obtain support the person must:

- a. have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit;
- b. not be somebody with a partner of working age in receipt of income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or income-based employment and support allowance;
- c. be liable to pay council tax in respect of a dwelling in which they are resident;
- d. not have capital savings above £16,000 (unless they have successfully claimed Pension Credit Guarantee);
- e. must have their assessed income **less than** or equal to the set living allowances (applicable amounts) set by Central Government; and
- f. have made a valid application for the support

The class also includes persons who have successfully claimed Pension Credit Guarantee.

### Class B

To obtain support the person must:

- a. have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit;
- b. not be somebody with a partner of working age in receipt of income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or income-based employment and support allowance;
- c. be liable to pay council tax in respect of a dwelling in which they are resident;
- d. not have capital savings above £16,000;
- e. have made a valid application for the scheme; and
- f. have assessed income **more than** the set living allowances (applicable amounts) set by Central Government

### Class C

To obtain support the person must:

- a. have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit;
- b. not be somebody with a partner of working age in receipt of income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or income-based employment and support allowance;
- c. be liable to pay council tax in respect of a dwelling in which they are resident;
- d. made a valid application for the scheme;
- e. be somebody who has at least one second adult living with them who is not his/ her partner, not somebody who pays rent, and who is on a prescribed low wage and/or prescribed benefit, as set out by Central Government.

### What Council Tax Support will be payable to Pension Age persons?

If a person matches the criteria in Class A, including that their *income* is less than their *living allowances (applicable amounts)*, that person qualifies for 100% reduction on their council tax liability, (net of any council tax discounts, such as single person discount). This will be adjusted down for any non- dependent deductions and also applies if a person is in receipt of state pension credit guarantee credit from the Department for Work and Pensions (Pensions Service)

If a person matches the criteria in Class B, it will mean that their *income* is greater than their *applicable amount (living allowances)*. Twenty per cent of the difference between the two will be subtracted from this individual's council tax liability (net of any council tax discounts, such as single person discount) and will be adjusted down for any non- dependent deductions.

Council Tax Support for person in Class C may be awarded in respect of a second adult sharing

the household who would normally be expected to contribute towards the council tax bill, but who cannot afford to do so, based on their low income or on prescribed benefits. This reduction will equate to the *second adult rebate* available under the Council Tax Benefit scheme and may be awarded at 100%, 25%, 15% or 7.5% of the council tax liability, depending on individual circumstances

**The draft Council Tax Support scheme for working age persons**

## The draft Council Tax Support scheme for working age persons

The Council has decided that there will be two classes and they will decide which class each applicant is in. The class will determine the level of Council Tax Support that can be provided:

### Class A

To obtain support the individual (or their partner) must:

- a. have not attained the qualifying age for state pension credit; or
- b. has attained the qualifying age for state pension credit if he, or his partner, is a person on income support, on an income-based jobseeker's allowance or on an income-related employment and support allowance.
- c. be somebody in respect of whom a maximum council tax support amount can be calculated
- d. be liable to pay council tax in respect of a dwelling in which he is solely or mainly resident;
- e. not have capital savings above £6,000;
- f. be a person whose *income* is **less** than their living allowances (*applicable amount*) or the claimant or partner is in receipt of Income Support, Jobseekers allowance (income based) or Employment and Support Allowance (income related); and
- g. have made a valid claim for support.

### Class B

To obtain support the individual (or their partner) must:

- a. have not attained the qualifying age for state pension credit;
- b. be liable to pay Council Tax in respect of a dwelling in which they are solely or mainly resident;
- c. be somebody in respect of whom a maximum council tax support amount can be calculated;
- d. not have capital savings above £6,000;
- e. be a person whose *income* is **more** than their living allowances (*applicable amount*);
- f. have made a valid claim for support;

### What Council Tax Support will be payable to working age person?

If a person matches the criteria in Class A, and their *income* is less than their *living allowances (applicable amounts)*, that person qualifies for the maximum available reduction on their council tax liability (less any non dependant deductions). The maximum reduction will be calculated of Council Tax Support less a percentage deduction (based on current estimates of between 20% and 25%), which the Council has decided that all working age claimants will have to pay. This also applies if a person in receipt of income support, on an income-based jobseeker's allowance or on an income-related employment and support allowance

If a person matches the criteria in Class B, it will mean the person's *income* is greater than their living allowances (*applicable amount*). Twenty per cent of the difference between the two will be subtracted from the maximum council tax reduction allowed. The reduction will be the calculated Council Tax Support less a percentage deduction (based on current estimates of between 20% and 25%), which the Council has decided that all working age claimants will have to pay.

The deduction **will not apply** where the following circumstances apply;

- The claimant or partner is in receipt of a severe disability premium within the calculation of Council Tax Support or within any means tested benefit (Housing Benefit, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based)); or
- The claimant, partner or any dependant is in receipt of a enhanced disability premium within the calculation of council tax support or within any means tested benefit (Housing Benefit, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based)); or
- The claimant or partner is in receipt of a support component within the calculation of council tax support or within their Employment and Support Allowance; or

- The claimant or partner receives War Disablement Pension or a War Widow's/Widower's Pension, or any similar payment from another country.

TELFORD - DRAFT

## How Council Tax Support works

## How Council Tax Support works

### Who can claim?

If you have to pay Council Tax, you may be able to get Council Tax Support (CTS) from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013

You can only get support if you have a right to reside and are habitually resident in the United Kingdom (UK). If you have entered the UK within the 2 years before your claim for benefit, the Council will ask you about this.

People given refugee status, humanitarian protection or exceptional leave to remain in the UK will continue to be eligible for support.

Most full-time students are not entitled to Council Tax Support as they are usually not liable to pay Council Tax.

### How much Council Tax Support can I get?

Maximum Council Tax Support depends on:

- Whether you are in the Pension Age scheme (attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) or are in the Working Age scheme;
- How much council tax you have to pay; and
- Who you live with.

### How is the maximum Council Tax Support calculated for the Pension Age Scheme?

For the Pension Age Scheme the maximum Council Tax Support is set by the Government as up to 100% of the council tax you are liable to pay less any non dependant deductions (see non dependant deductions later in this document). If you are already getting or have claimed Pension Credit Guarantee Credit the Council will grant maximum Council Tax Support

### How is maximum Council Tax Support calculated for the Working Age Scheme?

For the Working Age Scheme the maximum Council Tax Support is set by the Council as up to 100% of the council tax you are liable to pay less any non dependant deductions (see non dependant deductions later in this document). However once your support is calculated, the Council has decided that all working age claimants will have their support further reduced by a percentage deduction (based on current estimates of between 20% and 25%).

The percentage deduction **will not be made** where the following circumstances apply;

- The claimant or partner is in receipt of a severe disability premium within the calculation of council tax support or within any means tested benefit (Housing Benefit, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based); or
- The claimant, partner or any dependant is in receipt of a enhanced disability premium within the calculation of council tax support or within any means tested benefit (Housing Benefit, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based); or
- The claimant or partner is in receipt of a support component within the calculation of Council Tax Support or within their Employment and Support Allowance; or
- The claimant or partner receives War Disablement Pension or a War Widow's/Widower's Pension, or any similar payment from another country.

### Is there a minimum amount of Council Tax Support payable?

If you are of working age you must qualify for at least £2.50 per week to actually receive support. There is no limit for pension age claimants.

### Extended Payments

If your Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment & Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or contributory Employment & Support Allowance stops because of work.

Extended Payments of Council Tax Support are available and the payment is an extra four weeks of support to help pay towards your Council Tax when certain other benefits stop because you're going back to work, working more hours or earning more money.

You do not have to claim an Extended Payment if you or your partner, or civil partner (and they remain a partner throughout the claim) have stopped getting one of the benefits mentioned below because one of you is expected to do one of the following for five weeks or more:

- Return to work full time
- Work more hours
- Earn more money

And you've been getting one of the following:

- Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, or income-related Employment & Support Allowance or a combination of these benefits continuously for at least 26 weeks

**or**

- Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or contributory Employment & Support Allowance continuously for at least 26 weeks

**and**

- You expect the work, increased hours or earnings to last five weeks or more and you've not been getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment & Support Allowance with your Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or contributory Employment & Support Allowance, when it ceased.

Normally you'll get the same amount of Council Tax Support as you did before your income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, income-related Employment & Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or contributory Employment & Support Allowance stopped.

It is paid by the Council directly to your Council Tax account. The Council will decide whether or not you're entitled to an Extended Payment. The Council will also consider whether you are entitled to in-work Council Tax Support. Once your extended payment period has ended, you can move onto in-work Council Tax Support (provided you are entitled to it) without having to make a new claim.

**If you do not get Pension Credit Guarantee, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance**

Even if you do not get Pension Credit Guarantee, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment & Support Allowance you may still get some help with paying your council tax. This is worked out by comparing the maximum Council Tax Support you could get with:

- your needs (called your living allowances or applicable amounts); and
- your income and capital resources

**Capital**

You will not be able to claim support if you are of working age and have capital / savings of more than £6,000 (any amount under £6,000 will be ignored).

If you are of pension age, the limit is £16,000 (unless you are have successfully claimed Pension Credit Guarantee Credit) and capital over £10,000 up to £16,000 will be taken into account at £1 a week for each £500 (or part of £500) of capital over £10,000. Actual interest payments or dividends are not counted as income but as capital.

**Absences from home**

There are some special situations in which you may continue to get Council Tax Support and these are explained below.

### **Going away**

You should normally let the council know if you are temporarily absent, for example if you go away on holiday. But the Council may not need to know if you will be absent for only a short time (for example 2-3 weeks) and your circumstances remain unchanged. If in doubt, ask us.

If you are temporarily absent you can normally get Council Tax Support for a maximum of 13 weeks as long as:

- you intend to return home; and
- in your absence you will not let or sub-let the part of your home where you normally live; and
- you will not be away for longer than 13 weeks.

In certain circumstances, you may be able to get Council Tax Support for up to 52 weeks, for example if you are in hospital, or are held in custody on remand, provided that:

- you intend to return home; and
- in your absence you will not let or sub-let the part of your home where you normally live; and
- you will not be away for longer than 52 weeks.

### **How to claim**

Claims for Council Tax Support can be made in writing, by telephone and electronically. Contact the Council for details.

All claims will need to be supported by evidence of your circumstances and this will need to be provided to the Council. If you are claiming Housing Benefit as well as Council Tax Support, the Council will provide you with a joint claim form

If you are married and your husband or wife normally lives with you, or if you live with someone as though you are a married couple, only one of you can make the claim for Council Tax Support. You may choose who is to make the claim, or if you cannot agree who is to claim, the Council will nominate one of you to be the claimant.

### **Appointees**

An appointee, for the purposes for Council Tax Support, is someone over 18 appointed by the Council, to manage the Council Tax Support claim of someone who is incapable of doing so themselves (mainly because of mental incapacity).

If you are already an appointee for other benefits and wish to be the appointee for Council Tax Support, you should write to be appointed by the Council. The role and responsibilities are the same. If you wish to become an appointee you should get in touch with the Council; they will explain the process and your responsibilities. The authority can end the appointment at any time. It is ended automatically if one of the people listed below is appointed. As an appointee you can resign at any time. An appointee cannot be made where there is already someone acting for the customer's financial affairs in any of the following capacities:

- a receiver appointed by the Court of Protection
- under Scottish law, a tutor, curator or other guardian, a continuing attorney or welfare attorney
- someone appointed to have the power of attorney.

### **Information and evidence**

The Council may need more information or supporting evidence so that they can calculate your Council Tax Support. If all the information they need is not on the claim form, they need to clarify something or want some more verification of your circumstances the Council will write to you. If you do not reply within one month from the date the request was made, a decision will be made

on your claim based on the evidence you have provided.

### **How long will it take to decide your claim for Council Tax Support**

The Council will deal with your claim for Council Tax Support as soon as possible after receiving all the information from you that they need to work out your entitlement

### **Date of claim**

The date of claim will be the date of first contact typically by phone provided that the claim form is returned to an office of the authority within one month of the claim form being issued.

### **If you change your address**

If you move to a different Council area, you must make a new claim for Council Tax Support at your new council. If you move within the same Council area, you must still tell the Council.

### **Backdating a claim**

If you have reached the qualifying age for state pension credit your Council Tax Support may be paid for up to 3 months before the date you made your claim. You do not have to ask for this and you do not have to show "good cause" for not having claimed earlier.

If you are of working age your claim may be backdated 1 month from the date of claim provided you can provide that there was a 'good cause' as to why you did not apply earlier.

### **Start of Council Tax Support**

If you become liable for Council Tax for the first time, for example if you move to a new address or reach the age of 18 or stop being a registered student, you should claim either in advance (you may claim up to 13 weeks before you expect to become liable), or in the week that your liability starts. You then get support from the day you start being liable for Council Tax. If you claim later than this, your support starts on the Monday after the day you claim

If you are already paying Council Tax and become entitled to support because you have less money or your applicable amount changes, you also start getting support on the Monday after you claim.

### **Start of Council Tax support where a claimant acquires a partner**

If you acquire a partner, you and your partner will be jointly and severally liable for Council Tax.

If you notify the council of the change, either before, or in the week that your partner becomes jointly and severally liable, support can be paid from the day that joint liability for council tax begins.

If you notify the Council of the change after the week in which your partner becomes jointly liable for Council Tax, support for you and your partner, as a couple, can only be paid from the Monday following the day you told the Council about the change. In this case, the Council will re-assess your support entitlement from the Monday following the day you and your partner become a couple, and they will take any income and capital your partner has into account and will look at your joint needs.

### **End of Council Tax Support**

If you stop being liable for Council Tax, for example if you move away from an address or become exempt or start being a registered student, your Council Tax Support stops on the day you stop being liable. If you no longer qualify for Council Tax Support because, for example, your income increases or your applicable amount changes, your Council Tax Support will be stopped from the Monday of the next support week.

### **End of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance entitlement**

If you stop getting Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance, you must tell the Council and they will have to stop your Council Tax Support. At the same time they will ask you to explain

your new circumstances, because you may still be able to get some help with your Council Tax.

### **People who live with you - non-dependants**

People who normally share your accommodation but are not dependent on you for financial support are known as non-dependants. Others who live with you such as a family and any children you have fostered do not count as non-dependants.

Non-dependants are people like grown-up sons or daughters and elderly relatives. If you have non-dependants living with you, your Council Tax Support may be affected.

### **Non-dependant deductions**

Any non-dependants who normally share your accommodation could affect the amount of Council Tax Support you get whether or not you are also getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit Guarantee

The following people do not count as non-dependants, whether they share accommodation or not:

- carers employed by a charity that charges for the service;
- joint tenants;
- subtenants;
- boarders;
- tenants of owner occupiers; and
- landlords/ladies and their partners.

They do not count as part of your household.

### **Non-dependant deductions from Council Tax Support**

Deductions will be made from your Council Tax Support for non-dependants aged over 18 who normally live with you. There are four levels of deduction. If the non-dependant is working less than 16 hours a week, the lowest deduction will apply. If the non-dependant is doing paid work for 16 hours or more a week, the level of deduction will depend on the non-dependant's gross income.

A deduction will not be made from your Council Tax Support if:

- the non-dependants' normal home is somewhere else; or
- you, or your partner, are registered blind or treated as blind; or
- you, or your partner, are receiving the care component of Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance in respect of yourself or your partner; or
- the non-dependant is receiving Pension Credit Guarantee, Income Support or income-based JSA or income-related Employment & Support Allowance; or
- the non-dependant is a prisoner; or
- the non-dependant is severely mentally impaired; or
- the non-dependant is over 18 but Child Benefit is still payable for them; or
- the non-dependant is a student nurse or apprentice or on Youth Training; or
- the non-dependant has been a patient in hospital for 52 weeks or more; or
- the non-dependant is living in a residential care or nursing home; or
- the non-dependant is a care worker; or
- the non-dependant is a resident of a hostel or night shelter for the homeless; or
- the non-dependant is a full-time student (even if they work full-time in the summer vacation).

A deduction may be delayed for 26 weeks if you or your partner are aged 65 or more and a non-dependant moves into your home, or the non-dependants' circumstances change to increase the deduction.

## Working out the amount of Council Tax Support

The maximum amount of Council Tax Support depends on:

- Whether you are in the Pension Age scheme (attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) or are in the Working Age scheme;
- How much Council Tax you have to pay; and
- Who you live with.

### How is maximum Council Tax Support calculated for the Pension Age Scheme

For the Pension Age Scheme the maximum Council Tax Support is set by the Government as up to 100% of the council tax you are liable to pay less any non dependant deductions (see non dependant deductions later in this document). If you are already getting or have claimed Pension Credit Guarantee the Council will grant maximum Council Tax Support

### How is maximum Council Tax Support calculated for the Working Age Scheme

For the Working Age Scheme the maximum Council Tax Support is set by the Council as up to 100% of the council tax you are liable to pay less any non dependant deductions (see non dependant deductions later in this document). However once your support is calculated, the Council has decided that all working age claimants will have their support further reduced by a percentage deduction (based on current estimates will be between 20% and 25%).

### Are there any people who will be protected from the cut in support?

Yes - the deduction **will not apply** where the following circumstances apply;

- The claimant or partner is in receipt of a severe disability premium within the calculation of council tax support or within any means tested benefit (Housing Benefit, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based); or
- The claimant, partner of any dependant is in receipt of a enhanced disability premium within the calculation of council tax support or within any means tested benefit (Housing Benefit, Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) or Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based); or
- The claimant or partner is in receipt of a support component within the calculation of council tax support or within their Employment and Support Allowance; or
- The claimant or partner receives War Disablement Pension or a War Widow's/Widower's Pension, or any similar payment from another country.

### What if I do not receive Pension Credit Guarantee, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance?

If you do not get Pension Credit Guarantee, income Support, income-based JSA or income related Employment and Support Allowance, the council has to work out if you can get Council Tax Support and if so, how much you can get.

To do this, the Council works out your maximum Council Tax Support, and then compares your needs – called the living allowances or applicable amount – with your resources (your income and capital).

For customers receiving the Savings Credit of Pension Credit, the Council will use a statement supplied by The Pension Service to assess your resources (income and capital).

### Income less than applicable amount

In this case you get maximum Council Tax Support (depending on whether you are of Pension Age or Working Age this may vary in amount).

You will also get maximum Council Tax Support if your income is the same as your applicable amount. Maximum support is your Council Tax liability net of any council tax discounts, such as single person discount, adjusted down for any non- dependent deductions. If you are of working age, once support has been calculated an amount will be deducted from the result (this is to be

decided by the Council but is likely to be between 20% and 25%). The cut will apply unless you are protected as mentioned earlier.

### **Income greater than applicable amount**

In this case you will get an amount less than your maximum Council Tax Support. The amount by which your Council Tax Support is reduced is based on the difference between your income and your needs.

A percentage of this difference – called a taper – is taken away from your maximum Council Tax Support. Maximum support is your Council Tax liability net of any council tax discounts, such as single person discount, adjusted down for any non- dependent deductions. If you are of working age, once support has been calculated an amount will be deducted from the result (this is to be decided by the Council but is likely to be between 20% and 25%). The cut will apply unless you are protected as mentioned earlier.

### **Calculating your needs**

Your needs are known as your living allowance or applicable amount and this is an amount that is set each year. For the Pension Age scheme this is set and approved by Parliament. For the Working Age scheme this is set by the Council. Your applicable amount takes into account the size of your family, your age and extra needs you may have. It is made up of personal allowances and premiums. Premiums are included if you have a family, or disability, or a disabled child.

### **Living Allowances or Applicable Amounts**

The living allowances or applicable amount represents the needs of you and your family if you have one. The larger your family the larger your applicable amount. The applicable amount is made up of three parts:

- a personal allowance; and
- personal allowances for children in your family; and
- premiums.

### **Personal allowance**

Your applicable amount always includes a personal allowance. Different amounts apply according to your age and whether you have a partner.

### **Personal allowances for children**

If you are looking after children (other than foster children) then you get an allowance for each child included in your applicable amount according to his or her age. This allowance is included until that child leaves school or reaches their 20th birthday.

A special rule applies if the child has left school and started work before the Child Benefit stops.

### **Premiums for your family**

Once personal allowances and allowances for children have been worked out, premiums can be added – if they apply – to make up your applicable amount.

### **Your children**

A family premium will be included if you have any dependent children in your household. No matter how many children you have, you can only get one family premium.

### **Premiums or components for disabilities**

These premiums are included in your applicable amount for people in your family with disabilities. There are three premiums and two components in this group:

- disabled child premium (for each disabled child in your household);
- disability premium (if you or your partner gets one of the benefits listed below or you have been off sick for more than 52 weeks);
- severe disability premium (if you are disabled and live in special circumstances);
- work related activity component; and

- support component.

### **Disabled child premium**

The disabled child premium is a flat-rate premium, which may be awarded for each disabled child in your household and can be included with any other premiums. Your child is considered disabled if they are:

- registered blind
- or receiving Disability Living Allowance.

### **Disability premium**

Disability premium will be included in your applicable amount if you and your partner are aged less than pension credit age and:

- either of you is registered blind; or
- either of you gets one of the qualifying benefits listed below; or
- has been off sick for 52 weeks or more.

### **Qualifying benefits**

You will get the disability premium if you or your partner get any of the following benefits:

- Disability Living Allowance ;or
- Working Tax Credit Disability Element; or
- Constant Attendance Allowance; or
- War pensioners' mobility supplement; or
- Severe Disablement Allowance; or
- Incapacity Benefit – long term rate

### **Severe disability premium**

This premium cannot be included on its own. You must first qualify for the disability premium.

*If you are single or a lone parent* - The severe disability premium may be included in your applicable amount if you:

- receive the care component of Disability Living Allowance at the highest or middle rate, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance; and
- live alone (but if others live with you, see below); and
- no one receives Carer's Allowance for looking after you.

*If you have a partner*

You may get the severe disability premium if you both:

- receive the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at the highest or middle rate, Attendance Allowance (AA) or Constant Attendance Allowance; or
- your partner is blind and you receive the care component of DLA at the highest or middle rate, AA or Constant Attendance Allowance; and
- no one lives with you; and
- no one receives Carers Allowance for looking after either one or both of you.

For the purposes of severe disability premium your Council Tax Support is not affected if other people living with you are:

- Children; or
- aged 16-17; or
- a person who is registered blind; or
- receiving the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) at the highest or middle rate, or Attendance Allowance (AA); or
- people caring for you who are employed by a charity that makes a charge for this service

### **Enhanced Disability Premium**

Enhanced Disability Premium is awarded where you, or a member of your family, who is aged under 60 receives the highest rate of the care component of Disabled Living Allowance (DLA) or where the claimant is in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance Support Component. This premium will remain in payment if the DLA is suspended during hospitalisation. This premium is awarded at three different rates. They are:

- a rate for each dependent child/young person in your household who receives the highest rate of DLA (Care component);
- a rate for a single person who receives the highest rate of DLA (Care component);
- a rate for couples where at least one member of the couple receives the highest rate of DLA (Care component).

### **Work Related Activity Component**

This is awarded where you or your partner receives main phase Employment and Support Allowance and receive a similar component within that benefit

### **Support Component**

This is awarded where you or your partner receives main phase Employment and Support Allowance and receive a similar component within that benefit

### **Carer Premium**

The Carer Premium is awarded if either you or your partner are looking after a disabled person and:

- receive Carer's Allowance; or
- made a claim for Carer's Allowance and would be entitled but for an overlapping benefit.

If both you and your partner satisfy the qualifying conditions two premiums can be awarded.

The carer premium continues for eight weeks after caring ceases.

### **Calculating your resources**

Your resources are made up of your income and your capital. These are worked out as a weekly amount of income.

#### **Income**

Income is all the money that you have coming in from earnings, social security benefits, maintenance payments and other sources. Depending on the type of income, it may be completely or partially ignored in the calculation of your Council Tax Support (the disregards), or taken fully into account.

Normally, your resources and those of your partner are taken together when your income and capital are worked out.

#### **Income from employment**

This explains what counts as your income from work you do, when you are employed by someone else. If you are a company director or any other officeholder in a company you are classed as an employee of that company.

Earnings from employment means any money you are paid when you work for someone else. This includes the following types of payments:

- bonuses or commission (including tips);
- money you get instead of your normal pay (for example, a liquidator may give you money when your employer stops trading and you are owed some pay);
- money you get in place of notice to end your employment, or money you get to make up for losing your job;

- money you get for holidays you did not take (holiday pay) – but not holiday pay owed to you more than four weeks after you stopped work;
- money you get if you are kept on while doing no work (for example, a retainer paid to school cooks during school holidays);
- expenses you are given to cover your travel to and from work;
- expenses you are given to cover the costs of looking after someone in your family
- any expenses you are given that are not essential for you to carry out your work;
- money you get, under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, when you are not given work because of bad weather, or money you get because of unfair dismissal;
- money that an industrial tribunal orders your employer to give you if the period of notice or redundancy that is required by law has not been given;
- money you get from your former employer's redundancy funds if the business goes into liquidation;
- Statutory Sick Pay or Statutory Maternity Pay;
- Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay;
- Employer's sick pay or employer's maternity pay
- earnings from permitted work, that is, work while you are getting an incapacity benefit which your doctor thinks would benefit your health.

Earnings from employment do not include:

- payment in kind (where no money is involved)
- expenses you are given that are essential for you to carry out work
- any occupational pension.

### **Net earnings**

Once your gross earnings have been worked out, your council will take away:

- your income tax payments (allowing for personal relief); and
- your National Insurance (NI) contributions; and
- half of any contributions you make to an occupational or personal pension scheme (any amounts paid to a pension scheme by your employer do not count).

This gives your net earnings, which are used to work out your Council Tax Support

### **Self-employed earnings**

If you are self-employed, all the money you earn when you are not employed by someone else is known as your earnings from self-employment. You may have self-employed earnings even if you are also working for someone else, or if you are a franchise holder.

When working out your earnings the Council will want to know how much you earn when you are self-employed, and you will be asked to provide evidence, if possible, of how much you earn.

There are three stages in working out your self-employed earnings. The first is calculating the gross profit of your business. In the second stage, deductions – which are called allowable expenses – are taken away from the gross profit to give the net profit of the business. In the third stage, tax, NI, and pension payments are taken away from your net profit to give your net earnings.

### **Childminders**

If you are a childminder only one third of your earnings from childminding will be taken into account when your council works out your Council Tax Support.

### **Earnings and earnings disregards**

After working out your net earnings, any amount that is not counted in the calculation of your Council Tax Support is known as a disregard.

The amount of your earnings that is not counted depends on which premium is included in your applicable amount. There is more information on the applicable amount and premiums.

**When £5 is not counted** - If you are single and you cannot get a greater disregard by any of the means explained below, up to £5 of your weekly earnings will not be counted (the £5 disregard).

**When £10 is not counted** - If you have a partner and you cannot get the £20 disregard by any of the means explained below, up to £10 of your joint weekly earnings will not be counted (the £10 disregard).

**When £20 is not counted** - £20 per week of your earnings will not be counted if your applicable amount includes:

- the disability premium; or
- the severe disability premium; or
- a component with Employment and Support Allowance; or
- or the carer premium (where the carer is working).

**When £25 is not counted** - If you are a lone parent, up to £25 of your weekly earnings will not be counted (the lone parent disregard).

If both you and your partner are carers, the total disregard cannot be more than £20. The carer premium and this earnings disregard can continue for a further eight weeks after caring ceases.

If you have a partner, your earnings are added together when your Council Tax Support is worked out.

If you cannot get the £20 disregard under the above categories, you may still be able to get it if you are:

- a part-time firefighter; or
- an auxiliary coastguard; or
- a part-time member of a crew launching or manning a lifeboat; or
- a member of the Territorial Army or the Reserve Forces.

#### **Additional disregard**

If you work on average 30 hours a week or more you will usually be able to get an extra earnings disregard. In certain circumstances you can also qualify for the higher earnings disregard if you work 16 hours or more e.g. if you are a lone parent or disabled. This is the same amount as the 30-hour tax credit in your Working Tax Credit (WTC)

#### **Childcare charges**

In certain circumstances, average childcare charges of up to £175 (for one child) or up to £300 for 2 or more children per week per family can be offset against your earnings. This disregard, which is in addition to the other earnings disregards, is available to:

- lone parents who are working 16 hours or more per week;
- couples where both are working 16 hours or more per week;
- couples where one member is working 16 hours or more per week and, generally, the disability premium, or, in certain circumstances, the higher pensioner premium, is included in the applicable amount on account of the other member's incapacity or the other member is in hospital or in prison.

It applies where formal childcare is provided by, for example, registered childminders or day nurseries for children until the first Monday in September following their 15th birthday (or the 16th birthday for children who are entitled to Disability Living Allowance or who are registered blind).

In certain circumstances, help with childcare costs can be given while you are on maternity leave or paternity or adoption leave or you are sick. The authority will be able to give you more details.

In some other cases explained here, different amounts of your earnings are not counted.

If you are in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income related Employment and Support Allowance then any earnings you get will not be counted again in working out Council Tax Support.

### **Notional Earnings**

If you have done some work and you seem to have been paid very little for it, then the council will estimate what that work is worth. If you have a good reason for the pay being so low – for example, if you worked for someone who had very little money – then you should let the council know. If necessary, the Council may check your statement of earnings by asking your employer.

### **Other income**

Other income is all the other money you have coming in apart from earnings from employment or self-employment. It is sometimes called unearned income. In some cases none of your unearned income is counted. Sometimes part of it is counted, in other cases it is all counted.

### **State benefits**

The following benefits are counted in full as income for Council Tax Support:

- Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Contribution-based Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit
- State Pension
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Carer's Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
- Industrial Death Benefit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit (ignored if you or your partner are pension age)
- Savings Credit of Pension Credit
- Bereavement Benefits (ignored if you or your partner are pension age).

### **Unearned income that is not counted**

The following types of income are not counted by the Council when it works out your Council Tax Support:

- any income you get if you are getting the Guarantee Credit of Pension Credit, Income Support, income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESAIR) or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA);
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) / Personal Independence Payment (PIP) from April 2013;
- Attendance Allowance (AA) or Constant Attendance Allowance (CAA);
- Attendance allowances paid as part of a War Disablement Pension or Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit;
- Child Benefit;
- Child Maintenance (spousal maintenance is taken into account in part or in full depending on whether you have a child);
- money you get which takes the place of DLA, AA, CAA, or Income Support;
- war pensioners' mobility supplement;
- any money you get from the Social Fund;
- Guardian's Allowance;
- money you get as a holder of the Victoria Cross, the George Cross, or any comparable award;
- any grants or allowances you get from your local education authority if you have a dependent child who continues in education after school leaving age;
- any training premium and any refunded travelling expenses or living away from home allowances when you are on a Department for Education and Employment Training

- Scheme training course or at an employment rehabilitation centre;
- any money such as interest or dividends from savings or investments;
  - any expenses you get from an employer that you need to carry out your work;
  - any expenses you get from a charity so that you can carry out unpaid work;
  - any income in kind (where you are given something other than money);
  - any income you have which has been held back outside this country, as long as it remains held back, and it is not within your control;
  - any money you get for fostering a child;
  - any money you get for looking after an elderly or disabled person temporarily (community boarding out schemes);
  - any money you get from a local Social Services Department to help keep a child at home instead of putting them into care;
  - any Council Tax Benefit you have received;
  - special payments made with your War Widow's Pension if you have been designated as a pre-1973 war widow;
  - any charitable or voluntary payments which are made regularly;
  - payments made under the Employment Department's 'Access to Work' scheme for disabled people; or
  - War Disablement Pension or a War Widow's/Widower's Pension, or any similar payment from another country

Some types of income may be counted as capital.

#### **Unearned income that is counted in part**

The following are the types of unearned income that are only partly counted.

- the first £15 of Widowed Mother's Allowance or Widowed Parent's Allowance;
- the first £20 of any money from sub-tenants; or
- the first £20 then 50% of the excess of money you receive from a boarder is ignored. The balance is treated as income.

#### **Notional income**

The council may think that there is income, which you could get, but you are not claiming it. This is known as notional income because you do not actually receive that income. The Council may take this into account for Council Tax Support purposes

#### **Parental contributions to students**

If you are making a parental contribution to a student then part of your income is not counted to take account of this.

#### **Capital**

Your capital includes savings and investments held by yourself in any form (for example, bank and building society accounts, investment trusts, and shares) from any source (for example, inheritance, redundancy payments, and irregular payments from a charitable or voluntary source). It will normally also include the net sale value of land and housing that you do not occupy, after deducting 10% for expenses of sale.

If you have a partner, capital belonging to your partner is treated as yours for the purposes of Council Tax Support

#### **Capital outside the United Kingdom**

If you have capital – in the form of liquid or fixed assets – outside this country, the council will need to know how soon it can be transferred and how much it is worth. If the capital cannot be brought into this country, enquiries will be made about how easily it can be sold, and whether a willing buyer can be found. If no willing buyer can be found, it may not be counted.

### **Capital for Working Age**

The first £6,000 of capital is not counted. If you have capital over £6,000 no support can be granted.

### **Capital for Pension Age**

The first £10,000 of capital is not counted. Capital over £10,000 up to £16,000 will be taken into account at £1 a week for each £500 (or part of £500) of capital over £10,000. Actual interest payments or dividends are not counted as income but as capital.

For customers who receive the Guarantee Credit of Pension Credit there is no upper limit on the capital you can have.

If you have capital over £16,000, you may still be entitled to Second Adult Rebate, as your income and savings are not taken into account. However, the actual income received from the second adult's capital will be taken into account.

### **Personal possessions**

Personal possessions – for example, a car, furniture and fittings in your house, and family belongings – are usually not included in the calculation of capital. However, this may not be the case where the Council has good reason to believe that something has been bought to reduce your capital in order to gain or increase entitlement to benefit. If the council decides that you deliberately got rid of capital just so that you can get Council Tax Support, it may assume that you have notional capital to the value of the capital you disposed of.

### **If you own your home**

The value of your property (including the house, garage and outbuildings) is not counted unless any part of the property could reasonably be sold off separately. Loans raised on the property will be counted as capital.

### **Property you own but do not occupy**

The value of this property is counted as capital but you may be able to get Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support even if the value of the property means that your savings are more than £16,000. This is because the value of the property may be ignored when your savings are worked out, in certain circumstances.

If the property is occupied by an elderly or disabled relative as their home, its value is not taken into account for as long as it is so occupied.

If you have recently acquired the property and you intend to occupy it as your home, its value may not be counted for 26 weeks, or for a longer period if reasonable, from the date you acquired it.

If you are trying to sell the property, its value may not be counted for the first 26 weeks after you start doing this. It may not be counted for longer than this if you are finding it difficult to sell the property.

If you are carrying out essential repairs or alterations so that you can live in the property, its value may not be counted for a period of 26 weeks from the date you first arranged for repairs to be carried out. It may not be counted for longer than this if you are finding it difficult to finish the work.

If you are taking legal action so that you can live in the property, its value may not be counted for the first 26 weeks after you start doing this. It may not be counted for longer than this if legal action is continuing and you cannot live in the property.

If you have left the property after the breakdown of a relationship, and it is occupied by your former partner, its value may not be counted for the first 26 weeks after you left. If the property is occupied by your former partner and they are a lone parent, the property will not be counted for as long as it continues to be so occupied.

### **Deposits on your accommodation**

Sums that have to be deposited with a housing association as a condition of your tenancy are not counted.

### **Earmarked capital**

If capital from the sale of a house is kept for a house purchase, it is not counted for up to six months, or longer if:

- major repairs or adaptations are needed for you to occupy your home; or
- the completion of the purchase of your new home is unavoidably delayed.

Compensation received for a burglary or for damage to or loss of a house is also not counted for six months, as long as it is to be used for repair or replacement

### **Valuation of property**

Property will be valued at the price it would be expected to fetch on the open market, less any outstanding mortgage or legal charges on the property. Ten per cent of the current market value will also be deducted to take into account the cost of the sale.

If you have property outside Great Britain and there is no restriction on transferring money to this country, your property will be valued at its local sale value. If there is a restriction, its notional value will be the value of a sale to someone in the UK. In both cases, any outstanding legal charges on the property or mortgages will be deducted, together with 10% of the total to cover the cost of the sale.

### **National Savings Certificates**

National Savings Certificates of the current issue are valued at purchase price. Certificates of a previous issue are valued as if they were purchased on the last day of that issue.

### **Life assurance policies**

The surrender value of life assurance policies is not taken into account when assessing Council Tax Support.

### **Arrears of benefits**

Any arrears of Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Pension Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit that you get are not counted for up to 12 months.

### **Lump sum payment of deferred State Pension**

The gross amount of lump sum, or an interim payment made on account of a final lump sum, paid at the end of the period of deferring State Pension will be disregarded as capital for the life of the recipient.

### **Compensation payments**

For Council Tax Support purposes, compensation payments will normally be counted in full as capital. Capital will not be counted if it is held in trust or by the 'Court of Protection' as a result of a personal injury payment – for example, a criminal injury payment or a vaccine damage payment. For persons of Pension Age compensation payments made as a result of personal injury are ignored whether or not placed in a trust.

### **Business assets**

Business assets of a self-employed earner are not counted while engaged in that business. Nor are they counted in certain other circumstances, but any shares owned will be treated as capital.

### **Notional Capital**

The council may think that there is capital which you could get but which you do not have. This is known as notional capital because you do not actually possess that capital.

- Capital you have disposed of - You will be treated as having notional capital if you have disposed of capital in order to get Council Tax Support or to get more Council Tax Support.

- Capital you could have got - If you have the right to money held in a private trust, then that is actually your capital, and will be taken fully into account.

If the Council has decided to treat you as possessing notional capital they will reduce the amount of this capital on a regular basis by a set calculation. This calculation reduces your notional capital by the amount of support you have lost as a result of deprivation.

### **How Council Tax Support is paid**

If you are liable to pay Council Tax, the Council will normally send you a Council Tax bill from which your Council Tax Support has already been deducted. You will then have to pay only the reduced amount. This means that you will not actually receive any money, but your Council Tax bills will be reduced.

### **How you will be notified about your Council Tax Support**

The Council will reach a decision on your entitlement to Council Tax Support as soon as possible after our claim and all supporting evidence is received.

### **How can I appeal?**

If you disagree with the decision you will need to write to the Council stating the reasons. The council has two months to reply to you. If the Council agrees with your appeal then the Council Tax Support will be amended and you will receive another Council Tax bill showing the revised amount.

If the council does not agree with your appeal or you do not receive a response within two months, you may appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. This is an independent tribunal who will hear your case (either in person or in writing). If the Valuation Tribunal agrees with you they will instruct the Council to amend your Council Tax Support accordingly.

Throughout the appeal you will still be required to make payment of your Council Tax liability as determined by the Council.

### **Changes of circumstances**

You must notify your Council immediately if there is a change in anything that might affect your right to or the amount of Council Tax Support.

This will include:

- where you live; or
- who you live with; or
- your income, savings and investments; or if you stop getting Pension Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance; or
- if you get a job; or
- if you or your partner go into hospital; or
- if there is any other change in your circumstances which you might reasonably be expected to know might affect your right to Council Tax Support

The changes must be notified in writing although in certain circumstances the council may accept this by telephone or electronically

Most of these changes will affect your Council Tax Support in the following support week, but changes in the amount of council tax payable will affect your Council Tax Support from the day on which the change occurs.

### **Students**

Council Tax Support is not normally available for students. The exceptions are:

- vulnerable students, such as disabled students and lone parents;
- part-time students; and
- couples where one partner is not a student (a 25% discount disregard will be applied to the Council Tax bill if the student is a full time student).

Full time students are usually not liable to pay Council Tax.

### **Loan and grant income**

The grant money you get is generally paid to cover the period you are studying. If it does not cover this period your council, or Student Awards Agency for Scotland, will tell you the period it does cover.

If you are eligible for a loan or have been awarded a grant the Council will assume that these amounts are paid, whether they are actually paid or not.

The money you receive in your loan is your income for the period between the beginning of September and the end of June and is divided by the number of weeks in that period to give a weekly amount.

If you receive a dependants grant this will be taken into account over the same period as your loan unless you also receive, or only receive, a grant towards your personal maintenance.

Because much of your loan is meant for essential educational items, some of the grant is ignored when working out your income for Council Tax Support. The following elements of your loan or grant are not counted:

- tuition and examination fees;
- any disability allowance in your grant;
- the cost of term-time residential study away from your college;
- the Two Homes Grant – given when you have to maintain another home away from college;
- an allowance for books and equipment; and
- travel expenses.

### **Students and partners**

Your grant may have been reduced to allow for your partner's income because your partner can make a contribution to your expenses. An amount – equal to that contribution – is then ignored when the council works out your joint income for Council Tax Support. If a student is required to contribute to his own grant income, an equivalent amount is disregarded from the income used to assess that contribution.

### **Other income**

Will be treated in the same way as grant income if it is intended for expenditure that is needed on the course. If the income is not intended for expenditure on the course, it is treated under the normal rules for income.

### **Loans from the Student Loans Company**

The maximum loan available to you will be taken into account regardless of whether you have borrowed up to your limit or not. The loan will be divided by the number of weeks between the beginning of September and the end of June to arrive at a weekly figure for assessment purposes. Up to £10 a week of the loan may be ignored.

### **Access funds**

These are discretionary payments made by educational establishments to students who are facing financial hardship.

The amount of the payment to be taken into account will depend on how it is to be paid and what the payment is for. Some payments from the funds can be disregarded in full.

### **Information and information sharing**

The Council will use information provided by the Department for Work and Pension and Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs for the purposes of Council Tax support, council tax liability, billing, administration and enforcement

The Council may receive and obtain information and evidence relating to claims for Council Tax Support, the council may receive or obtain the information or evidence from-

- a. persons making claims for council tax support;
- b. other persons in connection with such claims;
- c. other local authorities; or
- d. central government departments including the DWP and HMRC

The Council may verify relevant information supplied to, or obtained for Council Tax Support purposes.

### **Counter Fraud and Compliance**

In order to protect the finances of the Council and also in the interests of all Council Taxpayers, the authority will undertake such actions as allowed by law to;

- a. Prevent and detect fraudulent claims and actions in respect of Council Tax Support;
- b. Carry out investigations fairly, professionally and in accordance with the law; and
- c. Ensure that sanctions are applied in appropriate cases