

**COUNCIL
24 NOVEMBER 2022**

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - SCHEME APPROVAL 2023-24

**Responsible Cabinet Member -
Councillor Scott Durham, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director -
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To approve the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for 2023-24.

Summary

2. On 25 November 2021, Council approved the local CTS scheme for 2022-23 and the scheme became operational on 1 April 2022.
3. Councils are required to set a CTS scheme each year and as part of that exercise:
 - (a) Consider whether any changes should be made to the existing scheme, and
 - (b) Where changes are made, consider what transitional protection, if any, should apply to anyone affected by those changes.
4. This report sets out the details of the CTS scheme for 2023-24. No significant changes are proposed to the existing scheme, other than the removal of the provisions for care leavers under the age of 25, as it is proposed to introduce a Council Tax exemption for this group, covered under a separate report.
5. This report was considered by Cabinet on 8 November 2022, who agreed its onward submission for approval by Council.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that Council:-
 - (a) Consider the contents of this report.
 - (b) Approve the CTS scheme for 2022-23 at **Appendix 1** which is to continue providing up to 80% CTS for all working age people.

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) The Council is required to publish a local CTS scheme for 2023-24 by 11 March 2023.
 - (b) The CTS schemes since 2013 have all been implemented successfully without any major challenges.
 - (c) The continued application of a reduced entitlement for working aged people is still appropriate, given the current financial position of the Council.

Elizabeth Davison
Group Director of Operations

Background Papers

- (i) Local Government Finance Bill 2012
- (ii) Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012

Anthony Sandys: Extension 6926

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues
Health and Wellbeing	The CTS scheme may have an adverse impact on the health and well-being of low income groups
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	There is no impact in this report
Diversity	Working aged recipients of CTS are treated differently to pensioners, whose CTS entitlement is decided under a national set of regulations
Wards Affected	All wards are affected but in particular, those with higher numbers of people claiming CTS
Groups Affected	Working age recipients of CTS are affected by the local scheme. Pensioners are protected under a national set of regulations.
Budget and Policy Framework	The issues contained within this report do not represent a change to Council budget or the Council's policy framework
Key Decision	This is not an Executive decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an Executive decision
Council Plan	This report supports the Council Plan to maximise Council Tax income
Efficiency	The operation of the local CTS scheme continues to represent a significant financial challenge to the Council and other precepting authorities

Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	Care leavers under the age of 25 will be exempt from Council Tax from April 2023 covered under a separate report
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MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

8. Since 2013, the previous national Council Tax Benefit scheme was replaced with local CTS schemes, designed and administered by local authorities. Grants are paid to local authorities to fund CTS, but the overall amount does not fully meet actual expenditure levels.
9. The Council is required to design and publish a new CTS scheme each year, in time to implement for annual Council Tax billing. A full public consultation exercise and an equality impact assessment were undertaken on the initial scheme in 2013.
10. Each year, the Council has to consider whether any changes should be made to the existing scheme and, where changes are made, consider what transitional protection, if any, should apply to anyone affected by those changes.
11. Each year's scheme then has to be approved by full Council.
12. The key feature of Darlington's CTS scheme is that working aged people can only receive a maximum of 80% support towards their Council Tax. In April 2018, a provision was made to provide up to 100% support for care leavers under the age of 25. Under a separate report, it is proposed to provide a Council Tax exemption for this group from April 2023 and therefore, this provision in the CTS scheme has been removed for 2023-24 (as care leavers under the age of 25 will no longer pay Council Tax). Pensioners are also protected under a national set of regulations.
13. No other changes are recommended for the 2023-24 CTS scheme however, Members should note the following:
 - (a) The applicable amounts in Table 1 and non-dependant deductions in Table 2 are those amounts currently applied to the 2022-23 CTS scheme and will be uprated for 2023-24. The uprated amounts will be calculated with reference to the amended Prescribed Requirement regulations and Social Security Benefits Uprating Order. These regulations will be published in January 2023 and the CTS scheme for 2023-24 will therefore be amended before publication.
 - (b) Any other changes to the Prescribed Requirements regulations 2023 will also be incorporated into the CTS scheme for 2023-24 before publication. These changes are for reference only and do not represent a change to the local CTS scheme.

Financial Implications

14. The recommendations in paragraph 6 will not have any significant financial implications and therefore it is not intended to amend the budget in the MTFP.