

Law and Governance

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To Members of the Delegated Decisions
of the Board Member, Customer
Services and Regeneration

10 August 2012
Our ref:
Your ref:

Dear Councillor

**DELEGATED DECISIONS OF THE BOARD MEMBER, CUSTOMER SERVICES AND
REGENERATION - THURSDAY 16 AUGUST 2012**

I attach the following report which was not available when the main agenda was dispatched.

This is the updated council tax survey, the draft of which is included in the report at Appendix 2.

Agenda No Item

4. **Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme (Pages 1 - 6)**

Report of the Head of Customer Services attached.

Yours sincerely

Lois Stock

Lois Stock.
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer
Encs



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE



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Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation Background Information

Council Tax Benefit is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and supports people on low incomes by reducing the amount of Council Tax they have to pay.

People can claim full Council Tax Benefit if they are on certain benefits. These include income based jobseekers allowance, income support, guarantee credit which is part of state pension credit and income related employment and support allowance. Others receive some Council Tax Benefit based on their income and other factors.

How is the Council Tax Benefit scheme changing?

From April 2013 the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme will be replaced by a new Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The new scheme will be determined by local District Councils rather than the Department of Work and Pensions. The Government will provide funding but, on average, the amount of funding available to the new scheme will be 10 % below that for the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme.

It is stipulated that pensioners and vulnerable groups should not be disadvantaged by this new scheme and so these groups will receive the same level of support providing their circumstances do not change.

In line with Government guidance, we have a duty to consult on this scheme and give you an opportunity to give us your views on the new Council Tax Reduction scheme.

Oxfordshire's Councils are working together to take the same approach to setting up their new schemes. By doing this the cost of setting up and maintaining the schemes is reduced and a single countywide consultation process can be carried out, saving both time and money.

In Oxford, 10,420 people currently receive Council Tax Benefit. Oxford City Council will need to find an additional £188,000 per year to maintain the current level of benefits. Across the county, including all the Oxfordshire Councils and Thames Valley Police, this figure will be £3,282,000.

Will I see a change in my Council Tax Benefit?

Everybody that is currently receiving full Council Tax Benefit would not notice a change providing their circumstances remain the same.

To support the continuation of the scheme in 2013/14, however, District Councils will need to find the funds to make up the 10% shortfall in government funding. It is proposed that funding options for this are considered later in 2012 as part of the normal District Council budget setting and budget consultation processes.

A copy of the draft Council Tax Reduction Scheme is available for your information.

Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation 2012

Before giving your views about changes to the Council Tax Benefit scheme you may find it helpful to read the background information provided above.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Q1. Do you currently receive Council Tax Benefit?

Yes

No

Q2. Are you responding to this survey on your own behalf or on behalf of somebody else?

Own Behalf

On behalf of somebody else

Q3. If you are responding on behalf of somebody else, please let us know who by selecting one of the options below.

Carer

Landlord

Voluntary
Organisation

Housing
Association

Parish

Other (please
specify)

Q4. Which district do you live in? (Please tick ONE box only)

Oxford City

Cherwell

South
Oxfordshire

Vale of White
Horse

West
Oxfordshire

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Oxfordshire Councils are proposing to provide a Council Tax Reduction scheme in 2013-2014 which will cost Oxford City Council £188,000 per year.

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposals to maintain a scheme?

(Please tick ONE box only)

Strongly
agree

Tend to
agree

Neither agree
nor disagree

Tend to
disagree

Strongly
disagree

Don't
know

Q6. Why do you agree or disagree? Please write in below.

Q7. Instead of maintaining Council Tax Reductions as is suggested, councils could consider a range of options to reduce the cost of the scheme from 2013 or in future years. This would apply to all claimants apart from pensioners and other vulnerable groups who the Government says must continue to be protected.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following ways in which the cost of the scheme could be reduced?

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Reduce the amount of savings someone can have and claim Council Tax Reduction. The current limit is £16,000 savings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce the maximum Council Tax Reduction award for properties in higher council tax bands to that of a lower property band e.g. anybody in a band E to H property would be awarded a reduction equivalent to a maximum of a band D property.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Further reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction someone gets if there are other adults of working age in the household (not including spouses and partners)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q8. If you have any other comments about the Council Tax Reduction scheme please write in below.

ABOUT YOU

We are committed to making sure that residents have equal access to services. Please help us to keep track of how successfully we are achieving this by ticking the appropriate question boxes below.

All information is confidential and will only be used to help us monitor whether views differ across the community.

Are you male or female?

- Male Female

How old are you?

- Under 16 16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+

Do you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term impact on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities?

i.e. poor hearing, poor sight (except if can be corrected by glasses), significant mobility impairment, mental health condition, learning disabilities, dyslexia, heart conditions, multiple sclerosis, HIV, diabetes, cancer, epilepsy

- Yes No

What is your ethnic group? (Please tick ONE box only)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British | <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy or Irish Traveller | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background (please write in) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other white background (please write in) _____ | Asian or Asian British |
| Mixed or multiple ethnic groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black African | <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White & Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other mixed background (please write in) _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background (please write in) _____ |
| Other ethnic group | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arab | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other ethnic group (please write in) _____ | |

Can the council contact you again to invite you to take part in any further research about Council Tax benefits? (If yes, please remember to provide your contact details)

- Yes No

CONTACTING YOU

We would like to let you know what people have told us and what we are doing in response.

Feedback will be made available on our web pages at [web address]. If you would like us to contact you with the outcomes please give your contact details below.

Title Mr Mrs Miss Ms Dr
 Other (please write in) _____

First name

Surname

Email address

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Address 4

Postcode

**Day time phone
(including code)**

Thank you for your comments. Please return your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided or to the address below (no stamp needed):

[freepost address]

If you have any questions or would like this questionnaire in another format such as large print or audio please contact [name], [job title] on [telephone] or email [email address]