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**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, 15TH JANUARY, 2020 at 7.30 p.m.**, and all Members of the Council, listed below, are hereby summoned to attend to transact the undermentioned business.

Councillors, C.G. Riley, (The Worshipful the Mayor), Mrs P. Haunts, (Deputy Mayor), A.J. Acott, J. Anderson, D.A. Blackwell, Mrs.J.A Blissett, B. Campagna, S. Cole, D.T. Cross, J.M.Cutler, W.J.C. Dick, Ms.N.B.Drogman, Mrs B. Egan, E. Egan, M.J Fuller, P.C. Greig, S.Hart, N.R. Harvey, G.I. Isaacs, W. Johnson, C.A. MacLean, P.J. May, C.E. Mumford, B.A. Palmer, J.A. Payne, Mrs. J. Payne, Mrs C.J Sach, W.K.Sharp, A.G. Sheldon, T.F. Skipp, N.G. Smith, J.A. Stanley, A. Taylor, D.J.Thomas, Mrs J Thornton M.A Tucker, P.E.Varker, A.C.Walter, Mrs L. Wass, G.St.J. Withers and B.S. Wood.

**Chief Executive**

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## **AGENDA**

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### **PART I**

**(Business to be taken in public)**

- 1. Apologies for absence**
- 2. Members' Interests**
- 3. Minutes**  
To receive the following:
  - Minutes of the meeting of the Ordinary Council held on 22nd October 2019.
- 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: Notices of Motion**  
Consideration of two notices of Motion were deferred for report to Cabinet. Cabinet considered the reports which are attached on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Council is invited to consider the deferred motion in the light of the reports:
  - (a) Notice of Motion – Proposal for Castle Point Borough Council to fund the reinstatement of full-coverage street lighting at night across the Borough.
  - (b) Notice of Motion – Tree Planting Campaign throughout the Borough.
- 8. Any explanations for urgent decisions taken by Cabinet**  
There are none.
- 9. Consideration of recommendations from Cabinet:**
  - (a) Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for 2020/21:** Council is requested to consider recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 20th November 2019 on which a report is attached.
  - (b) Amendment to the 2019/20 Investment Strategy:** Council is requested to consider recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 20th November 2019 and the Audit Committee held on 24th October 2019 on which a report is attached.
- 10. Any References from the Scrutiny/Policy and Scrutiny or Regulatory Committees**  
See item 9(b) above. Recommendation from the Audit Committee.
- 11. Review of Polling Arrangements**  
A report is attached.
- 12. Report from the Leader of the Council/Cabinet Member**  
The Leader is to report at the meeting.
- 13. Notices of Motion**  
There are none.
- 14. Petitions submitted by Members of the Council of which Notice has been given.**



## **ORDINARY COUNCIL MINUTES**

**22ND OCTOBER 2019**

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 22nd October 2019.

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors, Mrs P. Haunts,(Deputy Mayor), A.J. Acott, J. Anderson, D.A. Blackwell, Mrs.J.A Blissett, B. Campagna, S. Cole, D.T. Cross, J.M.Cutler, W.J.C. Dick, Ms.N.B.Drogman, Mrs B. Egan, E. Egan, M.J Fuller, P.C. Greig, S.Hart, G.I. Isaacs, W. Johnson, C.A. MacLean, P.J. May, C.E. Mumford, B.A. Palmer, J.A.Payne, Mrs. J. Payne, Mrs C.J Sach, , A.G. Sheldon, T.F. Skipp, N.G. Smith, J.A. Stanley, A. Taylor, D.J.Thomas, M.A Tucker, P.E.Varker, A.C.Walter, Mrs L. Wass, G.St.J. Withers and B.S. Wood.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C.G. Riley, (The Worshipful the Mayor), N.R. Harvey, W.K.Sharp and Mrs J Thornton. (All present joined with the Deputy Mayor in wishing the Mayor a speedy recovery.)

### **31. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **32. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Ordinary Council held on 30th July 2019 were taken as read and approved as a correct record. The Mayor signed the Minutes.

### **33. NEW CASTLE POINT LOCAL PLAN**

The Council considered a report seeking the Council's formal agreement to the new Castle Point Local Plan and its associated documents and sought the Council's consent to proceed to consultation on that plan and thereafter submission to the Secretary of State for public examination.

The Chief Executive presented the comprehensive report to the Council.

Section 4 of the report set out the background, recent history and why the Council was now considering a new local plan.

Section 5 set out the policy context. Section 6 described the new local plan's important relationship with the emerging Joint Strategic Plan for South Essex and explained how the Council was now part of a strong collaboration with

Thurrock, Basildon, Brentwood, Rochford, Southend Councils and Essex County Council who were all committed to make progress on the area's strategic priorities.

Section 7 dealt with the Evidence Base and if the Council was to be successful at the public examination it was crucial the plan was based on up to date and detailed evidence which included among other matters housing needs, housing supply, housing trajectory, flood risk assessment and infrastructure investment.

The net housing supply identified in this Plan was 5,295. This was above the target of 5,130 and equated to 353 dwellings per annum. This provided a buffer and ensured that the Council could demonstrate it could meet need a key consideration in the examination of the Plan. Failure to not meet the need, and in the absence of any alternative or evidence to suggest why the Council should not meet needs would result in all likelihood in the plan being found unsound.

Attention was drawn to the Community Infrastructure Levy(CIL) which was an important funding stream which would boost the delivery of infrastructure on which a report would be made to the next meeting of the Cabinet about how that would be secured. The evidence set out in the report was not an exhaustive list and further evidence could be found on the Council's website. All of the evidence will be published for scrutiny and examination and would be kept under review.

Section 8 of the report described the contents of the New Local Plan 2019 and covered the following:

- Introduction and Strategic priorities
- Vision
- Objectives
- Presumption in Favour of Achieving Sustainable Development and Effective Use of Land
- Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- Strategic Sites
- Meeting longer term needs beyond the plan period
- Traveller provision
- Building a Strong, Competitive Economy
- Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres
- Promoting good health, education and well-being
- Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Supporting High Quality Communications Infrastructure
- Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Protecting Green Belt Land
- Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
- Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
- Monitoring and Review

Within the section dealing with Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes the associated strategic sites were listed and it was explained how each would be delivered including the master planning approach that was to be taken and how

master planning provided a fresh opportunity for Members and their local community to work with the promoters of development to ensure the very best outcomes for their community.

Section 9 of the report described how the Council had worked and would continue to work with the Council's neighbouring local authorities to fulfil the Duty to Co-operate.

Section 9 of the report also covered other matters relating to Legal and Policy compliance such as the Draft Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment. A full copy of the Equality Impact Assessment had been included with the agenda papers for the meeting. The analysis found the Objectives and Policies of the New Local Plan to meet the socio-economic and single (integrated) equality duties of the Equality Act 2010, and that there were no areas which needed to be changed or given further consideration in order for the Council to fulfil its duties under the Act.

Section 10 of the report contained the next steps the Council must take in accordance with the expressly agreed time table.

The Chief Executive reminded Members of his statutory duty to bring to the Council's attention matters presenting a corporate risk to the authority. These concerns were set out in Section 11 paragraph 11.1 through to 11.20 of the report.

The Chief Executive concluded by reporting on the recent meeting attended by The Leader, the Deputy Leader and the Chief Executive with the Government's Chief Planner who was encouraged by the action now being taken by the Council to consider progressing the plan. However, they were left in no doubt that intervention in plan making and decision taking through the development control process were still likely if the Council did not make enough progress to develop a sound local plan.

The Council remained under threat if the Council was unable to support the plan – it would not prevent development and there was a very real risk that failure would result in the Council being excluded from controlling development and merely becoming bystanders whilst others decided what happened.

Unfortunately, if that happened this would result in local communities being burdened with development far more intensive and intrusive over which the Council or those directly affected by it would have no control.

The report and recommendations were commended to the Council.

In moving the Recommendations the Leader of the Council among other matters emphasised the importance of the Council remaining in control of the Local Plan making process and future planning decisions for the Borough. The Deputy Leader seconded the Motion.

Debate took place during which Members acknowledged the difficult decision before the Council. However a number of Members recognised that they would have to set aside their views concerning the use of Green Belt land for building in order that an effective Local Plan could be delivered to retain control of local plan making in the Borough and future planning decisions for the benefit of the community. At the conclusion of the debate a vote was taken on the recommendations

**Resolved:**

1. Pursuant to Section 20 of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Order Act 2004, and Regulations 19 and 22 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, to approve the publication of the Castle Point Local Plan for further consultation and then submission to the Secretary of State, subject to 2 below;
2. Following consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to authorise both the Chief Executive and the Head of Place and Policy to undertake any of the following actions:
  - a. To make any minor amendments to the Plan required prior to publication under Regulation 19.
  - b. To continue with on-going engagement and additional work as necessary to fulfil the duty to co-operate.
  - c. To seek appropriate legal and technical advice on any new evidence or guidance which emerges, and effect any consequential changes as required to the new Castle Point Local Plan before consultation or submission;
  - d. To seek appropriate legal and technical advice on any consultation responses to the Castle Point Local Plan, and effect any consequential changes as required to the New Local Plan before examination;
  - e. To make available for public examination the evidence base and supporting documents prepared to inform and accompany the new Castle Point Local Plan;
3. To appoint a Master Plan Working Group to prepare a master plan or planning brief for each site identified for master planning or planning briefs to be reported to Cabinet and formally agreed by the Council in accordance with the policies set out in the new Castle Point Local Plan; membership to include Ward Councillors (as required for each identified site), to work with officers, other service providers, the local community and developers.
4. To approve a new Local Development Scheme.
5. To note the intention to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy.

(Note: Councillor Cole left the chamber before debate took place and a vote was taken on the item.)

**34. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were none.

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

There were none.

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

There were none

**37. TO DEAL WITH ANY BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

There was none.

**38. ANY EXPLANATIONS FOR URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET**

There were none.

**39. CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET: CORPORATE PLAN 2018-21(2019 REFRESH)**

The Council was asked to approve the proposed draft Corporate Plan 2018-2021(2019 Refresh) and to agree to improve the alignment of corporate planning and financial planning.

The refreshed Corporate Plan had been subject to scrutiny by the Scrutiny Committee and all Policy and Scrutiny Committees together with the Cabinet. The annual objectives contained a number which continued to be relevant. New objectives had been included. These were:

*Priority: Environment*

- *Re-develop The Paddocks community hall to ensure the provision of a modern and efficient facility that is valued by the local community*
- *Engage with and influence the development of the new Resources and Waste Strategy for England*

*Priority: Housing & Regeneration*

- *Develop and implement a strategic approach to dealing with homelessness*

*Priority: Commercial & Democratically Accountable Council*

- *Implement initiatives to reduce costs of delivery whilst maintaining excellent customer services*

**Resolved:**

1. To adopts the Corporate Plan 2018-21 (2019 Refresh).

2. To Council note the 2019/20 annual objectives detailed in Chapter 10 of the refreshed Corporate Plan and that these will form the basis of the 2020/21 annual objectives to bring corporate planning and financial planning cycles back into alignment.

**40. CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET: EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM & SECOND HOMES – COUNCIL TAX**

Council considered recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 18th September 2019 on the level of Council Tax Premium to be applied to long-term empty properties, with effect from 1 April 2020.

Since 2013 Councils had been able to use their discretion to charge an additional 50% Council Tax Premium to long term empty properties which had been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than two years. New legislation was introduced increasing the Premium from April 2019, with further incremental changes once properties have been empty for 5 and 10 years. The Government had introduced the changes as part of several measures to improve the housing market.

**Resolved:**

To approve the following:

1. A Council Tax Empty Homes Premium of 100% is implemented from 1 April 2020 in respect of properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than two years.
2. A Council Tax Empty Homes Premium of 200% is implemented from 1 April 2020 in respect of properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for five years or more.
3. From April 2021 to increase the Empty Homes Premium for those properties which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for ten years or more to 300%
4. The removal of the 10% second home discount so that Council Tax will be payable in full on these properties from 1 April 2020

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

There were none.

**42. REVIEW OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES**

At the meeting of the Council in July 2019 the Leader of the Council had requested that a report be made to this meeting on arrangements to be made to review the Scheme of Members Allowances mindful that it was some time since the scheme had been formally reviewed and under the current scheme the Basic Allowance received by all Members was the lowest in Essex.



Members noted that in order for a review to be undertaken it would be necessary to convene an Independent Remuneration Panel to make recommendations and report to a future meeting of the Council.

**Resolved:**

1. That a review of the Members Allowances Scheme be undertaken and to approve the convening of an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP)
2. To request the Panel to conduct a review and make recommendations on the Scheme of Allowances for consideration by Council.

**43. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

As a result of Councillor Cole's decision to leave the Conservative Group and stand as an Independent Member. Council was asked to formally confirm his membership of the Place and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee and the Review Committee.

Council was also asked to note the appointment of Councillor James Cutler to the Audit Committee and his appointment as Chairman of the Audit Committee

**Resolved:**

To note and approve these appointments and memberships of Committees.

**44. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL/CABINET MEMBER**

The Leader of the Council took the opportunity to thank the Officers for their outstanding work in preparing the Draft Local Plan before Council that evening in particular mentioning Mr Ian Butt, Head of Place and Policy; Ms Maria Hennessy, Planning Policy Officer and Mr Tim Parton, Policy Planning Officer.

**45. NOTICES OF MOTION**

1. Councillor Blackwell had given notice of the following:

*'Canvey Island Independent Party calls upon Castle Point Borough Council to follow Basildon Council and pay for our street lights to stay on all night in the interests of community safety.'*

Seconded by Councillor May

2. Councillor Blackwell had given notice of the following:

*'Canvey Island Independent Party calls upon Castle Point Borough Council to embark on a tree planting campaign throughout the Borough to help offset global warming.'*

Seconded by Councillor Anderson.

As both Motions had financial implications the Motions were deferred without debate for a report to Cabinet Council Procedure Rule 13 applied.

**46. PETITIONS**

A petition was presented to Council seeking the restoration of the Driver's knowledge test.

**Mayor**

**ORDINARY COUNCIL**

**15th January 2020**

**Subject: Any business from the Last Council Meeting: Notice of Motion – Proposal for Castle Point Borough Council to fund the reinstatement of full-coverage street lighting at night across the Borough.**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Isaacs – Neighbourhoods and Safer Communities**

**Councillor Hart – Streets, Waste, Floods and Water Management**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

**To present to Council the report and recommendations of the Cabinet on the Motion adjourned from Council on 22nd October 2019 in respect of a proposal for this Council to fund the reinstatement of full- coverage street lighting at night across the Borough.**

**2. Links to Council's Priorities and Objectives**

**This proposal links with the Council's Community Safety priority.**

**3. Recommendations**

**Cabinet recommended to Council that it is not this Council's responsibility to fund the keeping on of street lights throughout the night and that this Council should lobby Essex County Council (ECC) to accelerate its LED replacement programme and utilise the ongoing savings to fund the keeping on of all street lights in the Borough throughout the night.**

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**4. Background**

**The Notice of Motion put at the Council meeting held on 22nd October 2019 by Councillor Blackwell and seconded by Councillor May was:**

***‘Canvey Island Independent Party calls upon Castle Point Borough Council to follow Basildon Council and pay for our street lights to stay on all night in the interests of community safety’.***

Essex County Council (ECC) as the Highways Authority is responsible for the provision, maintenance and operation of street lights on adopted highways. Over 70% of the 129,000 streetlights owned by ECC are now operated on a part night lighting basis. Part night street lights are switched off between 1am and 5am, Tuesday to Sunday (midnight until 5am on Monday mornings).

It is ECC’s policy that street lights are only kept on all night where they meet the following exceptions criteria:

- Sites where there are a large number of conflicting traffic movements (e.g. roundabouts) which are on significant routes (generally those lit by columns greater than 6m high).
- Sites where street lights are installed as a result of accident remedial measures.
- Town Centre areas where there is one or more of the following features:
  - Publicly maintained CCTV
  - High proportion of high security premises (e.g. banks, jewellers)
  - Areas of high crime risk
  - High concentration of people at night such as transport interchanges, nightclubs etc.
- Main approaches to town centre areas where there is a mix of development between residential and commercial/industrial (e.g. not exclusively residential).
- Sites where the police can demonstrate that there is likely to be an increase in crime if the lights are switched off during part of the night (or that there will be a decrease in crime if the lights are switched back on).
- Remote footpaths and alleys linking residential streets.
- Where there is a statutory requirement to provide lighting.

Lighting for road signs, traffic bollards etc., are not be affected.

When this policy was first introduced there were serious concerns expressed about the impact that turning the lights off would have on the level of crime. However, Essex Police has confirmed that since the implementation of ECC’s part night lighting policy, there has been no increase in crime levels that can be attributed to the lights being turned off at night.

Whilst there is no evidence that crime levels have increased there is still a public perception that areas are less safe when the lights are turned off. In response to these concerns Harlow Council, and most recently Basildon

Council have decided to pay for all the lights in their area to be kept on at night.

If the Council was to agree to fund the keeping on of lights throughout the night, the responsibility for the maintenance of street lighting would still remain the responsibility of ECC.

## **6. Corporate Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

ECC has confirmed that if this Council wished to pay for street lights to be kept on at night then the estimated energy cost would be £107,066.89/annum, based upon 7182 lights being switched back on. Clarification is being sought on whether this cost includes all the lights that meet their exceptions policy and which are already kept on all night, and also, what the annual cost would be once all the existing lights have been upgraded to LED.

No budgetary provision has been made to fund the keeping on of street lights at night. If Cabinet is supportive of this proposal a growth bid would need to be submitted for 2020/21 and considered and prioritised alongside all the other growth bids that are being prepared in accordance with the agreed budget setting process. This would be a significant increase in discretionary expenditure for the Council which would be very difficult to discontinue at a later date.

The Council must be mindful that to take on additional unfunded functions at this time could make future budget decisions even more difficult.

This Council's financial position means that it is unable to take on responsibility for unfunded functions which belong to another public sector organisation who have themselves deemed them to be low priority in the context of their overall budget without it impacting adversely on the services we provide either on a statutory or discretionary basis.

ECC is upgrading existing lights to LED which are longer-lasting, require less maintenance and use less electricity than other conventional lamps. Any savings achieved from this upgrading programme could potentially be used to offset the cost of keeping lights on throughout the night.

### **(b) Legal Implications**

ECC is the Highways Authority and as such is responsible for the provision and maintenance of street lights.

### **(c) Human Resources and Equality Implications**

None directly associated with this report.

### **(d) IT and Asset Management Implications**

None directly associated with this report.

**7. Timescale for implementation and Risk Factors**

Implementation during 2020/21 would be subject to this Council funding the initiative and formalising the agreement with ECC. Funding beyond 2020/21 would by necessity be subject to further review and affordability. Subsequent withdrawal of funding and cessation of the arrangement would inevitably be seen as a service cut by this Council and result in adverse comments and criticism.

**Background Papers**

None

**Report Author:**

Trudie Bragg, Head of Environment

**ORDINARY COUNCIL**

**15th January 2020**

**Subject: Any business from the Last Council Meeting: Notice of Motion – Tree Planting Campaign throughout the Borough**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Varker - Environment & Leisure.**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

To present to Council the report and recommendations of the Cabinet on the Motion adjourned from Council on 22nd October 2019 in respect of a Borough wide tree planting campaign which due to its potential financial implications was referred without debate to Cabinet.

**2. Links to Council's Priorities and Objectives**

The Motion to plant trees across the Borough to combat climate change links with the Council's Environment priority.

**3. Recommendations**

Cabinet recommended to Council that the Motion be referred to the Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee to be considered as part of a task to look at what action the Council can take to tackle the growing global threat of climate change and to report back its findings and recommendations to Cabinet.

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**4. Background**

The Motion put to Council Notice by Councillor Blackwell and seconded by Councillor Anderson was:

***'Canvey Island Independent Party calls upon Castle Point Borough Council to embark on a tree planting campaign throughout the Borough to help offset global warming.'***

The climate is changing and will continue to change as a result of the emission of greenhouse gases by human activity.

In the future we can expect:

- hotter, drier summers;
- milder, wetter winters;
- rising sea levels; and
- more extreme weather events i.e. flood and droughts.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published its Report on global warming in October 2018 describing the damage that global warming of 2°C above pre-industrial levels would inflict compared with a 1.5°C increase and recommended that net-zero carbon emissions be reached by 2030.

Such is the concern about the impact of climate change on the environment that many authorities have declared a Climate Change Emergency and are developing action plans to help combat/minimise the impact of climate change. The UK Parliament declared an environmental and climate emergency on 1 May 2019, becoming the first country in the world to do so.

Locally, Essex County Council has recently established the Essex Climate Change Commission. This new cross-party working group will look at how the Council can work to reduce its carbon footprint, reduce waste, promote recycling and sustainable transport and work with the community, businesses and suppliers to support them in becoming more environmentally aware and proactive in tackling climate change. It has set aside £250k to support this project which will include the planting of 375,000 trees over the next five years, thereby saving 60,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.

Whilst a Boroughwide tree planting programme as proposed by the Motion to this Council is one way of helping to reduce net carbon emissions, a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to tackling climate change would ensure that maximum benefit is derived from the resources allocated to addressing it. There is an opportunity for this Council to take a leadership role in this work and to assist households, businesses and agencies in Castle Point to take advantage of the opportunities associated with reducing carbon emissions. It is proposed that the Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee be requested to review this Council's approach to the threats posed by Climate Change and to make recommendations to Cabinet on future actions it feels are appropriate and necessary for the Council to take in this regard.

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## **6. Corporate Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

None directly associated with this report. It is highly likely though that any action plan to further help combat the impact of climate change will have significant financial implications for the Council, but it is not possible to estimate costs in advance of production of the action plan. The cost of a Boroughwide tree planting initiative would be dependent on the number of suitable locations to plant trees and the number of trees it is proposed to plant. However, there are several potential grants/funding streams available that may help to offset the cost.



**(b) Legal Implications**

None directly associated with this report. However, the emerging new Local Plan will be instrumental in promoting high levels of sustainability and resilience to natural and man-made risks through the location and design of development, having regard to the implications of climate change, including flood risk from all sources.

**(c) Human Resources and Equality Implications**

Officers from various departments throughout the Council will need to support this project.

**(d) IT and Asset Management Implications**

None directly associated with this report.

**7. Timescale for implementation and Risk Factors**

It is envisaged that the Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee will meet early in the New Year and will report back its initial findings to Cabinet in March 2020.

**Background Papers**

None

**Report Author:**

Trudie Bragg, Head of Environment

**ORDINARY COUNCIL**

**15th January 2020**

**Subject: Consideration of Recommendations from Cabinet:  
Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for 2020/21**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Stanley – Finance, Policy & Resources**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

To present recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 20.11.2019 following consideration of a report providing an update to Cabinet in respect of the Proposed Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2020/21.

**2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives**

This report is linked to the Council's priority of 'A Commercial and Democratically Accountable Council'. 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 the information regarding consultation requirements, summarised in Section 5 of this report.
2. To note the findings regarding the impact of Universal Credit, summarised in Appendix A.
3. To note the content of the Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment, at Appendix B.
4. To note the impact of the proposed 2020/21 LCTS Scheme, summarised at Appendix C.
5. That there are no changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21.

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**4. Background Information**

- 4.1 The former Council Tax Benefits scheme was replaced by a discretionary, Local Council Tax Support scheme (LCTS) in April 2013, following a Government

announcement in the 2010 spending review that support for Council Tax would be localised. At the same time, the level of funding provided by government was reduced nationally by an average of 10% which translated locally to a reduction of 15%.

- 4.2 In December 2012, Council approved the local scheme for Castle Point for 2013/14. The scheme was designed to be cost neutral, based largely on an Essex wide framework developed jointly by Essex Benefit and Finance Officers.
- 4.3 The current scheme is generally still in line with the original 2013/14 scheme, with only minor changes made since then (where necessary) to align it with technical and legislative changes to Housing Benefit and Welfare Reform.
- 4.4 Key aspects of the current scheme are set out in paragraph 6.1.
- 4.5 The Council is required to approve future year's Local Council Tax Support schemes annually by 11<sup>th</sup> March each year, regardless of whether there are proposals to change the scheme or not.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 There is a legal requirement for Local Authorities to consult with residents and other interested parties in relation to the scheme before any changes can be imposed.
- 5.2 Up until last year consultation was routinely undertaken, even where no changes (other than technical) were made to the scheme.
- 5.3 In July 2018 the Council became a Universal Credit "full service" site.
- 5.4 The impact of this change on working age customers and the full migration timetable was uncertain last year, and so no changes or consultation were recommended in respect of the 2019/20 scheme.
- 5.5 Impacts of Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS) have been closely monitored over the past year, and a summary of the impacts and current information with regards to the UC migration timetable is provided at **Appendix A**.
- 5.6 Subsequently no changes to the scheme and no consultation, are proposed for the 2020/21 scheme.
- 5.7 For illustrative purposes, a summary of the impact the proposed 2020/21 scheme may have on residents - in terms of Council Tax payments - is provided at **Appendix C**.

## **6. Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21**

- 6.1 The following elements are already incorporated in the 2019/20 scheme for Castle Point:

- 1 As directed by central government, all pensioners are treated as protected, meaning that the financial impact of changes falls on working age households only.
- 2 The scheme is means tested, using many of the principles of the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme, which enables specific protections to be applied to vulnerable groups, households with children, and households with disabilities.
- 3 The scheme incentivises work by disregarding £25 per week of earned income.
- 4 Child Benefit is counted in full as income when calculating entitlement.
- 5 Claims for Local Council Tax Support cannot be back dated.
- 6 As far as possible the scheme allows for expected growth in demand and is easy to claim and administer.
- 7 Second Adult Rebate, previously available under Council Tax Benefit, is not part of the scheme for working age claimants.
- 8 The savings limit is £6,000, meaning that claimants with capital exceeding this value are not entitled to Local Council Tax Support.
- 9 Non-Dependant deductions, previously applicable under Council Tax Benefit, are not included in the scheme for working age claimants.
- 10 In conjunction with the Council's 'Local War Pensioner' scheme, income received in respect of War Pensions for disablement or bereavement is fully disregarded when calculating entitlement.
- 11 Support is capped at Council Tax band D and at 70% of Council Tax liability for working age claimants, meaning 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.
- 12 Underlying Entitlement, previously awarded when an overpayment occurred under Council Tax Benefit, is not applicable in the scheme for work age claimants.
- 13 The Family Premium, previously awarded under Council Tax Benefit, no longer applies to new working age claims made from 1st April 2017 onwards.
- 14 The period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Local Council Tax Support is limited to a maximum of 4 weeks (subject to specific exceptions).
- 15 The Severe Disability Premium, previously awarded under Council Tax Benefit, no longer applies where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carers Element) to look after them.

- 16 The Work-Related Activity Component is no longer included when calculating entitlement for new applicants who receive Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and who fall within the Work-Related Activity Group.
- 17 The number of Dependant Child Applicable Amounts used when calculating entitlement is limited to a maximum of two (subject to specific exceptions).

6.2 It is recommended that the scheme should not be changed for 2020/21.

## **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 the scale of reductions applied to Revenue Support Grant (RSG) means that local authorities are now required to fund this scheme entirely from their own resources.
- 7.2 The overall impact on the Council Tax Base for each financial year since introduction of the scheme is shown in the table below:

Year	Outturn £000s	Projected £000s
2013/14	5,798	
2014/15	5,282	
2015/16	4,874	
2016/17	4,804	
2017/18	4,686	
2018/19	4,666	
2019/20		4,659
2020/21		4,657

- 7.3 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.

#### Collection

- 7.4 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.

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

#### Council Tax Reserve

- 7.6 The Council has preserved an amount of **£114k** in an earmarked reserve from scheme underspends in previous years.

#### **b. Legal Implications**

- 7.8 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. As no changes are proposed since the introduction of the 2019/20 scheme no consultation was required in respect of the 2020/21 scheme.

#### **c. Human resources/equality/human rights**

- 7.9 A stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment for the proposed 2020/21 scheme has been completed. A copy is attached at **Appendix B** of this report.

#### **d. Timescale for implementation and risk factors**

- 7.10 The 2020/21 Scheme needs to be finalised by 11th March 2020. The new scheme must be operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

Key project milestones are as follows:

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Grant published	Nov 19 – Dec 19	
Cabinet Report	20.11.19	Proposed scheme to be recommended to Council
Report to Ordinary Council	15.1.20	Final scheme approval
2020/21 Scheme in place	31.03.20	Adoption and implementation
2020/21 Scheme in operation	01.04.20	Operation

## **8. Background Papers:**

<b>Appendix A</b>	Universal Credit Summary
<b>Appendix B</b>	Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment
<b>Appendix C</b>	Impact of the Proposed 2020/21 Scheme

#### **Report Author:**

Eddie Mosuro – Revenues & Benefits Transformation Manager

### **Summary of Universal Credit Full Service Impacts**

- 1.1 In May 2015 UC Live Service (UCLS), a partially digital model applied to only non-complex single working age households, was introduced in CPBC.
- 1.2 In July 2018 UC Full Service (UCFS), the national full digital model applied to all qualifying working age new claims, was introduced in CPBC.
- 1.3 By December 2018 UC Full Service had been introduced across all Local Authorities nationally.

#### **Impact on Council Tax Collection**

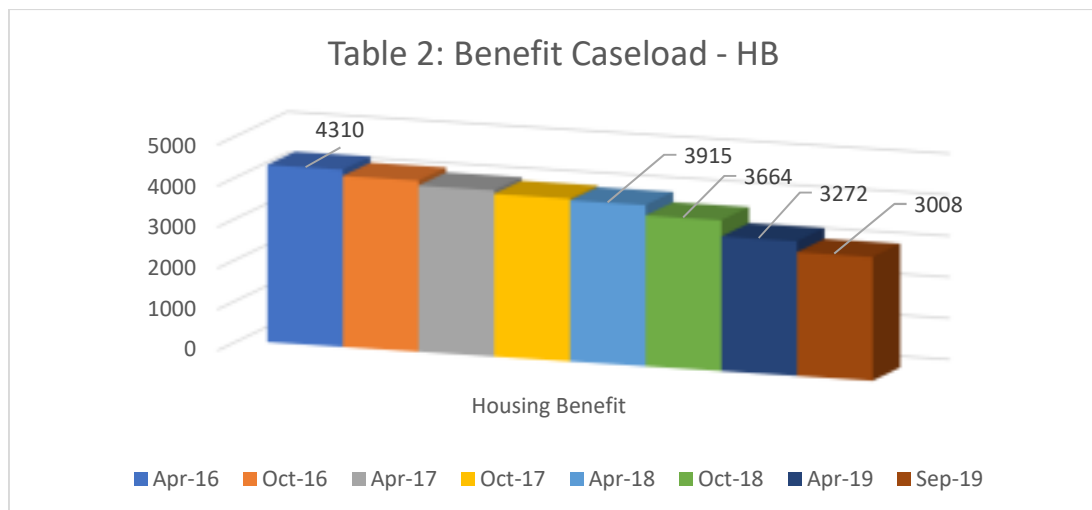
- 2.1 Despite UCFS implementation last year, there are no indications to date to suggest that UCFS has detrimentally impacted the collection rate for Council Tax over the past year.
- 2.2 Council Tax collection rates remain generally in line with previous years and we have not seen an increase in Exceptional Hardship Claims.
- 2.3 The adoption of more realistic payment and recovery arrangements and the use of Peabody and Citizens Advice services have helped in this regard.
- 2.4 Table 1 (below) shows the volume of UC claimants supported by Peabody and Citizens Advice between April and July 2019;

<b>Table 1: UC Support</b>	<b>Citizens Advice</b>	<b>Peabody</b>
Total No. of Customers supported	161	81
No. who received Digital Support	76	45
No. of received Budgeting Support	61	15
No. who received General Support	49	30
<b>Total volume of support provided</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>90</b>

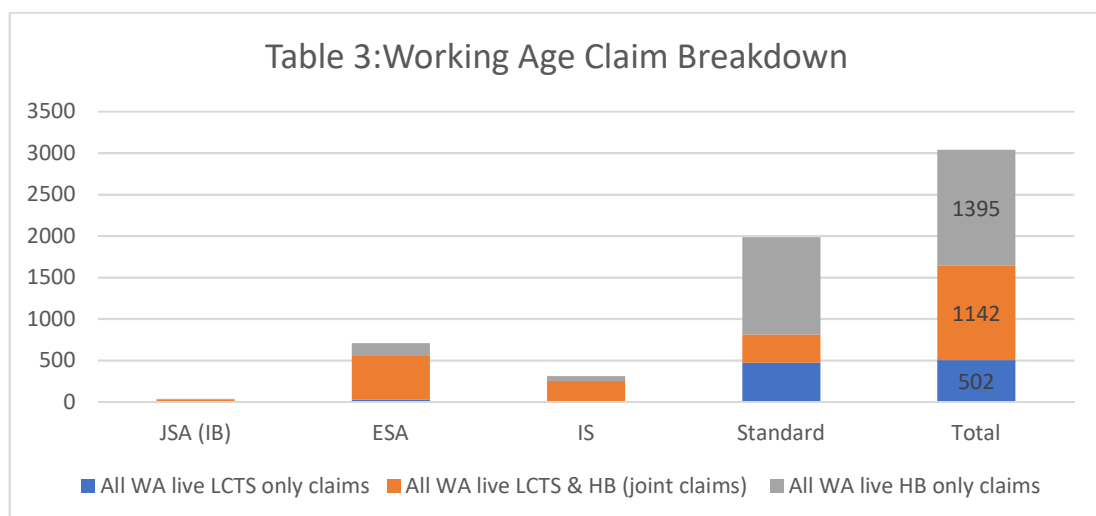
- 2.5 Concerns that customers may fail to claim LCTS when making their claim for UC have been somewhat founded, however Job Centre Plus and Citizens Advice are proactively advising customers to claim and recent monitoring shows this does seem to be having an impact.
- 2.6 In conclusion, current arrangements in respect of mitigating the impacts of UCFS on Council Tax Collection through support and revised enforcement arrangements appear to be working well and changes to the scheme to alleviate any pressures here are not currently deemed necessary.

### Impact on HB and LCTS Caseloads

- 3.1 HB caseloads have reduced significantly since UCFS implementation and the volume of work items that require administration has also changed.
- 3.2 Table 2 (below) shows the decline in HB caseload. There was a steady decline between 2016 and 2018 (averaging 99 cases every 6 months), increasing to - 226 cases every 6 months between 2018 and 2019 - coinciding with UCFS implementation. The pace at which cases are declining appears to have slightly slowed since April 2019 – this is in line with national trends;

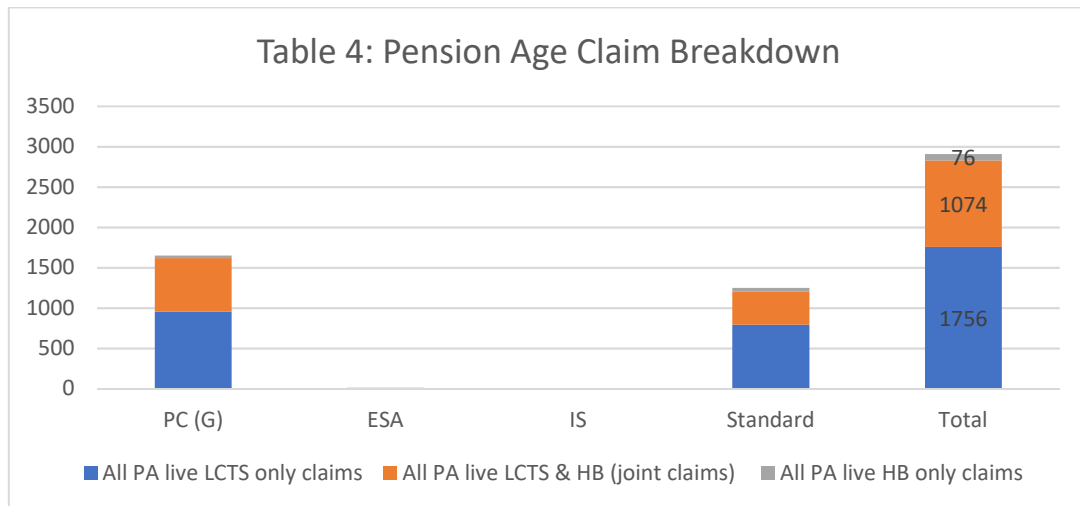


- 3.3 The timetable to 'mass migrate' all remaining working age HB claims to UCFS is still unclear - a 'mass migration' pilot began in Harrogate in July 2019, however this has only seen 2 cases successfully migrated to date, and The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) continues to predict that mass migration will start in earnest in 2023/24.
- 3.4 Table 3 (below) shows CPBC's current working age (WA) caseload breakdown;

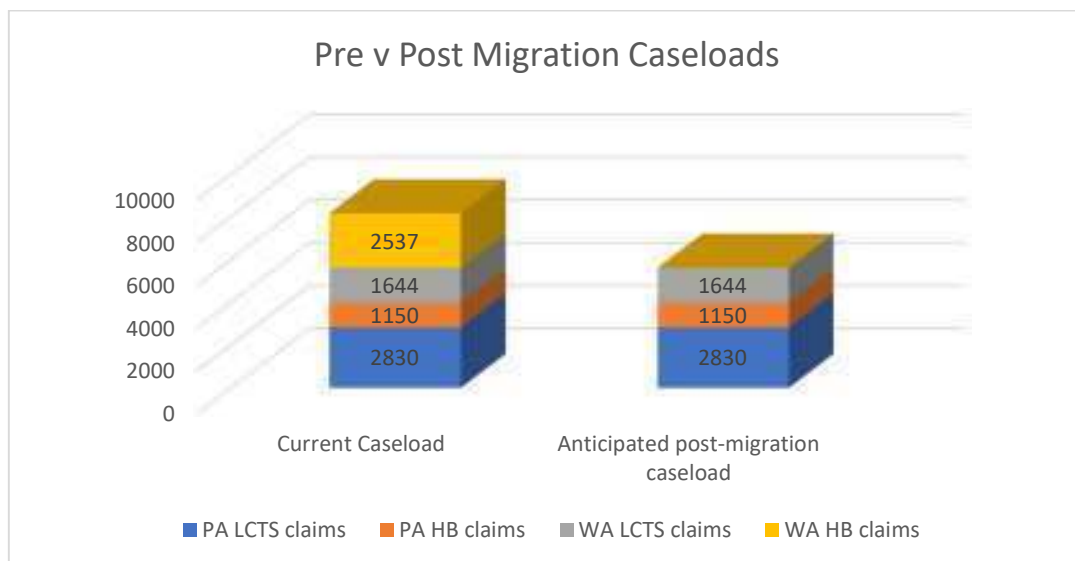




- 3.5 Under mass migration all WA HB claims (1,395 + 1,142) would transfer to UC until they reach pension age, whilst all WA LCTS claims (1,142 + 502) would be retained by the Authority.
- 3.6 The Department for Work and Pensions also recently countered growing speculation about the impact of UC on pensioners, by confirming that there are no plans to transfer pensioner housing costs into UCFS.
- 3.7 Table 4 (below) shows CPBC's current pension age caseload breakdown;



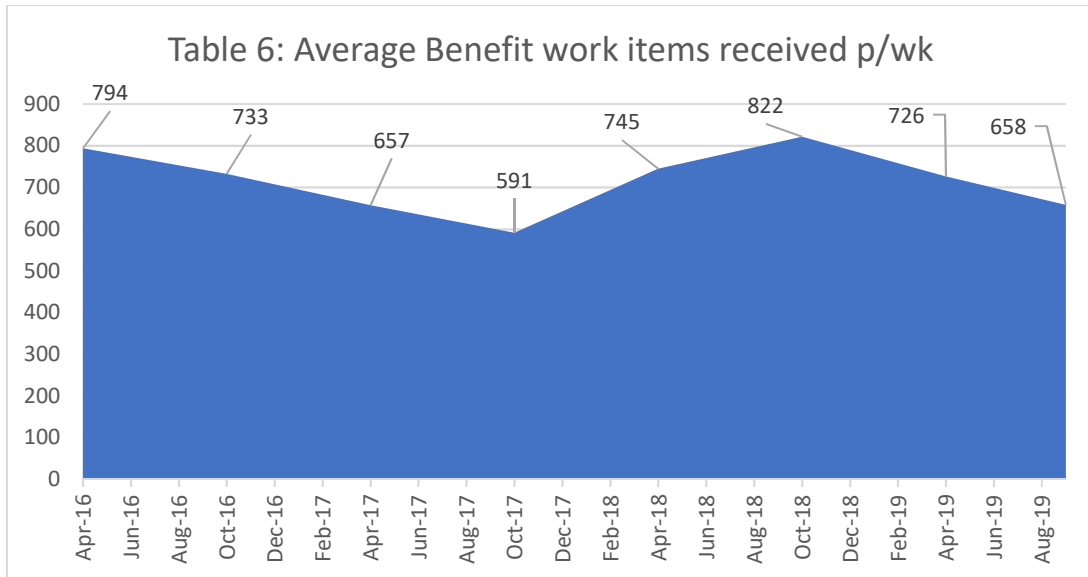
- 3.8 Under mass migration all PA claims (HB and LCTS) will be retained by the Authority
- 3.9 This means a 31% overall anticipated reduction in caseloads pre and post mass migration (from 8,161 claims to 5,624) – see Table 5 (below);



- 3.10 In conclusion, with the continuing high volume of joint HB/LCTS claims and slow progress towards mass migration UC means adapting the LCTS scheme to accommodate these changes is not yet warranted.

### Impact on Workloads & Resources

- 4.1 Table 6 (below) shows that the average number of benefit-related work items received per week peaked in April 16 (following UCLS implementation) and peaked again during 2018 (following UCFS implementation) and is now gradually declining.



- 4.2 The peak in Oct 2018 was mainly the result of the transition to UCFS - Authorities averagely received 4 notifications each time an existing HB/LCTS claimant moved onto UCFS.
- 4.3 Although now on a decline, Authorities continue to see high work volumes due to the 'Real Time Benefit' and other data matching arrangements which are now a fundamental part of the benefit system and part of DWP's wider digital transformation agenda.
- 4.4 Whilst DWP hope to automate all electronic data matches eventually, this is still some way off due to issues with the integrity and quality of data. Consequently, most Authorities still manually process most work items received.
- 4.5 As a result, data matching has added an increased level of complexity to claim administration - with data being received from multiple sources and sometimes going back over several claim periods.
- 4.6 Simplifying claim administration and reducing the impact on resources has consequently become a significant driver for Local Authorities to move towards simpler alternative LCTS schemes.

- 4.7 In conclusion the Benefit Team plans to undertake further work during 2020 to try and automate more DWP electronic data where possible and continues to monitor the impact on resources and alternative scheme options closely with long term objectives to adopt an alternative scheme as and when appropriate.

**Authors:**

Eddie Mosuro – Revenues & Benefits Transformation Manager

Nick Bale – Benefit Manager



## **Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2020-21**

### **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)**

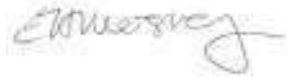

**Nov 2019**

# 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 .

<b>Title of strategy or policy:</b>	Local Council Tax Support Scheme
<b>Person undertaking EqIA:</b>	 Eddie Mosuro
<b>Head of Service:</b>	 Craig Watts
<b>Department:</b>	Housing & Communities
<b>Date EqIA completed:</b>	4.11.19

## 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 <sup>st</sup> April 2020.
What are the summary aims and objectives of the strategy or policy?	<p>Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, the Council has maintained a Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. This replaced the national Council Tax Benefit scheme, which ended on 31<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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><b>Changes since 2013</b></p> <p>Since the introduction of LCTS, the overall scheme adopted by the Council has remained broadly the same, with only applicable amounts for Pension Age and Working Age people being up-rated annually in line with Central Government.</p> <p>Some technical changes were introduced in 2017/18 to mirror changes being made within Housing Benefit legislation.</p> <p>Income from Universal Credit is treated in line with non-passported claims and attracts the same disregards, applicable amounts, and premiums detailed below.</p> <p><b>The Proposed Scheme for 2020/21</b></p> <p>The Council is minded not to make changes to the working age scheme for 2020/21.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>This Policy supports the Council's corporate priority of being 'A Commercial and Democratically Accountable Council' by ensuring the Council is 'fit for purpose by meeting national and</p>
Who will benefit from implementing the strategy or policy?	
What are the links to the Council's corporate priorities?	

What are the links to other Council strategies and policies?	local requirements to agreed timescales and to optimum performance standards' and 'ensuring the organisation has the right capacity and resources in place for effective customer focussed services whilst ensuring a balanced budget for 2020/21 and future years'.  Corporate Debt Recovery Policy Exceptional Hardship Policy Homelessness Strategy Action Plan Vulnerability Policy
What are the links to other community strategies and policies?	National Child Poverty Strategy: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-new-approach-to-child-poverty-tackling-the-causes-of-disadvantage-and-transforming-families-lives">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-new-approach-to-child-poverty-tackling-the-causes-of-disadvantage-and-transforming-families-lives</a>

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

Initial screening		
Does the strategy or policy aim to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage?	<b>Yes / <del>No</del></b>	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?	<b>Yes / <del>No</del></b>	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

## Appendix B

		the working age scheme has sought to eliminate discrimination.
Does the strategy or policy aim to advance equality of opportunity?	<b>Yes / <del>No</del></b>	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 groups where advancement of equal opportunity would be restricted.
Does the strategy or policy aim to foster good community relations?	<del>Yes</del> / <b>No</b>	No evidence available – not applicable.
Does the strategy or policy have the potential to make a negative contribution to equality?	<b>Yes / <del>No</del></b>	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?	<b>Yes / <del>No</del></b>	Pension age people are specifically protected under Government Regulations.
Initial screening outcome	<b>Full EqIA is required</b>	Initial screening outcome

# Full assessment

Information gathering	
What quantitative and qualitative information is there?	<p>The following paper contains information detailing the changing LCTS caseload and impacts of Universal Credit on the caseload:</p> <p><a href="S:\Corporate\LCTS\Reports\2020 - 21 Scheme Reports\NOV CABINET\Nov Cabinet Report - Appendix A Universal Credit Summary FINAL.docx">S:\Corporate\LCTS\Reports\2020 - 21 Scheme Reports\NOV CABINET\Nov Cabinet Report - Appendix A Universal Credit Summary FINAL.docx</a></p> <p>The following paper sets out the relative financial impact that the proposed scheme will have on Canvey Island Parish Council and non-Parish residents:</p> <p><a href="S:\Corporate\LCTS\Reports\2020 - 21 Scheme Reports\NOV CABINET\Nov Cabinet Report - Appendix C - Impact of Proposed 2020-21 LCTS Scheme FINAL V2.docx">S:\Corporate\LCTS\Reports\2020 - 21 Scheme Reports\NOV CABINET\Nov Cabinet Report - Appendix C - Impact of Proposed 2020-21 LCTS Scheme FINAL V2.docx</a></p> <p>This is based on the assumption that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Tax will increase by 5%,</li> <li>• The property is Band D,</li> <li>• A full charge applies,</li> <li>• The customer is entitled to the maximum LCTS award (70%),</li> <li>• No changes are made to the scheme for 2020/21.</li> </ul>
What additional information is required?	No further information is required.
What are the outcomes of any internal and/or external consultation with stakeholders?	As no changes are proposed for 2020/21 no formal consultation was required.
What further consultation is required?	Not applicable.

<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.</p> <p>Other current scheme elements have been designed to meet specific needs within Castle Point.</p> <p>All of the technical changes, previously introduced in 2017/18, mirror changes which have been introduced as part of Central Governments wider Welfare Reforms.</p> <p>Guidance from DCLG outlining good practice with regards to treatment of vulnerable groups (published May 2012) and incentives to work (published May 2012) were previously used to inform the scheme design;</p> <p><a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscvulnerablepeople">http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscvulnerablepeople</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscworkincentives">http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscworkincentives</a></p> <p>The Local Government Finance Bill: Localizing Support for Council Tax – Updated Impact Assessment (published Aug 2011) also informed the scheme design;</p> <p><a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lgfblocalisingcounciltax">http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lgfblocalisingcounciltax</a></p> <p>Each Local Authority is required to adopt their 2020/21 scheme by 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.</p>
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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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 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.</p>

## Appendix B

	<p>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.</p> <p>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>Working Age people aged over 18 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 locally funded nature of the scheme that applies to those of working age, compared to the Prescribed Regulations that apply to those of pension age, mean it is not financially viable to completely protect all protected characteristic groups from the full effects of this scheme.</p>
What can be done to address any contribution to inequality caused by the strategy or policy?	<p>Working Age people aged over 18 will be required to pay more:</p> <p>The Council actively supports customers with information and advice on income maximisation, financial capability, and debt</p>

## Appendix B

	<p>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>
What can be done to assist understanding of the strategy or policy?	<p>Details of the scheme will be publicised on the council website <a href="http://www.castlepoint.gov.uk">www.castlepoint.gov.uk</a> , 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>Partners, national bodies, and local advice and support agencies are notified of the scheme adopted each year.</p>

## Appendix B

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 2020/21 Final Scheme formally adopted.	First Contact Manager	Staff time & printing costs	Jan '20 – Mar '20	All affected groups fully aware of the Policy and how it will affect them.
Assist understanding of the Policy	Engage with and raise awareness amongst local advice and support groups.	Benefit Manager	Staff time	Jan '20 - Mar '20	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 2019/20.	Revenues Manager	Staff time, provision of discretionary funding pot	Apr '20 – Mar '21	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 & Benefits Transformation Manager	Staff time, funding pot for services, additional staff resource	Apr '20 – Mar '21	Customers adequately supported and equipped with skills to manage financial impact.



**Impact of the Proposed 2019/20 LCTS Scheme**

In 2018/19 and 2019/20 the overall Council Tax increase was 4.75% and 4.74% respectively.

The Council Tax has not yet been set for 2020/21 so for illustrative purposes only an assumed overall increase of 4.75% has been applied to the following calculation for both mainland and Canvey Island Parish properties.

Using this figure, the impact of a **no change recommendation** for 2020/21 based on a tax payer receiving the highest rate of Local Council Tax Support (70%) and residing in a band D property on a full charge would be as follows: -

**Canvey Island Parish**

	<b>2019/20 £</b>	<b>2020/21 £</b>
Property Band D liability	1,814.49	1,900.68 (4.75% estimated increase)
Maximum LCTS award (70%)	1,270.14	1,330.48
Minimum charge due	544.35	570.20

The tax payer would be required to pay at least £25.85 more in 2020/21, compared to the amount they were required to pay in 2019/20.

This equates to an increase of 50p per week for customers receiving maximum Local Council Tax Support.

**Mainland**

	<b>2019/20 £</b>	<b>2020/21 £</b>
Property Band D liability	1,793.88	1,879.09 (4.75% estimated increase)
Maximum LCTS award (70%)	1,255.72	1,315.36
Minimum charge due	538.16	563.73

The tax payer would be required to pay at least £25.57 more in 2020/21, compared to the amount they were required to pay in 2019/20

This equates to an increase of 49p per week for customers receiving maximum Local Council Tax Support.

**ORDINARY COUNCIL  
15th January 2020**

**AGENDA ITEM 9(b)**

**Subject: Consideration of Recommendations from Cabinet: Amendment to the 2019/20 Investment Strategy**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Stanley - Finance, Policy and Resources.**

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**1. Purpose of report**

To present to Council recommendations from Cabinet and the Audit Committee to accept the recommendation of the Strategic Director (Resources) to add two new types of non-specified investments to the approved list of counterparties for 2019/20, and approve this change in the Investment Strategy

This report follows an equivalent report approved by Audit Committee on 24 October 2019 and the Cabinet on 20th November 2019.

The relevant extract of the reports to the Audit Committee and Cabinet is reproduced below

**2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives**

The scrutiny and approval of the Council's Treasury Management activity is linked to the Council's objective of a Commercial and Democratically Accountable Council through sound financial management.

**3. Recommendation to Council**

To approve the amendment to the 2019/20 Investment Strategy.

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**5. Amendment to the 2019/20 Investment Strategy to add two new investments to the approved list of investment counterparties**

**5.1 New Investments**

- 5.1.1 The portfolio of investments maintained by the Council is very cautious and the yield is below that earned by some other Councils. By investing for longer periods than the current 364-day limit with banks and other local authorities, this should increase the return on investments without significantly compromising security. Accordingly, the

Strategic Director (Resources) recommends adding two new types of non-specified investment to the approved list of counterparties for 2019/20, as detailed below. The Council has consulted with its treasury adviser, Link Asset Services, on this amendment to the strategy.

- 5.1.2 These investments are classified as non-specified investments as they exceed 365 days. Non-specified investments may not have the high credit quality of specified investments.
- 5.1.3 The Council is continuing to review its Investment Strategy and may add further investment categories to the 2020/21 strategy due to be approved in February 2020. This is to achieve more diversification and yield with new investments, which are used regularly by other councils, whilst maintaining good levels of security. Some non-specified investments are more complex instruments, requiring greater consideration by officers and members, and therefore officers will consult with Link Asset Services and undertake detailed due diligence before seeking approval to add any new types of non-specified investments to the 2020/21 Investment Strategy to ensure all products any associated risks are fully understood.

## **5.2 Local authority longer-term deposits over 365 days**

- 5.2.1 Many local authorities require borrowing to help with their cashflow or to fund capital expenditure and others have surplus funds to invest so there is a market for inter-local authority lending. Interest rates are generally higher for longer duration deposits so more interest can be earned by investing for more than one year. The Council currently places deposits with other authorities up to a maximum of 6 months duration and now intends on occasion to place deposits over longer terms up to or possibly in excess of 1 year. Local authorities, although generally not credit-rated are perceived as safe as they must balance their budgets and have strict criteria for borrowing. Castle Point's treasury team will carry out thorough due diligence on any potential new local authority counterparties and only invest with those that have sound finances.

## **5.3 Bank longer-term deposits over 365 days**

- 5.3.1 Interest rates are normally higher for longer duration deposits so additional interest can be earned by investing for more than one year. The Council only invests with the more secure banks and in accordance with the Council's approved credit-rating criteria and limits recommended by the Council's treasury adviser, Link Asset Services. Again, as with other local authority investments, the Council currently places deposits with institutions up to a maximum of 6 months duration and now intends on occasion to place deposits for longer periods. Officers will be mindful of the risks associated with bank insolvency and bail-in legislation where deposits are not guaranteed by Government and customers risk deposits not being repaid in full nor on time. However, following the banking crisis over 10 years ago and many years of austerity, major UK retail clearing banks are currently relatively strong, since they have been ring-fenced from more risky investment bank activities, and have strengthened their balance sheets and solvency ratios and undergo regular stress testing by banking regulators.

<b>Table 1A - Specified Investments for the financial year 2019/20</b> <b>(Note – unchanged from counterparty list previously approved in February 2019)</b>			
<b>Investment</b>	<b>Counterparty limit</b>	<b>Security / Minimum Credit Rating</b>	<b>Maximum period of investment</b>
<b>Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility (DMADF)</b> (this facility is at present available for investments up to 6 months)	No limit	The Debt Management Office is an agency of the UK Government	6 months (DMO imposed time limit)
<b>Treasury Bills</b> issued by the UK Government (currently maximum 6 month duration)	No limit	The Debt Management Office is an agency of the UK Government	364 days
<b>Term deposits</b> with the UK Government or with UK local authorities (i.e. local authorities as defined under section 23 of the 2003 Act)	The lesser of £5m or 33% of total investments	High quality as either directly invested or via agencies of UK Government. (Although local authorities are not specifically credit rated)	364 days
<b>Term Deposits</b> with institutions, part nationalised by the UK Government	The lesser of £5m or 33% of total investments	long-term A-, short-term F1 (lowest common denominator Fitch, Moody's & S&P)	364 days
<b>Money Market Funds</b> (i.e. a collective investment scheme as defined in SI 2004 No 534). These funds do not have a maturity date	The lesser of £5m or 33% of total investments	Fitch, Moody's or Standard and Poors AAA (Minimum of two ratings)	n/a (repayable on demand)
<b>Current accounts, notice accounts or term deposits</b> with credit-rated deposit takers (UK banks and building societies)	The lesser of £4m or 25% of total investments	long-term A-, short-term F1 (lowest common denominator Fitch, Moody's & S&P)	364 days (Call deposits repayable on demand)
<b>Forward deals</b> with credit rated banks and building societies < 1 year (i.e. negotiated deal period plus period of deposit)	The lesser of £4m or 25% of total investments	long-term A-, short-term F1 (lowest common denominator Fitch, Moody's & S&P)	364 days
<b>Certificates of Deposit</b> issued by UK institutions	The lesser of £4m or 25% of total investments	long-term A-, short-term F1 (lowest common denominator Fitch, Moody's & S&P)	364 days
<b>Covered bonds</b> (maximum 364 day period includes borrower extension option)	The lesser of £4m or 25% of total investments	long-term AA-, short-term F1 (lowest common denominator Fitch, Moody's & S&P)	364 days
<b>Reverse repurchase agreements "repos"</b> (a form of secured lending with enhanced security)	The lesser of £4m or 25% of total investments	long-term AA-, short-term F1 (lowest common denominator Fitch, Moody's & S&P)	364 days

<b>Table 1B - Non-specified Investments for the financial year 2019/20</b> <b>(Note – new additions to the counterparty list)</b>			
<b>Investment</b>	<b>Counterparty limit</b>	<b>Security / Minimum Credit Rating</b>	<b>Maximum period of investment</b>
<b>Term deposits</b> with the UK Government or with UK local authorities (i.e. local authorities as defined under section 23 of the 2003 Act)	The lesser of £4m or 25% of total investments	High quality as either directly invested or via agencies of UK Government. (Although local authorities are not specifically credit rated)	2 years
<b>Current accounts, notice accounts or term deposits</b> with credit-rated deposit takers (UK banks and building societies)	The lesser of £4m or 25% of total investments	long-term A-, short-term F1 (lowest common denominator Fitch, Moody's & S&P)	2 years

- All Specified Investments listed above must be sterling-denominated.
- All investments are managed in-house.
- No shares or loan capital are held by the Council
- None of the investments are classified as capital expenditure.

## **6 Corporate Implications**

### **a Legal implications**

The Council's treasury management activities are regulated by a variety of professional codes, statutes and guidance, including:

- The Local Government Act 2003, and associated Statutory Instruments;
- The CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities;
- The CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services.

The Council continues to comply with all of the relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.

### **b Financial implications**

Any required changes will be implemented as part of the forthcoming 2020/21 budget cycle.

### **c Human resource and equality implications**

There are no new implications.

### **d Timescale for implementation and risk factors**

The change to the Investment Strategy will be implemented immediately.

**Report Author:** Robert Greenfield, Accountant

**Background Papers:**

- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy: *Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services*.
- CPBC: *Treasury Management and Investment Strategy Statement for 2019/20*.

**ORDINARY COUNCIL**

**15th January 2020**

**Subject: Review of Polling Arrangements**

**Report of the Acting Returning Officer - David Marchant**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

**To provide the Council with a report on the outcome of a statutory review of the polling districts and polling places in the Borough.**

**2. Links to Council's Priorities and Objectives**

**The review contributes to the Council's priority of a Commercial and Democratically Accountable Council.**

**3. Recommendations**

**That the proposals for changes to the future electoral arrangements for the Borough, as set out in Section 5 of this report, are approved for commencement with effect from the Borough Elections and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Elections in May 2020.**

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**4. Background**

**4.1 Under the Representation of the People Act 1983 the Council has a duty to divide the Borough into polling districts and designate a polling place for each district. The Council also has to keep these arrangements under review.**

**4.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 and Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a number of changes to the 1983 Act in respect of the way reviews must be undertaken. The most important changes are that this review must be started and completed between 1 October 2013 and 31 January 2015 inclusive, and that future reviews must be started and completed within the period of 16 months that starts on 1 October of every fifth year after 1 October 2013.**

**4.3 The focus of this review is the polling districts and polling places for Parliamentary elections, although in practice these are used for other types of elections. The review is not concerned with the boundaries of UK parliamentary constituencies or the borders or names of local authorities or electoral areas.**

- 4.4 In designating polling districts and polling places the Council must seek to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances. This includes a particular requirement that accessibility of disabled people is considered.

## **5. Proposals**

- 5.1 The review has been undertaken using the principles contained in the Electoral Commission's evaluation documents.
- 5.2 Public notice of the review was given in September 2019 which was extended due to the UK Parliamentary General Election on held on 12 December 2019. The review process was publicised through public notices, notice boards, and on the Council's website to encourage either expressions of support for the proposals or representations for alternatives to be considered.
- 5.3 The Acting Returning Officer produced a proposals paper on the current and proposed electoral arrangements which was published on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019 for consultation. The closing date for representations was 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2020
- 5.4 In addition key stakeholders involved in the process were sent copies of the proposals and invited to submit comments.
- 5.5 No responses were received to the consultation.
- 5.6 A summary of the proposals is set out in the table below.

<b>Ward</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
Appleton (polling districts AA, AB, AD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
Boyce (polling districts AF, AG, AH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
Cedar Hall (polling districts AW, AX, AY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
St. George's (polling districts AZ, BA, BB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
St. James' (polling districts BC, BD, BE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
St. Mary's (polling districts BF, BG, BJ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes are proposed to the current polling arrangements for BG and BJ.</li><li>• That Polling district BF votes in future at St Mary's Church Hall High Road Benfleet</li></ul>
St. Peter's (polling districts BK, BL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
Victoria (polling districts BN, BO, BP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
CI Central (polling districts AJ, AK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
CI East (polling districts AL, AM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
CI North (polling districts AN, AO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
CI South (polling districts AP, AQ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
CI West (polling districts AS, AT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>
CI Winter Gardens (polling districts AU, AV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No changes</li></ul>



## **6. Corporate Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from the proposals in this report.

The costs of administering elections are met as appropriate through the Consolidated Fund, the Essex County Council, The Canvey Island Town Council or the Borough Council depending upon election type.

The costs of any building adaptations can be partially reclaimed from Central Government.

### **(b) Legal Implications**

This five-yearly review is a legal requirement as described in the background section of this report.

### **(c) Human Resources and Equality Implications**

#### **Human Resources**

The proposals present an opportunity to review the staffing requirements for Elections.

#### **Equality Implications**

This report reflects the Acting Returning Officer's proposals in response to a legislative change which has been the subject of an Impact Assessment at national level. The content of that Impact Assessment has been taken into account in the proposals and recommendations outlined.

### **(d) IT and Asset Management Implications**

There are no asset management or IT implications arising from the proposals in this report.

## **7. Timescale for implementation and Risk Factors**

The proposals will be implemented to be effective for the elections in May 2020.

The risks are minimal as the review is a legislative requirement carried out in accordance with detailed guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.

## **8. Background Papers**

- Guidance on the review of polling districts and polling places (Electoral Commission)
- Checklist: Review of polling districts and polling places (Electoral Commission)
- Acting Returning Officer's Proposals – November 2019

**Report Author:** Acting Returning Officer, David Marchant