

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

**LOCALISED SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX
AND RELATED REFORMS: ACTION PLAN**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 At its meeting on 26 March 2013 cabinet received a report on Localised Support for Council Tax and related welfare reforms from the Corporate Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.2 This report sets out a proposed action plan to deliver the Panel's recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In the 2012/13 financial year the Corporate Scrutiny Panel determined to review the local implications of pending welfare reform changes. From 1 April 2013 this would transfer from DWP to the Council responsibility for Council tax support, and two elements of the social fund, crisis payments and community care grants.
- 2.2 The scrutiny focussed on the process of design and consultation on a local scheme and on the evaluation of the potential local impact of the changes, including the steps the council proposed to take to assist those in financial hardship.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 Appendix A provides an action plan which addresses each of the Panel's four recommendations, with an appropriate timescale. This has been agreed by the Corporate Scrutiny Panel and comes to cabinet for endorsement.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 The council has the freedom to determine its own review procedures on the council tax support scheme and related local welfare provision, within parameters set by legislation. The Corporate Scrutiny Panel can provide valuable assistance in this process.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

- 5.1 The review of local welfare provision can be completed within existing resources. Any changes arising from the review may have financial implications for the council.

6. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

- 6.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment will form part of the review of welfare provision.

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

- 7.1 No outcomes at this stage.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That cabinet approves the action plan attached at Appendix A.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

Civic Centre
Ashby Road
SCUNTHORPE
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1AB
Author: Peter Fijalkowski
Date: 10 June 2013

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Report of the Corporate Scrutiny Panel, Localised Support for Council Tax, March 2013

PROPOSED ACTION PLAN FOR LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT AND WELFARE REFORM

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTIONS	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	INDICATIVE TARGET DATES
<p>Recommendation 1 That all members and council officers be congratulated on the apparent seamless transition towards implementation of the localised support for council tax scheme.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of transition is actively monitored</p>	<p>Assistant Director Financial Services</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 That council officers be congratulated on the inclusive way it has engaged all stakeholders in the process. The success of the away days and information events demonstrates just how important engagement is.</p>	<p>Appropriate stakeholder and customer feedback will be considered in the review of the welfare schemes for 2014/15 (see 3 below)</p>	<p>Head of Local Taxation and Benefits Shared Service</p>	<p>November 2013</p>
<p>Recommendation 3 That the scrutiny panel re-visits the localized support for council tax policy in six months time as the council prepares to implement a new policy for 2014-15. The re-visit will consider the communications strategy, income recovery experience and any impact on the council's collection rate for council tax as a result of the new localised scheme.</p>	<p>The Council Tax Support Scheme is subject to annual review and is for Council to approve for 2014/15 in December. Officers to evaluate the impact on households and the cost to the council in order to inform any proposed changes to the scheme</p>	<p>Head of Local Taxation and Benefits Shared Service</p>	<p>November 2013</p>

<p>Recommendation 4 That the scrutiny panel receive updates from the Financial Inclusion Group (FIG) on the impact of, and remedial action taken, to assist those householders who are in financial hardship as a result of the implementation of the new policies.</p>	<p>A quarterly update will be provided on the numbers seeking financial assistance from the council's support fund, the level of assistance provided and action taken by the council and FIG partners to assist those facing financial hardship</p>	<p>Head of Local Taxation and Benefits Shared Service</p>	<p>On-going</p>
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