

Report To:	COUNCIL
Date:	21 January 2016
Executive Member/ Reporting Officer:	Cllr Jim Fitzpatrick, First Deputy – Performance and Finance Sandra Stewart - Director of Governance and Resources Ilys Cookson, Assistant Executive Director – Exchequer Services
Subject Matter:	CONSULTATION OUTCOME AND SETTING LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/17
Report Summary:	This report sets out the outcome of consultation on three proposed changes to the existing local Council Tax Support scheme and sets out the impact the changes may have on different claimant groups, equality impact assessment, estimated costs of the scheme together with risks, and recommends a revised scheme for approval by Council to make the scheme more affordable within the reducing Council budget.
Recommendations:	That the Council approves and agrees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17, as attached at Appendix 5, which includes the following four proposed changes to the previous scheme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cap support to a Band A property. • Reduce the maximum CTS award to 75%. • Align deductions for non-dependents of working age to the same level as those in the prescribed scheme for claimants of pensionable age. • Disregard non-dependent deductions for CTS claimants in receipt of a Staying Put payment. ii) That the hardship fund and policy continues to be in place, as set out in Appendix 4, in order to assist severe cases of hardship funded from existing budgets and administered via the Tameside Resettlement Scheme.
Financial Implications: (Authorised By Section 151 Officer)	As the cost of the Council Tax Support scheme is difficult to predict a number of prudent assumptions relating to demand, inflation and collection rates have been included in the current cost estimates. The changes to the scheme proposed and set out at 10.3 (table 5) could realise a reduction in cost of £0.696m, assuming no other changes, such as caseload and Council tax level as set out in 10.4. This reduction in cost is based on the current estimated costs of the scheme. This will be monitored throughout the year, any savings when realised will be reflected in the Collection Fund.
Legal Implications: (Authorised By Borough Solicitor)	Under Appendix 4 paragraph 5 (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, the Council must agree any changes to its discretionary scheme by 31 January 2016, which must be in accordance with the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Prescribed Regulations)(England) Regulations 2012 as amended, as must its appeal process. In preparing the amended scheme consultation has been carried

out as has an equality impact assessment in accordance with the public sector equality duty. This is attached to the report at **Appendix 3** and members must ensure that they both read and understand this assessment before making a decision.

Having set a discretionary scheme, the Council must also be mindful of recent case law (including R (Logan) v the London Borough of Havering – 6.11.15) when applying the scheme. In particular, it may not be considered reasonable to refuse hardship funding on the basis that the hardship fund is exhausted (paragraph 8.9 of this report). Any claim for hardship must be considered on its merits only and careful consideration should be given to the impact of any restrictions on those of working age, and or those that have a disability.

Risk Management:

As set out in the report.

Links To Community Plan:

The administration of the Council Tax Support also links with the corporate governance theme as well as Prosperous Tameside and Supportive Tameside themes.

Access To Information:

The background papers relating to this report including consultation questions can be inspected by contacting the report writer Ilys Cookson, Assistant Executive Director – Exchequer Services by:

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Welfare Reform Act 2012, contained provision to abolish Council Tax Benefit and replace it with a power for each local authority to have its own locally set council tax reduction scheme. The necessary primary legislation is included in the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which contained provision that Councils wishing to implement a local scheme must have the scheme approved by 31 January each year.
- 1.2 The Council introduced its own Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, or Council Tax Support scheme as it is better known, from 1 April 2013. Had it not undertaken to put in place its own scheme the Council would have had to fund the 10% funding reduction by Central Government in respect of Council Tax benefits which, at that time, was estimated to be approximately £3.2 million.
- 1.3 The local scheme was funded in the first year by way of a fixed grant, which the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had determined as being 90% of the 2011/12 outturn for Council Tax Benefit expenditure. In real terms this reduction in funding equated to 17.3% for Tameside for 2013/14 and a local Council Tax Support scheme was set taking into account the budget available.
- 1.4 Tameside's own local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme was set at the Council meeting on 21 December 2012. The scheme was adopted in alignment with Universal Credit Regulations.
- 1.5 Tameside's CTS scheme has been in operation from 1 April 2013 and has remained unchanged. The caseload of claimants has reduced steadily since the scheme was introduced from 12,720 working age claimants and 10,996 pensioners in April 2013 to 11,760 working age and 9,753 pensioners as at September 2015.
- 1.6 It is appropriate given the Councils overall financial position that further revisions to the scheme are now considered. The current cost of the CTS scheme is £14.8m. It is clear, given the financial challenges we face, that a local Council Tax Support scheme must be set taking into account the finances that are available, which are reducing.
- 1.7 This report sets out:
 - What the Council is required to do
 - What it has consulted the public and precepting bodies about
 - What the public and precepting bodies said
 - The impact of the proposals on the public.

2 PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 In setting a Council Tax Support scheme the Council must adhere to a number of procedural requirements contained in the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which are detailed as follows:
 - Adopt a Council Tax Support scheme no later than 31 January before the start of the financial year to which the scheme applies.
 - Comply with prescribed requirements which must apply to all schemes
 - Ensure that claimants of state pension credit age continue to receive the same support under the scheme as they receive in council tax benefit.
 - Consider the statutory public sector equality duty in adopting a scheme and the child poverty strategy.
 - Consult all major precepting authorities.
 - Consult generally on changes to the scheme

3 CONSULTATION PROPOSALS

3.1 The Council has consulted on three options detailed at **Appendix 1** and summarised below and as contained in the Executive Decision dated 14 September 2015:

- Cap support to a Band A property.
- Reduce the maximum CTS award to 75%.
- Align deductions for non-dependents of working age to the same level as those in the prescribed scheme for claimants of pensionable age.

PROPOSAL A: cap support to a band a property

3.2 Current CTS support is limited to claimants living in band A and band B properties. Claimants living in band C property and above have to pay difference in full between a band B property and the band of their property for working age claimants. As at 1 September 2015 there were 21,513 working age and pensionable age CTS claimants of which 17,063 live in a band A property, which equates to 79% of the caseload. The Council currently subsidise, via CTS, anyone living in a band B property or below. If implemented this proposal would affect approximately 1,835 claimants and reduce the cost of the scheme by an estimated £234k. If these claimants met certain vulnerability criteria they would be protected elsewhere in the scheme.

PROPOSAL B: Reduce the maximum CTS award to 75%

3.3 The current maximum CTS awarded under the present scheme is 80%. This proposal would affect all 11,760 (as at 1 September 2015) working age claimants equally if implemented. If Council Tax increases then so too does the CTS paid out by the same proportion. Any reduction in cost arising from this proposal would have to be net of any potential increase. Reducing support to a maximum of 75% would mean that all working age claimants would have to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax liability, reducing the cost of the scheme by an estimated £357k.

PROPOSAL C: Align deductions for non-dependents of working age to the same level as those in the prescribed scheme for claimants of pensionable age

3.4 The CTS scheme currently subsidises households where there is a working age adult (other than the claimant's partner). This proposal would affect 617 working age claimants who have a working adult in the household (as at 1 September 2015). Non-dependents living in working age claimant's households would be required to contribute to CTAX liability. If the claimant is receiving Disability Living Allowance care component the non-dependent deduction will not apply. This proposal if implemented would reduce the cost of the scheme by an estimated £104k. The proposed non-dependent deductions which align with the prescribed scheme are detailed in **Appendix 1**.

3.5 There are a number of caveats to be considered in consulting on the three proposals above such as the cost of the scheme and those affected. Working age people only are affected by all of the above because the prescribed scheme protects pensioners. Any reduction in cost arising from the proposals will lead to an increase in Council Tax to be paid for those affected. Collection of Council Tax from lower income claimants may be more difficult. Attachments of benefit/earnings could be limited where attachments are already in place to recover unpaid Council Tax. The caseload changes daily as claimants move on and off benefit depending on their circumstances and changes in income. More than one proposal may be implemented and claimants may be affected by more than one of the above proposals. Government have recently announced a further £12b cuts to welfare benefits and this will inevitably impact on working age claimants in receipt of CTS.

4 CONSULTATION METHOD

4.1 The consultation commenced on 14 September 2015 ending on 30 November 2015. The Councils Big Conversation website detailed the questions raised on the three proposals.

The consultation was also advertised in local press. Paper copies of the questionnaire were made available on request. Stakeholders and local voluntary organisations were contacted by letter to inform them of the consultation. Notices were sent out to benefit claimants with benefit notification letters and enclosed with Council Tax bills. Notices were also sent with approximately 40,000 electoral registration reminders, making a total notice circulation of 58,000. Fifty posters were displayed in supermarkets, doctor's surgeries and public buildings. Two advertisements have appeared in local press.

4.2 The timeline of consultation exercise and target audience is set out below:

Target Audience	Method of Consultation	Start Date	End Date
Precepting Authorities	Email	14 September 2015	30 November 2015
Working Age Claimants	On line Survey	14 September 2015	30 November 2015
Welfare Rights, Customer Services, Citizens Advice Bureau, Homeless Shelter, Housing options, MiNT, CVAT	On line Survey	14 September 2015	30 November 2015
	Letter to notify	7 October 2015	30 November 2015
Social Landlords	RSL Forum	8 October 2015	30 November 2015
	On line Survey	14 September 2015	30 November 2015
All Interested Parties	On line Survey Posters in Customer Services and Libraries Adverts in newspapers	14 September 2015 October 2015 October & November 2015	30 November 2015
Benefit Claimants and Council Tax Payers	Leaflets in Benefit notification letters and CTAX Bills.	October 2015	20 November 2015

5 ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION RESULTS

Precepting Bodies

5.1 Consultation took place with the Police Authority and Fire and Rescue Authority by email. One precepting body queried if the potential £696k was Tameside's share of the saving and if risks of non-collection and bad debt had been built in. A response was provided that £696k would result in reduced costs of the scheme if all three of the proposed changes were implemented. The total saving is not only Tameside's share and non-collection would be factored into bad debt calculations undertaken by Resource Management. This change also needs to be considered in terms of overall Council Tax position and estimated resource position.

Public and stakeholder consultation

5.2 A total of 21 responses were received to the survey undertaken via the Big Conversation. All responses were deemed valid, no invalid responses were received. All respondents completed the consultation on the Big Conversation web-site. One paper copy of the consultation was requested and not returned.

5.3 Of the 21 responses, 16 were from members of the public, one was from a partner organisation and two stated they had other interests in the consultation; two did not specify. A total of 9 respondents were male and 9 were female and 3 declined to specify. 15 respondents claimed to be white/English in terms of ethnicity; one was white/Asian and one Asian/Asian British – Pakistani. The remaining 4 declined to specify. 15 claimed their day to day activities were not limited due to a health problem or disability, 2 didn't comment and 2 respondents claimed their day to day activities were limited a lot. 15 respondents stated

that they did not provide support or help to family members or friends or neighbours due to long term physical or mental health problems or problems due to old age; 4 provided some support, and 2 did not specify.

5.4 The age range of the respondents that declared their age is detailed below:

Table 1

Age range	Number of respondents
Aged 18 – 25	1
Aged 26 – 35	4
Aged 36 – 45	1
Aged 46 – 55	7
Aged 56 – 65	2
Aged over 65	0
Did not specify their age	6

5.5 The response headlines arising from the consultation in relation to the three proposals are detailed here:

Table 2

Proposal	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Don't know	Total
Cap CTS to Band A properties	14 (66.67%)	6 (28.57%)	0	1 (4.76%)	21 (100%)
Award a maximum of 75% CTS	10 (47.62%)	9 (42.86%)	1 (4.76%)	1 (4.76%)	21 (100%)
Align non-dependent deductions with prescribed scheme	16 (76.20%)	1 (4.76%)	2 (9.52%)	2 (9.52%)	21 (100%)

5.6 Ten of the respondents chose to make additional comments in the free text box as summarised as follows:

Table 3

Comment	Response
Maintain the current position of a cap on the maximum CTS to that of a band B property.	2
Make cuts elsewhere and not to the CTS scheme	2
Agree with non-dependent deductions	4
Non-dependent deductions don not go far enough	1
Comments regarding current CTS scheme and respondents own circumstances	1

6 CONSULTATION CONCLUSIONS

PROPOSAL A: Cap support to a Band A property

6.1 The majority of respondents 14 (66.67% of the total) agree that CTS should be capped to the maximum equal to a Band A property with 6 respondents (28.57%) disagreeing. One respondent (4.76%) didn't know.

PROPOSAL B: Reduce the maximum CTS award to 75%

6.2 The majority of respondents 10 (47.62% of the total) agree that the maximum CTS award should be 75% and CTS claimants would have to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax

liability. A total of 9 (42.86%) disagreed with this proposal and one respondent (4.76%) neither agreed nor disagreed and one (4.76%) didn't know.

PROPOSAL C: Align deductions for non-dependents of working age to the same level as those in the prescribed scheme for claimants of pensionable age.

- 6.3 The majority 16 (76.20% of total respondents) agreed that deductions of CTS should be made for non-dependents living in working age households to align with the prescribed scheme as set in law for claimants of pensionable age. Only one respondent (4.76%) disagreed and 2 respondents (9.52%) didn't know and 2 respondents neither agreed nor disagreed (9.52%).
- 6.4 The conclusions drawn from the consultation analysis is that, in each proposal, the majority of respondents agreed that each of the three proposals be implemented.

7 IMPACT OF PROPOSALS

- 7.1 In considering implementation of any the three proposals it is appropriate to consider impact on typical claimant groups particularly in light of the limited response to the consultation. Data has been taken from the Council Tax Support system to determine impact on different household compositions and circumstances taking into account differing income levels in the scenarios listed below. Table 4 below details the amount payable if the three proposals were implemented assuming Council Tax remains at current levels. Further information on each scenario can be found at **Appendix 2**.

Table 4

Household composition	CTS 75%	Band A	Band B	Non-dep	Weekly Council Tax Increase	Rationale
Mr and Mrs Z, unemployed, 2 children or with 1 student. Same applies to a couple.	✓	✓			92p inc on £3.68 ctax pw = £4.60 to pay	75% reduction applies. No Band cap. No non-dependents
Mr B single parent unemployed, 1 non-dependent in work	✓	✓		✓	96p inc on £9.28 ctax pw = £10.24 to pay	75% reduction & deduction for 1 non-dep applies. No Band cap.
Mr and Mrs X, working, 1 child, 1 non-dependent working	✓		✓	✓	£3.02 inc on £16.60 pw = £19.61 to pay	75% reduction & deduction 1 non-dep applies. Band cap applies.
Mr and Mrs P, unemployed, 2 children, 1 non-dependent working	✓		✓	✓	£3.43 inc on £9.89 ctax pw = £13.31 to pay	75% reduction & deduction 1 non-dep applies. Band cap applies.
Mr & Mrs W unemployed, 2 children, 1 non-dependent not working	✓		✓	✓	£6.21 inc on £4.29 ctax = £10.47 to pay	75% reduction & deduction 1 non-dep applies for first time. Band cap applies.
Mrs Y single pensioner with 1 non-dependent					Nil increase. £7.52 to be paid	Only non-dep deduction can apply as per the prescribed scheme.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The Equality Act 2010 makes certain types of discrimination unlawful on the grounds of 8 protected characteristics (1) Age; (2) Gender; (3) Race; (4) Gender reassignment; (5) Disability; (6) Maternity; (7) Sexual orientation; and (8) Religion or belief.
- 8.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places the Council and all public bodies under a duty to promote equality. All public bodies are required to have regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
 - Promote equal opportunities between members of different equality groups.
 - Foster good relations between members of different equality groups including by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
 - Eliminate harassment on the grounds of membership of an equality group.
 - Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by members of a particular equality group.
 - Take steps to meet needs of people who are members of a particular equality group.
 - Encourage people who are members of an equality group to participate in public life, or in any other area where participation is low.
 - This specifically includes having regard to the need to take account of disabled people's disabilities.
- 8.3 The Act therefore imposes a duty on the Council, which is separate from the general duty not to discriminate. When a local authority carries out any of its functions, including deciding what Council Tax Support scheme to adopt, the local authority must have due regard to the matters within the section of the Act outlined above. The courts have made it clear that the local authority is expected to rigorously exercise that duty.
- 8.4 The Government has confirmed that people of state pension credit age are to have their current Council Tax Support levels protected and that the prescribed scheme must apply to them.
- 8.5 The anticipated impact on customer groups is outlined in this section. The population of Tameside is estimated at 220,800 based on the 2014 mid-year population. Trends show an ageing population. The number of people aged 65 years and over has increased by 18.7% between 2001 and 2014. The gender split of Tameside's overall population is 49.1% male and 50.9% female. There are an estimated 100,968 households in Tameside as at 2015.
- 8.6 Tameside has approximately 21,513 CTS claimants (as at September 2015), of these 9,753 have reached pension credit age and are therefore fully protected under legislation contained in the prescribed scheme and will not see any change in their benefit entitlement. The remaining 11,760 claimants may be potentially affected by the changes proposed in the CTS consultation. A full equality impact assessment on the proposals is detailed at **Appendix 3** and is in addition to the Equality Impact Assessments in place from the commencement of the CTS scheme in April 2013, as updated in December 2014.
- 8.7 In addition to considering the effects on the key characteristic groups it is important to also consider:
- Economic vulnerability – 90% of the working age claimants (i.e. non-protected people below pension credit age) are out of work. For those with a disability this rises to 99.5% (although this is a function of incapacity / disability benefits being used as a proxy for disability).
 - Carers – 558 (3%) of all claimants receive Carer's Allowance.
 - Maternity – 23 (0.2%) of working age claimants receive Maternity Allowance.
 - War widows – 40 (0.2%) of all claimants are war widows (of which 7 are of working age).

(Data as at September 2015)

- 8.8 The conclusions drawn from the evidence & analysis of the effects on equality on the key characteristic groups are detailed here:

Mitigation and Support:

- 8.9 The Hardship Fund, introduced in 2013/14 when the local Council Tax Support scheme was set, will remain in place to support claimants in exceptional circumstances, who suffer severe financial hardship as a result of the introduction of the scheme and may apply for additional monies to help pay their council tax. A total of two applications were approved from April 2015 to November 2015 totalling £2,237. The Hardship Fund will remain at £5k in 2016/7 however this amount does not exclude approved applications being granted should the maximum allocated funding being exceeded. Hardship Funding will be identified from existing budgets and be administered via Tameside Resettlement Scheme. The Hardship Policy is detailed in **Appendix 4**.
- 8.10 The circumstances of the claims do not suggest that any one protected characteristic has been more adversely affected as one claimant was a single person who was also impacted by other welfare reforms. The other recipient was a disabled claimant with multiple debts and Council Tax Support had not been claimed.
- 8.11 Residents may also obtain advice and assistance on the Hardship Fund and Council Tax Support scheme from the Council's Benefits Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, Tameside Welfare Rights Service and other local advice services such as MiNT.
- 8.12 The proposals do not affect the mitigations, which will continue to be in place to protect the relevant protected characteristics and will continue to comply with Government guidance Localising Support for Council Tax (Vulnerable people) 2014 in the following ways:

Workers on low incomes / or reduced means as a result of a previous period of unemployment are protected by virtue of keeping support for 4 weeks once back in employment after having been out of work for more than 26 continuous weeks.

Disabled claimants of working age are protected by the exclusion of Disability Living Allowance from their income taken into account when calculating CTS, which can be up to £139.75 (2015/16 rates) as the 2016/17 rates will not be known until January 2016 at the earliest. This benefits 282 disabled claimants as at quarter 2, 2015. Claimants (623 in total of which 558 working age) are in receipt of Carer's Allowance are provided with extra support by having an additional element of allowable income in the assessment. Disabled claimants in receipt of war pensions or war widow's pensions are protected as this income is also excluded from the CTS assessment.

Women are affected more by the scheme than men because there are a higher proportion of female claimants. The number of female lone parents has remained static since the scheme was set in 2013 at 93% of all lone parent households. A total of 2,702 female single parent households receive maximum CTS benefit with the remainder being protected by the exclusion of child benefit from the CTS calculation.

Children and Families continue to be protected by disregarding child benefit in full within the CTS calculation and child care costs being disregarded for claimants in work.

War Pensions/war widows continue to be protected as 100% of war pensions and war widows pensions are disregarded for CTS purposes.

There continues to be no specific impacts negative or positive on the following protected characteristic areas – ethnicity, marriage/civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion and belief, gender re-assignment.

- 8.13 The scheme was designed to provide extra support for vulnerable people with disabilities claiming benefit, carers and those in receipt of war pensions and to support as many claimants on low incomes as possible taking into account the requirements of the scheme as determined by the Government and affordability.
- 8.14 The caseload is relatively constant. The scheme will continue to use the annual DWP Housing Benefit upratings and the annual uprated UC elements as applicable. Further equalities analysis will continue to take place in each claimant category at the end of each quarter to enable the scheme to be continually monitored and to identify and investigate any unforeseen negative impacts should they arise.
- 8.15 The Benefits and Council Tax service works closely with the Troubled Families Team and with housing and voluntary sector colleagues who assist claimants in supported accommodation. There are strong links with local DWP Job Centre colleagues to ensure that claimants of Universal Credit also complete a claim for Council Tax Support at the point of becoming unemployed.
- 8.16 As Universal Credit is rolled out in Tameside and in other parts of the country we will, wherever possible, monitor the effects of the CTS scheme in relation to Universal Credit claimants, however as this benefit is administered entirely by the DWP it may not be possible to do so as the Council has little information on which a comparison between entitlement to CTS using Housing Benefit annual uprated amounts and Universal Credit uprated amounts can be made. The law states that Universal Credit annual upratings must be used for claimants in receipt of Universal Credit.

9 EIA CONCLUSION

- 9.1 There will be no anticipated specific impacts negative or positive on the following protected characteristic areas as a result of proposed changes to the CTS scheme – ethnicity, marriage/civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion and belief, gender reassignment.
- 9.2 The changes proposed will have no impact on claimants of pensionable age as they must be protected in accordance with the requirements of the prescribed scheme. The changes will affect all working age claimants.
- 9.3 **Women and families:** Women are likely to be affected by the changes more than men by virtue of the fact that there are more female claimants (50.9% as opposed to 49.1% male claimants). Claimants in receipt of maternity payments will not be more affected by the proposed changes than other working age claimants. Lone parent working age females will not be affected by the proposed changes and continue to be offered some protection by the disregard of child benefit in the scheme. Child care costs for employed claimants will continue to be disregarded in line with Universal Credit principles and child benefit will continue to be disregarded in full.
- 9.4 **Low income claimants** who have previously been unemployed will continue to be supported as in the existing CTS scheme by virtue of keeping support for 4 weeks once back in employment after having been out of work for more than 26 continuous weeks. The proposals to change the scheme do not affect this support.
- 9.5 **Disabled claimants:** In terms of disability the current CTS scheme offers some protection to the most severely disabled. Some protection will be given to claimants in receipt of sickness related benefits such as Incapacity Benefit, Disability Living Allowance (care element) and disabled claimants of working age are offered some protection by the disregard of war pensions and the exclusion of Disability Living Allowance from income.

- 9.6 The original scheme implemented in April 2013 was designed to provide extra support for vulnerable people with disabilities claiming benefit, carers and those in receipt of war pensions and to support as many claimants on low incomes as possible taking into account the requirements of the scheme as determined by the Government and affordability. In considering changes to the scheme the proposals were deemed to be as equitable as possible with regard to all equality groups.
- 9.7 In terms of mitigation and support a Hardship Fund continues to remain in place administered through the Tameside Resettlement Scheme. The Hardship Fund will remain at £5k in 2016/7. However this amount does not exclude approved applications being granted should the maximum allocated funding be exceeded.
- 9.8 As with the existing scheme, support and advice will continue to be provided by Tameside Welfare Rights Team, the DWP and local Job Centres, housing providers and the voluntary sector including CAB and MiNT and the Troubled Families in addition to Tameside's Benefits Team.

10 SCHEME COSTS AND COLLECTION IMPACT

- 10.1 Over the next 5 years the Government will continue to make further cuts to funding. It is expected that this will mean another £90 million less to spend on services. Cuts in funding from Government have a significant impact on how much the Council has to spend on services as this provides the greater proportion of the Council's finance. To meet this challenge a range of proposals across the Council are currently being considered.
- 10.2 The current cost of the CTS scheme is £14.830m as at mid-September 2015. The proposed options are estimated to reduce the scheme costs by approximately £696k if all three proposals were implemented as detailed in Table 5 and the effect on the overall costs of the scheme as detailed in Table 6.

Table 5

Option	Detail	Estimated cost reduction £m
Option A	Cap support to Band A property level	0.234
Option B	Reduce the maximum award to 75%	0.358
Option C	Align non-dependent deductions to same level as those of pensionable age	0.104
Total		0.696

Table 6

	£m
Current cost of scheme	14.830
Savings from implementing 3 options	0.696
Scheme costs If CTAX level remains same	14.134

- 10.3 The caseload for CTS changes continually and the estimated reduction in costs is based on current Council Tax levels. If the Council Tax were to increase by 1.99% from April 2016 the cost to the scheme as it is now, and without implementing the three proposals, is estimated to be an additional £295k. **Table 7** demonstrates the impact on the scheme if Council Tax levels increase by 1.99% from 01 April 2016.

Table 7

	£m
Cost of scheme as at 1 September 2016	14.830
Additional scheme costs to cover increase in Council Tax if this	0.295

increased by 1.99%	
Sub total	15.125
Cost reduction from implementing 3 options	0.696
Scheme costs If CTAX level increased by 1.99%	14.429

- 10.4 Additional income to the Council arising from a potential increase in Council Tax of up to 1.99% is not included in the above; however this is estimated to be £1.4m. If Council Tax increased by a further 2% to cover adult social care charges, as detailed in the Chancellors autumn statement, the effect on the CTS scheme of a 1.99% increase plus the 2% for adult social care (3.99% in total) would be an additional cost of £590k to the CTS scheme, which would be offset against a potential increase in Council Tax collection of £2.8m.
- 10.5 In considering implementing the three proposals, as detailed above, it is important to also consider the effect on the collection of Council Tax. If the maximum support reduced to 75% then all working age claimants would have to pay an additional 5% more towards their Council Tax. For working age claimants living in a band B property or above or who have non-dependents living in the property there will be more than an additional 5% to pay as detailed in the example scenarios in Section 7 of this report.
- 10.6 The Council Tax Service takes prompt recovery action on anyone defaulting on Council Tax payments in accordance with the recovery processes and timescales set in legislation in the Council Tax Administration and Enforcement Regulations 1992. From the issue of a Council Tax bill and Council Tax Support notification letter the Council Tax Service encourage a culture of payment and dialogue with all those who experience difficulties in paying Council Tax. Where non-payment, or continued late payment occurs, recovery documents are issued which can result in a Liability Order being granted and the debt being attached to a claimants DWP benefit and recovered at the rate of £3.70 per week (current rate). It is acknowledged however that this rate of deduction set by Central Government for those that do not pay on time, will take in excess of a year to clear. This means that some Council Tax Support claimants will start each new financial year in arrears.
- 10.7 There are 11,760 working age claimants as at 1 September 2015 and of those an estimated 10,440 are making regular payments either in accordance with their bill or via an agreed arrangement. Appropriate action is being taken in respect of recovery of monies.
- 10.8 An estimated additional 5% Council Tax paid by CTS claimants as a result of reducing CTS to 75% in 2016/17 would be approximately £740k. By way of example, if we estimate the same level of collection as 2014/15 at 78.05%, a total of £557k Council Tax would be paid by CTS claimants in 2016/17 with the remainder being recovered in future years. Overall Council Tax collection for all payers including CTS claimants for 2014/15 was 94.2% and £79.66m.

11 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 11.1 **Staying Put Scheme:** The Council has an obligation to support young people leaving care and in particular where foster carers wish to continue to provide a home for a young person turning 18 years old. It is acknowledged that young people in care have a better start in life if they are supported beyond 18 years old. Funding is received by Children's Services from Central Government in respect of Foster Carers wishing to continue to provide their home to support a young person they have fostered, beyond the age of 18 and up to 21 years old. Foster Care payments cease when the young person becomes 18 years old. Should a Foster Carer want to continue to provide care for the young person and the young person agrees to the arrangement, then a Staying Put payment is put in place to financially support the Foster Carer. It is suggested that the proposal to introduce non-dependant deductions in the CTS scheme may impact on claimants continuing to support a young person beyond the age of 18 and who are in employment. Therefore non-dependent deductions should

not apply in these specific cases. There are currently 7 people in receipt of Staying Put payments however none of these are in receipt of CTS at present.

- 11.2 This is a beneficial change to ensure that the claimant is not financially disadvantaged by continuing to care for a young person up to the age of 21 years old, where the young person is in work and a Staying Put payment is in place to their carer.
- 11.3 Although this specific proposal did not form part of the public consultation it is a beneficial change that is recommended to Council for consideration and approval as part of its statutory duty as a corporate parent role.

12 RISKS

- 12.1 In setting the local Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17 it is important to consider the risks in doing so. Procedural guidance has been observed, and both precepting bodies and public have been consulted via the Councils Big Conversation web-site. The consultation has been advertised extensively.
- 12.2 A local scheme must be set by 31 January 2016 or the default scheme will apply. The default scheme is the same as the Council Tax Benefit scheme, which ceased to exist on 31 March 2013. Costs associated with the default scheme were estimated to be in excess of £3.2m in 2013/14, and this is likely to increase in 2016/17 depending on demand and the amount of CTS paid.
- 12.3 There is a continued risk that demand for support could increase if the economic picture worsens and we cannot predict the number of people that may claim Council Tax Support in the future.
- 12.4 Implementation of a local scheme will mean that some people are paying Council Tax for the fourth year as all benefit claimants must pay at least 25% of their Council Tax liability. Small debts are difficult to collect and often take years to clear. This is particularly so where an attachment of benefit is in place to recover Council Tax arrears because the DWP hierarchy of attaching a debt to a benefit from source ranks council tax sixth after utility payments and other housing costs. There is a risk that Council Tax arrears may increase as a result.
- 12.5 There is also a continuing risk concerning provision of appropriate and timely communication of the scheme changes to residents and in particular benefit recipients. To mitigate this communication on the scheme will remain in place, as it is important that claimants are clear that they will have some council tax liability which will need to be paid.

13 CONCLUSIONS

- 13.1 The public, interested parties and precepting bodies were consulted on the three proposed changes to the CTS scheme in accordance with procedural requirements.
- 13.2 The consultation was undertaken from 14 September 2015 to 30 November 2015 via the Big Conversation website and was extensively advertised. A total of 21 responses were received with the majority being in agreement with each the three proposals.
- 13.3 The equality impact assessment considered the impact of the three proposals on the scheme by the key characteristic groups, in addition to the equality scheme assessments undertaken at the time the scheme was set in December 2012 to become effective in April 2013 and updated in December 2014. There is no disproportionate impact on any group.

- 13.4 In terms of mitigation and support the Hardship Fund will remain in place at £5k and continued to be administered by Tameside Resettlement Scheme. This amount does not exclude approved applications being granted should the maximum allocated funding being exceeded.
- 13.5 The three proposals will result in an estimated £696k reduction in scheme costs and, if Council Tax remains at the same level in 2016/17 the scheme costs are estimated to be £14.1m. Should the Council Tax increase by 1.99% from April 2016 then the estimated costs are expected to be £14.4m however this does not include the additional overall income, which could be raised as a result of increasing Council Tax.
- 13.6 Claimants in receipt of a Staying Put payment in respect of continuing to care for a young person they have previously fostered, should not be disadvantaged by the introduction of the non-dependent deduction charge.
- 13.7 There is a risk that as CTS claimants have to pay more in Council Tax that small debts are difficult to collect and often take years to clear. This is particularly so where an attachment of benefit is in place to recover Council Tax arrears. There is also a continuing risk concerning provision of appropriate and timely communication of the scheme changes to residents and in particular benefit recipients and it must be clear to claimants that they will have some council tax liability which will need to be paid.

14 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 As set out at the front of this report.

APPENDIX 1

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME PROPOSALS

Proposed change to scheme	Scheme now	Rationale	Possible savings	Impact	Numbers of claimants affected
<p>PROPOSAL A</p> <p>Cap support to a Band A property</p>	<p>Current CTS support is limited to Band B. Claimants living in Band C property and above have to pay difference in full</p>	<p>Majority of claimants live in Band A properties and Council subsidies those living in higher banded properties by paying more in CTS.</p>	<p>234k</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affects only those working age claimants living in Band B properties or above 	<p>1835 cases would be affected i.e. living in Band B or above</p>
<p>PROPOSAL B</p> <p>Reduce maximum award to 75%</p>	<p>Maximum CTS award 80%</p>	<p>Affects all working age claimants equally</p>	<p>357k</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All working age claimants would have to pay 75% of their CTAX liability Some claimants would cease to qualify for any Council Tax Support Could impact on CTAX collection rates and liabilities may not be collected within one financial year Affects most financially vulnerable residents Attachments of benefit or earnings could be affected 	<p>All working age claimants affected total 11,777 claimants.</p>
<p>PROPOSAL C</p> <p>Align deductions for the non-dependents of working age to those of pensionable age which are prescribed</p>	<p>Only those non-dependents with a weekly net earned income above £189 have a deduction of £7.00 per week made</p>	<p>Aligns with prescribed scheme and all non-dependent income would be taken into account except Disability Living Allowance care component</p>	<p>104k</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-dependents in working age households would be required to contribute to CTAX liability 	<p>617 claimants have non-dependents affected by this proposal</p>

Non-Dependent deductions scale:

Working age non-dependent weekly income	Proposed deduction weekly	Number affected
Up to £188.99	£3.74	454
£189.00 to £327.99	£7.52	95
£328.00 to £407.99	£9.49	23
£408.00 and above	£11.36	45
Total		617

IMPACT SCENARIOS

LOCALISING COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - SCENARIO MODELS

PROPOSAL A - Cap Council Tax Support to a Band A

PROPOSAL B - Reduce the maximum limit to the amount of Council Tax Support that can be paid to 75%

PROPOSAL C - Changing the amount deducted in respect of non-dependants residing in the household

HOUSEHOLD ONE

Mr and Mrs Z are unemployed on Income Support with two children and no non-dependents or have a non-dependent who is a student and the family in a Band A property.

If all three proposals were implemented they could pay up to 92p a week or £48.10 a year. This is because they live in a Band A property and so are not affected by the Band cap, a non-dependent deduction is not applicable and would have to pay an additional 5% Council Tax if maximum support is reduced from 80% to 75%. This scenario would also apply to a couple without any children.

		CURRENT		PROPOSAL A			PROPOSAL B			PROPOSAL C			ALL PROPOSALS		
		Year	Week	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference
BAND A	Charge	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	£ 961.72	£ 18.39		£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 769.12	£ 14.71	£ 769.12	£ 14.71		£ 721.02	£ 13.79		£ 769.12	£ 14.71		£ 721.02	£ 13.79	
	(=) To Pay	£ 192.60	£ 3.68	£ 192.60	£ 3.68	£0.00	£ 240.70	£ 4.60	£ 48.10	£ 192.60	£ 3.68	£0.00	£ 240.70	£ 4.60	£ 48.10
BAND B	Charge	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	£1,122.02	£ 21.46		£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 897.75	£ 17.17	£ 769.12	£ 14.71		£ 841.28	£ 16.09		£ 897.75	£ 17.17		£ 721.02	£ 13.79	
	(=) To Pay	£224.27	£4.29	£352.90	£6.75	£128.63	£ 280.74	£ 5.37	£ 56.47	£ 224.27	£4.29	£0.00	£ 401.00	£7.67	£176.73
BAND C	Charge	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	£1,282.30	£ 24.52		£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 897.74	£ 17.17	£ 769.12	£ 14.71		£ 841.28	£ 16.09		£ 897.75	£ 17.17		£ 721.02	£ 13.79	
	(=) To Pay	£ 384.56	£ 7.35	£ 513.18	£ 9.81	£128.62	£ 441.02	£ 8.43	£ 56.46	£ 384.56	£ 7.35	£0.00	£ 561.28	£ 10.73	£176.72

HOUSEHOLD TWO

Mr B is a single unemployed parent claimant of working age with a non-dependent living with him. Mr B received £73.10 Job Seekers Allowance and the non-dependent earns £200 per week gross. Mr B lives in a Band A property and he could pay up to £50.19 more each year (£0.96 per week) if all three proposals were implemented. The proposal to place a cap on the maximum Council Tax Support award for claimants living in a Band A property would not affect Mr B because he already lives in a Band A property.

If Mr B lived in a Band B or Band C property he could pay up to £178.82 (£3.43 per week) more in a Band B or higher banded property. This is because the non-dependent would be expected to contribute towards Mr B's Council Tax.

		CURRENT			PROPOSAL A			PROPOSAL B			PROPOSAL C			ALL PROPOSALS		
		Year	Week		Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference
BAND A	Charge	£ 961.72	£ 18.39		£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-
	(-) Discount	£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 476.32	£ 9.11		£ 476.32	£ 9.11		£ 446.52	£ 8.54		£ 454.89	£ 8.70		£ 426.13	£ 8.15	
	(=) To Pay	£485.40	£9.28		£ 485.40	£ 9.28	£0.00	£ 515.20	£ 9.85	£ 29.80	£ 506.83	£9.69	£ 21.43	£ 535.59	£ 10.24	£50.19
BAND B	Charge	£1,122.02	£ 21.46		£1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	-
	(-) Discount	-			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 604.95	£ 11.57		£ 476.32	£ 9.11		£ 566.78	£ 10.84		£ 582.99	£ 11.15		£ 426.13	£ 8.15	
	(=) To Pay	£517.07	£9.89		£ 645.70	£ 12.35	£ 128.63	£ 555.24	£ 10.62	£ 38.17	£ 539.03	£10.31	£ 21.96	£ 695.89	£13.31	£178.82
BAND C	Charge	£1,282.30	£ 24.52		£1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	-
	(-) Discount	£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 604.95	£ 11.57		£ 476.32	£ 9.11		£ 566.78	£ 10.84		£ 582.99	£ 11.15		£ 426.13	£ 8.15	
	(=) To Pay	£677.35	£12.95		£ 805.98	£ 15.41	£ 128.63	£ 715.52	£ 13.68	£ 38.17	£699.31	£13.37	£ 21.96	£ 856.17	£ 16.37	£178.82

HOUSEHOLD THREE

Mr and Mrs X have two children and a non-dependant. The household income is £374.40 per week which comprises the claimant's £200.00 net earned income, £140 Tax Credits, £34.40 Child Benefit. A non-dependent also resides in the property with a £200.00 gross earned income.

Mr and Mrs X live in a Band A property and could pay up to £28.76 more each year (0.55p per week) if all three proposals were implemented. The proposal to place a cap on the maximum Council Tax Support award for claimants living in a Band A property would not affect Mr and Mrs X because they already live in a Band A property.

If Mr and Mrs X lived in a Band B or Band C property they could pay up to £157.38 more each year (£3.02 per week) because they are affected by the cap on the maximum Council Tax Support award and would have to pay the difference in Council tax between a band A property and the Band of property they currently live in.

		CURRENT		PROPOSAL A			PROPOSAL B			PROPOSAL C			ALL PROPOSALS		
		Year	Week	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference
BAND A	Charge	£ 967.33	£ 18.50	£ 967.33	£ 18.50	-	£ 967.33	£ 18.50	-	£ 967.33	£ 18.50	-	£ 967.33	£ 18.50	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 131.76	£ 2.52	£ 131.76	£ 2.52		£ 123.39	£ 2.36		£ 109.80	£ 2.10		£ 103.00	£ 1.97	
	(=) To Pay	£ 835.57	£ 15.98	£ 835.57	£ 15.98	£0.00	£ 843.94	£ 16.14	£ 8.37	£ 857.53	£16.40	£ 21.96	£ 864.33	£ 16.53	£28.76
BAND B	Charge	£1,128.56	£ 21.58	£1,128.56	£ 21.58	-	£ 1,128.56	£ 21.58	-	£ 1,128.56	£ 21.58	-	£1,128.56	£ 21.58	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 260.38	£ 4.98	£ 131.76	£ 2.52		£ 244.17	£ 4.67		£ 238.95	£ 4.57		£ 103.00	£ 1.97	
	(=) To Pay	£ 868.18	£ 16.60	£ 996.80	£ 19.06	£128.62	£ 884.39	£ 16.91	£ 16.21	£ 889.61	£17.01	£ 21.43	£1,025.56	£19.61	£157.38
BAND C	Charge	£1,289.78	£ 24.67	£1,289.78	£ 24.67	-	£ 1,289.78	£ 24.67	-	£ 1,289.78	£ 24.67	-	£1,289.78	£ 24.67	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 260.38	£ 4.98	£ 131.76	£ 2.52		£ 244.17	£ 4.67		£ 238.95	£ 4.57		£ 103.00	£ 1.97	
	(=) To Pay	£1,029.40	£ 19.69	£1,158.02	£ 22.15	£128.62	£ 1,045.61	£ 20.00	£ 16.21	£1,050.83	£20.10	£ 21.43	£1,186.78	£ 22.70	£157.38

HOUSEHOLD FOUR

Mr and Mrs P have 2 children and are unemployed and on Income Support with a non-dependent earning £200 a week gross. Mr and Mrs P live in a Band A property and they could pay up to £50.19 more each year (£0.96 per week) if all three proposals were implemented. The proposal to place a cap on the maximum Council Tax Support award for claimants living in a Band A property would not affect Mr and Mrs P because they already live in a Band A property.

If Mr and Mrs P lived in a Band B or Band C property they could pay up to £178.82 (£3.43 per week) more in a Band B or higher banded property. This is because the non-dependent would be expected to contribute towards Mr and Mrs P's Council Tax.

		CURRENT		PROPOSAL A			PROPOSAL B			PROPOSAL C			ALL PROPOSALS		
		Year	Week	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference
BAND A	Charge	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	£ 961.72	£ 18.39		£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 476.32	£ 9.11	£ 476.32	£ 9.11		£ 446.52	£ 8.54		£ 454.89	£ 8.70		£ 426.13	£ 8.15	
	(=) To Pay	£ 485.40	£ 9.28	£ 485.40	£ 9.28	£0.00	£ 515.20	£ 9.85	£ 29.80	£ 506.83	£ 9.69	£ 21.43	£ 535.59	£ 10.24	£50.19
BAND B	Charge	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	£1,122.02	£ 21.46		£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 604.95	£ 11.57	£ 476.32	£ 9.11		£ 566.78	£ 10.84		£ 582.99	£ 11.15		£ 426.13	£ 8.15	
	(=) To Pay	£517.07	£9.89	£645.70	£12.35	£128.63	£ 555.24	£ 10.62	£ 38.17	£ 539.03	£10.31	£ 21.96	£ 695.89	£13.31	£178.82
BAND C	Charge	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	£1,282.30	£ 24.52		£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	-
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-
	(-) Benefit	£ 604.95	£ 11.57	£ 476.32	£ 9.11		£ 566.78	£ 10.84		£ 582.99	£ 11.15		£ 426.13	£ 8.15	
	(=) To Pay	£677.35	£12.95	£805.98	£15.41	£128.63	£ 715.52	£ 13.68	£ 38.17	£699.31	£13.37	£ 21.96	£ 856.17	£ 16.37	£178.82

HOUSEHOLD FIVE

Mr and Mrs W have 2 children and are claiming Income Support. They also have a non-dependant claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA) income related. If they lived in a Band A property they would pay an additional £194.50 per year or £3.74 per week. If the household lived in a Band B or C property or above they could pay up to £323.13 a year (£6.21 a week) as they would have to pay the difference between a Band A property and the property band for where they reside.

		CURRENT			PROPOSAL A			PROPOSAL B			PROPOSAL C			ALL PROPOSALS		
		Year	Week		Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference
BAND A	Charge	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	£ 961.72	£ 18.39		£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	
	(-) Benefit	£ 769.12	£ 14.71	£ 769.12	£ 14.71		£ 721.02	£ 13.79		£ 612.79	£ 11.72		£ 574.62	£ 10.99		
	(=) To Pay	£ 192.60	£ 3.68	£ 192.60	£ 3.68	£0.00	£ 240.70	£ 4.60	£ 48.10	£ 349.93	£ 6.67	£ 157.33	£ 387.10	£ 7.40	£194.50	
BAND B	Charge	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	£1,122.02	£ 21.46		£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	
	(-) Benefit	£ 897.75	£ 17.17	£ 769.12	£ 14.71		£ 841.28	£ 16.09		£ 741.41	£ 14.18		£ 574.62	£ 10.99		
	(=) To Pay	£224.27	£4.29	£352.90	£6.75	£128.63	£ 280.74	£ 5.37	£ 56.47	£ 380.61	£7.28	£ 156.34	£ 547.40	£10.47	£323.13	
BAND C	Charge	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	£1,282.30	£ 24.52		£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -			£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	
	(-) Benefit	£ 897.74	£ 17.17	£ 769.12	£ 14.71		£ 841.28	£ 16.09		£ 741.41	£ 14.18		£ 574.62	£ 10.99		
	(=) To Pay	£384.56	£7.35	£513.18	£9.81	£128.62	£ 441.02	£ 8.43	£ 56.46	£540.89	£10.34	£ 156.33	£ 707.68	£ 13.53	£323.12	

HOUSEHOLD SIX

Mrs Y is a single person of pension age living with a non-dependent earning £200.00 per week. Mrs Y has weekly income of £97.28 retirement pension and £20.55 Guaranteed Pension Credit.

Regardless as to which Band property Mrs Y lives in, none of the proposals will impact on her as she is a pensioner even though she has a non-dependent living with her and legislation ensures that pensioners must be protected and continue to receive the same amount as if the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme applied.

		CURRENT			PROPOSAL A			PROPOSAL B			PROPOSAL C			ALL PROPOSALS		
		Year	Week		Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference	Year	Week	Difference
BAND A	Charge	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	£ 961.72	£ 18.39	-	
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	
	(-) Benefit	£ 568.53	£ 10.87	£ 568.53	£ 10.87		£ 568.53	£ 10.87		£ 568.53	£ 10.87		£ 568.53	£ 10.87		
	(=) To Pay	£393.19	£7.52	£393.19	£7.52	£0.00	£ 393.19	£ 7.52	£0.00	£ 393.19	£ 7.52	£0.00	£ 393.19	£ 7.52	£0.00	
BAND B	Charge	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£ 1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	£1,122.02	£ 21.46	-	
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	
	(-) Benefit	£ 728.83	£ 13.94	£ 728.83	£ 13.94		£ 728.83	£ 13.94		£ 728.83	£ 13.94		£ 728.83	£ 13.94		
	(=) To Pay	£393.19	£7.52	£393.19	£7.52	£0.00	£ 393.19	£ 7.52	£0.00	£ 393.19	£7.52	£0.00	£ 393.19	£7.52	£0.00	
BAND C	Charge	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£ 1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	£1,282.30	£ 24.52	-	
	(-) Discount	£ -		£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	£ -		-	
	(-) Benefit	£ 889.11	£ 17.00	£ 889.11	£ 17.00		£ 889.11	£ 17.00		£ 889.11	£ 17.00		£ 889.11	£ 17.00		
	(=) To Pay	£393.19	£7.52	£393.19	£7.52	£0.00	£ 393.19	£ 7.52	£0.00	£393.19	£7.52	£0.00	£393.19	£7.52	£0.00	

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

EIA Demographic information

Council Tax Support Client Base

The tables below provide data on people by particular household characteristics. The data is based on known characteristics (i.e. those people who reported a particular characteristic). As not all people choose to report a characteristic the total won't be the same as above.

		All		Pensioners (Protected)		Working age (Not Protected)		Working age by Council Tax Bands (Not Protected)					
		Number	% (a)	Number	% (b)	Number	% (b)	Number	% (c)	Number	% (c)	Number	% (c)
								Band A		Band B		Band C and above	
Age		21,513	100%	9,753	45%	11,760	55%	9,915	84%	1,145	10%	700	6%
Gender	Male	8,783	41%	4,182	48%	4,601	52%	4,024	87%	349	8%	228	5%
	Female	12,730	59%	5,571	44%	7,159	56%	5,891	82%	796	11%	472	7%
Disabled	Total	5,224	24%	2,812	54%	2,412	46%	2,004	83%	270	11%	138	6%
(1)	In work	34	0.2%	0	0%	34	100%	23	68%	5	15%	6	17%
Not Disabled	Total	16,289	76%	6,941	43%	9,348	57%	7,911	84%	875	10%	562	6%
Race (2)	White	13,661	90%	5,520	40%	8,141	60%	7,025	86%	706	9%	410	5%
	Non-white	1,480	10%	639	43%	841	57%	611	73%	130	15%	100	12%
Carers (3)		623	3%	65	10%	558	90%	392	70%	91	17%	75	13%
War Pension		40	0.2%	33	82%	7	18%	6	86%	0	0%	1	14%
Single person household		14,640	68%	7,340	50%	7,300	50%	6,362	87%	629	9%	309	4%
Total number of claims that are households with children		5,007	23%	78	2%	4,929	98%	3,876	79%	653	13%	400	8%
Lone parent household		3,357	16%	40	1%	3,317	99%	2,697	81%	400	12%	220	7%
Female lone parent households		3,128	14%	27	1%	3,101	99%	2,512	81%	379	12%	210	7%
Couple with children		1,650	8%	38	2%	1,612	98%	1,179	73%	253	16%	180	11%
Couple with no children		3,185	15%	2,307	72%	878	28%	677	77%	118	13%	83	9%

Sources: Tameside MBC Council Tax and Benefit systems as at September 2015.

Religion and Belief / Sexual Orientation / Gender Re-Assignment / Pregnancy and Maternity / Marriage and Civil Partnership

Specific data is not available on these protected characteristics for the CT client base. It is not anticipated that there will be any disproportionate impact on these protected characteristic groups.

Notes:

- (a) Percentage of total CTS caseload
 - (b) Percentage of claims within that characteristic
 - (c) Percentage of working age claims within that characteristic
- (1) Disability is based on receipt of disability income or the disability premium
 - (2) Race is based on claims where the ethnic origin has been provided.
 - (3) Carer is based on a person in receipt of a carer premium.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT		
Subject	Local Council Tax Support scheme (original changes to scheme agreed in 2013)	
Service / Business Unit	Service Area	Directorate
Benefits	Exchequer	Governance and Resources
EIA Start Date (Actual)	EIA Completion Date (Expected)	
August 2015	December 2015	

Lead Contact / Officer Responsible	Ilys Cookson
Service Unit Manager Responsible	Michelle Bowler

EIA Group (lead contact first)	Job title	Service
Ilys Cookson	Assistant Executive Director	Exchequer
Michelle Bowler	Service Unit Manager	Exchequer
Karen Milner	Operations Manager	Exchequer

SUMMARY BOX
<p>The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit from 31 March 2013 and all Local Authorities, including Tameside Council, were required to design and run their own scheme or use the government default national scheme which would have resulted in a short fall in funding in real terms at that time of approximately £4.2 million.</p> <p>The Government stipulated that certain claimants, such as those of pensionable age, must remain protected from any cuts. This means that any reduction in support cannot impact on pensioners and so the full impact falls entirely upon claimants of working age.</p> <p>Tameside's Council Tax Support scheme was introduced, after consultation, from 1 April 2013. The scheme, which is supported by a full Key Decision on 21 December 2012 and Equality Impact Assessment, still provides financial assistance to some Council Tax Charge payers on a low income whether they rent or own their home, or live rent-free. The effect of receiving Council Tax Support is a reduction in the amount of Council Tax they have to pay.</p> <p>Since 2010 the Council has had £104 million less to spend on services due to funding cuts from the Government. Over the next 5 years we know the Government will continue to make further cuts to our funding. We expect that will mean at least another £90 million less to spend on services.</p> <p>Cuts in funding from Government have a significant impact on how much the Council has to spend on services. To meet this challenge a range of proposals across the Council are currently being considered including changing the Council Tax Support scheme for 2016 / 2017 to reduce the cost of the scheme.</p> <p>Tameside Council have considered and consulted on the following proposed changes to the</p>

Council Tax Support scheme;

1. Cap Council Tax Support to a Band A
2. Reduce the maximum of Council Tax Support that can be paid to 75%
3. Changing the amount deducted for working age claimants in respect of non-dependants residing in the household to align with claimants who are pension age.

Section 1 - Background

BACKGROUND

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit from 31 March 2013 and all Local Authorities, including Tameside Council, were required to design and run their own scheme or use the government default national scheme which would have resulted in a short fall in funding in real terms of approximately £4.2 million.

The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements)(England) Regulations 2012 must be included in the Councils own scheme and provide protection to claimants of pensionable age so that they must remain protected from any cuts. This means that any reduction in support cannot impact on pensioners and so the full impact falls entirely upon claimants of working age.

Tameside's Council Tax Support scheme was introduced from 1 April 2013. The scheme still provides financial assistance to some Council Tax Charge payers on a low income whether they rent or own their home, or live rent-free. The effect of receiving Council Tax Support is a reduction in the amount of Council Tax they have to pay. The caseload of claimants is currently 11,760 working age and 9,753 pensioners as at September 2015 and the current cost of the scheme is £14.8 million.

Council Tax Support is accessed by a claim form which is available on-line on the Council's website and a paper form can be provided when necessary. Help is also available to support those who may have difficulty applying.

Cuts in funding from Government have a significant impact on how much the Council has to spend on services.

To meet this challenge a range of proposals across the Council are currently being considered including changing the Council Tax Support scheme for 2016 / 2017 to reduce the cost of the scheme. Tameside Council have considered and consulted on the following proposed changes to the Council Tax Support scheme;

1. Cap Council Tax Support to a Band A
2. Reduce the maximum Council Tax Support that can be paid to 75%
3. Changing the amount deducted for working age claimants in respect of non-dependants residing in the household to align with claimants who are pension age.

Although the changes being proposed will protect approximately 9,753 pensioner claims there are 11,760 working age claims who are currently receiving Council Tax Support who will be affected by the proposed amendments to the new scheme.

The table below shows the Council Tax Support caseload by area.

	Pension age				Working age				
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Total	Band A	Band B	Band C	Total	
Audenshaw	308	84	71	463	339	48	46	433	896

Ashton	1706	232	212	2150	2686	278	164	3128	5278
Denton	1076	158	372	1606	1023	161	94	1278	2884
Droylsden	677	301	96	1074	1414	220	68	1702	2776
Dukinfield	757	81	125	963	869	59	64	992	1955
Hyde	1306	221	213	1740	1828	210	136	2174	3914
Longdendale	212	80	44	336	231	60	36	327	663
Mossley	293	42	51	386	391	36	22	449	835
Stalybridge	803	104	128	1035	1144	76	57	1277	2312
Total	7138	1303	1312	9753	9925	1148	687	11760	21513

Of these 21,513 claimants, 59% are female, and 41% male. Amongst this same 21,513 cohort there are 5,007 claimants with children, of which 4,929 are working age, 3,317 being single parents that are working age claimants. 93% are working age lone parents that are female.

Some protection will continue to be given to the non-passported benefit claims where child benefit is received. This equates to almost 1,017 claims of which 43% are single parents and primarily single mothers.

In addition some protection is also being given to 282 standard working age claims in receipt of Disability Living Allowance income. This would limit the impact of proposal C as claimant's who are in receipt of some elements of Disability Living Allowance income will be protected.

Section 2 – Issues to consider & evidence base

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places the Council and all public bodies under a duty to promote equality. All public bodies are required to have regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- Promote equal opportunities between members of different equality groups.
- Foster good relations between members of different equality groups including by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The Council has also taken into consideration the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements)(England) Regulations 2012.

Financial considerations.

The scheme was designed to provide extra support for vulnerable people with disabilities claiming benefit, carers and those in receipt of war pensions and to support as many claimants on low incomes as possible taking into account the requirements of the scheme as determined by the Government and affordability.

The caseload of claimants is currently 11,760 working age and 9,753 pensioners as at September 2015 and the current cost of the scheme is £14.8 million.

Cuts in funding from Government have a significant impact on how much the Council has to spend on services.

To meet this challenge a range of proposals across the Council are currently being considered and consulted on including changing the Council Tax Support scheme for 2016 / 2017 to reduce the cost of the scheme.

It is estimated that the proposed changes will make the following financial efficiencies:

Proposal A – Cap support to a band A property - Based on the current Council Tax Support caseload, the potential saving would be £234,000.

Proposal B – Reduce the maximum limit of Council Tax Support that can be paid - Based on the current Council Tax Support caseload, the potential saving would be £357,000.

Proposal C - Changing the amount deducted in respect of non-dependants residing in the household - Based on the current Council Tax Support caseload, the potential saving would be £104,000.

Consultation, engagement & feedback

A robust consultation process was undertaken to gain views from the public and stakeholders.

The consultation commenced on 14 September 2015 and ran until 30 November 2015 on the three proposals.

The consultation was conducted as follows:

- Precepting Bodies: Consultation took place with the Police Authority and Fire and Rescue Authority by email.
- Via the Council's online Big Conversation consultation portal
- Two advertisements in local press.
- Paper copies of the questionnaire were made available on request.
- Stakeholders and local voluntary organisations were also contacted by letter to inform them of the consultation, including;
 - CAB
 - Welfare Rights
 - Customer Services
 - Housing Options
 - MiNT
 - CVAT
- Notice was given at a Registered Social Landlord Forum
- Notices of the consultation were also sent out to benefit claimant with benefit notification letters and enclosed with Council Tax bills.
- Notices were also sent with approximately 40,000 electoral registration reminders, making a total notice circulation of 58,000.
- Fifty posters were displayed in supermarkets, doctors surgeries and public buildings
- A message about the consultation was also put on the Benefits and Council Tax telephone lines.
- Awareness messages were put on the benefits and Council Tax Council webpages
- Article was placed in the Tameside staff newsletter "The Wire"
- Promoted via social media channels e.g. Council's Twitter account, Contour Housing Twitter account

The responses to the consultation have been analysed on a weekly basis.

In total, 21 consultation responses were received. All of these were received via the Big Conversation consultation portal.

An analysis of the 21 consultation responses follows:

Proposal	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Don't know	Total
Cap CTS to Band A properties	14	6	0	1	21
Award a maximum of 75% CTS	10	9	1	1	21
Align non-dependent deductions with the prescribed scheme	16	1	2	2	21

Respondent details:

A member of the public	16
A community or voluntary group	0
A partner organisation	1
A business /private organisation	0
Other	3

Gender

Male	9
Female	9

Age

Aged 18 – 25	1
Aged 26 – 35	4
Aged 36 – 45	1
Aged 46 – 55	7
Aged 56 – 65	2
Aged 65 years and over	0

Disability

Where day-to day activities are limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months, including problems related to old age.

Yes, limited a lot	2
Yes, limited a little	2
No	15

Ethnicity

White - English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	15
White - Irish	
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	
Other White background	
White & Black Caribbean	
White & Black African	
White & Asian	1

Other Mixed background	
Black/Black British – African	
Black/Black British – Caribbean	
Other Black / African / Caribbean background	
Asian/Asian British - Indian	
Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	1
Asian/Asian British - Bangladeshi	
Asian/Asian British - Chinese	
Other Asian background	
Arab	
Any other ethnic group	

Carers

Where the respondent looks after, or gives any help or support to, family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either:

- Long term physical or mental ill-health / disability
- Problems due to old age

No	15
Yes, 1-19 hours a week	1
Yes, 20-49 hours a week	2
Yes, 50 or more a week	1

LIST OF EVIDENCE SOURCES

- Communities and Local Government Department Guidance – Localising Support for Council Tax - Vulnerable people – key local authority duties
- The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements)(England) Regulations 2012, as amended.
- Big Conversation results analysis
- Capita reporting module
- Quarterly monitor of current Council Tax Support scheme Equality Impact Assessment data

Section 3 – Impact

IMPACT

TAMESIDE POPULATION – COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT CLIENT BASE

The population of Tameside is estimated at 219,324 in the March 2011 Census (Office for National Statistics), of which 176,616 are aged 16 years and over. There are an estimated 100,968 properties in Tameside. The population of Tameside is estimated at 220,800 based on the 2014 mid-year population. Trends show an ageing population. The number of people aged 65 years and

over has increased by 18.7% between 2001 and 2014. The gender split of Tameside's overall population is 49.1% male and 50.9% female. There are an estimated 100,968 households in Tameside as at 2015.

Age (16 and over)

- Population – 16 to 65 / over 65 – 142,415 65% / 34,201 16%
- CTS client base – working age / pension age – 55% / 45%

The age profile of the CTS client base has a greater proportion of older people compared than the Tameside population. The percentage of claimants of pension age has remained consistent since the Council Tax Support scheme came into effect in April 2013.

Gender

- Population – Male / Female – 107,650 49% / 111,674 51%
- CTS client base – Male / Female – 41% / 59%

The gender profile of the CTS client base has a greater proportion of females compared to the Tameside population.

Disability

- Population aged 16 and over – Disabled / Not disabled – 25% / 75%
- CTS client base – Disabled / Not disabled – 24% / 76%

The disability profile of the CTS client base is indicative of the Tameside population aged 16 or over.

Note: receipt of disability related benefits or premiums have been used as a proxy for disabled people within the CTS client base figures.

Ethnicity

- Population aged 16 or over – White / Non-white – 92% / 8%
- CTS client base – White / Non-white – 90% / 10%

The ethnicity profile of the CTS client base is indicative of the Tameside population aged 18 or over.

Religion & belief / sexual orientation / gender re-assignment / pregnancy & maternity / marriage & civil partnership

Specific data is not available on those protected characteristics for the CTS client base.

Single People / Couples / Families

Information within the Council Tax Support system allows us to model data on family make-up. The data below is indicative and looks at family status and the breakdown between pensioners and non-pensioners.

- Single person households – approximately 14,640 (7,340 – pensioners / 7,300 – non-pensioners).
- Lone parent households – 3,357 (40 – pensioners / 3,317 – non-pensioners).
- Couples with children – 1,650 (38 pensioners / 1,612 – non-pensioners).
- Couples with no children – 3,185 (2,307 pensioners / 878 – non-pensioners).

Note: of the 3,317 non-pensioner (i.e. working age) lone parent families, 93% of these are female.

Other considerations

- *Economic vulnerability* – 90% of the working age claimants (i.e. non-protected people below pension credit age) are out of work. For those with a disability this rises to 99.5% (although this is a function of disability benefits being used as a proxy for disability).
- *Carers* – 558 (3%) of all claimants receive Carer's Allowance.

- Maternity – 23 (0.2%) of working age claimants receive Maternity Allowance.
- War widows – 40 (0.2%) of all claimants are war widows (of which 7 are of working age).

IMPACT ON CLIENT BASE – PROPOSALS FOR COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Tameside has approximately 21,513 claimants of Council Tax Support (CTS). Of these, 9,753 are pensioners (i.e. reached pension credit age) and are therefore fully protected under the legislation and will not see any change in their benefit entitlement.

The remaining 11,760 claimants are all potentially affected by the changes proposed in the LCTSS consultation and proposals. The general impact will be that residents of working age will not receive the same level of CTS as in previous years. This will have economic impacts on a variety of groups of people who will face additional cost pressures due to changes in benefits more generally such as the introduction of Universal Credit and changes to Tax Credits.

Pensioner age – 9,753 (45%) of claimants are fully protected. Almost half of current claimant base will be subject to no impact as a result of the final scheme. Similarly, there will be no change to the 100% war pensions/war widows pension disregard for working age claimants.

Disabled people – 5,224 (24%) of claimants are disabled. Of these, 2,812 (54%) are pensioners so are already covered by the full protection afforded to people who have reached pension credit age. The remaining 2,412 disabled claimants may be affected to varying degrees depending on whether they fall into any of the categories below.

PROPOSAL A - Cap Council Tax Support to a Band A

As at 1 September 2015 the majority of Council Tax Support claimants, over 84%, live in Band A properties

It is proposed to reduce the level of support given to people living in larger properties, by limiting the maximum award of Council Tax Support for people living in a band B property or above to the maximum level of a band A property.

The effect of this restriction means that those claimants living in more expensive properties with have a larger shortfall. This change would affect the following working age groups:

Age

1,835 working age claims reside in a property band B or above, 16% of the working age caseload and 9% of the total caseload.

1,135 (10%) of which reside in a band B property.

Gender

1,268 claims in a band B or above are female, which is 69% of all claims in Band B and above. 43% are female and reside in a band B property.

18% are male and reside in a band C property or above.

Ethnicity

91% of the people affected are white and 9% are Non-white.

Disability

22% of the people affected have a disability.

Carers

166 (9%) of the people affected are carers.

Children

620 (34%) are single people with children, of which 589 (95%) are female.

400 (35%) reside in a band B property.

253 (14%) are couples with children

War Pensioners

There is 1 working age war pensioner who would be affected by this change.

Religion and Belief / Sexual Orientation / Gender Re-Assignment / Pregnancy and Maternity / Marriage and Civil Partnership

Specific data is not available on these protected characteristics for the CT client base. It is not anticipated that there will be any disproportionate impact on these protected characteristic groups.

PROPOSAL B - Reduce the maximum limit to the amount of Council Tax Support that can be paid to 75%

Currently support is limited to a maximum discount of 80% for all working age claimants. It is proposed that the maximum discount would be reduced to a limit of 75%.

All working age households would receive less support, leaving households having to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax.

Age

11,760 (55%) of claims are working age.

Gender

61% of the people affected are female, which is 33% of the total CTS caseload.

Ethnicity

Of those people who have informed the Council of their ethnic origin, 8141 are white and 841 are Non-white.

Disability

There are 2,412 working age claims where it can be determined that there is a disability, which is 21% of the affected claims.

282 of these claims have received some protection as Disability Living Allowance income is not taken into consideration in the calculation of the CTS award.

Carers

558 (5%) of the people affected are carers. 65 carers are pension age.

Children

3,317 (28%) of those affected are single people with children, of which 93% are female.

400 single people with children reside in a band B property.

1,612 (14%) are couples with children

Religion and Belief / Sexual Orientation / Gender Re-Assignment / Pregnancy and Maternity / Marriage and Civil Partnership

Specific data is not available on these protected characteristics for the CT client base. It is not anticipated that there will be any disproportionate impact on these protected characteristic groups.

PROPOSAL C - Changing the amount deducted for working age claimants in respect of non-dependants residing in the household to align with claimants who are pension age.

A non-dependant is a person who normally resides with a claimant on a non-commercial basis, such as an adult family member or friend. A deduction is made from a claimant's Council Tax Support dependant on the non-dependant's income.

Currently only non-dependants with a net weekly earned income of £189.00 or above contribute £7.00 per week towards the household Council Tax liability for working age claimants.

This proposal would align the deduction income levels and amounts to pension age claimants, which are prescribed amounts i.e. set by the Government. The prescribed amounts are not currently set for 2016 / 2017.

The deduction for all non-dependant's aged 18 or over residing with working age claimants would increase.

Non-dependant deductions do not apply to some claimants with entitlement to specific components of Disability Living Allowance and would be protected from the proposed change. The non-dependent deductions may impact on anyone caring for a young person who has previously been a foster child up to the age of 18, and in receipt of a Staying Put Payments. There are no CTS claimants in receipt of Staying Put Payments in respect of a foster child becoming 18 and being cared for up to 21 at present. It is suggested that as the proposal to introduce non-dependant deductions may impact on claimants continuing to support a young person beyond the age of 18 and who are in employment, that the non-dependent deductions should not apply in these specific cases

Age

1015 claims with a non-dependant, of which 617 are working age claims or 5% of the working age caseload and 3% of the total caseload.

Gender

461 claims (75%) of the people affected are female

Ethnicity

63% of the people affected are white and 12% are Non-white. The other 25% of working age claims have not declared their ethnicity.

Disability

139 (22%) of the people affected have a disability.

Carers

64 (10%) of the people affected are carers.

Children

134 (22%) are single people with children.

100 (16%) are couples with children

Religion and Belief / Sexual Orientation / Gender Re-Assignment / Pregnancy and Maternity / Marriage and Civil Partnership

Specific data is not available on these protected characteristics for the CT client base. It is not anticipated that there will be any disproportionate impact on these protected characteristic groups. The Council has a hardship fund to support people suffering severe financial hardship as a result of the changes to the Council Tax Support scheme.

Section 4 – Proposals & Mitigation

PROPOSALS & MITIGATION

PROPOSALS

Tameside Council have considered and consulted on the following proposed changes to the Council Tax Support scheme;

1. Cap Council Tax Support to a Band A
2. Reduce the maximum Council Tax Support that can be paid to 75%
3. Changing the amount deducted for working age claimants in respect of non-dependants residing in the household to align with claimants who are pension age.

MITIGATION

The Hardship Fund introduced in 2013/14 when the local Council Tax Support scheme was set will remain in place to support claimants in exceptional circumstances, who suffer severe financial hardship as a result of the introduction of the scheme and may apply for additional monies to help pay their council tax. The Hardship Fund will remain at £5k in 2016/7 however this amount does not exclude approved applications being granted should the maximum allocated funding being exceeded. Hardship Funding will be identified from existing budgets and be administered via Tameside Resettlement Scheme.

Mitigations will continue to be in place to protect the following equalities groups in the following ways:

Workers on low incomes / or reduced means as a result of a previous period of unemployment are protected by virtue of keeping support for 4 weeks once back in employment after having been out of work for more than 26 continuous weeks.

Disabled claimants of working age are protected by the exclusion of Disability Living Allowance from their income taken into account when calculating CTS. Claimants in receipt of Carer's Allowance are provided with extra support by having an additional element of allowable income in the assessment. Disabled claimants in receipt of war pensions or war widow's pensions are protected as this income is also excluded from the CTS assessment.

Women are affected more by the scheme than men because there are a higher proportion of female claimants. The number of female lone parents has remained static since the scheme was set in 2013 at 93% of all lone parent households. There are 5,571 female pensioners. A total of 2,702 female single parent households receive maximum CTS benefit with the remainder being protected by the exclusion of Child Benefit from the CTS calculation.

Children and Families are protected by disregarding child benefit in full within the CTS calculation and child care costs being disregarded for claimants in work. There is no anticipated impact on the following protected characteristic groups – ethnicity, marriage/civil partnership, sexual orientation, religion and belief, gender re-assignment.

Staying Put claimants The non-dependent deductions may impact on anyone caring for a young person who has previously been a foster child up to the age of 18, and in receipt of a Staying Put Payments. There are no CTS claimants in receipt of Staying Put Payments in respect of a foster child becoming 18 and being cared for up to 21 at present. As the proposal to introduce non-dependant deductions may impact on claimants continuing to support a young person beyond the age of 18 and who are in employment, that the non-dependent deductions should not apply in these specific cases.

Section 5 – Monitoring

MONITORING PROGRESS

Ilys Cookson – Assistant Executive Director / Michelle Bowler – Service Unit Manager

Issue / Action	Lead officer	Timescale
Ensure that changes to the Council Tax Support scheme are communicated appropriately (i.e. different media) and in a timely manner.	Ilys Cookson	On-going
Monitoring (by protected characteristic group where appropriate) those presenting to the Council with concerns over Council Tax Liability, eligibility for Council Tax Support, and access to help / advice.	Ilys Cookson	On-going

NB – The version sent to Corporate Performance should be the version agreed and signed off by the relevant Senior Manager.

Sign off

Signature of Service Unit Manager	Date
Signature of Assistant Executive Director / Assistant Chief Executive	Date
I. Cookson .	04 December 2015

APPENDIX 4

Council Tax Support scheme Hardship Policy

Council Tax Hardship Payments

In accordance with Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended in 2012 Section 13(a)(2) the Council Tax Support Hardship Fund is an additional payment which has the effect of reducing Council Tax liability for the liable person. The liable person must reside in Tameside and be in receipt of Council Tax Support. Hardship payments are generally paid to people experiencing a short term exceptional finance problem. The Council has a limited amount of money each year for the scheme and we have to decide who the money is paid to and so applicants must not rely on a payment being made.

Who can apply for a Council Tax Hardship Payment

You can apply for a Council Tax Hardship Payment if you are the liable person to pay Council Tax.

How decisions are made on whether a Council Tax Support Hardship payment is made

Each request will be considered independently and no single factor will determine if an award is to be made.

The following will be considered when making the decision:

- Applicant is leaving an institution such as leaving care, prison, young offenders institute, hospital, care home, temporary supported housing or hostel
- Avoidance of going into care
- Council tax hardship being experienced
- Chronic illness, disability including mental health illness
- Experiencing domestic abuse
- Homelessness or living in temporary housing such as 'sofa surfing'
- Substance or alcohol abuse
- Lone parent and / or pregnant
- Applicant has a support worker
- Housing circumstances and rented properties
- Other people living with the applicant
- Sanction placed by the DWP
- Significant debt
- It is reasonable that applicants may be able to manage money better

The amount payable

Each application is considered individually and the amount of payment depends on circumstances. The maximum paid would be no more than the amount of council tax outstanding after any Council Tax Support has been applied. It is likely that such payments are 'one off' payment and will not be repeated.

How a Council Tax Support Hardship payment is made

If approved a Council Tax Support Hardship payments will reduce the amount of Council Tax outstanding. Applicants will not receive cash or any other type of payment.

Appeals against the decision

If the applicant does not agree with the decision, applicant may request that the decision is looked at again. Council Tax Support Hardship payments are discretionary and after a reconsideration the applicant still does not agree with the decision then an appeal to the Valuation Tribunal Service.

Process by which a person can apply for a Council Tax Support Hardship payment

The application form for Tameside Council Tax Support Hardship scheme can be accessed via the Council's web-site as follows: <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/support/independentliving>.