



Council Offices, Kiln Road,
Thundersley, Benfleet,
Essex SS7 1TF.
Tel. No: 01268 882200
Fax No: 01268 882455



David Marchant LLB (Hons) BSc (Hons) CEng FICE FCMI
Chief Executive

A **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** of the Borough of Castle Point will be held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kiln Road, Thundersley, on **WEDNESDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 2016 at 7.30 p.m.**, and all Members of the Council, listed below, are hereby summoned to attend to transact the undermentioned business.

Councillors S. Cole, (The Worshipful the Mayor), B.S. Wood (Deputy Mayor), A.J. Acott, J. Anderson, A.J. Bayley, D.A. Blackwell, B. Campagna, D.T. Cross, W.J.C. Dick, Mrs B. Egan, E. Egan, Mrs W. Goodwin, P.C. Greig, S. Hart, N.R. Harvey, R.C. Howard, J. Hudson, R. Hurrell, G.I. Isaacs, Mrs J. King, N.E. Ladzrie, C.A. MacLean, P.J. May, C.E. Mumford, B.A. Palmer, J.A. Payne, Mrs J. Payne, A. Partridge, C.G. Riley, Mrs C.J. Sach, W.K. Sharp, A.G. Sheldon, T.F. Skipp, N.G. Smith, J.A. Stanley, A. Taylor, P.E. Varker, A.C. Walter, Mrs L. Wass, Mrs G. Watson and N. Watson.

Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

(Business to be taken in public)

Before commencing the business of the meeting, prayers will be offered by the Chaplain.

1. Apologies for absence

2. Members' Interests

3. Minutes

To receive the Minutes of the meeting of the Ordinary Council held on 28th September 2016.

4. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor will report at the meeting.

5. Questions from members of the public of which Notice has been received

There are none.

- 6. Questions from Members of the Council of which Notice has been received**
There are none.
- 7. To deal with any business from the last Council Meeting**
There is none.
- 8. Any explanations for urgent decisions taken by Cabinet**
There are none.
- 9. Consideration of recommendations from Cabinet:**
At the Cabinet meeting on 16.11.2016, Cabinet is to refer recommendations on which the Cabinet reports are attached concerning:
(a) Arrangements for the Appointment of the Council's External Auditor
(b) Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for 2017/18
- 10. Any References from the Scrutiny/Policy and Scrutiny or Regulatory Committees**
There are none.
- 11. Report from the Leader of the Council**
The Leader is to report at the meeting.
- 12. Notices of Motion**
Details are attached to the Agenda.
- 13. Committee Membership Changes**
Members have already been notified of the following changes received from Cllr Blackwell, the Leader of the CIIP Group to the Canvey Island Independent Party's nominees:
Scrutiny Committee - Cllr Alan Acott to replace Cllr Neville Watson
Development Control Committee - Cllr Allan Taylor to replace Cllr Neville Watson
- 14. Petitions submitted by Members of the Council of which Notice has been given.**
No Notice has been received.



ORDINARY COUNCIL MINUTES

28TH SEPTEMBER 2016

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council of the Borough of Castle Point held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kiln Road, Thundersley on 28th September 2016.

PRESENT:

Councillors S. Cole, (The Worshipful the Mayor), B.S. Wood (Deputy Mayor), J. Anderson, A.J. Bayley, D.A. Blackwell, B. Campagna, D.T. Cross, W.J.C. Dick, Mrs B. Egan, E. Egan, Mrs W. Goodwin, P.C. Greig, S. Hart, N.R. Harvey, R.C. Howard, J. Hudson, R. Hurrell, Mrs. J. King, N.E. Ladzrie, C.A. MacLean, P.J. May, J.A. Payne, Mrs. J. Payne A. Partridge, C.G. Riley, Mrs C.J. Sach, W.K. Sharp, A.G. Sheldon, T.F. Skipp, N.G. Smith, J.A. Stanley, A. Taylor, Mrs L. Wass, Mrs G. Watson and N. Watson.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.J. Acott, G.I. Isaacs, C.E. Mumford, B.A. Palmer, P.E. Varker and A.C. Walter,

26. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were none.

27. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Ordinary Council held on 27th July 2016 were taken as read and approved as a correct record noting the removal of the words 'Debate took place at the conclusion' from Minute 24d. The Mayor signed the Minutes.

(Under this item a query was raised concerning the record of the Council meeting and whether precedence could be given to the web cast of the meeting. Council was advised that the Minutes were the record of the meeting, recording the Council decisions. In responding to further questions it was confirmed that the webcast could be used for evidence purposes. The webcast could be retained as required for reference.)

28. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Mayor thanked the Canvey Railway Club for running a Charity Day to raise funds for the Mayor's Chosen Charities.
- The Mayor was honoured to preside over a reception to welcome representatives from the Hasidic Community who had recently moved onto Canvey Island. The Mayor had received a message from the local leader of the community thanking the Council for its warm welcome.

- The Mayor was pleased to attend the Link Radio Event held on 23.9.2017 to recognise the achievements of a number of runners who took part in the London marathon to raise funds for Link Radio which provides such valuable support for the housebound in the community.
- The Mayor encouraged attendance at the Firework Spectacular which was to take place at Waterside Farm on Saturday 5th November 2016.

29. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC OF WHICH NOTICE HAD BEEN RECEIVED

There were none.

30. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF WHICH NOTICE HAD BEEN RECEIVED

There were none.

31. TO DEAL WITH ANY BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

Dealt with under Minutes 33 below

32. ANY EXPLANATIONS FOR URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET

There were none.

33. CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET: NOTICE OF MOTIONS REFERRED FROM COUNCIL.

Cabinet on 21.9.2016 considered a report on four Motions which were referred without debate in order for Cabinet to consider the impact of the proposition contained in the Motions in the view of the potential impact on Council expenditure.

Cabinet decided to note the information contained in the report and refer the report to Council. Council considered each Motion separately as follows:

33a MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

“The UKIP Group would like it known that many of the pavements and roads throughout the borough are in a poor state of repair and that currently there are many weeds, grass and suchlike growing out of control in the pavements and gulleys and cracks; these will only continue to further damage the roads and pavements. Can we therefore request that a thorough cleansing and removal of all debris and growth in our roads and pavements throughout the borough take place at the earliest opportunity?” (Proposed by Cllr Varker, seconded by Cllr Bayley).

As the prime responsibility for the proposition in this Motion rested with Essex County Council it was agreed this Motion be referred to the County Council for attention.

33b MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

“Canvey Island Independent Party calls upon Castle Point Council to reinstate the disabled parking bays outside the entrance of Waterside Farm Leisure Centre”. (Proposed by Cllr Blackwell, seconded by Cllr Neville Watson).

Discussion took place during which it was suggested there would be merit in considering the Motion as part of a review by a Policy and Scrutiny Committee of disabled access to all council facilities.

Resolved:

To refer the Motion for examination by the appropriate Policy and Scrutiny Committee(s) as part of a review of disabled access arrangements to all council facilities.

33c MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

“We the Canvey Island Independent Party call upon Castle Point Council to look at the rubbish collections Calendar with a view to changing the collection dates to bring the side roads in line with the main roads. For example, Link Road's black collection day is the side road's pink collection day.

I feel that if these collection days are brought in line to one colour it will stop the confusion on what colour/ what week”. (Proposed by Cllr Mrs Grace Watson, seconded by Cllr Mrs Sach).

Councillor Mrs. Grace Watson the proposer of the Motion spoke noting that the refuse rounds were to be reviewed and acknowledged that the proposition in the Motion was being addressed.

33d MOTIONS TO COUNCIL

We the Canvey Island Independent Party call upon Castle Point Council to explain why the grass cutting in the Borough has not been cut regularly for some time, also why the weeds have been left to grow out of control. This has made our area's look untidy and an eyesore”. (Proposed by Cllr Neville Watson, seconded by Cllr Mrs Grace Watson).

Councillor Neville Watson the proposer of the Motion spoke to explain why he had brought forward the Motion. He acknowledged that grass cutting and weed clearance had taken place and the appearance of the Borough had improved. Accordingly he withdrew the Motion.

34. CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET: THE CORPORATE PLAN

Council was requested to consider the recommendation from Cabinet to consider and approve the Corporate Plan which was before the Council.

Cabinet on 21.9.2016 considered a report on the draft Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan was an important document for the Council. It sets out the strategic direction for the organisation as well as how the Council would achieve its aims and priorities through appropriate action planning.

It was planned to undertake a review of the Corporate Plan later in the year to include more detailed consideration by the Policy and Scrutiny Committees and public consultation.

The Corporate Plan also included an annual report detailing the Council's achievements over the last year. Members noted in particular the construction of three new homes at St Christopher's Mews, the first new council housing constructed by the Council in many years.

Resolved:

To approve the Corporate Plan.

35. ANY REFERENCES FROM THE SCRUTINY, POLICY & SCRUTINY OR REGULATORY COMMITTEES

There were none

36. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council referring to the next item on the agenda and the importance of continuing financial security expressed confidence that the Members and officers moving forward together would respond to the funding challenges facing the Council.

The Leader announced changes to the Conservative Group's nominees on the Audit Committee - Cllr Hart to replace Cllr Sheldon and Cllr Mumford to replace Cllr Stanley as substitute member of the Committee.

The Leader asked Members to include relevant Cabinet Members in queries regarding council services and announced that revisions to clarify Cllr Isaacs and Cllr Skipp's responsibilities would be published in the Member Brief.

Regarding Devolution, the Leader reported that he as part of group of Essex Leaders had written to the Secretary of State to confirm support for Greater Essex Devolution but maintaining opposition to an Elected Mayor as part of the proposition. The Leader was continuing to work with the Leaders and Chief Executives within the south east Essex quadrant to ensure that Castle Point was fully included in future plans for the area. The Leader referred to remarks made by Lord Heseltine on the opening of the Thames Estuary Commission commenting on the need to reform leadership in Essex and the necessity for fifteen local authorities to run Essex.

The Leader encouraged Members to respond to the Police and Crime Commissioner's consultation on the Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020. A public engagement meeting was to take place on 18.10.2016 at the Memorial Hall Canvey Island.

The Leader reminded Members concerning the joint East and West Canvey Forums to be held on 10.10.2016 at which Essex Police would be present.

The Leader reported on progress of the Council's New Local Plan. The Local Plan had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in August and Planning Inspector Mr David Smith had been appointed to examine the plan.

The Planning Inspector had written to the Council following preliminary appraisal of the Local Plan seeking clarification regarding the duty to co-operate before the Inspector would be in position to indicate how examination of the plan might be progressed. A response was being prepared.

The Leader concluded his report seeking support for the Trust Links Charity. This local charity for wellbeing and mental health support had three operational gardens with the newest allotment garden based to the rear of the Council Offices. The Leader, Councillor Skipp and the Head of Licensing and Safer Communities had taken part in a charity walk raising over three hundred pounds. The Leader thanked everyone for their contributions to date.

37. FINANCIAL RESULTS AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2015/2016

The Council considered a report containing the financial out-turn results and audited Statement of Accounts for approval by Council.

The Statement of Accounts must be prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and proper accounting requirements, as set out in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16, and the associated Guidance notes for Practitioners,

The accounts had been audited by the Council's External Auditors Ernst and Young and had been available for public inspection.

In order to ensure that the accounts were subject to robust scrutiny additional guidance had been produced. Annexe A contained a summary of the 2015/16 financial results for the Council's three main funds: the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account and the Capital Programme. Annexe B contained supporting information for the benefit of Members including explanations of changes to the format of the financial statements and an analysis of figures and disclosures presented in the accounts. A summary of the Accounts was also before the Council. A separate report to Audit Committee in June 2016 and Cabinet in July 2016 had summarised the Council's Treasury Management activity for 2015/16.

The Head of Resources made a presentation to explain the accounts. In moving approval of the accounts Councillor Stanley Deputy Leader of the Council drew attention to the outturn figures which demonstrated close financial control. In commenting on the Accounts he highlighted the Council spending in maintaining and delivering Council services, the use of reserves and future financial pressures to be faced by the Council. Councillor Stanley acknowledged and thanked the Head of Resources and officers for their work.

The Council examined the audited accounts. During discussion it was necessary for the Mayor to stand in order to restore order to the meeting. (Council Procedure Rule 20.2 referred). Councillor Sheldon apologised to the Mayor. Consideration of the accounts resumed. At the conclusion Councillor Stanley responded to questions and observation from Councillors.

The Council concurred with the view that the overall financial results for 2015/16 generally indicated sound budgeting and good budgetary control.

Resolved:

That following scrutiny:

1. The financial results for 2015/16 and explanations of budget variances and significant items were noted.
2. To approve the audited Statement of Accounts which were signed by the Mayor.

38. NOTICES OF MOTION

There were none.

39. PETITIONS

There were none.

Mayor

ORDINARY COUNCIL

7th December 2016

**Subject: Consideration of Recommendation from Cabinet:
Arrangements for the appointment of the Council's
External Auditor**

Cabinet Member: Councillor Stanley – Finance & Resources

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 16.11.2016 on the provisions of the Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 regarding the appointment of the External Auditor to the Council.

2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives

This report is linked to the Council's priority of Efficient and Effective customer focussed services

3. Recommendations from Cabinet:

- 1. To note the requirements relating to the appointment of the Council's External Auditor for 2018/19 and beyond.**
 - 2. To approve arrangements to opt into the arrangements led by Public Sector Audit Appointments, for a national collective scheme for auditor appointments.**
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4. Background

- 4.1** The Cabinet meeting on 16.11.2016 considered a report on the Local Audit & Accountability Act 2014 regarding the appointment of the External Auditor to the Council.
- 4.2** In January 2014 the Local Audit & Accountability Act received Royal Assent. Part 3 of the Act contains provisions for the Appointment of Local Auditors. The Council, as a 'relevant authority' must appoint a local auditor to audit its accounts for a financial year not later than 31st December in the preceding financial year.
- 4.3** Under current arrangements the Council's appointed auditor is Ernst & Young LLP. The firm was appointed under arrangements established by the former Audit Commission which were subsequently delegated on a transitional basis to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) on the abolition of the Audit

Commission. Under these transitional arrangements, the PSAA is currently responsible for appointing auditors to local government (and other sectors), the setting of audit fees and arrangements for the certification of Housing Benefit subsidy claims.

- 4.4 For local government these transitional arrangements have been extended to include the audit of the accounts for 2017/18 which means that, on conclusion of the accounts audit for 2017/18 the audit contract with Ernst & Young LLP will conclude.
- 4.5 For the 2018/19 year of audit, the Council can make its own arrangements to appoint the external auditor. The 2014 Act sets out the framework and requirements within which this appointment can be made. In accordance with the Act the Council will need to conclude this appointment by the end of December 2017.

5. Options for the appointment of the Council's External Auditor

- 5.1 There appear to be 3 options, namely,
 - a) Make the appointment direct – with requirement to have an Auditor Panel to advise the Council on the selection and appointment of a local auditor;
 - b) Make the appointment in conjunction with other bodies (e.g. on a regional / sub-regional basis);
 - c) Make the appointment via a national collective scheme.
- 5.2 In July 2016, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government specified PSAA as an appointing person under regulation 3 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015. This means that PSAA can make auditor appointments for audits of the accounts from 2018/19 of principal authorities that *choose to opt into* its arrangements. The Local Government Association (LGA) is strongly supportive of this and the PSAA is leading on the development of this national option.
- 5.3 The PSAA has produced a prospectus to explain how they are developing a scheme for local auditor appointments and are currently working on the details of the scheme, including a timetable.
- 5.4 The date by which principal local government bodies will need to opt into the appointing person arrangement is not yet finalised. The aim is to award contracts to audit firms by June 2017, giving six months to consult on appointments with authorities before the 31 December 2017 deadline. The PSAA anticipate that invitations to opt in will be issued before December 2016. (At the time of preparation of this report the invitations had not been issued.)
- 5.5 The Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015 require that a principal authority may only make the decision to opt into the appointing person arrangement by the members of the authority meeting as a whole (i.e. a decision of the Council).
- 5.6 Subject to the arrangements being finalised Council is requested to give approval to opt into the arrangements established by the PSAA.

6. Corporate Implications

a) Financial Implications

There are no new financial implications arising directly through this report.

b) Legal Implications

As contained above.

c) Human Resources and Equality Implications

There are no human resource or equality implications arising from this report

d) IT and Asset Management Implications

There are no new IT or Asset Management implications arising from this report.

7. Timescale for Implementation and Risk Factors

Timescales as set out above.

16th November - Cabinet

7th December – Council (decision to opt-in)

December 2016 – PSAA invitations to opt in anticipated

June 2017 – Award of new contracts

Background Papers

- Letter from Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) dated 22nd September 2016

Report Author: Chris Mills – Head of Resources

ORDINARY COUNCIL

7th December 2016

**Subject: Consideration of Recommendation from Cabinet:
Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for 2017/18**

Cabinet Member: Councillor Stanley – Finance and Resources

1. Purpose of Report

To present recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 16.11.2016 in respect of:

- The results of consultation on proposed changes for the 2017/18 scheme.
- Recommended changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2017/18.

2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives

This report is linked to the Council's priority of Efficient and Effective Customer Focused Services. Sound and strategic financial management is essential in order to ensure that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and maintain or improve services.

3. Recommendations from Cabinet

1. To note and carefully consider the consultation results, Impacts assessment, and Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment appended to this report before making any decision on the scheme.
2. To approve the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18 as stated in this report.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The Council is required to approve future year's Local Council Tax Support schemes annually before 31st January, regardless of whether there are proposals to change the scheme or not.

- 4.2 It is also an annual requirement to consult with residents and other interested parties in relation to the scheme and at its meeting in July; Cabinet noted proposed arrangements for consultation for next years scheme. This consultation has now concluded and a summary of responses is provided at Appendix A of this report.

5. Consultation responses

- 5.1 The consultation period ran for 6 weeks, from 10th August to 21st September 2016. In order to raise awareness and encourage participation in the consultation 3,000 flyers were distributed with outgoing Council Tax Bills and benefit notifications; publicity material and consultation forms were distributed to all four local libraries; and information was prominently displayed on the Council's website and at the benefit enquiry counter.
- 5.2 Partners, via the Benefit Information Network group and Local Strategic Partnership group, were also notified and asked to raise awareness amongst their customers.
- 5.3 The consultation contained questions about; whether the scheme should remain the same or be changed, views on 5 proposed technical changes to bring the scheme in line with other benefits, and views on 3 alternative proposals to cover the costs of administering the current scheme if no changes are made.
- 5.4 170 people accessed the consultation form with 66 responding fully to all questions. This compares to 84 people who accessed the consultation last year, of which 72 went on to fully answer the questions. The response rate is comparative with the average seen in other Essex Authorities to date.
- 5.5 A detailed summary of the consultation results is set out at Appendix A of this report.
- 5.6 Essex County Council, Essex Police and Essex Fire have been consulted via the Pan Essex Group which is an officer led working group consisting of representatives from all Essex authorities and precepting organisations. No objections have been raised to the proposed changes.

6. Proposed Changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18

- 6.1 The following elements are incorporated into the 2016/17 scheme for Castle Point:
- 1 The scheme is 'cost neutral', meaning that the cost to the Council and each pre-cepting authority does not exceed the funding notified by central government (see section 7a - financial implications).
 - 2 As directed by central government, all pensioners are protected, meaning that the financial impact of the scheme falls solely on working age households.

- 3 The scheme is means tested and contains weightings in the form of Premiums, Disregards, and Applicable Amounts to enable protection for working age vulnerable groups and households with children and/or disabilities.
 - 4 The scheme incentivises work by disregarding £25 per week of earned income.
 - 5 Child Benefit is counted in full as income when calculating entitlement.
 - 6 There are no mechanisms in the Scheme to allow backdated support.
 - 7 As far as possible the Scheme allows for expected growth in demand and is easy to claim and administer.
 - 8 There is no entitlement to Second Adult Rebate within the scheme for working age claimants (Second Adult Rebate was benefit which could be awarded where a single Council Tax payer had an adult friend or relative, who was on a low income, living with them).
 - 9 The savings limit is £6,000, meaning that claimants with capital to a value exceeding £6,000 are not entitled to Local Council Tax Support.
 - 10 There are no Non-Dependant deductions for working age claimants (Non Dependant deductions were made from Council Tax Benefit where the claimant had another adult, who was not their partner, living in their household).
 - 11 The Council's 'Local War Pensioner' provisions have been retained, meaning incomes received in respect of War Pensions for disablement or bereavement are fully disregarded when calculating support.
 - 12 Support is capped at Council Tax Band D and at 70% of Council Tax liability for working age claimants. This means that all working age Council Tax Payers are required to pay a minimum of 30% of their weekly council tax bill and those living in properties banded E to H will be assessed as though they are living in a Band D property (% and band are specific to CPBC's local scheme).
 - 13 There is no entitlement to 'underlying entitlement' when support is overpaid.
 - 14 A small sum is available to provide additional assistance in accordance with the Council's Exceptional Hardship Policy.
- 6.2 It is recommended that the scheme should be changed for 2017/18 to mirror technical changes that have already, or soon will be, implemented across other state benefits as part of wider Welfare Reforms.
- 6.3 The new elements that are recommended to be incorporated into the current scheme from 1st April 2017 are;
- 15 *Remove the Family Premium for all new working age applicants. The Family Premium is an amount which is used to indicate 'needs' and is*

compared with the level of income when calculating weekly entitlement. It is usually given when a claimant has at least one dependent child living with them. Central Government has already implemented this change within the prescribed Pension Age scheme and Housing Benefit from 1st May 2016.

- 16 Reduce the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Local Council Tax Support to 4 weeks. Central Government has already implemented this change to Housing Benefit from 30th May 2016.*
- 17 Remove the Work Related Activity Component in the calculation of Local Council Tax Support for new Employment and Support Allowance applicants. Central Government is expected to implement this change to Housing Benefit from April 2017. Members are advised that in the unlikely event that these changes are not effected by Central Government by 1st April 2017, that the Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme will not be amended for 2017 but will be amended from 2018.*
- 18 Limit the number of Dependant Child Applicable Amounts used within the calculation for Local Council Tax Support to a maximum of two. Central Government will be implementing this change to Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, and Tax Credit from April 2017. Members are advised that in the unlikely event that these changes are not effected by Central Government by 1st April 2017, that the Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme will not be amended for 2017 but will be amended from 2018.*
- 19 Remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium, used within the calculation for Local Council Tax Support, where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carers Element) to look after them. Central Government has already implemented this change to Housing Benefit from April 2016.*

6.4 Understandably those consulted did not agree that any changes should be made to the scheme, however,

- The changes will align the scheme with proposed changes to Housing Benefit and with the approach taken by the Department for Work and Pensions in the creation, introduction, and roll out of Universal Credit.
- The changes are intended to address potential shortfalls in funding, resulting from the continued reduction in Central Government grants.
- Since pensioners are protected by a directive from central government the financial impact of the scheme falls completely on working age claimants, these changes will ensure more accurate targeting of support to those working age claimants most in need.

- 6.5 Analysis of the changes and their impacts is set out at Appendix B. This information must be carefully considered by Members, along with the consultation results (Appendix A), before a decision on the final scheme for 2017/18 is made.

7. Corporate Implications

a. Financial Implications

Funding

- 7.1 The reduced tax yield arising directly from the council tax support scheme discount was originally compensated for by a Government grant. With the exception of the Town Council, each precepting organisation received their equivalent grant directly and it was specifically identified within the overall finance settlement. An amount was paid over from this Council to the Town Council based on an estimate of the amount relating to them. From 2015/16 the grant has not been specified separately and given the scale of reductions applied to Revenue Support Grant (RSG) up to 2017/18 and its complete depletion from 2018/19 it can be assumed that local authorities are now required to fund this scheme entirely from their own resources.
- 7.2 Despite significant reductions in government funding and other cost pressures the Council has maintained the scheme at broadly its original level.
- 7.3 The overall impact on the Council Tax Base for each financial year since the introduction of the scheme is shown in the table below:

	Outturn £000s	Projected £000s
2013/14	5,798	
2014/15	5,282	
2015/16	4,874	
2016/17		5,100

- 7.4 The number of discounts awarded under the local scheme has steadily reduced throughout the period since the scheme was launched in April 2013. Caseload will be influenced by changes in the local economy.

Scheme performance

- 7.5 The first three years of the local scheme resulted in an under spent position (expenditure to grant) and the respective caseload was seen to slightly reduce, month on month, as each year progressed.

Collection

- 7.6 On introduction, the scheme resulted in a number of residents receiving full or partial Council Tax bills for the first time and, as expected, some residents have had difficulty in making payment. The Council has seen a reduction in the overall council tax collection rate, and an increase in the number of payment arrangements which extend payment into subsequent financial years.

- 7.7 Financial implications over and above the target cost of the scheme, positive or negative, would be shared with the major pre-cepting organisations.

Council Tax Reserve

- 7.8 The Council has preserved an amount of £100k in an earmarked reserve from scheme underspends in previous years.

b. Legal Implications

7.9

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 made provision for local authorities to implement a council tax reduction scheme based on financial need criteria. This legislation also placed responsibility on the billing authority before introducing or implementing changes to their scheme to undertake consultation on the various options enabling consultees to express meaningful views on the proposals. These views have been considered by the local authority before making a final decision.

c. Human resources/equality/human rights

A stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment for the proposed changes has been completed. A copy is attached at Appendix C of this report.

d. Timescale for implementation and risk factors

The local scheme needs to be finalised by 31st January 2017. The new scheme must be operational from 1st April 2017.

Key project milestones are as follows:

Milestone	Timeframe	Purpose
Formal Public/Stakeholder Consultation	Aug 16 – Sept 16	Pre-cepting organisations & Residents
Grant Published	Nov 16 – Dec 16	
Cabinet Report	16.11.2016	Consultation outcome
Report to Council	7.12.2016	Proposed scheme to be recommended to Council Final scheme approval
2017/18 Scheme in place	31.01.2017	Adoption and Implementation
2017/18 Scheme in operation	01.04.2017	Operation

Appendix A Consultation Summary Report

Appendix B Impacts of Proposed 2017/18 LCTS Scheme Changes

Appendix C Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment

8. Background Papers:

Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18 update – report to Cabinet 20th July 2016

Report Author:

Eddie Mosuro – Revenues & Benefits Transformation Manager

Castle Point Borough Council
2017/18 Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme
Consultation Summary Report

In total 170 people accessed the consultation form, of which 66 people went on to answer all of the consultation questions.

Consultation Results

Q1:

The Council is very keen that you have all the information you need to provide informed answers to this consultation. Details of the current scheme, how it is funded, and the proposed changes which are subject to this consultation can be reviewed here (web link/leaflet provided). Please confirm whether you have reviewed this information before completing this form:

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes	<div style="width: 100%; background-color: yellow;"></div>	63	100%
No	<div style="width: 0%; background-color: yellow;"></div>	0	0%
Total Respondents			63
(skipped this question)			107

Q2:

Should the Council keep the current Local Council Tax Support scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme and have the same level of support as it does at the moment?)

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes	<div style="width: 67%; background-color: yellow;"></div>	44	67%
No	<div style="width: 26%; background-color: yellow;"></div>	17	26%
Don't know	<div style="width: 8%; background-color: yellow;"></div>	5	8%
Total Respondents		66	100%
(skipped this question)			104

Q3:

Please use the space below to make any comments you have on protecting the Local Council Tax Support scheme from these changes.

17 comments were recorded:

- 2 comments suggested that the consultation did not provide enough information for people to make an informed decision.
- 5 comments generally supported the need for a scheme that supports vulnerable people or suggested it needs to be made more generous and flexible.
- 1 comment suggested that the scheme does not currently incentivize people into work
- 5 comments suggested that staff costs should be reduced instead.

Q4:

Option 1 – Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants

The removal of family premium from 1st April 2017 for new claims will bring the Local Council Tax Support scheme in line with Housing Benefit. The family premium is part of how we assess the 'needs' (Applicable Amounts) of any claimant which is compared with their income. Family Premium is normally given when a claimant has at least one dependant child living with them. Removing the family premium will mean that when we assess a claimant's needs it would not include the family premium (currently £17.45 per week). This change would **not** affect those on Universal Credit, Income Support, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance.




The benefit of the Council doing this is:

- It brings the working age Local Council Tax Support scheme in line with Housing Benefit changes proposed by Central Government. The change has already been introduced for pension age claimants by Central Government;

The drawbacks of doing this are:

- New working age residents may see a reduction in the amount of support they received.
- Some households with children may pay more

Do you agree with Option 1?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		22	33%
No		43	65%
Don't know		1	2%
Total Respondents		66	100%
(skipped this question)			104

Q5:

If you disagree with Option 1 what alternative would you propose?

13 responses were recorded;

- 6 comments generally opposed Option 1 and/or any other changes to the scheme but did not propose any alternatives.
- 1 comment stated that Option 1 does not incentivize people into work and does not treat Universal Credit and Job Seekers claimants equally.
- 2 comments generally supported Option 1, suggesting that the current scheme penalizes childless households and unfairly benefits those with children..
- 1 comment suggested Option 2 as an alternative.

Q6:

Option 2 - Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to 4 weeks.

Within the current scheme, applicants can be temporarily absent from their homes for 13 weeks (or 52 weeks in certain cases) without it affecting their Local Council Tax Support. This replicated the rule within Housing Benefit. Housing Benefit has now been changed by the Government so that if a person is absent from Great Britain for a period of more than 4 weeks, their benefit will cease. It is proposed that the Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme is amended to reflect the changes in Housing Benefit. There will be exceptions for certain occupations such as mariners and the armed forces or where you have to go abroad due to the death of a close relative.

The benefits of the Council doing this are:



- The treatment of temporary absence will be brought into line with Housing Benefit
- It is seen as fair
- There are exceptions for certain occupations including the armed forces and

mariners. Exceptions will also apply if you leave Great Britain due to the death of a close relative.

The drawback of this is:

- If a person is absent from Great Britain for a period which is likely to exceed 4 weeks, their Local Council Tax Support will cease from when they leave the Country. They will need to re-apply on return

Do you agree with Option 2?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		28	43%
No		37	57%
Don't know		0	0%
Total Respondents		65	100%
(skipped this question)			105

Q7:

If you disagree with Option 2 what alternative would you propose?

14 responses were recorded;

- 6 comments generally opposed Option 2 but did not propose any alternatives.
- 3 comments stated that holidays abroad were none of the Council's business, private matters, and that imposing this change would breach Human Rights
- 2 comments supported Option 2, including one which stated only the rich should travel.

Q8:

Option 3 - To remove the element of a Work Related Activity Component in the calculation of the current scheme for new Employment and Support Allowance applicants.

From April 2017, all new applicants of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) who fall within the Work Related Activity Group will no longer receive the work related activity component in either their ESA or within the calculation of Housing Benefit. It is proposed that the Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme is amended to reflect this change.




The benefits of the Council doing this are:

- The treatment of ESA will be brought into line with Housing Benefit

- It avoids additional costs to the Local Council Tax Support scheme.
- Persons receiving ESA will not experience any reduction in Local Council Tax Support.

There are no drawbacks to this change

Do you agree with Option 3?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		24	38%
No		39	61%
Don't know		1	2%
Total Respondents		64	100%
(skipped this question)			106

Q9:

If you disagree with Option 3 what alternative would you propose?

10 responses were recorded;

- 4 comments generally opposed Option 3 but did not propose any alternatives.
- 1 comment opposed Option 3 suggesting that homelessness and crime will increase.

Q10:

Option 4 - To limit the number of dependant children within the calculation for Local Council Tax Support to a maximum of two

Within the current scheme, claimants who have children are awarded a dependant's addition of £66.90 per child within the calculation of their needs (Applicable Amounts). There is no limit to the number of dependant's additions that can be awarded. From April 2017 Central Government will be limiting dependant's additions in Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits to a maximum of two. This will only affect households who have a third or subsequent child on or after 1st April 2017. It is proposed that the Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme is amended to reflect the changes in Housing Benefit and Central Government Benefits. There will be exceptions where: there are multiple births after 1st April 2017 (and the household is not already at their maximum of two dependants within the calculation); adopted children or where households merge.



The benefits of the Council doing this are:

- Local Council Tax Support will be brought into line with Housing Benefit, Universal Credit and Tax Credits
- It is simple and administratively easy

The drawbacks of doing this are:

- Claimants who have a third or subsequent child after 1st April 2017 (and are not excepted from the rules) may receive less Local Council Tax Support than claimants who have more children born before 1st April 2017

Do you agree with Option 4?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		25	39%
No		39	61%
Don't know		0	0%
Total Respondents		64	100%
(skipped this question)			106

Q11:

If you disagree with Option 4 what alternative would you propose?

12 responses were recorded;

- 5 comments generally opposed Option 4 but did not propose any alternatives.
- 1 comment generally supported Option 4.
- 1 comment suggested that the calculation should be limited to one child only (excepting multiple births)

Q12:

Option 5 – To remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carers Element) to look after them

Currently when another person is paid Carers Allowance to look after a Local Council Tax Support claimant, then the Severe Disability Premium is not included when working out their needs (Applicable Amounts). The reason for this is that it avoids paying for the same care twice. This proposed change will align the scheme with Housing Benefit by treating persons who receive the Universal Credit (Carers Element) in the same way as anyone receiving Carers Allowance

The benefit of this is:

- Local Council Tax Support will be brought into line with Housing Benefit;
- It is simple and administratively easy

The drawbacks of doing this are:

- There are no drawbacks to this change as persons receiving Universal Credit (Carers Element) will be treated in the same way as those receiving Carers Allowance who look after any person who claims Local Council Tax Support.

Do you agree with Option 5?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		23	36%
No		41	64%
Don't know		0	0%
Total Respondents		64	100%
(skipped this question)			106

Q13:

If you disagree with Option 5 what alternative would you propose?

14 responses were recorded including;

- 2 comments generally opposed Option 5, suggesting it will detrimentally impact the vulnerable.
- 7 comments generally opposed Option 5 but did not propose any alternatives.
- 1 comment suggested more support is needed for Carers and those on Universal Credit.

Q14:

If the Council keeps the current scheme, it will be administratively more complex (as it will not align with Housing Benefit which is also administered by the Council) and it will cost taxpayers more. If this happens we will need to find savings from other services to help meet the increase in costs. The proposals set out in this consultation could deliver savings. The alternatives are set out in the background information.

Do you think we should choose any of the following alternative options rather than the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme?

APPENDIX A

	Yes	No	Don't know	Response Total
Increase the level of Council Tax	14.29% (9)	79.37% (50)	6.35% (4)	63
Find savings from cutting other Council Services	22.22% (14)	68.25% (43)	9.52% (6)	63
Use the Council's savings	58.73% (37)	33.33% (21)	7.94% (5)	63
Total Respondents				63
(skipped this question)				107

Q15:

If the Council were to choose these other options to make savings, what would be your order of preference? Please rank in order of preference by writing a number from 1 – 3 in the boxes below, where 1 is the option that you would most prefer and 3 is the least.

	1	2	3	Response Total
Increase the level of Council Tax	17.46% (11)	7.94% (5)	74.6% (47)	63
Reduce funding available for other Council Services	19.05% (12)	20.63% (13)	60.32% (38)	63
Use the Council's savings	71.43% (45)	11.11% (7)	17.46% (11)	63
Total Respondents				63
(skipped this question)				107

Q16:

Please use this space to make any other comments on the scheme.

27 responses were recorded;

- Most comments were generally opposing any changes to the scheme.
- 1 suggested that the consultation did not provide enough information for people to make an informed decision.

Q17:

Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).

20 responses were recorded;

- Most comments were generally opposing any changes to the scheme but did not propose any alternatives.
- 3 comments suggested clamping down harder on fraudulent activity

- 3 comments suggested selling council assets
- 7 comments suggested reducing staff costs

Q18:

If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Local Council Tax Support scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.

16 responses were recorded;




- Most contained general statements of discontent.
- 3 comments suggested that the Council should have more income due to recent building works undertaken across the borough.
- 3 comments raised questions or made commentary about the level of support offered to particular community groups (Students, Travellers, and the economically inactive)

Diversity and Equality Results

This section details the makeup of the respondents. None of these questions were mandatory so the response total varies from question to question.




Q19.

Are you, or someone in your household, getting Local Council Tax Support at this time?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		9	16%
No		46	81%
Don't know		2	4%
Total Respondents		57	100%
(skipped this question)			113

Q20.

Are you . . . ?

		Response Total	Response Percent
Male		29	52%
Female		20	36%
Prefer not to say		7	12%

APPENDIX A

Total Respondents	56	100%
(skipped this question)		114

Q21.

Age . . ?

		Response Total	Response Percent
18 - 24		5	8%
25 - 34		6	10%
35 - 44		7	12%
45 - 54		14	24%
55 - 64		17	29%
65 - 74		3	5%
75 - 84		3	5%
85+		0	0%
Prefer not to say		4	7%
Total Respondents		59	100%
(skipped this question)			111

Q22:

Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?








		Response Total	Response Percent
Yes		12	23%
No		24	46%
Don't know		3	6%
Prefer not to say		13	25%
Total Respondents		52	100%
(skipped this question)			118

Q23:

What is your ethnic group?

		Response Total	Response Percent
White British		27	49%
Other White		0	0%
White Irish		2	4%
White & Black Caribbean		0	0%
White & Black African		0	0%

APPENDIX A

White & Asian		1	2%
Any Other Mixed background		0	0%
Indian		0	0%
Pakistani		2	4%
Bangladeshi		1	2%
Any Other Asian background		1	2%
Caribbean		2	4%
African		0	0%
Any Other Black background		0	0%
Chinese		0	0%
Arab		0	0%
Prefer not to say		18	33%
Other, please specify		1	2%
Total Respondents		55	100%
(skipped this question)			115

Impacts of Proposed 2017/18 LCTS Scheme Changes

The 5 options, on which residents were consulted, mirror technical changes that already have, or will be, implemented across other state benefits as part of the wider Welfare Reforms.

Some of these changes will only affect new claims from April 2017, so have minimal impact to existing claimants.

If these changes are adopted by the Council transitional arrangements and protections will be put in place to mirror the arrangements made in those other state benefits to protect existing claims.

It is difficult to fully assess the impact of these changes but this paper contains tables and information outlining the anticipated effects of the changes (where available) on the working age claimants within the Council's area.

Table 1: This table shows key working age population data for Castle Point, taken from the 2011 Census. This data is derived from 'Total Population' and 'Out-of-Work' data sets.

Population data (Census 2011)	Total Population (18 – 64)	Disability* (All ages)	Carer* (All Ages)	Female (18 – 64)	Male (18 - 64)	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Number	89,200	530	680	45,800	43,400	7,000	9,000	9,800	13,000	11,500
Proportion of total WA population	100%	0.59%	0.76%	51.3%	48.7%	7.8%	10.19%	10.99%	14.57%	12.89%

* Disability & Carers details are not split by age range in the Census data so the figures shown represent all responses recorded in these categories, not just working age.

Appendix B

Table 2: This table shows the proportionate split between the same key data sets within the current Working Age LCTS claim database. Data was extracted at 31.10.16.

Working Age LCTS Scheme 2016/17	All Claimants	Disability	Carer	Female	Male	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Number of claimants	2341	107	26	1575	766	81	500	487	621	652
Proportion of claimants	100%	4.57%	1.11%	67.28%	32.72%	3.46%	21.36%	20.80%	26.53%	27.85%
Average benefit paid (£ per week)	13.25	12.58	11.29	13.22	13.30	11.70	12.43	12.66	13.00	13.89
Difference to Census Data	N/A	+3.98%	+0.35%	+15.98%	-15.98%	-4.34%	+11.17%	+9.81%	+11.96%	+14.96%

Comparing Tables 1 and 2 shows, in terms of EQIA protected characteristics, that;

Disability

Working age people with disabilities make up a slightly higher proportion of the current caseload (at 4.57%) compared with the proportion measured against the general population (0.59%). Working age people with disabilities receive more per week than working age people without disabilities, on average, due to the design of the scheme that ignores certain disability benefits and awards higher applicable amounts.

Carers

There is a marginally higher proportion of claimants with a carer in the household (1.11%), than the population generally overall (0.76%). Working age claimants with a carer in the household receive more per week, on average, than working age claimants without a carer in the household. The main reason for this is both the treatment of disability and care within the existing scheme.

Age

In general, there is a higher proportionate LCTS caseload amongst those aged 25 to 64, and a lower proportionate caseload amongst those aged 18 to 24. Additionally, those aged 55-64 currently receive the highest weekly amount and those aged 18-24 receive the lowest weekly amount, on average.

Sex

Females continue to make up a high proportion of the caseload at 67.28%. Although, there is a difference between the average amount females and males receive per week, this is due to factors relating to circumstances which directly affect the calculation of LCTS, and is not linked to a claimant's sex directly.

Race

This information is not collected from claimants as it is not relevant to the calculation of LCTS.

Other protected characteristics

Information is not collected from claimants in relation to the following characteristics as it is not relevant to the calculation of LCTS:

- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy or maternity

Option 1: Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants

This change will only apply to new claims made on or after 1st April 2017.

This change will not impact households receiving passported benefits (i.e. Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, etc.), meaning it will generally impact households with earned or other incomes.

There are currently 279 existing non passported working age Local Council Tax Support claims with a Family Premium.

Existing working age claims will not be affected by this change unless they have a break in their claim of 4 weeks or more, necessitating a new claim.

Households impacted by this change may also be impacted by the changes from Option 4 (limiting the Dependent Children Applicable Amounts) – see Case Studies at Option 4.

Option 2: Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Local Council Tax Support to 4 weeks

Data on this change cannot be extracted from the Benefit software, however, it is estimated that less than 10 cases have so far been impacted by this change since May 2016, when it was introduced to Housing Benefit.

Most LCTS claims are made jointly with Housing Benefit, and this therefore suggests the number of LCTS claims impacted will be equally minimal.

Option 3: Removing an element of the Work Related Activity Component for new Employment and Support Allowance applicants

Based on current case load, there are 8 existing claims which have this component in their LCTS calculation.

This represents 0.34% of the total working age LCTS population, so the number of claims expected to be impacted are once again very low.

The average LCTS award received by these 8 claims is currently £11.41 per week.

Analysing this change on 3 sample cases has shown that this would result in a weekly reduction to the LCTS award of £5.81.

Option 4: Limiting the number of Dependent Children Applicable Amounts within the calculation for Local Council Tax Support to a maximum of two.

Appendix B

Based on existing caseload, there are:

160	Non passported Claims with 3 Dependents
45	Non passported Claims with 4 Dependents
13	Non passported Claims with 5 Dependents
4	Non passported Claim with 6 Dependents
7	Non Passported Claim with 7 Dependents
229	Total

This change will not impact households receiving passported benefits (i.e. Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, etc.), meaning it will generally impact households with earned or other incomes.

This change will impact claims, whether existing or new, that have a third or subsequent child born on or after 1st April 2017.

Exceptions will apply in line with Central Government changes (i.e. where the child is born as the result of a multiple birth, rape etc.)

Households impacted by this change would also be impacted by Option 1 - removal of the Family Premium.

Case Study 1:

The following table illustrates the impact of Options 1, Option 4, and the combined impact of both on a family with 3 children:

Family with 3 children	Weekly Income	Weekly Needs Assessment	Maximum weekly LCTS award (70% of liability)	Weekly LCTS award	Weekly reduction to award
Current scheme	£330.52	£330.00	£18.95	£18.95	£0.00
Option 1	£330.52	£315.55	£18.95	£15.95	£3.00
Option 4	£330.52	£266.10	£18.95	£6.07	£12.88
Option 1 & 4	£330.52	£248.65	£18.95	£2.61	£16.34

The biggest impact is where a claim is impacted by both Option 1 and 4.

Analysis of the existing caseload identified only 3 claims, received between April and October 2016, that would have been impacted by both Option 1 and Option 4, had these changes already been introduced this year. This suggests that the number of households impacted by both changes is expected to be extremely low.

Option 5: Removing entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium where another person is paid Universal Credit (carers element) to look after them

Currently when another person is paid Carers Allowance to look after an LCTS claimant, the Severe Disability Premium is not included when working out their needs (Applicable Amounts) – this avoids paying for care twice. This proposed change simply aligns the scheme so that those receiving the Universal Credit (Carers Element) are treated in the same way as anyone receiving Carers Allowance.

Analysis shows that there are currently 251 working age non-passported LCTS claims with a Severe Disability Premium however the number of these who have someone receiving Universal Credit (carers element) to look after them, given Universal Credit has not been fully rolled out yet, is expected to be extremely low.

Essentially this change simply means that people receiving Universal Credit (Carers Element) will be treated in the same way as those receiving Carers Allowance who look after any person who claims LCTS.



Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2017-18

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Nov 2016

Strategy and Policy EqIA

All strategies and policies must be initially screened for their positive and negative equality impacts.

This initial screening will determine whether or not it is necessary to carry out a full EqIA for the strategy or policy.

This template has been designed to help you initially screen your strategy or policy and, if necessary, undertake a full EqIA .

Title of strategy or policy:	Local Council Tax Support Scheme
Person undertaking EqIA:	Eddie Mosuro
Head of Service:	Wendy Buck
Department:	Housing & Communities
Date EqIA completed:	4.11.16

Strategy and policy overview

Strategy and policy overview	
What is the strategy or policy intending to achieve?	To fulfil the Local Authorities legal obligation under the Localism Act to provide a Localised Council Tax Support Scheme with effect from 1.4.17.
What are the summary aims and objectives of the strategy or policy?	<p>Since 1st April 2013, the Council has maintained a Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. This replaced the national Council Tax Benefit scheme, which ended on 31st March 2013. LCTS helps provide support to council taxpayers who have a low income. It supports the taxpayers by providing a reduction in the actual amount in Council Tax payable.</p> <p>The Council has the ability to determine the level of support given to working age applicants only. The scheme for pension age applicants is determined by Central Government and therefore the ability of the Council to vary that part of the scheme is limited and can only enhance the national scheme in any event.</p> <p>When LCTS was first introduced, Central Government provided a specified level of grant, which was approximately 10% lower than the amounts previously given (pre 1st April 2013). This has now been replaced by a general duty to provide a scheme and funding is not separately identified within the grants given to the Council.</p> <p>After the original consultation, the Council decided to introduce an LCTS scheme that differed from the original Council Tax Benefit in that instead of granting a maximum level of support of 100% it would limit the maximum support to 70%.</p> <p>Changes since 2013 Since the introduction of LCTS, the overall scheme adopted by the Council has remained</p>

	<p>broadly the same, with only applicable amounts and non-dependant charges being uprated as well as minor changes being made to mirror changes to the Housing Benefit scheme. Central Government has also continued to uprate changes to applicable amounts for pension age applicants, again to mirror the changes in Housing Benefit.</p> <p>The Proposed Scheme for 2017/18</p> <p>In July 2016 the Council approved a public consultation, which took place during August and September 2016, to gather views as to whether the current scheme should be changed. A summary of the results of the consultation are provided together with this Equality Impact Assessment. The Council is minded to make changes to the working age scheme to meet the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The more accurate targeting of support to those working age applicants who most need it; • The need to change the scheme, not only to align it with proposed changes to Housing Benefit, but also to align the scheme with the approach taken by the Department for Work and Pensions in the creation, introduction and roll out of Universal Credit; and • To address potential shortfalls in funding due to the continued reduction in Central Government grants.
Who will benefit from implementing the strategy or policy?	The scheme benefits those on low incomes by providing them with support to pay their Council Tax. In particular it provides full protection to Pensioners (as prescribed within the requirements of the Localism Act) and includes locally determined protections for vulnerable groups and incentives to encourage people into work.
What are the links to the Council's corporate priorities?	This Policy supports the Council's corporate priority of 'Efficient & Effective Customer Focussed Services' by ensuring the Council is 'fit for purpose by meeting national and local requirements to agreed timescales and to optimum performance standards'.
What are the links to other Council	Corporate Debt Recovery Policy

strategies and policies?	Exceptional Hardship Policy Homelessness Strategy Action Plan
What are the links to other community strategies and policies?	National Strategy for tackling child poverty under the Coalition Government: https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/CM%208061

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 introduces 2 specific statutory duties on public bodies such as local authorities:

- **Socio-economic duty:**

- Have due regard when making strategic decisions to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage

- **Single (integrated) equality duty:**

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation or any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not

The Equality Act 2010 brings together all of the different equality strands and refers to them as “**protected characteristics**”:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief

- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Initial screening

This initial screening template will determine whether or not the strategy or policy requires a full EqIA

If any of the answers to the 6 screening questions is “yes”, then a full EqIA will be required.

Initial screening		
Does the strategy or policy aim to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage?	Yes / No	The Policy fundamentally aims to provide financial assistance in meeting Council Tax costs for those disadvantaged by socio-economic factors.
Does the strategy or policy aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	Yes / No	The scheme is prescribed for pension age people, however the scheme for working age people is less prescribed. Guidance has been given on treatment of vulnerable groups and work incentives. The design of the working age scheme has sought to eliminate discrimination.
Does the strategy or policy aim to advance equality of opportunity?	Yes / No	The Policy fundamentally aims to provide support with Council Tax for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged whilst also encouraging people into work. It has been recognised that in this regard opportunities for some groups may not be equal and therefore the Policy has been designed to provide protection for those

Appendix C

		groups where advancement of equal opportunity would be restricted.
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Initial screening (continued)		
Does the strategy or policy aim to foster good community relations?	Yes / No	No evidence available – not applicable.
Does the strategy or policy have the potential to make a negative contribution to equality?	Yes / No	The scheme may fundamentally make a negative contribution to equality for certain groups – children, families, lone parents etc.
Does the strategy or policy make a positive contribution to equality?	Yes / No	Pension age people are specifically protected under Government Regulations.
Initial screening outcome	Full EqlA is required	

Full assessment

Information gathering	
What quantitative and qualitative information is there?	Information detailing the current working age caseload against Census data and the impacts cross certain groups are set out here: Appendix B - Impact of Proposed 2017-18 LCTS Scheme Changes V1.0 FINAL.docx
What additional information is required?	No further information is required.
What are the outcomes of any internal and/or external consultation with stakeholders?	<p>Consultation was undertaken between 10.8.16 and 21.9.16.</p> <p>The consultation included key questions about;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether the scheme should remain the same or be changed, • views on 5 proposed technical changes to bring the scheme in line with other benefits, • views on 3 alternative proposals to cover the costs of administering the current scheme if no changes are made. <p>170 people accessed the consultation form, 66 of these fully answered all the questions.</p> <p>The response rate this year is comparative with the average seen in other Essex Authorities to date.</p>

Appendix C

<p>What further consultation is required?</p>	<p>The form contained a diversity data section, however this was optional. Based on the responses received the mix of respondents is believed to be broadly representative of the wider Castle Point community.</p> <p>The majority of respondents did not agree with any of the proposed changes</p> <p>Respondents were invited to make 'free text' comments.</p> <p>Most of the 'free text' comments generally indicated dissatisfaction with the scheme, dissatisfaction with the proposed changes, and concerns over affordability for those on low incomes.</p> <p>There is no requirement to conduct further consultation.</p> <p>Members are required to consider the Consultation results, Impacts report, and this EQIA when deciding on the final scheme for 2017/18.</p>
<p>What examples are there of existing good practice?</p>	<p>Some elements of the current working age scheme (i.e. Band restriction, % liability reduction, removal of Second Adult Rebate) have been agreed as part of the overarching Pan Essex scheme. Other current scheme elements have been designed to meet specific needs within Castle Point. All of the new proposals for the 2017/18 scheme mirror changes which have been , or will imminently be, introduced as part of Central Governments wider Welfare Reforms</p> <p>Guidance provided by DCLG, outlining good practice with regards to treatment of vulnerable groups http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscvulnerablepeople and incentives to work http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscworkincentives), has been considered in designing the scheme.</p> <p>The Local Government Finance Bill: Localizing Support for Council Tax – Updated Impact Assessment is also available here:</p>

	http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lgfblocalisingcounciltax Each Local Authority is required to adopt their 2017/18 scheme by 31.1.17.
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Making a judgement	
How will the strategy or policy eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	<p>Higher Rate Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation of their award and also may receive additional financial support through the Exceptional Hardship Fund. Without these elements the policy could potentially be discriminatory to those who fall within the 'disability' characteristic group.</p> <p>No other impacts on protected groups have been identified.</p>
How will the strategy or policy advance equality of opportunity?	<p>The Policy is compliant with prescribed Regulations that protect Pension Age people. This advances equality of opportunity for those who fall within the 'age' characteristic group (specifically those of Pension age) who would otherwise be disadvantaged by the schemes fundamental incentives to work.</p> <p>Parents will continue to receive a Dependant's Applicable</p>

Appendix C

	<p>Amount (limited to a maximum of two children in line with other Welfare Reforms) and working parents will continue to receive an earnings disregard, as part of the calculation of their award.</p> <p>Higher Rate Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation of their award and may also receive additional financial support through the Exceptional Hardship Fund. This advances equality of opportunity for those who fall within the 'disability' characteristic group who would otherwise be disadvantaged and may have less opportunity to improve their financial circumstances through work.</p> <p>No other impacts on protected groups have been identified.</p>
How will the strategy or policy foster good community relations?	No impacts on protected groups identified – not applicable.
<p>Does the strategy or policy have the potential to make a negative contribution to equality?</p> <p>If so, which groups with “protected characteristics” will be affected and what are the reasons?</p>	<p>People aged over 18 and of Working Age will be required to pay more than those of Pension Age.</p> <p>People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more than those above pension age. This is due to the Prescribed Regulations which automatically protect people of Pension Age.</p> <p>The reduced grant funding and Prescribed Regulations that apply to those of pension age means it is not financially viable to completely protect all protected characteristic groups from the full effects of this scheme.</p>

Appendix C

<p>What can be done to address any contribution to inequality caused by the strategy or policy?</p>	<p>People over 18 of Working Age will be required to pay more:</p> <p>The Council actively supports customers with information and advice on income maximisation, financial capability, and debt management. The Flat Rate earnings disregard has been maintained in the scheme design to incentivise work.</p> <p>People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more:</p> <p>Higher Rate Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions.</p> <p>A discretionary Exceptional Hardship Fund is available to provide additional financial assistance to those who are particularly vulnerable and suffering exceptional financial hardship.</p>
<p>What can be done to assist understanding of the strategy or policy?</p>	<p>Details of the scheme will be publicised on the council website www.castlepoint.gov.uk , and will be provided in hard copy and alternative formats (i.e. Braille, Large Print, Audio) on request.</p> <p>An on-line 'Calculator' is available to assist those who want to find out if they would be entitled to LCTS.</p> <p>First Contact customer service staff are available to explain the scheme to any individuals or organisations who require assistance.</p> <p>Members of the Benefit Information Network group are notified annually of the consultation process and are briefed annually on the scheme adopted each year.</p>

The real value of completing an EqlA comes from the actions that will take place and the positive changes that will emerge through conducting the EqlA.

The action plan should be SMART and feed directly in to the strategy or policy itself and any associated Service Plan. In addition, it should be consistent with any corporate equality actions.

The action plan should only include the main actions likely to have the greatest impact. It need not be a comprehensive list of all the possible things that might provide positive outcomes. It is unlikely that any action plan will have less than 6 to 8 actions but an action plan that runs to several pages may not provide sufficient focus and deliverability.

Appendix C

Action plan					
Equality objective	Action(s)	Lead responsibility	Resources	Timescale(s)	Outcome(s)
Assist understanding of the Policy	Refresh website and hard copy information once 2017/18 Final Scheme formally adopted.	First Contact Manager	Staff time & printing costs	Jan – Mar 2017	All affected groups fully aware of the Policy and how it will affect them.
Assist understanding of the Policy	Engage with local advice and support groups through the Benefit Information Network Group.	Benefit Manager	Staff time	Jan – Mar 2017	All local advice and support groups fully aware of the policy and how it will affect their customers.
Advancing equality of opportunity	Proactively identify suitable cases for Exceptional Hardship awards using internal knowledge of debts identified in 2016/17.	Revenues Manager	Staff time, provision of discretionary funding pot	Jan 2017 – Mar 2018	Reduce impact of the scheme on those suffering exceptional financial hardship.
Advancing equality of opportunity	Maintain a range of support services and referral arrangements to provide effective assistance with financial capability, budgeting, and/or debt management advice.	Revenues Manager & Benefit Manager	Staff time, funding pot for services, additional staff resource	Jan 2017 – Mar 2018	Customers adequately supported and equipped with skills to manage financial impact.

Finally....

- Sign the EqIA
- Ask your Head of Service to sign the EqIA
- Save a copy of the EqIA in the Corporate drive folder:
- <S:\Corporate\Diversity\Live Equality Impact Assessments>
- Publication
 - Council website
 - Make copies available for e-mail distribution, in hard copy format and by other means as appropriate (e.g. large print, Braille, CD, other languages, etc.)
- Internal communication to appropriate colleagues
- Agree arrangements for monitoring, exception reporting and review/refresh

ORDINARY COUNCIL

7th December 2016

Subject: Notices of Motion

1. Purpose of Report

To present to Council Notices of Motion received for consideration at this meeting.

1. Councillor Sheldon has given notice of the following:

"This Council requests the Chief Executive on behalf of the Council to write to the Chief Executive of Anglian Water Plc to thank the company for the hard and ongoing work to the Canvey Island drainage system, but also to request that all immediate action is taken to prevent further serious failures at Benfleet Sewage Plant"

The Motion is to be seconded by Councillor Partridge.
