



REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & IT
TO:	COUNCIL FORUM
ON:	28TH JANUARY 2016

SUBJECT: Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek approval for the adoption of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) That the contents of the report are noted;
- b) That the localised Council Tax Support Scheme that was approved by Council in January 2015 is continued for the financial year 2016/17, and;
- c) That any subsequent technical amendments to the Council Tax Support Scheme that may be required following legislative changes are delegated to the Director of Finance & IT in consultation with the Executive Member, Resources.

3. BACKGROUND

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

The Welfare Reform Act contained provisions which abolished Council Tax Benefit and recommended localised schemes to be administered by Local Authorities throughout England with effect from 1st April 2013.

As a consequence of the legislation, it was agreed at Council on 31st January 2013 that the localised scheme adopted by Blackburn with Darwen BC would be means tested in the same way as Council Tax Benefit, however, awards would be 20% less for working age claimants than the previous national scheme.

Council Forum in January 2014 and 2015 confirmed that this scheme would continue to apply for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial years. This report fulfils the Council's obligation to consider the local scheme each financial year and formally agree the provision.

4. KEY ISSUES

4.1 Local Council Tax Support

In preparation for setting the budget for 2016/17, the Council is obliged to formally continue the scheme already agreed or make any adjustments prior to 1st April 2016. This report seeks to fulfil the necessary legal requirements and confirm Blackburn with Darwen BC's Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17.

There are no changes to the scheme, however, there may be a number of minor changes relating to terminology and changes to national welfare benefits which may need to be made prior to April 2016. As noted in the recommendations, these changes will be delegated to Director of Finance & IT in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources.

The full scheme is available on request.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

By maintaining the Local Council Tax Support scheme from 2015/16 into 2016/17 there is no significant policy change to consider.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The localisation of Council Tax Support does result in an increased financial risk to the Council as any increase in the number of claimants or amount of Council Tax Support awarded will be met solely by the Collection Fund.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Localised Council Tax Support Scheme must be agreed by Council each year.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no other resource implications associated with this report.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

In preparing for the transfer of council tax benefit to local authorities, the DCLG completed an initial Equality Impact Assessment in January 2012, and an updated Impact Assessment in June 2012. In addition, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council prepared a high level Equality Impact Assessment. As the scheme remains the same the EIA is still valid and applicable for 2016/17.

10. CONSULTATIONS

The Council, as a billing authority, was required to enter into public consultation to develop and adopt a localised Council Tax Support scheme for implementation across Blackburn with Darwen from 1st April 2013. As the scheme will remain the same for 2016/17 there is no further requirement to undertake a new consultation exercise.

Chief Officer/Member

Contact Officer: Louise Mattinson, Director of Finance & IT

Date: 28th January 2016

Background Papers: Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17