

Agenda

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City Executive Board

Date: **Friday 23 November 2012**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford**

For any further information please contact:

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City Executive Board

Membership

Chair

Councillor Bob Price	Corporate Governance and Strategic Partnerships
Councillor Ed Turner	Finance and Efficiency
Councillor Colin Cook	City Development
Councillor Van Coulter	Leisure Services
Councillor Steven Curran	Young People, Education and Community Development
Councillor Mark Lygo	Parks and Sports
Councillor Scott Seamons	Housing
Councillor Dee Sinclair	Crime and Community Safety
Councillor Val Smith	Customer Services and Regeneration
Councillor John Tanner	Cleaner, Greener Oxford

The quorum for this meeting is three members. Substitutes are not permitted.

HOW TO OBTAIN AGENDA

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AGENDA

PART ONE PUBLIC BUSINESS

	Pages
1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
3 PUBLIC QUESTIONS	
4 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS	
5 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME	1 - 44
Lead Member: Councillor Turner	
Report of the Head of Customer Services	
<p>The purpose of the report is to provide feedback from the recent consultation on the proposed Local Council Support Scheme, agree the principles of the new scheme (which will then be drawn up for approval by Council on 17th December 2012) and to agree the Council Tax Discount and Exemption proposals for inclusion in the budget setting consultation.</p>	
<p><u>Recommendations:-</u></p>	
<p>(1) Note the outcome of the consultation on the proposed Local Council tax Support Scheme;</p>	
<p>(2) Instruct officers to draft the details of the new Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2013/14 replicating the provisions of the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme and submit the new Local Council Tax Support Scheme to council for approval at its meeting on the 17th December 2012;</p>	
<p>(3) Agree the Council Tax Discount and Exemption amendments as set out in paragraph 20 for inclusion in the budget setting and consultation.</p>	

6 TENANT AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2012

45 - 98

Lead Member: Councillor Seamons

Report of the Executive Director Community Services

The purpose of the report is to recommend a new strategy for involvement that will achieve best practice, meet regulatory requirements and the aspirations of tenants. This follows a review of current involvement of tenants/leaseholders on Oxford City Council by the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS)

Recommendations:-

- (1) To approve the proposed Tenant Involvement Strategy “Keeping Customers and Communities at the Heart of what we do”;
- (2) To approve the action plan for implementation.

7 OXPENS MEADOW - DEED OF DEDICATION

99 - 106

Lead Member: Councillor Executive Board Member for Corporate Governance and Strategic Partnerships

Report of the Executive Director City Regeneration

The purpose of the report is to consider the dedication of part of Oxpens Meadow as a Queen Elizabeth II Field, by imposing restrictive covenants in favour of the Field in Trust/National Playing Fields Association, to remain as public open space in perpetuity.

Recommendations:-

- (1) To agree the dedication of part of Oxpens Meadow (as specified on the plan attached to the report) as a QEII Field as a lasting legacy to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in her Diamond Jubilee year;
- (2) To agree to amend the resolution of the Board of 8th February 2012, and instead to agree to the Council entering into a Deed of Dedication with Fields in Trust (FIT) for the area highlighted on the plan attached to the report, and otherwise on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Head of Corporate Property.

8 MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

PART TWO
MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

DECLARING INTERESTS

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest.

If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". What this means is that the matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

To: City Executive Board

Date: 23rd November 2012

Report of: Head of Customer Services

Title of Report: Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To consider the feedback from the recent consultation on the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme, to agree the principles of the new scheme to be drawn up for approval by Council on 17th December 2012, and to agree the Council Tax Discount and Exemption proposals for inclusion in the budget setting consultation.

Key decision? Yes

Executive lead members: Councillor Val Smith and Councillor Ed Turner

Policy Framework:

Recommendation(s): The Executive Board Member is recommended to:

1. Note the outcome of the consultation on the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme.
2. Instruct officers to draft the details of the new Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2013/14 replicating the provisions of the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme and submit the new Local Council Tax Support Scheme to Council for approval at its meeting on the 17th December 2012.
3. Agree the Council Tax Discount and Exemption amendments as set out in paragraph 20 for inclusion in the budget setting consultation.

Appendix Numbers

- 1 – Local Council Tax Support Survey
- 2 – Oxfordshire Districts Consultation Results
- 3 – Financial Impact of Local Council Tax Support Scheme and Changes to Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions
- 4 – Risk Register
- 5 – Equalities Impact Assessment

The administration has a clear commitment to the approach that should be taken in formulating a revised Local Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme. It is concerned to avoid any increase in poverty amongst claimants, many of whom are in low-paid work. It also believes that disproportionate amounts of taxpayers' money would be spent chasing small debts if the cut in benefit were passed on. It therefore asked officers to bring forward a scheme which avoids passing on the cut in benefit.

Introduction

1. From April 2013 Local Authorities are required to implement and administer their own Council Tax Support schemes which will replace Council Tax Benefit. The cost of providing this support will continue to be provided by Central Government, but reduced by 10% based on a prediction of Council Tax Support spending for next year.
2. In designing our own scheme the City Council will either need to cover our share of the 10% reduction and any increase in caseload within our own budget, or reduce the amount of support provided to customers. It is important to remember that the council tax we collect is made up of the County Council and Thames Valley Police precepts as well as our own charge. In percentage terms the City Council's precept constitutes 17% of the total council tax charged, whilst the County Council accounts for 73% and Thames Valley Police 10%. Regulations provide that people of pensionable age must receive the same level of support as currently. As such any reduction would fall wholly on working age customers.
3. Officers across all of the Oxfordshire Districts, the County Council and Thames Valley Police Authority have been working together to adopt a common scheme County-wide. The proposal is to replicate the provisions of the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme for 2013/14. This avoids any adverse equalities impacts which might otherwise occur.
4. As a result, a Single Member Decision was taken on 16th August 2012, agreeing to:
 - Replicate the provisions of the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme and adopt them as the City Council's draft Local Council Tax Support Scheme for consultation; and
 - Work in partnership with the County Council and other Oxfordshire districts to issue joint advertising and consultation on the proposed scheme for a period of 6 weeks between 27th August and 5th October 2012.
5. This report analyses the consultation feedback and proposes the principles of the new scheme to be drawn up for approval by Council on 17th December 2012.

Transitional Grant

6. It has recently been announced that the Department for Communities and Local Government is making available an additional £100 million for one year to support local authorities in developing well-designed council tax support schemes and to maintain positive incentives to work.
7. The grant will be payable in March 2013 to those authorities who adopt schemes that comply with criteria set by Government to ensure that low income households do not face an extensive increase in their council tax liability in 2013-14. This funding seeks to enable councils to explore more sustainable approaches to managing the funding reduction in order to minimise the impact on vulnerable taxpayers.
8. To apply for a grant from the transitional fund, billing authorities must adopt schemes which ensure that:
 - Those who are currently entitled to 100% support under council tax benefit arrangements pay between zero and no more than 8.5% of their net council tax liability;
 - The taper rate does not increase above 25%;
 - There is no sharp reduction in support for those entering work; and
 - The taper continues to operate as under current council tax benefit regulations - that is, to be applied to excess income and in relation to the claimant's maximum eligible council tax reduction. Where an authority has decided to adopt a scheme in which the maximum reduction is lower than 100% of liability, the taper will apply to the lower figure.

Although not one of the eligibility criteria, the Government do not expect local authorities to impose large additional increases in non-dependant deductions.

9. Funding will be payable to billing authorities whose schemes satisfy the criteria and their major precepting authorities, as an “un-ring fenced” specific grant.

Applications can only be made after the deadline for adopting schemes on 31 January 2013.

10. To provide certainty on the funding position in advance, a schedule stating the award amounts to each local authority has been published, this shows that if eligible Oxford City Council will receive £42,148.
11. The draft Local Council Tax Support Scheme that the City Council has consulted on appears to be eligible for the transitional grant. It is therefore recommended that the Council applies for the Transitional Grant in due course.

Oxford City Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation Results

13. Each District carried out a postal survey with a representative sample of 500 of its council tax payers. The survey was also made available on-line for a range of stakeholders who were invited to participate as well as other residents who responded to the media advertising.
14. A copy of the survey can be found at Appendix 1.
15. Oxford City Council received 152 responses to the consultation and our results as well as those of the other Oxfordshire Districts can be found in full at Appendix 2. The summary results for the City Council are as follows:
- 73% of respondents were not in receipt of benefit.
 - 97% of respondents were speaking on their own behalf.
 - 95% of respondents live within the City's administrative area.
 - 51% of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the proposed scheme. 5% either disagree or strongly disagree with the proposed scheme, whilst 44% neither agree, disagree or simply don't know. In the free text section most people commented that the scheme should be maintained in order to help those on lower incomes especially in the current financial climate.
 - In terms of alternative ways of reducing the scheme, the results were as follows:
 - Reduce the amount of savings someone can have and claim Council Tax Reduction. The Current limit is £16,000 savings. 37% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, whilst 35% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
 - 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 band D property. 44% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, whilst 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
 - Reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage. 39% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, whilst 28% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
 - 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). 67% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, whilst 15% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Consultation feedback from the other Oxfordshire Districts

16. Across the other Oxfordshire Districts there was broad consensus to the proposed scheme as follows:

	Agree	Disagree
Cherwell	50%	14%
Oxford City	51%	5%
South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse	64%	9%
West Oxfordshire	45%	23%

When asked for views on how the costs of the scheme could be reduced, the options in order of preference can be found in the table below with 1 being the preferred option and 4 being the least preferred option.

Oxfordshire District's Preferences for Alternative Council Tax Support Schemes				
	Cherwell	Oxford City	South & Vale	West
Reduce the amount of savings someone can have and claim Council Tax Reduction. The current limit is £16,000 savings	3	4	3	3
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.	2	2	2	1
Reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage	4	3	4	4
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	1	1	1	2

Consultation Conclusions

17. The consultation has shown that on balance there appears to be more support for replicating the provisions of the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme and adopting them as the City Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2013/14.

18. In terms of alternatives, most options suggested were not supported with any great significance, apart from reducing benefit entitlement if other adults of working age reside in the household.

Amendments to the Council Tax Discount and Exemption Schemes

19. The Government is introducing regulations to permit Councils to vary the percentage reductions for some discounts and exemptions. This will provide the opportunity to generate additional Council Tax income which could be used to offset the additional cost of providing Council Tax Support to working age customers. The exemptions and discount classes that can be amended are listed below with their current allowances and associated timescales:

- Exemption Class A – Recently built or uninhabitable due to work (current 100% exemption for a time limit 12 months)
- Exemption Class C – Vacant – empty and unfurnished (current 100% exemption for a time limit of 6 months)
- Exemption Class L – Unoccupied where the mortgagee is in possession (current 100% exemption)
- Second Homes Discount – This would include second homes, holiday homes and properties left empty between tenancies. Oxford City Council currently provides a 10% discount on these properties.

20. To mitigate the cost of the new Local Council Tax Support Scheme it is recommended that the City Council consult on the following proposed amendments to discounts and exemptions as part of its budget consultation exercise which is due to commence in December 2012.

- Exemption Class A – Recently built or uninhabitable due to work – 25% exemption for a time limit of 12 months
- Exemption Class C – Vacant – empty and unfurnished – 25% for a time limit of 6 months
- Exemption Class L – Unoccupied where the mortgagee is in possession – 0%
- Second Homes Discount – 0% discount

21. The other Oxfordshire Districts will also be examining their approach to what they charge for these discounts and exemptions.

Financial Implications

22. The table at Appendix 3 shows the estimated financial impact of the proposed Council Tax Benefit Support Scheme and potential extra income from council tax discounts and exemptions if the City Council changes the charging levels to those suggested in paragraph 20 above.

23. To explain the table in detail:

- The Council Tax Support Scheme will reduce the authority's tax base by the value of council tax support equated to the number of Band D equivalent properties. In Oxford City this equates to a reduction of 6,447 band D properties or 14 % of the tax base.
- The reduction in tax base reduces the amount of council tax income, which is estimated to be around £1.722 million per year. Allowing for a 1.5% estimated increase in claimants, this takes the reduction in council tax income to £1.747 million per year. This will be covered in part by grant funding from government, roughly equivalent to last years council tax subsidy less 10% and equates to £1.559 million. We have been notified of this grant, but are aware it will change.
- The difference between grant and loss of council tax income is therefore projected to be circa £188k for Oxford City.
- If the second home discount and exemption for unoccupied properties where the mortgagee is in possession are both reduced to zero, and the Class A and C exemptions are reduced to 25% each, the forecasted extra income generated will leave the City Council with a potential deficit of £43k. This deficit could potentially be covered if the Council is successful in its application for transitional grant (£42k).

Parishes

24. Billing Authorities were advised they would receive a grant in respect of parishes. For the City we have been advised this is provisionally in the region of £24k. In August 2012 the Government consulted on how this additional grant funding would be provided to parishes given the proposed changes to the tax base for council tax support. The government recognised the difficulties that could be experienced by Billing Authorities in deciding how to allocate the grant as well as the fact that there is no statutory duty for them to do so.

25. The Consultation concluded that the tax base for parishes would not be amended for council tax support as will happen with the city wide tax base. The parish tax base will stay the same and hence the parish Band D council tax will stay the same, providing that the parish does not change its precept. Whilst in the consultation it was still indicated that the grant will be paid to Billing Authorities until the Regulations are passed in November the situation remains a little uncertain.

Risk

26. An evaluation of the risks associated with the implementation of this policy has been carried out. A detailed risk register is at Appendix 4.

Climate Change/Environmental Impact

27. None.

Equalities Impact Assessment

28. A Screening exercise has been carried out and is at Appendix 5. As the draft Council Tax Support Scheme is proposed to replicate the provisions of the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme, it avoids any adverse equalities impacts which might otherwise occur.

Legal Implications

29. Consultation and implementation has been conducted in accordance with the regulation provisions. Schedule 4, Part 2(5) of the Local Government Finance Bill 2012 provides that to adopt a Council Tax Support Scheme, Full Council consent should be obtained by 31st January in the year preceding the financial year that the scheme is due to take effect.

Name and contact details of author:-

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Job title	Head of Customer Services
Service Area	Customer Services
Tel:	01865 252233 e-mail: hbishop@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None

Version number: 1.3

LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SURVEY

Council Tax Reduction Scheme Consultation 2012

Background Information

Council Tax Benefits are 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 around an additional £200,000 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 approximately £3,300,000.

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.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided or to the following address (no stamp needed): FREEPOST, PO Box 10, Oxford, OX1 1BR

If you need copy of this publication in another format, please contact us. T: 01865 249811

www.oxford.gov.uk



Before giving your views about changes to the Council Tax Benefit Scheme you may find it helpful to read the background information provided on the front cover.

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?

A. Reduce the amount of savings someone can have and claim Council Tax Reduction. The current limit is £16,000 savings

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

C. Reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

B. 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.

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

D. 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)

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

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?

- 18-24 25-34 35-44
 45-54 55-64 65+

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

- Yes, limited a lot Yes, limited a little
 No

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

White

- English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British
 Irish
 Gypsy or Irish Traveller
 Any other white background (please write in)

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
 African
 Any other Black background (please write in)

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
 Pakistani
 Bangladeshi
 Chinese
 Any other Asian background (please write in)

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

- White & Black Caribbean
 White & Black African
 White & Asian
 Any other mixed background (please write in)

Other ethnic group

- Arab
 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 www.oxford.gov.uk/counciltax. 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

Day time phone (including code)

Address

Thank you for your comments.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the envelope provided or to the following address (no stamp needed): FREEPOST, PO Box 10, Oxford, OX1 1BR

Oxfordshire Districts Consultation Results

Local Council Tax Support Scheme

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.

Oxfordshire's local authorities each asked residents for their views about how Council Tax benefit is provided by district councils next financial year (2013/4).

Whilst the questionnaire and background materials were agreed jointly, each district carried out its own exercise.

Key Findings:

The profile of those responding was as expected with high levels of older people (aged 60+), women and White British residents taking part.

When asked whether people agreed or disagreed with the proposals to maintain a scheme the responses were as follows:

	Agree	Disagree
Cherwell DC	50%	14%
Oxford City	51%	5%
South Oxon & Vale	64%	9%
West	45%	23%

When asked for views on how the costs of the scheme could be reduced, the options in order of preference can be found in the table below with 1 being the preferred option and 4 being the least preferred option.

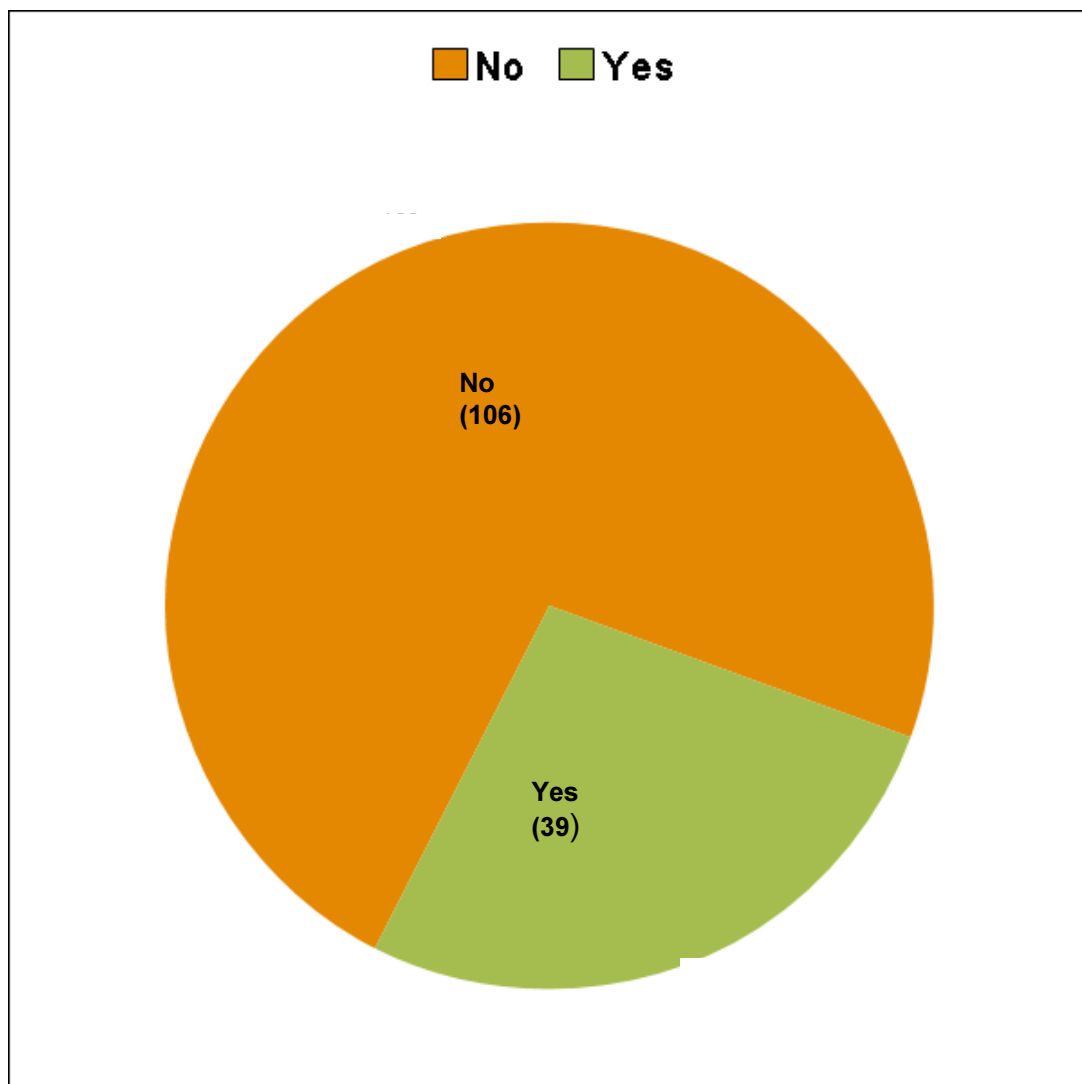
	CDC	OCC	SO&V	WDC
Reduce the amount of savings someone can have and claim Council Tax Reduction. The current limit is £16,000 savings	3	4	3	3
Reduce the maximum Council Tax Reduction award for properties in higher council tax bands to that of a lower property band.e.g. anybody in a band E to H property would be awarded a reduction equivalent to a maximum of a band D property.	2	2	2	1
Reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage	4	3	4	4
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)	1	1	1	2

Oxford City Council Survey Results

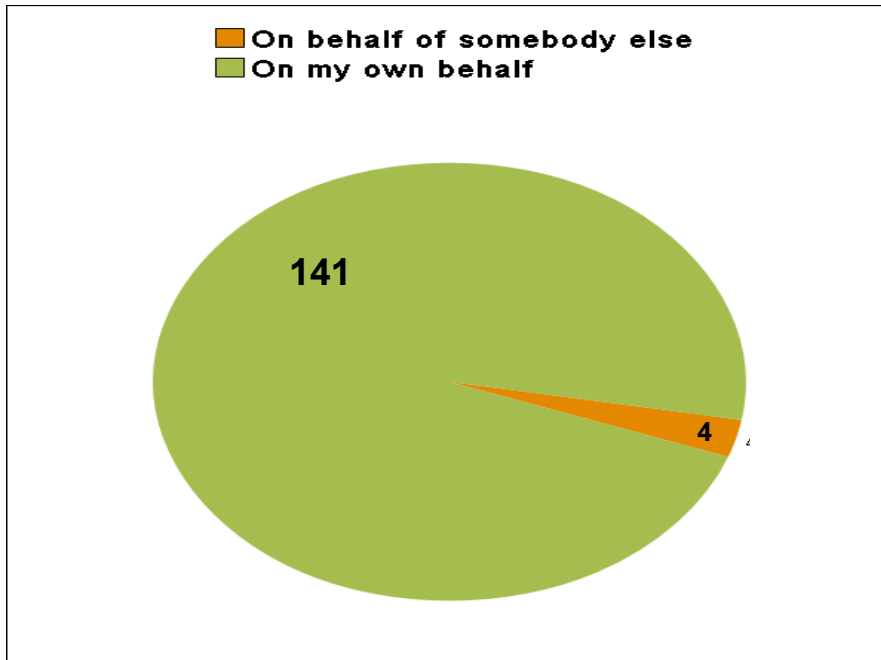
The Council Tax Reduction Scheme consultation began on 24th August and ended on 28th September 2012. The survey was mailed out to a random sample of 500 residents across the city and posted on our online consultation system where all members of the public had an opportunity to take part.

We received 152 responses to this consultation and the results can be found below.

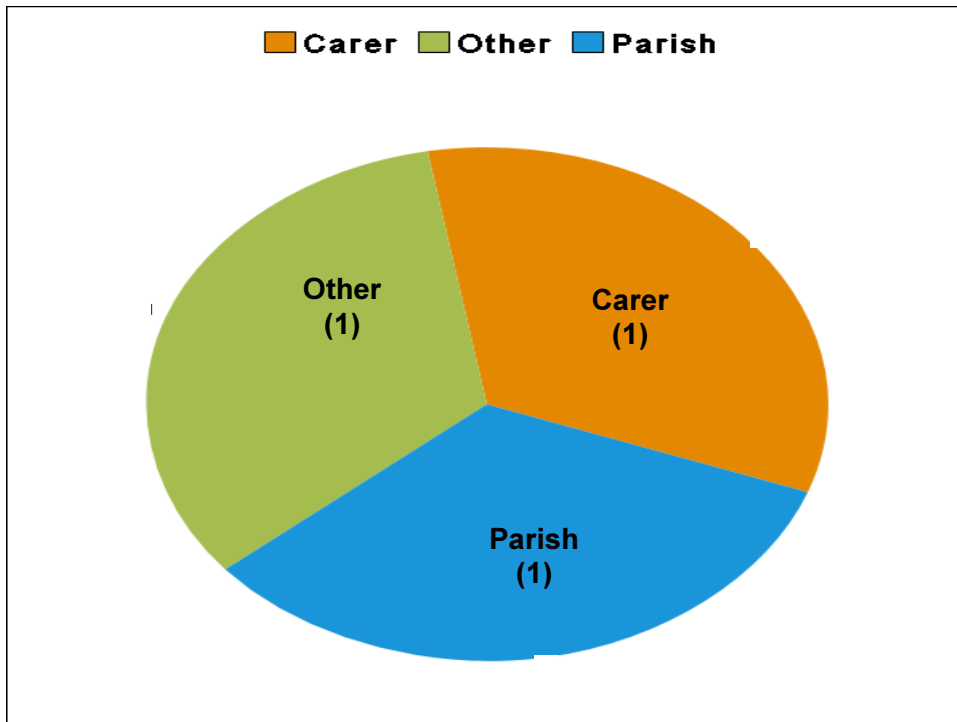
Question 1. Do you currently receive Council Tax Benefit?



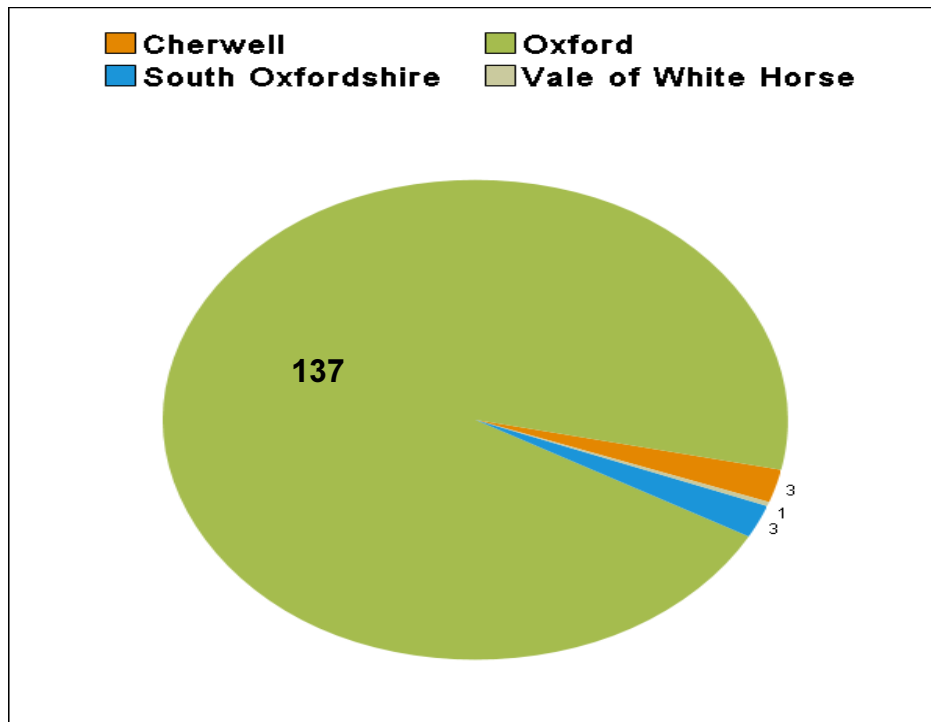
Question 2. Are you responding to this survey on your own behalf or on behalf of somebody else?



Question 3. If you are responding on behalf of somebody else, please let us know who be selecting one of the options below.

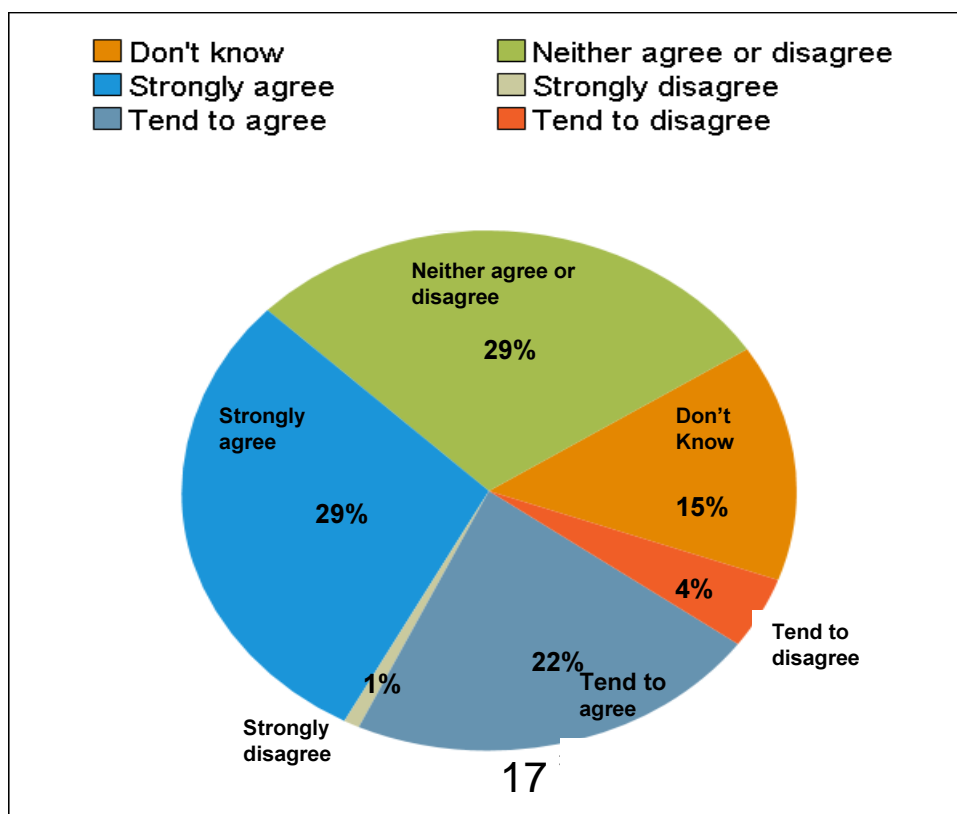


Question 4. Which district do you live in?



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

Question 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposals to maintain a scheme?



Strongly agree	29% (40)
Tend to agree	22% (30)
Neither agree or disagree	29% (39)
Tend to disagree	4% (6)
Strongly disagree	1% (1)
Don't know	15% (20)

Question 6

Why do you agree or disagree?

A total of 59 people responded to this question.

Reasons for agreeing with the proposal included the following views:

- Need to support vulnerable people (such as disabled, pensioners and people on low incomes)
- People should pay Council Tax according to how much they earn.
- People on lower incomes need extra support especially in the current tough financial climate.
- It will help to safeguard the incomes of the most vulnerable

Reasons for disagreeing included:

- State support should be reduced to encourage people to work/contribute more
- People on low incomes should not get help at the expense of others e.g. Council Tax should not go up to pay for this.
- The cost of Council Tax benefit will have to be met by working people

The most common reasons for agreeing Most people that commented on this question agreed that the scheme should be maintained in order to help those on lower incomes especially in the current financial climate.

Question 7

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?

'Reduce the amount of savings someone can have and claim Council Tax Reduction. The current limit is £16,000 savings'

Option	Count
Strongly agree	17% (22)
Tend to agree	20% (27)
Neither agree nor disagree	17% (23)
Tend to disagree	15% (20)
Strongly disagree	20% (26)
Don't know	11% (15)

'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.'

Option	Count
Strongly agree	21% (27)
Tend to agree	23% (30)
Neither agree nor disagree	18% (23)
Tend to disagree	13% (17)
Strongly disagree	13% (17)
Don't know	13% (17)

'Reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage'

Option	Count
Strongly agree	10% (13)
Tend to agree	29% (38)
Neither agree nor disagree	19% (25)
Tend to disagree	17% (22)
Strongly disagree	11% (14)
Don't know	15% (19)

'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)'

Option	Count
Strongly agree	35% (46)
Tend to agree	32% (42)
Neither agree nor disagree	8% (11)
Tend to disagree	9% (12)
Strongly disagree	6% (8)
Don't know	10% (13)

Question 8

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

7D - would depend if other adults are working or not.
In order to get a reduction I thought only one person could live in the property. If more adults are living in the property why are they receiving a reduction? Surely this question is irrelevant?
I don't know anything about council tax financial arrangements.
The government should create funds for council tax reduction. It is unfair to do this to councils which already have their financial problems.
I really have no idea of any of these proposals and can't find it's pros and cons. My general view is you should base the calculation/reduction on income.
I think that it's unfair that I still have to work and pay for everything just because I have

a daughter at home when neighbours have a son some house but she gets reduction.

Serious effort to collect the reduced council tax payments must be made.

Sorry - This whole thing is very unclear and I don't feel qualified to express an opinion.

Since Q7 apparently means that I shall, as a pensioner, continue to receive this benefits, I do not think I can suggest how others might be affected.

We are both pensioners and pay full rent + council tax.

We all pay an extortionate amount of council tax in Oxford. I think Oxford City Council and other District Councils should be abolished and just have one Oxfordshire County Council.

To help fund the scheme, I believe that students living in HMO's should pay Council Tax. By exempting them from Council Tax we are effectively giving money to their landlords, who set the rent at whatever a group of 4 or 5 students can pay. The Council provides generous services top these students and should receive something in return.

If a house is rented and the occupants receive rent allowance they should pay it as private householders in council tax from their income, receiving the same allowances or reductions for disables or elderly relatives living with them.

I support the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as outlined.

My wife who is disabled and myself are pensioners. Our joint income is just above the limit we can have to claim rent and council tax benefit. So if the new scheme is introduced it should not be at the expense of people like us. Our council tax goes up to pay for the new scheme as it would make it even harder for us to manage than it is now.

So our council tax does not go up to pay for this scheme:

First - if there are other people of working age who are not in education age 16-65 yrs in the household, then the amount of council tax reduction received should be reduced. Second - if then needed reduce the amount of council tax reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage. Be everyone I mean people of working age who can work.

Q7 I feel it would be wrong of me to comment on this as I am a pensioner + it does not affect me.

Even those who normally receive benefits should realise that others, including lower paid workers not able to claim, are struggling.

Council taxes are the most appropriate tax. It is a burden to working family. Should stop benefiting single parent/mum. Working family are struggling to meet the both ends of income and expenditure. If you abolish council tax it would be a great thing in a family who are working hard to feed their children.

Wow! I'm glad I'm not a person in your position.

I am told Wiltshire Farm Foods calling once a week is a benefit but I pay them what they ask for myself. I really like having them come but it seems to me I have nothing more to say.

Sorry, haven't been a lot of help, but what I've just read on front cover, don't think it's going to work. The problem is, there is ~~not~~ a lot of information to go by.

For people who have additional personal living in their property (the lodgers, students etc.) extra money should be paid by the tenant.

May I say it is beyond my comprehension how living in a first floor flat, 1 bedroom, no garden, I am paying the same council tax as a person in a 3 bedroom house, garden front and rear.

Sorry but I do feel quite bitter regarding this issue.

I receive a reduction in my Council Tax because I live alone in my flat.

Savings limits should be irrelevant.

People who have worked hard, been prudent, and should not be penalties when in need of money and should not be treated in the same manner as those who squander their help and expect the state to help them.

Any households with multiple amounts should be paying full council tax so long as one is employed. Multiple occupancy households make more use of council services should and should contribute accordingly.

I find the above questions have a loaded out come? Normal working class who are now retired + have payed TAXES should be more family treated, during their retirement.

My strong views about your proposed scheme are in part a reaction to the ridiculously high number of people entitled to council tax reduction in a small city like Oxford.

Schemes like this actively encourage some people to remain on benefits and with reduced council staff, I don't see how you can police such a scheme to ensure that those receiving council tax reduction are actually entitled to do so.

I believe that everyone should pay something towards council tax since this is the best way of ensuring that people appreciate the services provided by the Council.

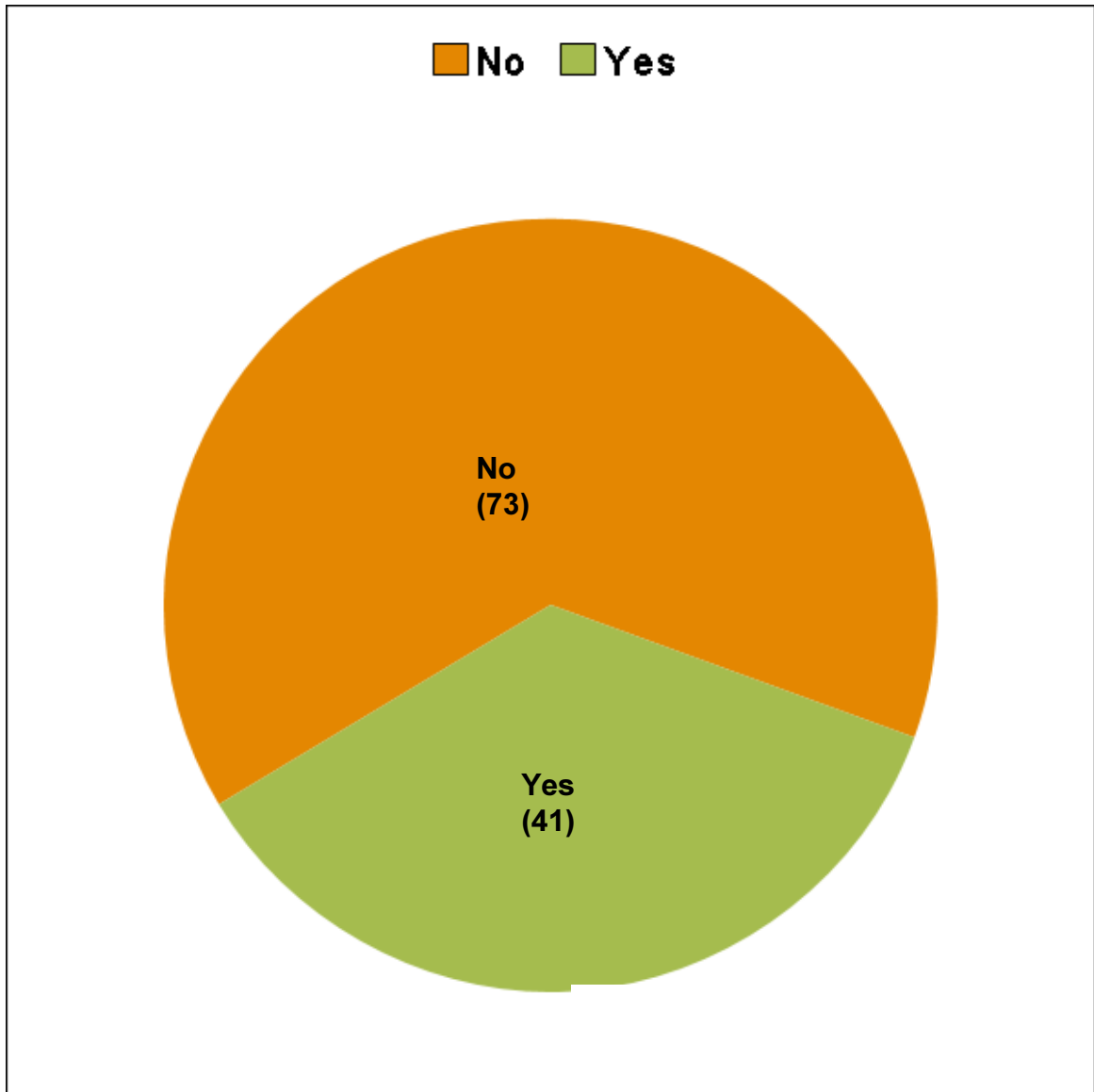
I would prefer to see the £188.000 cost of this scheme go towards, for example, the upkeep of library services which are available to all city residents.

Any reduction in tax and lowering property on any benefits - its good for everyone.

OAPs living alone should pay less.

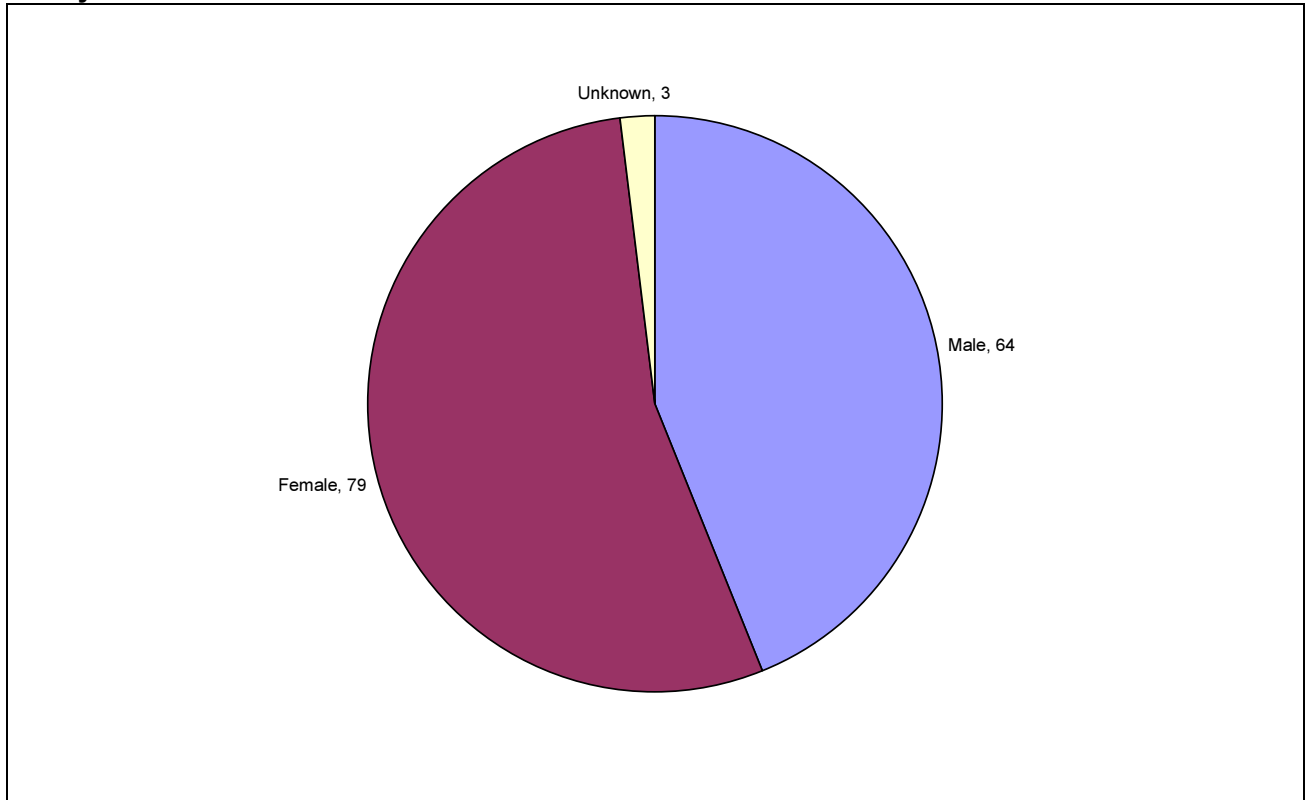
Question 9

Can the council contact you to invite you to take part in any further research about Council Tax benefits?

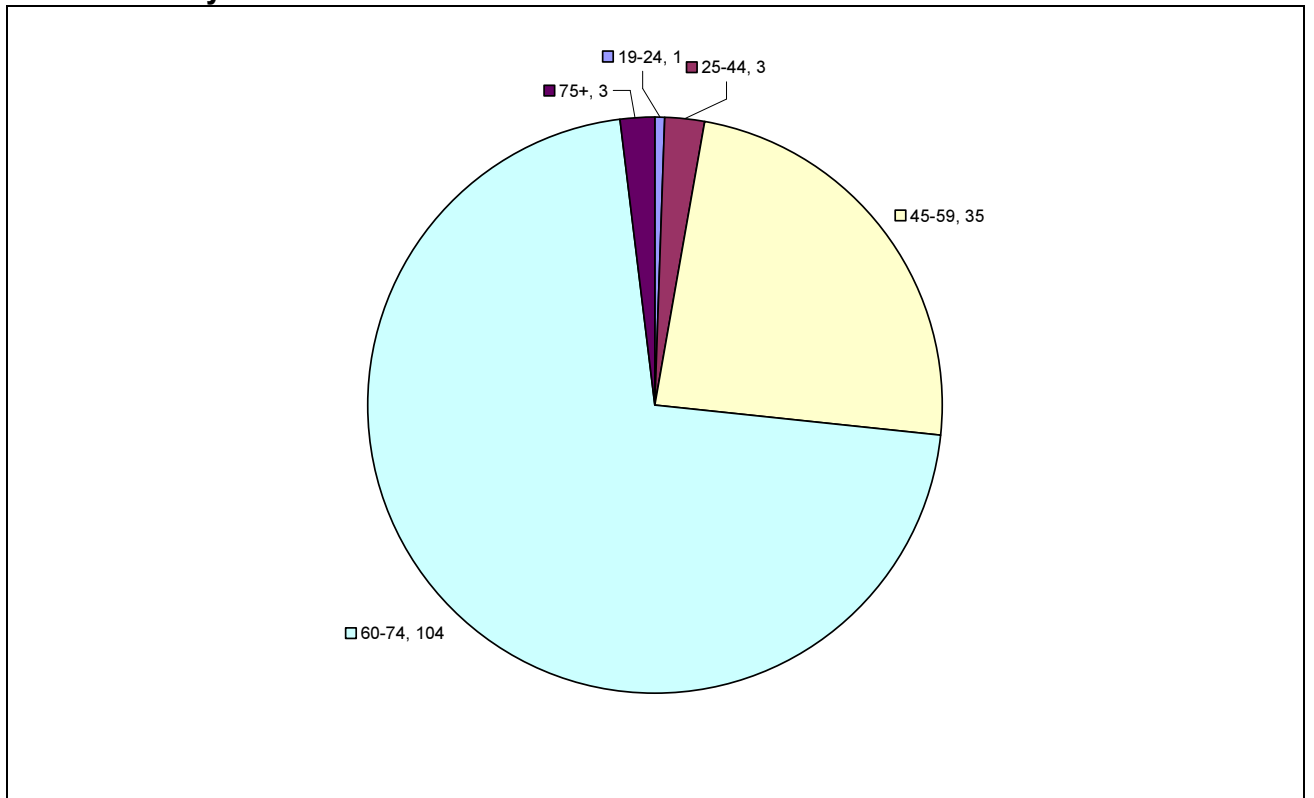


About you.

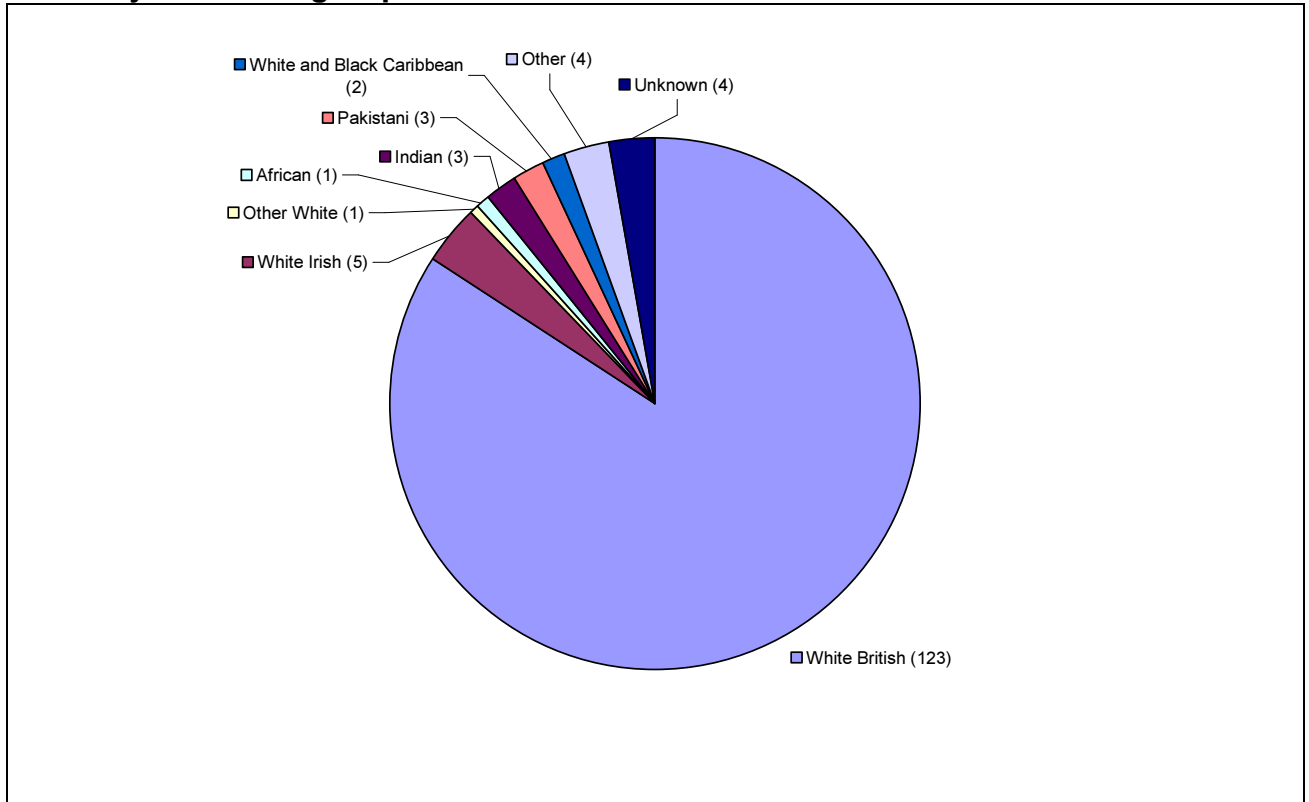
Are you male or female?



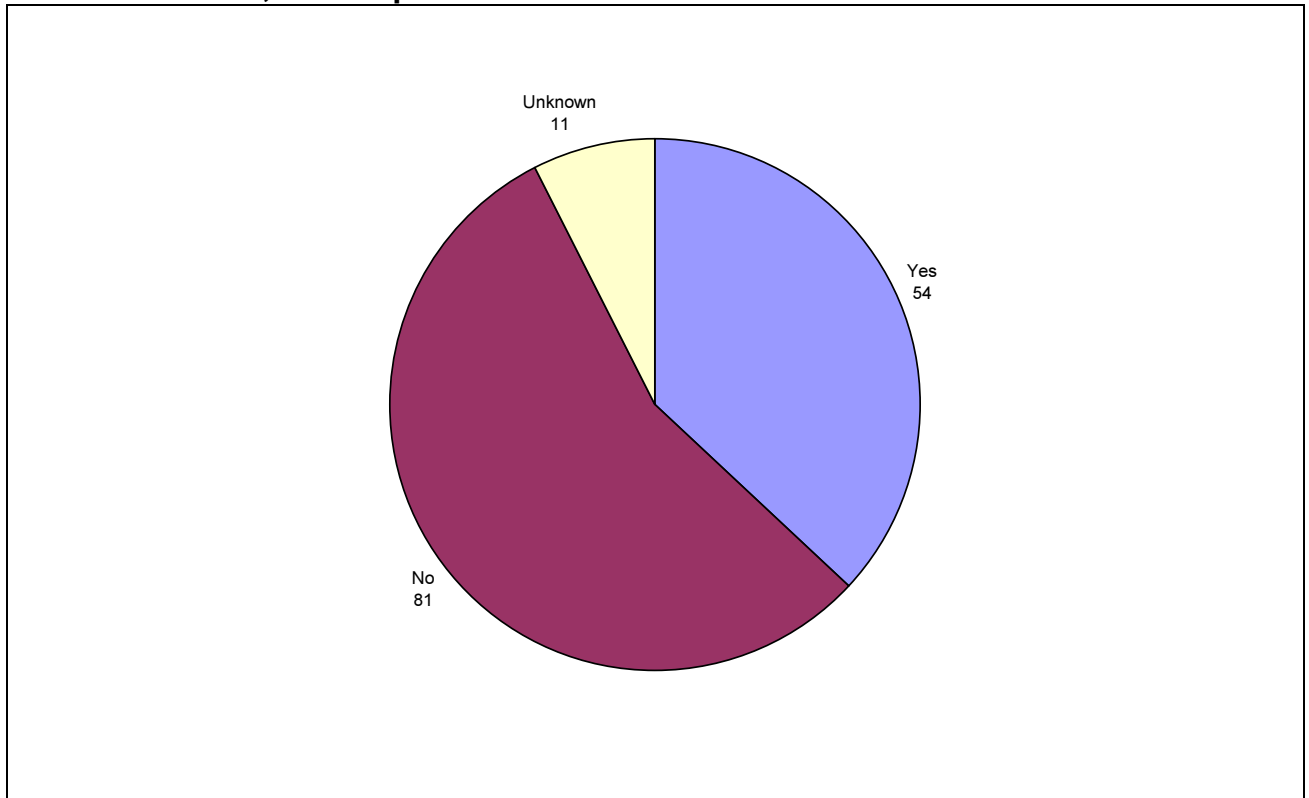
How old are you?



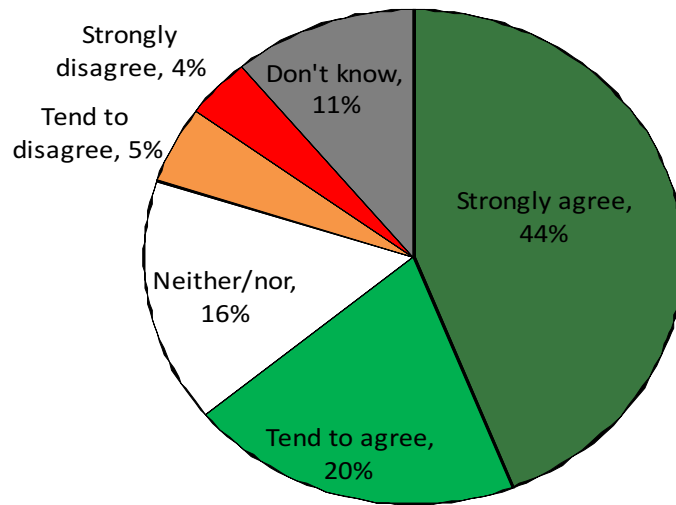
What is your ethnic group?



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



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



Base: All respondents (225)

Two thirds of those responding (64 per cent) agreed with proposals to maintain the scheme, 44 per cent strongly agreeing. Just under 1 in 10 people disagreed whilst higher proportions (16 and 11 per cent) neither agreed or disagreed or replied 'don't know'.

When comparing results between districts, whether someone received Council Tax benefit and characteristics such as age, gender and disability there were few differences between sub groups. The following differences are based on small sample sizes so should be treated with caution:

- Those who do not receive Council Tax benefit (34 people) may be more likely to agree (71 compared to 63 per cent), more likely to disagree (17 compared to 18 per cent) and less likely to say 'don't know' than those receiving the benefit
- Under 45s (41 people) may be more likely to disagree (17 per cent compared to 7 per cent of over 45s)

Question 6

Reasons for agreeing with the proposal included the following views:

- Need to support vulnerable people (such as disabled, pensioners and people on low incomes)
- Positive personal experience/impact of receiving Council Tax benefit
- Council is protecting local people from national cuts
- People should pay Council Tax in proportion to their ability to pay
- Council Tax is too expensive so people on lower incomes need support

Reasons for disagreeing included:

- Not the Council's role to reduce the impact of national cuts
- State support should be reduced to encourage people to work/contribute more
- The cost of Council Tax benefit will have to be met by working people

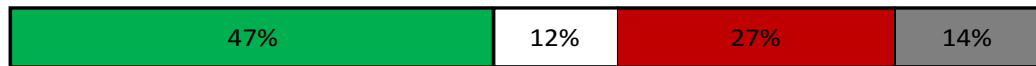
Those taking part were asked to what extent they agreed with options to reduce the cost of the scheme.

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following ways in which the cost of the scheme could be reduced ?

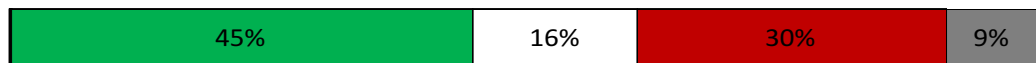
Further reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction someone gets if there are other adults of working age in the household



Reduce the maximum Council Tax reduction award for properties in higher Council Tax bands



Reduce the amount of savings someone can have and claim Council Tax reduction



Reduce the amount of Council Tax reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage



■ Agree □ Neither/nor ■ Disagree ■ Don't know

Agreement was lowest with the option of reducing Council Tax support for everyone by a fixed percentage.

Question 8

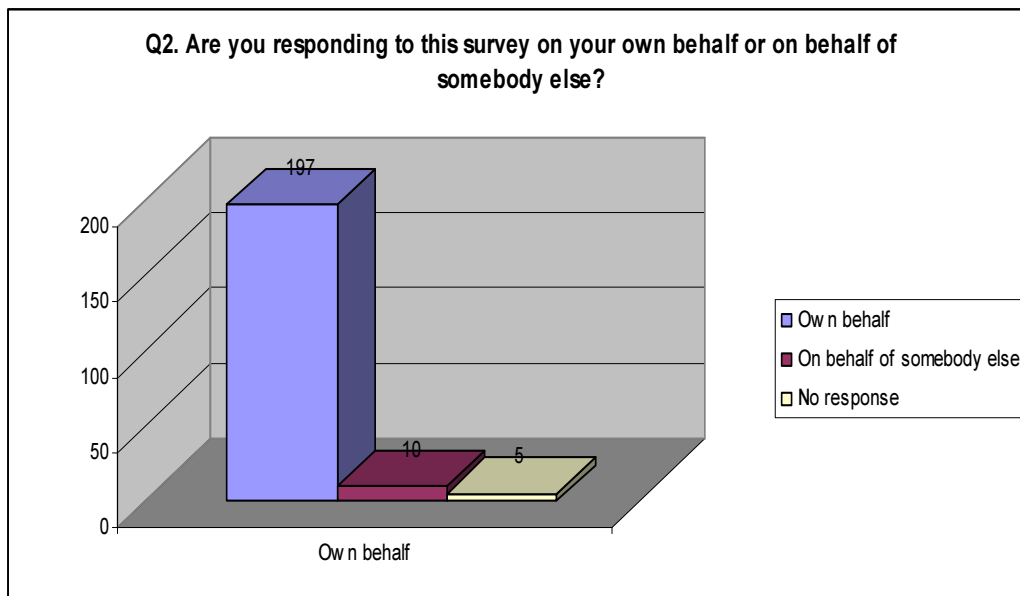
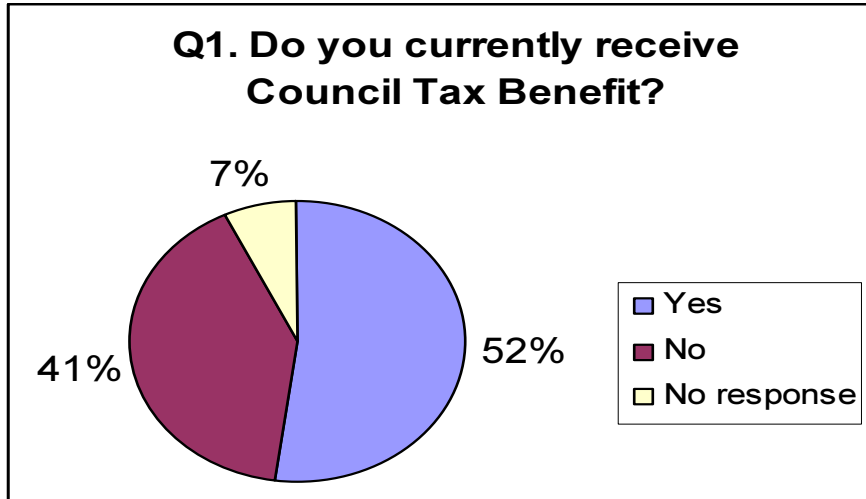
Other views expressed in the survey include:

- Council Tax should be proportional to income not property
- Council Tax paid should reflect the amount of services used, particularly for single-occupants
- Support should be targeted at those who need it based on prior contributions to reduce misuse
- People who have worked hard to save shouldn't be penalised
- Concern about the impact of charging more for properties empty for less than a month on landlords/tenants
- Query whether its practical to get information about other adults in a household
- Where a young person in a household finishes full time education but cannot get work this will already add pressure to household income
- How the Council will fund maintaining the scheme is not clear

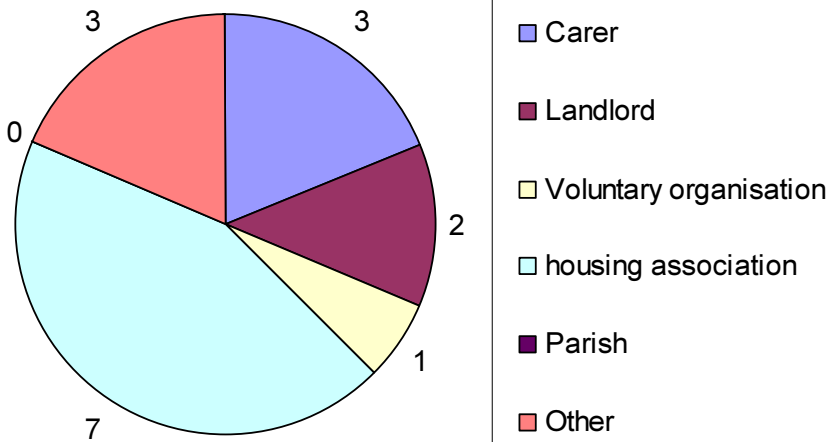
A number of comments and the high proportions of people responding 'don't know' indicate many residents found it difficult to understand the issues or felt they didn't have enough information to comment.

Cherwell District Council Survey Results

Comments were collected via Cherwell District Council website, there was also sample of local residents who received consultation letter and paper copy of the survey. A total of 212 responses were submitted.



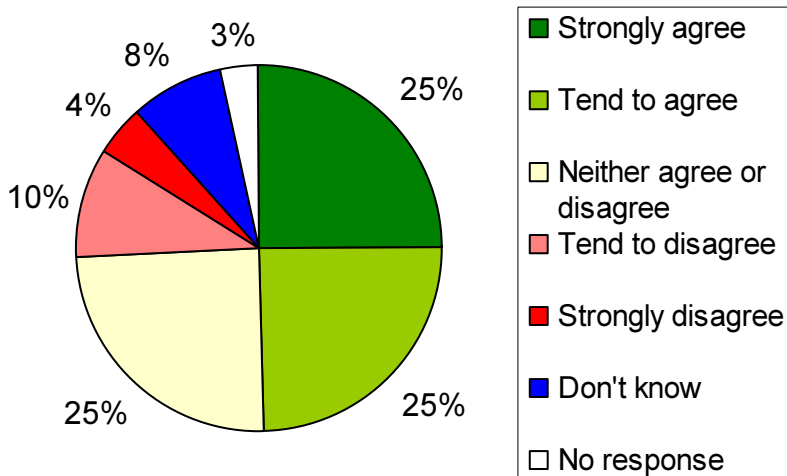
Q3. If you are responding on behalf of somebody else, please let us know who by selecting one of the options below.



Q4. Which district do you live in?

Oxford City	0
Cherwell	206
South Oxfordshire	0
Vale of the White Horse	0
West Oxfordshire	0
No response	6

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



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

Should reduce benefit even more, we give away far too much of taxpayers money.

If you are using services provided by the council then someone somewhere has to pay for them. Why should someone else have to pay extra for those services and subsidise that person? They are already supposedly receiving Benefits that should be assisting them so why extend that assistance further from the council funds?

It is very important that schemes are maintained to support those who can not afford the very high council tax costs in oxfordshire

I agree to the reduction as people who suffer a disability vcannot work and earn an income. Every penny counts to help maintain an average standard of life.

There appears to be an unaacceptable risk of an increase in Council Tax for those not in receipt benefit or cutsin essential services to fund the Â£60,000 required.
it is not clear

I agree as proposals do not appear to affect my situation

Shift of burden from central government to local without the matching funds. Also it is best to gradually reduce individual subsidies to individuals otherwise it can obstruct self help

Need to maintain or homeless situation will worsen
because there should be a benefit system

The benefits bill is too high. people should be made to work to return for JSA etc.
benefits by definition should benefit receipters not make it easier to remain NEET [?]

Because the poor and needy in our society need protection particularly when they are being targetted by welfare reform currently being implemented

people on low incomes especially pensioners need suypport and some relief from paying council tax

I have no comment

unable to manage without CT benefit

Don't know

safeguard all people involved

people in need and/or on low incomes need help

the scheme has to be maintained, because people cannot just be abandoned. All walks of life need to looked after when things go wrong

I agree because many elderly and low income people need help

If the government decided to cut benefits why should they keep at the same level on costs of district council tax payers

as i receive no council tax benefit i can see little point inbeing contacted again

My council tac benefit helps me greatly, if a scheme wasnt maintained. i would struggle to find the extra money to cover my council tax

I do need to know what i pay and have sorted this with the land lord [cant read most of Mr's writing!!!!]

waste of money to change. will the gain be greater than the cost

Number of low income people/families have their council tax bill as a large part of their expenditure, therefore the benefit/reduction scheme is very important to them

I neither agree nor disagree. also find it sad that councils will force people who have a spare room to move as they cant afford the price

Necessary to ensure that poverty is not increased amongst claimants of benefits and those on low incomes. Failure to provide a a schemew ould lead to increasein homelessnesss and personal debt

Really does not matter will happen no matter what people say

Not sure i understand the whole system

council should meet the shortfall and maintain council tax payments

In proportion to the average income of most OAP's - OAP + possibly a small work pension - the current council tax is too high and only sustainable with difficulty

Helps those on low or fixed incomes

a] its not clear to me what your options are from the list below b] i dont believe your maths

This will only result in my tax increasing **30**

I disagree with the statemnet regarding cost to CDC. Firstly, it will cost us not the taxpayer not the council. Secondly, why state per year when actually once the

reductions are in place, they won't be an additional charge. Thirdly, as always, the people who have always paid their way either renting and paying taxes or buying a home and paying taxes, have always contributed, will pay again or should I say have to pinch harder because some are pensioners!! But most have never worked!!!!

Why should householders pay more just because they're living there? It's going back to poll tax, why? Savings, why should people use their savings just to get by when they've saved all their lives and would need that money in old age? Wish I had savings and what are savings???

cannot agree/disagree until I have further information outlining how an individual or group would be affected

I have friends who really need their council tax benefit and would struggle without it. I am a lone parent who cannot afford large amounts of council tax and I am worried changes made will affect my liability to council tax help if any.

I agree people in real need [such as pensioners on a fixed income] should have a reduction regardless of any savings or whether they claim benefits. Households with several people working age [regardless of whether on benefits] should not get a reduction.

Every case should be looked at on its own merits, particularly when looking at council tax by band, though I agree people should live within their means. It is unfair for someone living in a large house who is made redundant to be expected to move. Fairer wealth distribution. Higher earners should pay more to support their community and infrastructure. There should be assistance for low earners to help them.

I am not sure - if this does go ahead how will it affect my housing benefit. I won't lose it will I?

additional cost falling on council tax payers

anything which increases costs at the moment must be carefully considered and unless unacceptable should be denied.

Pensioners and vulnerable groups should keep the same level as council tax benefit.

As I am a pensioner aged 76 with no savings and a low income I know I could not manage without the help I get from my council tax benefit.

It seems reasonable that a household with only one occupier should receive a discount.

The scheme provides essential relief to people who are, on the whole, unable to make the payment of the tax through no fault of their own.

council tax should be linked to ability to pay

Important to aid in people's lives with difficult economy and low incomes

Because some deserving people and/or those who cannot afford to pay due to unavoidable circumstances deserve a helping hand.

As a 95 year old disabled person, I would hope to receive some financial relief instead of watching my carefully hoarded savings gradually diminish.

While I understand that some people need assistance with paying their council tax, I feel myself that we have always budgeted to pay our council tax even if we have had to go without other things [holidays]. If our tax bill increases again to assist the new scheme something else will have to go.

There are many people on low income and they live in houses that are expensive to run. Not just the big houses, small flats and small houses. Pensioners have great difficulty with paying all their bills, leave almost no money left for food. They need all the help they can get.

1. people need to be encouraged to save - not penalised
2. not everyone is able to move to a lower property band
3. Fairer to reduce the amount of council tax reduction by a fixed percentage to all recipients
4. reduce the amount someone receives if there are other adults of working age in the property. It is much harder to meet one's living expenses when living alone on one income.

don't feel competent to judge so unwilling

council tax is expensive for everyone so anyone on a low income should be able to get a reduction.

some council tax reduction can apply to the poorest of us. They just cannot afford to pay the current high level of rents charged.

I feel more people may be receiving benefits who really need them. A tighter scheme should be applied to pursue council tax debts from those who can but refuse to pay on

time

The poor or hard up should not be penalised but offered help with council tax

Currently not receiving benefit and unlikely to in future

it will be time and money saving

system seems to work

to agree to a proposal that will benefit the community

to encourage to be accountable

I am on guarantee pension credits and my situation is unchanged. filled out just in case

the reason i am in favour of reduction is that some of the people who get it don't deserve it

Because it seems to me to be something we are going to be forced to do by law

i agree that vulnerable groups and elderly get a lower rate as long as they are identified correctly. However, i would not want this cost passed on to us

I think money could be saved by looking at other things being wasted

I strongly disagree with council tax - that's because the council spend out the money on works that don't even need doing. as all those years ago we didn't pay council tax so why now? it is a total con

i have mental health problems so would need more info on different things to make a vote

I've worked all my life and paid my own way. why should i now help subsidise other people. I'm still working to make sure we can live ok as a family.

need to recognise that some residents require financial support due to their personal circumstances

It seems to me that those groups of people that are truly vulnerable will be protected anyway. it may be hard, but all others should be encouraged to pay their own way like the rest of us

so it makes it easier to pay my rent

I am married with no children. my husband works full time and i am unable to due to my disability i was born with and now on very strong medication. i do not receive benefits for not being able to work, so we have one income coming in and do not use the resources people with families and people on benefits do, both who are in receipt of discounts unlike us. any savings will help us dramatically

people who live alone should get a discount

council tax too onerous for those on very low incomes

Reduce £16,000 to £12,000

we have to work hard to pay our bills and are fed up of subsidising those who will not work

Poor get poor. another benefits cut

not sure if i fully understand the council tax system

People on benefits deserve a break across the board

i think it has already been decided

because there is genuine need

because it tends to help everyone

When free handouts are available, there is little incentive to earn an income to pay one's dues

I think change is good but then the effects on others would be different and i don't know how it would affect me as a single mother

those who are genuinely financially disadvantaged should receive some support

principle of progressive taxation is most equitable and efficient

I think that OAP's and genuine people on benefits should still get the same allowance. But i think any new claimants or people on income support should have theirs revalued

with the current economic climate, i believe people are under enough pressure to keep a roof over their heads

sounds like my council taxes will be increased to cover the shortfall or drastic cuts in services

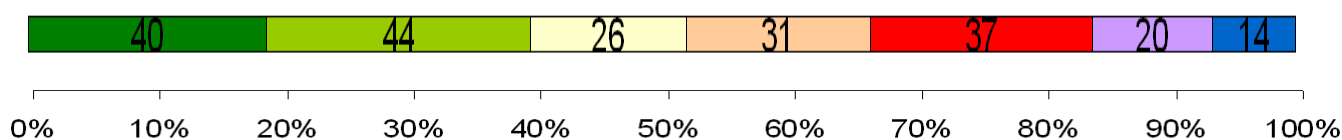
As this is a complicated issue of which i don't have sufficient knowledge to comment on i've ticked the don't know box

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.

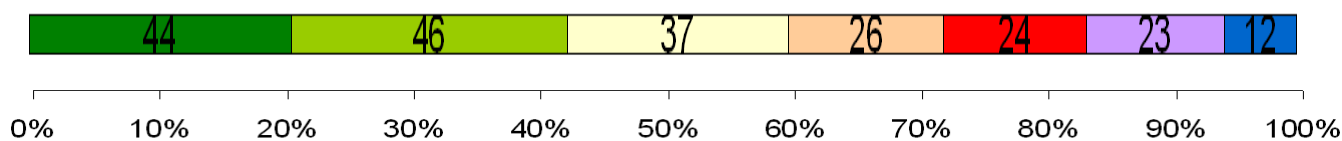
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following ways in which the cost of the scheme could be reduced?

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Tend to agree
 ■ Neither agree or disagree
 ■ Tend to disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Don't know
 ■ No response

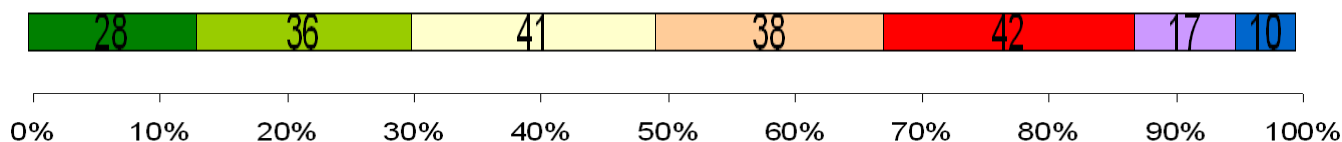
Reduce the amount of savings someone can have and claim Council Tax Reduction. The current limit is £16,000 savings



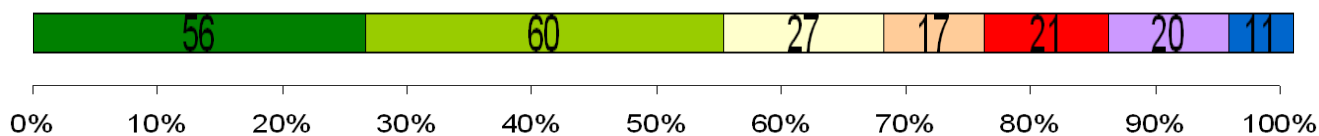
Reduce the maximum Council Tax Reduction award for properties in higher council tax bands to that of a lower property band e.g. anybody in a band E to H property would be awarded a reduction equivalent to a maximum of a band D property.



Reduce the amount of Council Tax Reduction that everyone receives by a fixed percentage.



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).



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

Sovereign is a major provider of social housing in the south and south west, owning and managing around 34,000 homes in more than 70 local authorities. As a provider of social housing in the Cherwell District, we feel it is important to share our views to support the design of your local Council Tax support scheme. We recognise that local authorities face a big challenge in implementing local council tax benefit schemes while making 10% savings overall from working age households. The overall impact of the Welfare Reform Act will be significant for many low income and vulnerable households and in some cases it will be devastating. Cutting council tax benefit entitlement will inevitably hit poorer households at a time when they need our support the most. It is our view that councils should be doing all that they can when devising their schemes to minimise the amount of council tax benefit that is cut. We feel it would be fairer for local authorities to prioritise savings by reducing, or cutting

completely, some of the existing council tax discounts. Many of these are provided regardless of people's ability to pay. Should these cuts result in individual cases of hardship, we would suggest that it is reasonable to expect that these could be addressed via the local council tax benefit scheme. For instance:

- Reducing the discounts received by those with a second home and introducing a premium to those owning an home that has been empty for a certain period of time
- Reviewing the single person discount, including the scope for introducing means testing to target the discount at people on low incomes (we recognise this is not in the power of the local authority but feel it worth stating our support for such a measure)

If these approaches do not generate sufficient savings, we would like Cherwell District Council to consider the following options before cutting entitlement:

- Increased contribution made by other adult members of the household who are in work
- Removal of second adult rebate
- Decreasing the £16k savings limit for eligibility

There are added advantages to reducing discounts rather than cutting entitlement:

- It will satisfy the government directives of protecting vulnerable households and avoiding disincentives to work. It is likely that any scheme that makes savings by cutting council tax benefit will go against one, if not both, of these directives. Applying a broad brush cut means those previously on full council tax benefit would have to pay a small amount of council tax under a new system presenting the council with an increased administrative burden and potentially affect collection rates.

CTB needs to be more transparent. Most of my clients don't even know what CT is. CT in Cherwell does seem quite high. Reducing overheads and services will reduce the rate of CT anyway.

Need to continue single person discount or there will be significant hardship to many. It seems fairer to me to consider earnings levels and house values and multiple occupancy before demands are made on pensioners, disabled and sole occupants [where appropriate] OR lowly paid occupants

To be honest I do not really understand the proposal

I think it should be scrapped. It's not worthy of the efforts and costs to administer it. People need to learn to stand on their own feet. It should be helping to take you out of poverty not a constant hand out that traps you in it.

Can't read Mr's writing!!!

If the money is to be found, why target the people that are in work and living on a budget when really we should be promoting that work pays

With a thriving black economy it is important that local councils regularly verify that any reduction is still appropriate. Currently no incentive to voluntarily give up the reduction

Nothing else to say

More information would have been helpful for a proper consultation

Empty Properties We estimate that, across our business, if all our partner local authorities were to require us to pay full council tax in these circumstances, the cost to Paradigm would be in the region of £120,000. This would need to be paid for ultimately by tenants via rental income, clearly resulting in a reduction in the amount of money available for maintaining property. One argument some local authorities are putting forward is to dissuade landlords from keeping property empty. This is not really relevant to us " we already work hard to minimise void turnaround times to increase the supply of property and to minimise our rent loss. If LAs wish to maintain pressure on landlords, they could do this perhaps by introducing charging after an initial 4 week period. Our void turnaround time is 21 days for general needs property" surely it is not cost effective for LAs to collect such small sums of money.

How can it be fair that people with considerable savings qualify for a reduction. Surely savings are for rainy days?

I'm not sure that why I put don't know. My two benefits I get are income support and incapacity benefit

I appreciate any help I can get. My 25% reduction is a manageable figure for me. I would prefer it stay the same but would appreciate anything you can do to maintain it. My own concern is that 3 bins over a 2 week period is a severe challenge to someone 85 years old. Though I am able to assist some of the time, there are occasions that I cannot. To have to wheel 2 bins to the curb for an 85 year old is a physical problem - do you agree?

Leave things the way they are - let people be happy

I do not have sufficient information to answer questions

I find everything changes which costs more money just yet another idea and so much waste

I find the last Q7 a little strange. I thought that other working persons living at the same address as a benefit recipient were already liable to make a contribution to council tax. if this is not the case it should be!!

some groups have been unable to live in social housing and had to privately rent - the housing benefit is not in line with rental prices across Cherwell and already leaving a shortfall. i think you would need to look at individual reasons for why people are in houses of a higher band and judge them on their own merit rather than penalising the whole group.

how about funding this scheme by cost reductions elsewhere or higher taxes for higher earners

the current council tax is too high in proportion to the pensioner that has just a pension and a small work pension - about the same as one months pension to pay a years council tax. sooner or later the council will kill the golden goose

In the present climate. it is the responsibility of the council to impose restrictions on any form of benefit claim to those in genuine need. dont allow benefit just as a matter of course

I hope you are not considering a reduction in the 25% you give for people living alone
See comment re q6 recovery of council tax who help fund a reduction scheme

People unable to work including pensioners should not be expected to pay the same council tax as those working

Given the current climate that Britain is in, with everyones income being stretched, i think all should be encouraged to budget and pay their own bills/

i think everyone should pay some council tax no matter how low their income is

Hope that 25% reduction for single occupancy will never be reduced

what i would like to know is there any investigation when claimants make their claim for this benefit

those on long term low income ie. basic old age pension or disabled should be protected

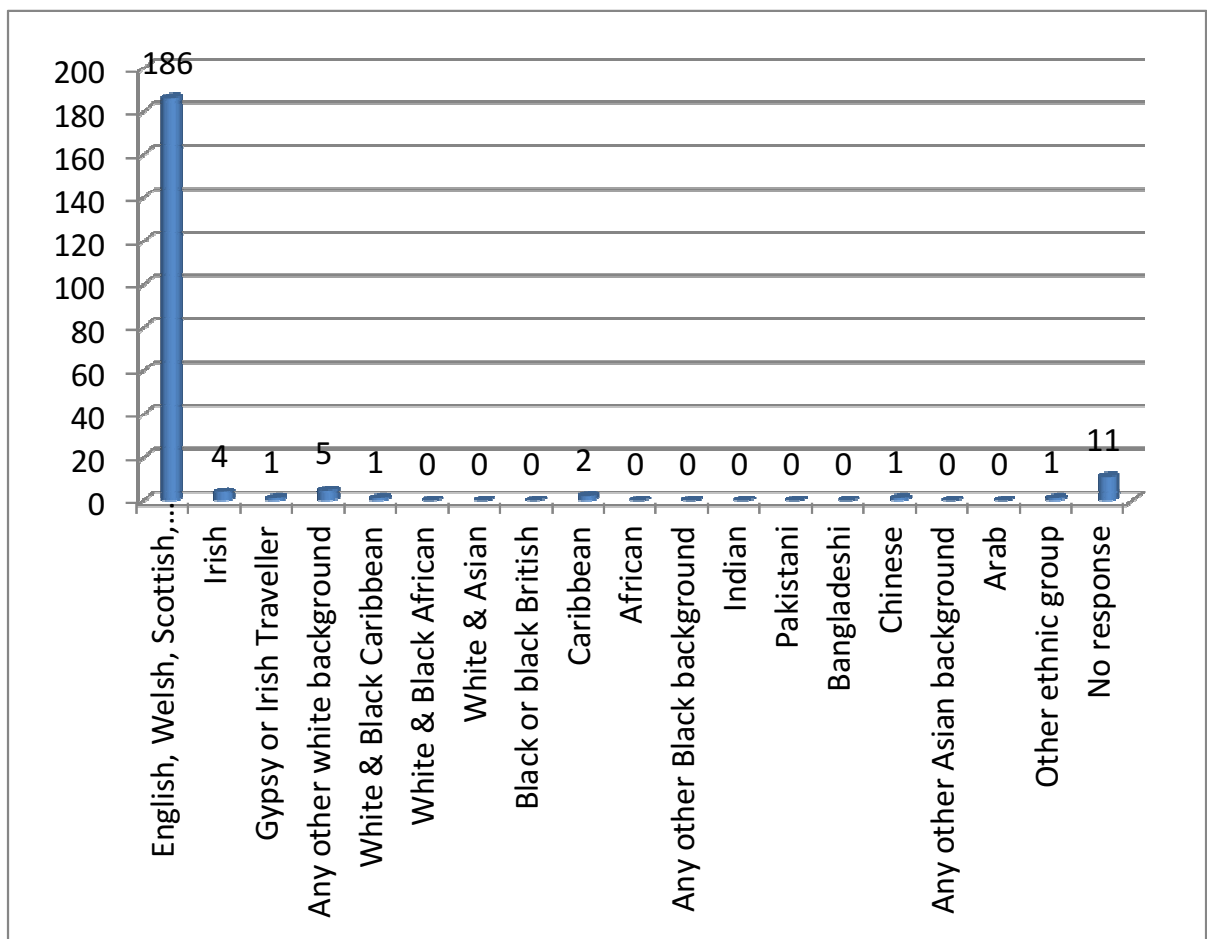
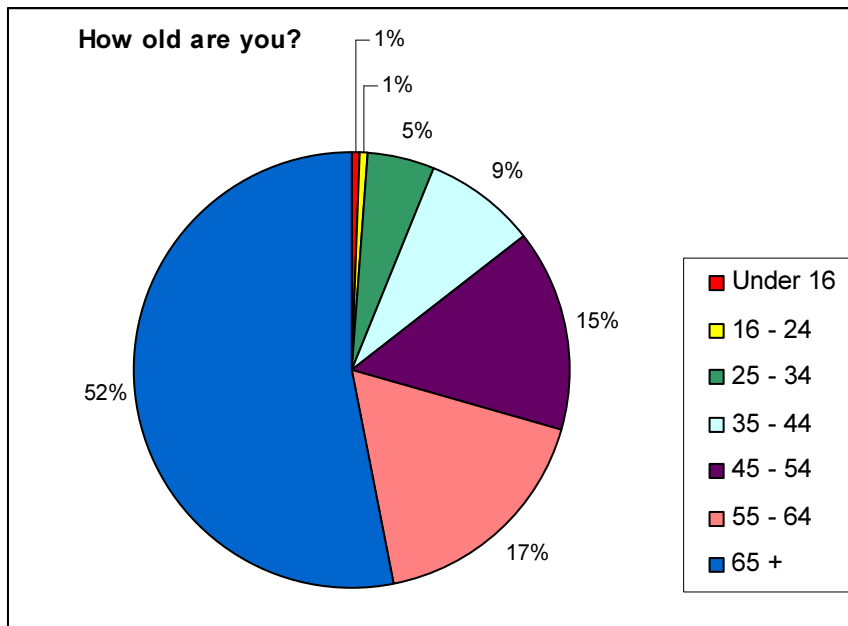
It should be based on 1. amount of adults working or not in the property. ie, they pay more for more adults 2. if they have children who use resources within the scheme they should pay more 3. i feel you should pay for what you use. ie if less people in a smaller, cheaper property you should pay less. as obviously they have less in equity of their property and amount of people in the home to use the resources we pay for well if people have got over £16000 in the bank, then they should not get a tax reduction and over that they should pay full council tax

Yes, about the amount what you expect me to pay is a total rip off - as i want you to look at this again. as i am not paying this until you have looked into this again. as when i tell you that i've got other bills to pay other than council tax, you people just say that you dont take into consideration about other bills i've got - but you people should - as there is things i would like to buy for myself and my wife but i cant as all i gets throwed in my face is bills same as my wife

sounds like you are going to do what the previous tory government did, take percentage of social security money of pension credits away.

I dont understand this so would prefer to have more information

About you:



Other groups (1 response each): European, German, Latvian, American, Maltese, Angloarab

Othe

West Oxfordshire District Council Survey Results

There were 56 responses to the consultation document. This is quite low considering that we publicised our website survey and posted 200 forms directly to current Council Tax Benefit recipients and could be an indication that there is no opposition to the proposal to adopt the current Council Tax Benefit scheme as our local scheme in 2013/14. The number of responses for the key questions is broken down as follows:

Statement 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to adopt the current Council Tax Benefit scheme as the local Council Tax Support scheme for 2013/14?

- 25 people (45%) Agree or Strongly Agree
- 14 people (25%) Neither agree or disagree
- 13 people (23%) Disagree or Strongly Disagree
- 4 people (7%) indicated that didn't know

Note: Of the 25 that agreed that the current CTB scheme should be adopted, 5 (9%) indicated that they are currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit.

Further questions asked for views on aspects of the local scheme that we will need to design for April 2014.

Statement 2: We should reduce the amount of savings that someone can have and claim Council Tax Support from the current limit of £16,000.

- 38 people (68%) Agree or Strongly Agree
- 4 people (7%) Neither agree or disagree
- 12 people (21%) Strongly Disagree
- 2 people (4%) indicated that they did not know

Statement 3: We should reduce the maximum Council Tax Support award for properties in higher council tax bands. For example, anyone in a band E to H property would be awarded entitlement equivalent to a maximum of a band D property.

- 43 people (77%) Agree or Strongly Agree
- 5 people (9%) Neither agree or disagree
- 5 people (9%) Disagree or Strongly Disagree
- 3 people (5%) indicated that they did not know

Statement 4: We should reduce the amount of Council Tax Support that everyone receives (excluding Pensioners, who are protected) by a fixed percentage.

- 23 people (41%) Agree or Strongly Agree
- 13 people (23%) Neither agree or disagree
- 16 people (28.5%) Disagree or Strongly Disagree
- 4 people (7.5%) indicated that they did not know

Statement 5: Where there are other adults in the household (not including spouses and partners) the current scheme reduces the entitlement to take account of the fact that this 'Non-Dependant' should make a contribution to the household finances. We should reduce entitlement by more than the current levels in the local scheme.

- 41 people (73%) Agree or Strongly Agree
- 6 people (11%) Neither agree or disagree
- 7 people (12.5%) Disagree or Strongly Disagree
- 2 people (3.5%) indicated that they did not know

Comments: The individual comments are of course available for inspection. However, they can be summarised into three general areas:

- Only help those that truly need help,
- Families with young children should be protected,
- Don't over burden those that are already working and therefore paying income tax,
- Drastically reduce the amount of capital that people can have and still claim.

People Profile

Current CTB Recipients: 16% of all responses were from people who indicated that they are currently receiving Council Tax Benefit.

Gender: The male/female split of those responding was 51% male/49% female.

Age: Responses were from people across most age groups:

- 16 to 24 year olds made up 1%
- 25 to 34 year olds made up 14.5%
- 35 to 44 year olds made up 24%
- 45 to 54 year olds made up 24%
- 55 to 64 year olds made up 22%
- 65+ year olds made up 14.5%

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS & EXEMPTIONS ACROSS OXFORDSHIRE

Based on 2012/13 Taxbase and Provisional grant figures								
	Cherwell	Oxford City	South Oxfordshire	Vale of the White Horse	West Oxfordshire	County	Police	All areas
Background information (£m)								
2012/13 taxbase before discounts (Band Ds)	50,478	47,134	55,652	49,076	41,186	243,526	243,526	243,526
Reduction in Band D taxbase due to discounts	-4,747	-6,447	-3,755	-3,592	-3,179	-21,720	-21,720	-21,720
Percent change in taxbase	-9%	-14%	-7%	-7%	-8%	-9%	-9%	-9%
2012/13 taxbase after discounts (Band Ds)	45,731	40,687	51,897	45,483	38,007	221,805	221,805	221,805
Band D tax including parishes £	204.28	267.05	191.43	177.03	140.90	1161.71	154.30	
Reduction in council tax income before inflation £m	-0.970	-1.722	-0.719	-0.636	-0.448	-25.233	-3.351	-33.078
Add 1.5% increase in claimants to above figure £m	-0.984	-1.747	-0.730	-0.645	-0.455	-25.611	-3.402	-33.574
Grant funding £m	0.886	1.559	0.671	0.578	0.416	23.112	3.070	30.292
Savings target £m	-0.098	-0.188	-0.059	-0.067	-0.039	-2.499	-0.332	-3.282
Existing cost of discounts (£k)								
Second Homes (10%)	47	94	74	59	115			388
Class L - Repossessed houses	22	21	17	16	14			89
Class A - Unoccupied, require or undergoing major repair	114	286	268	146	143			957
Class C - Unoccupied and unfurnished	861	707	734	688	715			3,705
Total	1,044	1,108	1,092	908	986			5,138
Share of Countywide total	20%	22%	21%	18%	19%			100%
Options illustrating possible changes (£k)								
Option 1								
25% discount for Class A (repairs) and 25% for Class C (unfurnished and unoccupied)								
No discounts for Second homes or Class L Repossessed property								
Target at authority level	-98	-188	-59	-67	-39	-2,499	-332	-3,282
Extra council tax raised	104	145	98	79	71	2,920	388	3,805
Net effect (- shortfall) or (+ surplus)	5	-43	40	11	33	421	56	523
Transitional Relief Grant		42						

RISK REGISTER

No.	Risk Description Link to Corporate Objectives	Gross Risk		Cause of Risk	Mitigation	Net Risk		Further Management of Risk: Transfer/Accept/Reduce/Av oid	
		I	P			I	P	Action: Reduce Owner: :	Outcome required:
1.	Challenge to consultation process	3	3	Community and stakeholders concerned about proposals	Validation received by Legal Team. Major precepting authorities involved from the beginning of the process. Wide range of community and stakeholders able to take part following joint advert and using on-line functionality. As proposed scheme replicates existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme shorter consultation period justified.	2	2	Head of Customer Services	Robust consultation process established.
2.	Unforeseen budget pressure	3	3	Increase in the number of residents successfully claiming Local Council Tax Benefit	Adequate financial contingency provided As proposed scheme replicates existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme likelihood of unforeseen increase in claim volume is reduced.	2	2	Head of Customer Services Head of Finance	Scheme delivered within budget.
3.	Difficulty in collecting council tax	3	3	Changes to exemptions and discounts levels may result in small Council Tax Bills	Ensure discounts and exemptions are set at a level where likely charges are large enough to warrant the costs incurred in collection.	2	2	Head of Customer Services Head of Finance	Council Tax collection performance meets target.

4.	Income projected from changes to discounts and exemptions levels is not realized as customers claim alternative discounts or exemptions	3	3	Change in customer behaviour, for example there could be more single person discount applications if there is no longer a second home discount.	Ensure accurate calculation of council tax base calculation. Monitor and review position and adjust council tax base calculations for future years as required.	2	2	Head of Finance	Robust council tax base calculation.
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EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Initial screening EqIA template

1. Which group (s) of people has been identified as being disadvantaged by your proposals? What are the equality impacts?

None – the draft Council Tax Support Scheme is to replicate the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme and avoid adverse impacts.

2. In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your current or proposed new or changed policy, strategy, procedure, project or service to minimise or eliminate the adverse equality impacts?

Please provide further details of the proposed actions, timetable for making the changes and the person(s) responsible for making the changes on the resultant action plan

The proposed draft scheme replicates the provisions of the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme, and as a consequence will negate any adverse equality impacts.

3. Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

Please note that you are required to involve disabled people in decisions that impact on them

A joint approach to consultation has been conducted across the County. Each district has carried out a postal survey with a representative sample of 500 council tax payers. The survey has also been made available on-line for other residents who may wish to respond and for stakeholders also invited to participate.

The consultation was carried out between 27th August and 5th October. As there

is no change proposed to the existing Council Tax Benefit Scheme, a 6 week period of consultation is considered adequate.

A joint media release has ensured messages are consistent, with each authority having their own member statements included.

4. Can the adverse impacts you identified during the initial screening be justified without making any adjustments to the existing or new policy, strategy, procedure, project or service?

Please set out the basis on which you justify making no adjustments

Not applicable as there are no adverse impacts.

5. You are legally required to monitor and review the proposed changes after implementation to check they work as planned and to screen for unexpected equality impacts.

Please provide details of how you will monitor/evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place

The Council Tax Support Scheme will be reviewed each year. If changes are proposed residents will be canvassed for their views.

In addition, the County and Oxfordshire districts will be meeting regularly during the year to monitor the impact of the scheme administratively and financially.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA: Helen Bishop

Role: Head of Customer Services

Date: 12th October 2012

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To: City Executive Board.

Date: 23rd November 2012.

**Report of: Executive Director, Community Services and Executive
Director, City Regeneration.**

Title of Report: Tenant and Resident Involvement Review.

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To recommend a new strategy for involvement that will achieve best practice, meet regulatory requirements and the aspirations of tenants. This follows a review of current involvement of tenants/leaseholders in Oxford City Council by the Tenant Participation and Advisory Service (TPAS).

Key decision No

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons

**Policy Framework: Corporate Priorities –
Strong and Active Communities and Meeting
Housing Need.**

Recommendation(s):

- 1. To approve the proposed Tenant and Resident Involvement strategy 'Keeping Customers and Communities at the Heart of what we do'**
- 2. To approve the action plan for implementation.**

Appendices to report –

Appendix 1: Regulatory Standards

Appendix 2: Results of consultation with Tenants/Leaseholders July 2012

Appendix 3: Keeping Customers and Communities at the Heart of What We Do

Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 5: Risk register

General Background

1. The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) were commissioned in March 2012 by Oxford City Council to review its Involvement Strategy in order to ensure a more outcome focused approach that provides a link for residents' aspirations straight into the Corporate Objectives.
2. As one of the first organisations to specialise in tenant and resident involvement at a national level, TPAS aim to join up government policy with front-line service delivery and grassroots tenants' groups. The TPAS vision is "Connecting People to achieve great communities" and this vision is stringently applied to their work with tenants and landlords nationally.
3. The objective was that with both the changes in the Government regulatory frame work and the organisational changes for the Housing Service within the City Council, the Tenant and Leaseholder Compact 2007 needed to be reviewed and a new involvement strategy needed to be developed and implemented.

Regulatory Background

4. Part of the context for this review of tenant and resident involvement is the new system for the regulation of social housing introduced in 2010 and since revised to take effect from April 2012.

The original six national standards are now known as either consumer standards or economic standards. Consumer standards are to do with all the housing services received by residents and applicants for housing.

Changes to consumer standards from the 2010 framework relevant to this review include the cross cutting:

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard with:

- a greater focus on local mechanisms to resolve complaints and disputes
- an increased scope for more tenant involvement in repairs and maintenance
- retained principles of 'local offers' and annual reporting to tenants

5. The principle of co-regulation means;

"Boards and councillors who govern providers' service delivery are responsible for meeting the standards and being transparent and accountable for their organisation's delivery of its social housing objectives."

The co-regulatory principles underpin the regulatory approach. Registered providers are required to meet the relevant standards. It is for providers to support tenants both to shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold boards and councillors to account. In cases where breach or potential

breach of a consumer standard leads to risk of serious detriment to tenants, the regulator may intervene.

6. Co-regulation is different to the previous system of regulation in how it defines the roles of each of the parties involved in it. Under co-regulation, the role of the Housing Regulator is to set clear, outcome-related¹ standards for social housing. On consumer standards, the role of a Registered Provider and its residents is then to work together to achieve the required housing service standards.

The Regulatory Framework sets out *six general principles*, which are relevant to this review:

- Boards and Councillors are responsible and accountable for delivering their organisation’s social housing objectives
 - Registered Providers must meet the applicable regulatory standards
 - Transparency and accountability is central to co-regulation
 - Tenants should have opportunities to shape service delivery and to hold the responsive Board or Councillors to account (including having “the ability to scrutinise their provider’s performance, identify areas for improvement and influence future delivery”)
 - A Registered Provider should understand the particular needs of its tenants (its “approaches to management and service delivery must incorporate and demonstrate principles of equality and diversity”)
 - Value for money goes to the heart of how a Registered Provider ensures current and future delivery of its objectives
7. The specific requirements of the Regulatory Standards that are most relevant to this review of tenant and resident involvement at Oxford City Council are set out in the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard – with separate standards for customer service, choice and complaints and understanding and responding to diverse needs. The detail of the Regulatory Standards is included in Appendix 1.
 8. The new Tenant and Resident Involvement Strategy will be aligned with the TPAS Landlord Accreditation framework and the Terms of Reference for the new Strategy were that it:
 - Meets Regulatory and statutory requirements following recent changes.
 - Meets tenant and resident priorities and needs, utilising current information held from previous consultation and feedback obtained from consultation during July/August 2012
 - Is benchmarked with best practice
 - Is aligned with the TPAS Resident Involvement Quality Standards.
 - Should tenant led scrutiny be developed as recommended then this will be aligned with the Quality Assured Scrutiny Standards

¹ Outcome-related means the standards are concerned with results, not with setting out in detail what processes have to be followed to achieve these results

(developed by TPAS, Chartered Institute of Housing and Housemark).

- Meets the aspirations of Oxford City Council;;
 - A simple structure which through implementation builds stronger relationships between residents and Oxford City Council
 - Adaptable to the reorganisation of the Housing Service,
 - To provide a route for tenants to be part of the Governance structure
 - To review accessibility of tenants to resources e.g. tenant resource centre at Horspath Road.
 - Ensure involvement is the vehicle to provide for real influence for tenants and leaseholders.
 - Enables broad engagement opportunities across all demographics and geographical areas of the City.
 - Is a clear recognition that tenants and leaseholders exist as residents in areas of mixed tenure and problem solving or the driving of initiatives cannot always be delivered successfully within narrowly defined groups.
 - Will enable engagement opportunities that are imaginative and varied allowing tenants, residents and leaseholders to be involved as much or as little as they wish and in ways that suit their needs and the needs of the task in hand.
 - Proper thought and consideration of the lead in times for tenants, residents and leaseholders to decide if they wish to or can be engaged in processes accompanied by good communications and networking to ensure that messages reach the widest audience.
 - Develop good training, support opportunities and encouragement to the widest audience.
 - Encouragement and support for the setting of local engagement structures based in communities and operated by communities.
 - Ensure that structures do not allow for one group, issue or process to be or become dominant and provide structures that are not hierarchical or get in the way of individuals or groups expressing their views clearly to those managing services or allocating resources.
 - Enables opportunities for tenants, residents and leaseholders to see on a regular basis the details of the difference that has been made as a result of their engagement.
 - Enables transparency in the operation and outcomes of the service with tenants, residents and leaseholder requests and questions being answered in a timely fashion.
 - Confirms clear commitments from all to keep the strategy and more importantly the influence it delivers fresh, healthy and in line with the requirements of all.
 - Enables effective Tenant Scrutiny arrangements to be actively encouraged and supported.

9. The initial phase of the project was to review Tenant and Resident Involvement arrangements and Phase 2 of the project will be to develop the Tenants Scrutiny of Housing services.

TPAS programme of work

10. An initial review was carried out by TPAS during March/April 2012. It involved:
 - Reading through documentation relating to tenant and resident involvement
 - Reading through tenant and resident feedback from December 2011 and March 2012 Local Offer consultations
 - Meeting both Tenant and Resident Involvement & Equalities officers in post over the period of the review
 - Meeting the Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager, Landlord Services Manager, Principal Scrutiny Officer, Equalities Manager and Corporate Director for Housing.
 - Meeting with the Involvement Monitoring Group (IMP) and meeting with the Chair and Vice-Chair.
 - Attendance at Housing Scrutiny Panel, Landlord Services Board and also Local Offers workshop.
11. As a key part of this project TPAS felt it important to work with a key group of tenants, residents and officers. It was agreed to establish this group at the Landlord Services Board on 18 April 2012. The aim of this group being:
 - To help design the consultation programme with the wider community
 - To help shape a final tenant and resident involvement strategy ready for approval

TPAS supports the principles of giving every eligible tenant and resident opportunities to put themselves forward. It was important that, clear information was provided to tenants and residents, setting out the role, expectations, limitations, and available support and development opportunities for successful candidates. It was agreed to invite tenants from the Involvement database to apply to be part of the Steering Group and a key part of the review.

The final Steering Group would consist of 4 members of staff and 4 tenants/leaseholders with TPAS as Independent Chair. The first meeting was held on 30th April 2012 and 5 further meetings were held after this.

Applicants were interviewed against the person specification by a TPAS lead Associate, ensuring independence, alongside the Equalities and Diversity Officer for Oxford, which was requested by the Involvement Monitoring Panel (IMP). Four Tenants were recruited.

The Officers on the Steering Group were: Communities & Neighbourhoods Manager, Landlord Services Manager, Equalities & Diversity Officer and the Principal Scrutiny Officer.

The Tenants and Officers steering group worked with TPAS to:

- Design the consultation
- Consider its findings
- Consider the draft strategy and structure
- Consider its' future role for strategy implementation

Current Involvement

12. The tenant and resident involvement structure that is current at Oxford City Council since the last TPAS desktop review in 2007, is the Involvement Monitoring Panel (IMP) which has been in operation since 2004. Tenants and Leaseholders have been recruited (co-opted from IMP) to a non voting resident place at the Housing Scrutiny Committee level and a place on the Landlord Services Board.

Currently IMP meet monthly to:

- Assist in the management of the tenant and leaseholder resource centre
- Appoint representatives onto the Housing Scrutiny Panel and Landlord Services Board
- To make recommendations on budget issues
- To work with OCC and others for the benefit of all tenants and leaseholders
- To work towards involving more tenants and leaseholders
- To help solve any complaints

Current membership is 9 with 7 vacant seats.

13. Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA) are groups who represent a defined area, often a neighbourhood street or flats, and are usually made up of members who are residents, tenants and leaseholders. These groups help drive changes and improvements to the local area. There are 8 currently in operation. These groups are supported by a small grant to assist in their running.
14. The OCC Tenant Involvement Officers support the development and involvement of residents, tenants and leaseholders through:
- Attending and supporting TRA meetings and activities
 - Organising focus groups, events, workshops e.g. local offers, Starcatchers (tenants talent show), roadshows
 - Training – IT skills, governance (chairing skills), money matters
 - Youth initiatives
 - Estate Walkabouts and supporting local initiatives e.g. cleaner, greener campaigns
 - Supporting new tenants groups – e.g. sheltered housing

- Mystery shopping – recruiting and training tenants and residents
 - Supporting applications to fund environmental and security projects from the environmental improvement budget
15. The Tenants Resource Centre is at Horspath Road and has facilities for tenants to use including a meeting room, an IT suite, photocopying facilities. Officers provide direct support for two sessions per week. Current data shows that from April – September 2012 only 21 tenants visits were recorded.

Analysis of current involvement

16. TPAS analysed the current involvement of tenants/leaseholders and residents. They concluded that while there are some real strengths with some aspects of OCC involvement of tenants, residents and leaseholders, key gaps have emerged from this review and are addressed below

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed and skilled core group of residents and staff • Corporate buy in to really improve opportunities for resident involvement • Coherence/consistency between strategy and activities on paper • Value for Money awareness • Equality & Diversity awareness • Already linked into external projects/training/other stakeholders • Some Residents, predominately leaseholders already have experience of scrutiny-related activities • Very strong community development work- area based forums, neighbourhood partnerships tackling local issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-regulation issues and clear gaps need to be strengthened to meet regulatory requirements • Capacity issue around embracing and developing Tenant and Resident Leadership • Too few young/ working residents involved, lack of involvement from some key areas • Limited use of social media as an alternative engagement technique • Communication generally landlord to resident, not enough resident to resident • Slim resident involvement structure in place which need to be expanded to include resident led scrutiny and complaints and locality based opportunities • Stronger basics to be put in place such as feedback on key issues to residents where OCC can demonstrate resident influence • Lack of clear route to decision making process • Tenants Resource Centre not well used and needs to be

	reviewed in terms of value for money.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement is seen as a driver for improvement • To develop Resident-led scrutiny and separate from member led scrutiny • A good start on development of Local Offers and an opportunity here to link to local groups • Make roadshows even better - overcome geography, put residents in touch with one another • New residents coming forward as a result of recent roadshows and outreach activities by Officers • A developing Involvement database • To develop more informal and creative involvement methods by way of a toolbox • Build up more diversity data to guide involvement activity • Develop a forum for Leaseholder Voice as an interest group • Develop mystery shopping further with clear links to service improvement as a result 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A real sense of issues around trust between some tenants and OCC. • A model Resident Involvement structure including governance documents must be developed as part of this review- issues that have been the focus of recent meetings can be avoided in the future with key documentation in place • Lack of role specification for resident roles on OCC Boards - need to develop clear and distinct roles • Need to ensure no duplication in roles • Main IMP group members sitting on other key groups highlights lack of capacity among other residents or lack of awareness of roles and responsibilities • Unresolved tensions over future direction of tenant scrutiny and concern over link to Scrutiny Committees • Residents on current structures over-burdened by too many demands • A perception that Resident led scrutiny should be added to member led scrutiny

Consultation

17. There have been a number of key events involving tenants, residents and leaseholders:

(i) Tenant and Leaseholder road shows December 2011

The events were held across 5 areas of the city;

- Wood Farm, Barton, Rose Hill, Blackbird Leys, Town Hall

Overall 100 tenants attended with 50 completed surveys. Feedback from those residents who attended have been taken into account and for those who indicated that they were interested in getting more involved they have been added to the involvement database. The key findings were:

- For OCC to improve how they publicise future involvement events and to hold more local events using a range of different methods,
- Tenants and residents are interested in monitoring and reviewing housing services with a number of residents who want to be involved in the future recruited.
- Tenants and residents wanted more training
- For OCC to provide a flexible and supportive approach to tenants and residents who want to be involved and key priorities are that involvement should be;
 - Local
 - Relevant
 - Innovative
 - Collaborative
 - Representative

(ii) Summary of Findings from Local Offer consultation event March 2012.

22 Tenants and residents attended and as a result OCC Local Offers were drafted for further development, all offers containing a number of sub offers under each heading;

The quality of your home
Doing repairs to your home
Rents and Service charges
Maintaining Communal areas
Dealing with ASB
Customer Service
Financial Management
Involvement

The final Local Offers were sent to all Tenants and Residents for comment and the final version agreed.

18. Through the TPAS steering group a consultation survey was developed and designed to go to all tenants, residents and leaseholders. This was to ascertain views on priorities, the level of interest in getting more involved and how they wanted to be consulted/involved in housing and other issues.
19. It was a postal survey but was also made available online. The consultation was approved by the OCC consultation project board.
20. The survey was issued to all Oxford City Council tenant and leasehold households (8367) in June/July 2012.

21. A total of 622 responses were completed and returned to TPAS for analysis. This represented a 7.4% response rate. A further 14 were completed online. The sample (636 respondents) is 7.6 % total response rate subject to a maximum standard error of 3.7% at 95% confidence level. Therefore, we can be 95% confident that responses are representative of the total population (8367 households), to within 3.7% of the percentages reported. The results are included as Appendix 2.

Results and way forward

22. From all the background data, desktop research and interviews/meetings attended by TPAS and the consultation carried out over the last 12 months, a revised strategy has been developed by TPAS for consideration.

The key drivers in developing this strategy have been:

- Evolving internal structures and approach
- Tenant and resident aspirations for involvement and influence
- Changing external regulation
- TPAS accreditation for Resident Involvement Quality

23. The strategy is included as Appendix 3: Keeping Customers and Communities at the Heart of What We Do

The term '**Resident**' is used throughout the new strategy to represent tenants, leaseholders, advocates or any other customer of our services. Many areas of the City have mixed tenure i.e. OCC housing, Housing Associations, private, rented. Residents have many similar needs related to the place where they live e.g. community safety, environmental issues and so these will be addressed by working with local residents. Where a particular item is only relevant to a specific client group they will be referred to as such (e.g. 'tenants' or 'leaseholders').

The strategy recognises that Oxford is made up of many diverse communities and commits to ensuring that all tenants, residents and leaseholders have equality of access and are able to have a say if they want to. We know that barriers exist which prevent people from becoming involved and this leads to certain groups being under-represented in involvement activities. The Choice working group will therefore develop and monitor a 'need to reach strategy' aimed at broadening the diversity of involvement and ensuring that those underrepresented through involvement have opportunities to influence what we do (this could involve developing specific 'community of interest groups', subject to demand).

24. The strategy was developed by TPAS through
- Analysis of the consultation
 - Considering a number of best practise examples (co-regulation)
 - Developing an approach for Oxford that:
 - Embeds a culture of involvement

- Provides a fully flexible approach for residents
- Limits the time asked of residents
- Delivers real outcomes in terms of service improvement and value for money

25. The key aspects of the strategy are:

The establishment of an independent scrutiny panel that will:

- Work on behalf of all Tenants and Leaseholders of Oxford City Council
- Provide an independent check of the services provided by Oxford City Council
- Challenge the delivery of services and the performance, making recommendations for improvements in:
 - service delivery; performance and efficiency; resident satisfaction

There will be standard task teams which will:

- Consist of a database of interested tenants and residents who have expressed interest in a specific area of service
- Operate on a 'task and finish' basis, utilising the Tool Box
- Be the overall responsibility of the relevant Housing Board Member who will set targets to involve residents in:
 - Decision-making; Shaping and developing services; Scrutinising and monitoring performance; Complaints
- Provide opportunities for:
 - Information; Consultation; Participation; Empowerment

Local Involvement:

The fully flexible approach to involvement through the new structure ensures that tenants, residents and leaseholders can be involved to the degree and level they choose, accessing involvement opportunities that influence decisions affecting all tenants or those which focus more locally on neighbourhood decision-making. The strategy seeks to build on the work undertaken to develop local offers by engaging with tenants and residents at neighbourhood level to develop and agree neighbourhood involvement plans. These plans will focus on what is most important to local people and provide opportunities (using the tool box activities) for tenants, residents and leaseholders to exercise meaningful influence over local services.

26. A detailed action plan is included as part of the Tenants and Residents Involvement Strategy and these actions have been designed by TPAS to enable Oxford City Council to achieve the Landlord Accreditation of which there are 27 units containing 99 standards.

The initial tasks will be:

Date	Actions
December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish strategy and summary document

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit tenants/leaseholders to an Involvement and Empowerment task team to establish the tenant steering group chaired by TPAS to develop approach to tenant led scrutiny • Create a Local Offers task team led by Landlord Service Manager to review and monitor current local offer and to provide performance monitoring across the service • End current structures for tenants/leaseholders involvement on a city-wide basis • Plan launch event for recruiting to standard task teams • Meet with relevant Heads of Service to agree task teams and relevant input • Review Tenants Resource Centre and explore alternatives to supporting tenants
January/February 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress tenant scrutiny work through task team • Publish toolbox of activities and promote to tenants and residents to ensure up to date database • Set up task teams for Anti-Social Behaviour and Repairs • Training for tenants and residents interested in tenant-led scrutiny
March/April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake Tenant and Resident Involvement roadshows promoting strategy and involvement activities • Set up tenant-led scrutiny panel

27. Implementation will involve a focussed programme of activities led by Housing Landlord Services but supported by Communities and Neighbourhoods. TPAS will continue to support phase 2 of the project to deliver tenant scrutiny. It is also proposed to appoint to a post for a year to drive and coordinate implementation and ensure delivery. It should be noted that success is also dependent on all front-line services engaging with the new arrangements. Funding has been identified from the HRA to support delivery.

28. Climate change / environmental impact

Throughout the strategy action plan we will make sure that actions take account of Oxford City Councils commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.

29. Equalities impact - included as Appendix 4.

30. Financial implications

The proposed activities documented in the report can be funded by re-alignment of existing resources to include support for the Independent Scrutiny Panel. Funding of the temporary post -part year (January 2013 - March 2013) can be contained within the existing 2012-13 Budget.

There is flexibility of approach to the 2013-14 Budget and it is envisaged that the part year funding (April 2013 - January 2014) for the temporary post can be found by re-aligning existing resources.

31. Legal implications

Regulatory requirements for registered providers of social housing are set out by the Tenant Services Authority in its Regulatory Framework for Social Housing which came into effect in April 2010.

Responsibility for regulating social housing passed to the Homes and Communities Agency in April 2012. The strategy is based on the principle of co-regulation where there is a clear role for tenants to scrutinise performance.

32. Level of risk - a risk register is appended as Appendix 5.

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APPENDIX 1

TPAS summary of regulatory standards and implementation

1a. Customer Service and Choice

Required outcomes for Customer service, choice and complaints are such that Registered providers shall:

- Provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly

The standard for *customer service, choice and complaints* lies behind the need for Oxford City Council to communicate clearly with its residents about the housing services it offers and its performance in delivering them.

The specific expectations are for Oxford City Council to provide timely, clear information on:

- how residents can access services
- the standards of housing services
- performance against those standards
- the service choices available
- progress of any repairs work
- how residents can provide feedback
- landlord and residents' responsibilities
- arrangements for resident involvement and scrutiny

- how to complain and service standards for responding

1b. Involvement and empowerment

Required outcomes are for Involvement and Empowerment are such that Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- the formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and strategic priorities
- the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- the management of their homes, where applicable
- the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and
- agreeing local offers for service delivery

The specific expectations are for Oxford City Council to support their tenants to develop and implement opportunities for involvement and empowerment, including;

- supporting their tenants to exercise their Right to Manage or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate
- supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them
- the provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must include the publication of an annual report which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets, and
- providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved

Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the scope of local offers for service delivery. This shall include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis. Registered providers shall consult with tenants, setting out clearly the costs and benefits of relevant options, if they are proposing to change their landlord or when proposing a significant change in their management arrangements. Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.

1c. Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Oxford City Council will have to achieve the required outcomes to:

- treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs

The specific expectation for *understanding and responding to diverse needs* sets the framework for Oxford City Council's work on equalities. Oxford has to show how it responds to needs in providing services and communicating with its residents

2. Implementing the standards

The Regulatory Standard stops short of describing exactly how a particular Registered Provider should put any of this into practice. That is to say, it describes what should be achieved as a result of working within the framework it creates, without prescribing how it should be done. So there is a great deal of leeway for negotiation and innovation to set up practical arrangements to suit different circumstances, *as long as they are in line with the principles and standards summarised above.*

For example, the Regulatory Standard does not define what groups can or can't be called a Tenants Panel. A project is currently underway hosted by the National Tenants Organisation (NTO) to identify good practice around Tenants Panels.

The final report was published at the end of March¹, and in answering a question as to whether residents who weren't tenants could be members of Tenants Panels, the project co-ordinator has said the following:

Our approach has been to be entirely non-prescriptive saying that it is down to tenants (by which we mean all of a landlord's service users) working with their landlords to decide how their Tenant Panels should be set up. We are also saying that the reason to involve residents is to improve the landlord business and that the critical issue behind all resident involvement is outcomes - so the key question that needs to be asked in this case is - will involving non-tenants in Tenant Panels lead to good outcomes for service users?... It is down to tenants and landlords to work out this kind of detail - this is the way it should be.

In at least one Housing Association currently working with residents on the design of its tenant scrutiny system, residents have decided that independent specialists should be invited onto the scrutiny panel to add skills, just as they might on the Board. In a similar vein, Gateshead ALMO, which manages the borough's council housing, has advertised for an independent mentor for its residents' scrutiny panel.

That having been said, there is an emerging consensus that Tenant Panels are likely to have the following characteristics:

- Designed in discussion with residents, with residents having the final choice between feasible options
- Resident Chair, or Chair appointed by residents
- Resident majority
- Freedom to choose what to scrutinise, including services, governance and strategic priorities
- Direct relationship with the Board
- Person specs, codes of conduct, training and induction applying to all members
- Recruitment of resident scrutineers from the whole resident body, not just residents who are already involved
- With a Community Call for Action or Resident Trigger to allow any customer to ask for an issue to be scrutinised

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has referred to a "good scrutiny cycle" as offering a framework for developing tenant scrutiny:

"critical" friend challenge → enables the voice of consumers to be heard → is carried out by independent-minded scrutineers who own and lead the process → leading to service improvement

Meanwhile, the scrutiny partnership set up in 2011 between TPAS, CIH and Housemark refers again to principles rather than specific models to define what tenant scrutiny is.

¹ Tenant Panels: Options for Accountability written by Nic Bliss & Blase Lambert and published by The National Tenants Organisation www.nationaltenants.org

For this partnership, the hallmarks of genuine tenant scrutiny are that it should have:

- Formality
- Independence
- Power

As well as allowing scope for local variation in how resident scrutiny develops in practice, it is useful to remember that this form of co-regulation is still in its early days. A leading group of 10 social landlords are “co-regulatory champions”, setting the pace nationally. Their experiences have been described in two recent publications from the Centre for Public Scrutiny², soon to include a set of *Top Tips for Tenants* as well. Oxford City Council and its residents are therefore in a good position to learn from the best of what has already taken place and make up ground on these leaders.

Two quotes from the Centre for Public Scrutiny’s case studies offer useful advice at this early stage:

Wherry Housing Association’s top tip: “Give yourself plenty of time. There may be pressure to get results quickly. However, if it’s to truly make a difference it needs time for those involved to truly understand what’s expected of them and how they might go achieving it. Training and support is essential.”

Wirral Partnership Home’s top tip: “...ensure that Board and Executive Management Team are regularly updated and fully endorse co-regulation...”

Various additional statutory and other initiatives have developed over the years in order to ensure tenants are empowered;
In summary these are;

- Tenants Charter 1980 – Rights to buy, security of tenure
- Housing Act 1985 – various rights including the right to be consulted
- Housing Act 1985 section 27AB / inserte3d by section 132 of Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 -1994 DCL Circular - Right to Manage/TMOs
- 1988 Local Government Act and Compulsory Competitive tendering-monitoring panels
- 1999 introduction of Tenant Compacts
- Greater recognition of tenant and resident associations, federations
- Growing number of tenants on Boards
- Greater involvement in stock transfer associations
- Tenant owned Housing Associations
- Wider community empowerment requirements through the Sustainable Communities Act 2007

² www.CfPS.org.uk *Developing tenant scrutiny and co-regulation in social housing & Stories in tenant scrutiny and co-regulation in social housing*

TPAS Consultation: Initial Results

Introduction/Methodology

A postal survey was issued to all Oxford City Council tenant and leasehold households (8367). In total of 622 responses were completed and returned to TPAS, representing a 7.4% response rate. A further 14 were completed online. The sample (636 respondents) is 7.6% total response rate subject to a maximum standard error of 3.7% at 95% confidence level. Therefore, we can be 95% confident that responses are representative of the total population (8367 households), to within 3.7% of the percentages reported.

1. Are you a:

Tenant: 95.3%

Leaseholder: 4.5%

Other: 0.2%

Total respondents: 618

2. Please provide the first four letters/numbers of your postcode e.g. OX1 1

Postcodes were provided, no analysis has yet been completed.

3. Thinking about where you live, what do you think are the most important thing to change or improve?

Comments were provided in 389 responses. A brief summary of the key points raised has been noted on the spread sheet in each case. Little analysis has taken place though it is clear that recurring themes include (but are not limited to): Parking, Roads & Pathways, Traffic, Rubbish & Litter, Gardens & Trees, Students, ASB and Repairs/Improvements

4. Oxford City Council's Housing Service provides help with finding a home and re-housing, repairs to homes, housing for people who need additional support and community facilities. Would you like to have more of a say in how you could get more involved in the work that we do?

Yes: 27.6% (170 respondents)

No: 50.2%

I didn't know I could have a say: 22.2% (137 respondents)

Total respondents: 616

5. **(a) Which of these statements most closely matches how you think about getting involved? (please tick 1 box)**

NB: A number of respondents ticked more than 1 box the percentage reported is taken against the total number of respondents (628) and will therefore total in excess of 100%.

I don't want to get involved:	31.1% (195)
I don't believe my views will be heard:	11.6% (73)
I just want to know what's going on:	30.4% (191)
I want to get involved in improving my local area:	10.4% (65)
I want to get involved in improving housing services for all:	8.1% (51)
I don't like meetings but if there was another way of getting things done, I'd be interested in finding out more:	16.9% (105)

5. **(b) How much time could you give each month to get involved? (please tick 1 box)**

NB: A number of respondents ticked more than 1 box the percentage reported is taken against the total number of respondents (615) and will therefore total in excess of 100%.

Not applicable:	58.7% (361)
I can spare a few minutes each month, but no more:	12.0% (74)
I can spare a couple of hours a month, but no more:	17.9% (110)
I can spare a couple of hours or more each month:	12.2% (75)

6. What services or issues would you most like to comment on or be more involved in at Oxford City Council (tick all that apply)

NB: it is of more value to present the findings as a numerical value. The figures below relate to those that ticked (said yes) against each service area/issue

	I would like to comment on	I would like to be more involved
Repairs:	203	65
Re-housing:	132	62
Improvements/major works:	187	79
How OCC Communicates:	103	76
Green issues:	129	71
How homes are let:	125	68
ASB:	203	81
How your money is spent:	113	78
Service charges:	105	49
Rent levels:	116	53
Rent collection:	74	41
How OCC involves:	80	62
Older people's housing:	137	75
Performance:	94	42
Housing Support:	105	78
Youth facilities:	105	79
Community facilities:	141	81

7. How would you like to be more involved in improving services? (tick all that apply)

NB: it is of more value to present the findings as a numerical value. The figures below relate to those that ticked (said yes) against each involvement method.

By contacting another tenant to act on your behalf:	45
Through a panel or group representing the area:	136
Through a city-wide panel/group:	57
By looking in close detail at performance and suggesting improvements:	89
By looking in close detail at specific services:	146
By completing a questionnaire/survey:	284
By providing feedback through the website/online forum:	96
By text message/over the telephone:	87
Through reading leaflets/newsletters:	174
By making complaints:	75
By posing as a customer (Mystery Shopping):	88
By attending social activities:	80
By attending an annual tenants & leaseholder conference:	76
Other:	14

8. Would you like someone to contact you to discuss your answers and what Oxford City Council Housing plans to do next?

168 respondents said they would like further contact. House numbers and postcodes were noted for each (where they were provided) and logged on the spread sheet. A number of respondents specified their preferred method of contact, which was also noted.

Equal opportunities monitoring (postal questionnaire only):

Gender: Male: 37.8% (235) Female: 55.3% (344) Spoilt/PNS/Blank: 6.9% (43)

Age: 16-19: 0.2% (1)
20-29: 4.3% (27)
30-39: 9.0% (56)
40-49: 15.4% (96)
50-59: 18.8% (117)
60-64: 10.6% (66)
65+: 33.3% (207)
Spoilt/PNS/Blank: 8.4% (52)

Disability: Yes: 35.2% (219)
No: 51.0% (317)
Spoilt/PNS/Blank: 13.8% (86)

Ethnicity:

Bangladeshi:	0.6% (4)
Indian:	0.6% (4)
Pakistani:	1.7% (11)
Other Asian:	1% (6)
Black African:	1% (6)
Black British:	0.2% (1)
Black Caribbean:	1.1% (7)
Black Other:	1% (6)
Mixed/Multiple:	1.9% (12)
White British:	76.3% (475)
White Irish:	2.4% (15)
White Other:	3.7% (23)
PNS/Blank:	8.4% (52)

Religion: Atheist/None: 10.9% (68)
Buddhist: 0.6% (4)
Christian: 52.7% (328)
Jewish: 0.2% (1)
Muslim: 4.3% (27)
Sikh: 0.2% (1)
Other: 4.3% (27)
Spoilt/PNS/Blank: 27.7% (166)

Sexual Orientation:	Bi-Sexual:	1.6% (10)
	Gay Man:	0.6% (4)
	Gay Woman:	0.2% (1)
	Heterosexual:	47.7% (297)
	Other:	1.3% (8)
	Spoilt/PNS/Blank:	48.6% (302)

Tenant and Resident Involvement Strategy

Keeping Customers & Communities at the heart of what we do.

Foreword

We are pleased to introduce our Tenant and Resident Involvement Strategy 2013-16 – Keeping Customers & Communities at the heart of what we do, which has been developed in partnership with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) in close consultation with residents.

Oxford City Council is committed to involving tenants and residents in improving services through widening the role that they have in:

- Decision-making
- Shaping and developing services
- Scrutinising and monitoring performance, challenging us to improve and holding us to account if we fail to do so and highlighting what is working well
- Complaints

This is why we have developed a new model of involvement, with a range of ways for you to get involved to the degree and level that you choose. We hope that the hundreds of you who expressed interest in involvement through the recent consultation will recognise where your feedback has influenced our approach, and that you will take the opportunities that we are developing to continue to influence and improve all that we do.



Councillor Scott Seamons
Oxford City Council's Executive Board Member for Housing

1. Introduction & Background to the Strategy

Oxford City Councils' Mission is: '**Building a world-class city for everyone**'. The Mission is underpinned by the following corporate priorities:

- A vibrant and sustainable economy
- Meeting housing need
- Strong and active communities
- Cleaner greener Oxford
- An efficient and effective council

A strong and effective approach to resident involvement and customer insight (what you tell us) can make a difference in each of the corporate priority areas and deliver real outcomes for residents in Oxford. Our approach is one of 'Keeping Customers and Communities at the Heart of What We Do'. This Strategy sets how we intend to do this.

The term '**Resident**' is used throughout this document to represent tenants, leaseholders, advocates or any other customer of our services. Where a particular item is only relevant to a specific client group they will be referred to as such (e.g. 'tenants' or 'leaseholders').

In terms of Resident Involvement, we mean:

- all of the activities and processes to help Oxford City Council to know what its' residents and communities want and need
- all the ways that residents can get involved, if they want to
- the systems for accountability and support

Gaining resident's views is vital for us to constantly enhance and improve services. The many benefits/outcomes of involvement can be seen through:

- improved services which better meet residents needs
- better equality of access to services by removing potential barriers
- increased value for money by considering the costs and benefits of what we do

- clarity around decision-making by seeking your views and explaining the decisions we make
- more effective scrutiny and monitoring of performance
- increased capacity, confidence and skills through the training and support that we offer
- improved community cohesion by helping communities to help themselves
- increased influence over quality of life in neighbourhoods and communities
- better staff/resident relationships

2. What Have We Learned

Residents from across the City took part in a postal and online consultation, designed through a Resident & Officer Steering Group. The results of this consultation have been used to develop this strategy.

You told us that:

- Half of you (50%) either wanted more of a say in the work that we do, or didn't know that you could have a say
- Many are interested in what is going on, with 19% specifically wanting to get involved in improving either their local area or housing services for all, and 17% want to get involved if we can find a way that doesn't mean lots of meetings
- 42% of you can spare anything from a few minutes to a couple of hours or more each month to get involved
- The top three service areas that you would like to comment on are:
 - Repairs and Anti-Social Behaviour (tied 1st) – 33%
 - Improvements & Major Works – 30%
- The top three service areas that you would like to have involvement in are:
 - Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Facilities (tied 1st) – 13%
 - Youth Facilities & Improvements & Major Works (tied 3rd) – 12.7%
- The majority of you (who would like to get involved) are more interested in informal opportunities such as completing surveys, reading leaflets and newsletters etc.

- A significant number of you are interested in looking in close detail at specific services (scrutiny) or being involved in a panel or group that represents your local area
- There is also healthy interest in using technology to get you involved (text, online) as well as using new methods of involvement such as mystery shopping, and social activities.

3. Aims of the Strategy

This Resident Involvement Strategy has five main aims, each with targets and milestones to be reached over the next three years.

These are:

- **We will ensure that there is a strategic commitment to involvement & empowerment**
 - We will communicate our aims and approach to resident involvement & empowerment and we will ensure that these aims are influenced by resident's priorities and aspirations and are clear about the scope of our approach
 - We will routinely review the impact and cost of Resident Involvement and identify outcomes in collaboration with residents
 - We will promote all aspects of Resident Involvement, including the principles of tenant management
- **We will ensure that there are a wide range of opportunities to be involved and influence what happens**
 - We will ensure that there are a broad and accessible range of involvement opportunities
 - We will provide easily accessible information that is developed in collaboration with residents
 - We will provide a range of opportunities for residents to exercise meaningful influence over our strategic direction/priorities
 - We will provide a range of opportunities for residents to exercise meaningful influence over local services
 - We will understand and respond to the diverse needs of residents

- **We will make better use of Resident Intelligence**
 - We will ensure that we capture meaningful intelligence from residents so that we have a clear view of our resident profile
 - We will use this information to influence our approach to Resident Involvement

- **We will deliver resident-led scrutiny and involvement that can demonstrate Value for Money for both the resident and the organisation**
 - We will involve residents in setting standards, performance indicators and targets and report on our performance
 - We will ensure that we develop robust processes to ensure our accountability to residents for services
 - We will measure impact and efficiency
 - We will support resident led scrutiny

- **We will provide training opportunities that will empower residents to be involved in improving communities, neighbourhoods and homes**
 - We will offer supporting and resource resident involvement & empowerment to ensure that resident skills are developed
 - We will embed an inclusive and accessible involvement culture across Oxford City Council ensuring that staff are aware of the role of resident involvement, have resident involvement targets, and are positive about resident involvement ensuring that staff are skilled in Resident Involvement
 - We will support and celebrate resident involvement

All targets and milestones associated with these aims will be monitored in partnership with residents and reviewed at least annually.

4. Resident Involvement & Regulation

Regulatory requirements for registered providers of social housing are set out by the Tenant Services Authority in its Regulatory Framework for Social Housing which came into effect in April 2010.

Responsibility for regulating social housing passed to the Homes and Communities Agency in April 2012. The framework is based on the principle of co-regulation where there is a clear role for tenants to scrutinise performance.

Oxford City Council's Housing Service is expected to support co-regulation by:

- Offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing related policies, and the delivery of housing resident services
- Consulting with tenants and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
- Providing tenants with a range of opportunities to scrutinise performance against all standards and in the development of the Annual Report
- Providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more actively involved.

Local Offer

Oxford City Council consulted widely with tenants and leaseholders to assess their priorities and service requirements. The results of this consultation created a set of 'Local Offers' promising certain levels of service across a range of services. Each resident involvement activity should support the service's commitment to these standards.

Additionally, specific standards were agreed in relation to involving you in how we manage and deliver the housing service. These are:

- We will fully support the development of a city wide tenant and resident involvement strategy, with opportunities to establish more Tenant and Resident Associations (TRA's) to

represent the views and experiences of tenants and residents.

- We will support, recognise and facilitate a city-wide tenant and resident structure to ensure the views of all tenant/resident groups are represented democratically in making decisions.
- We will work with tenant and resident representative groups, to agree future housing delivery at both a city-wide and local level.
- We will involve tenant and leaseholder representatives in monitoring and regulating our housing service
- We will publish an annual report to look at how we have performed over the year.

In addition to ensuring that the level of service promised in the 'Local Offers' document is met, the cost of delivering the service needs to be considered to ensure that tenant and leaseholders receive the maximum benefit from the available resources.

Localism Act

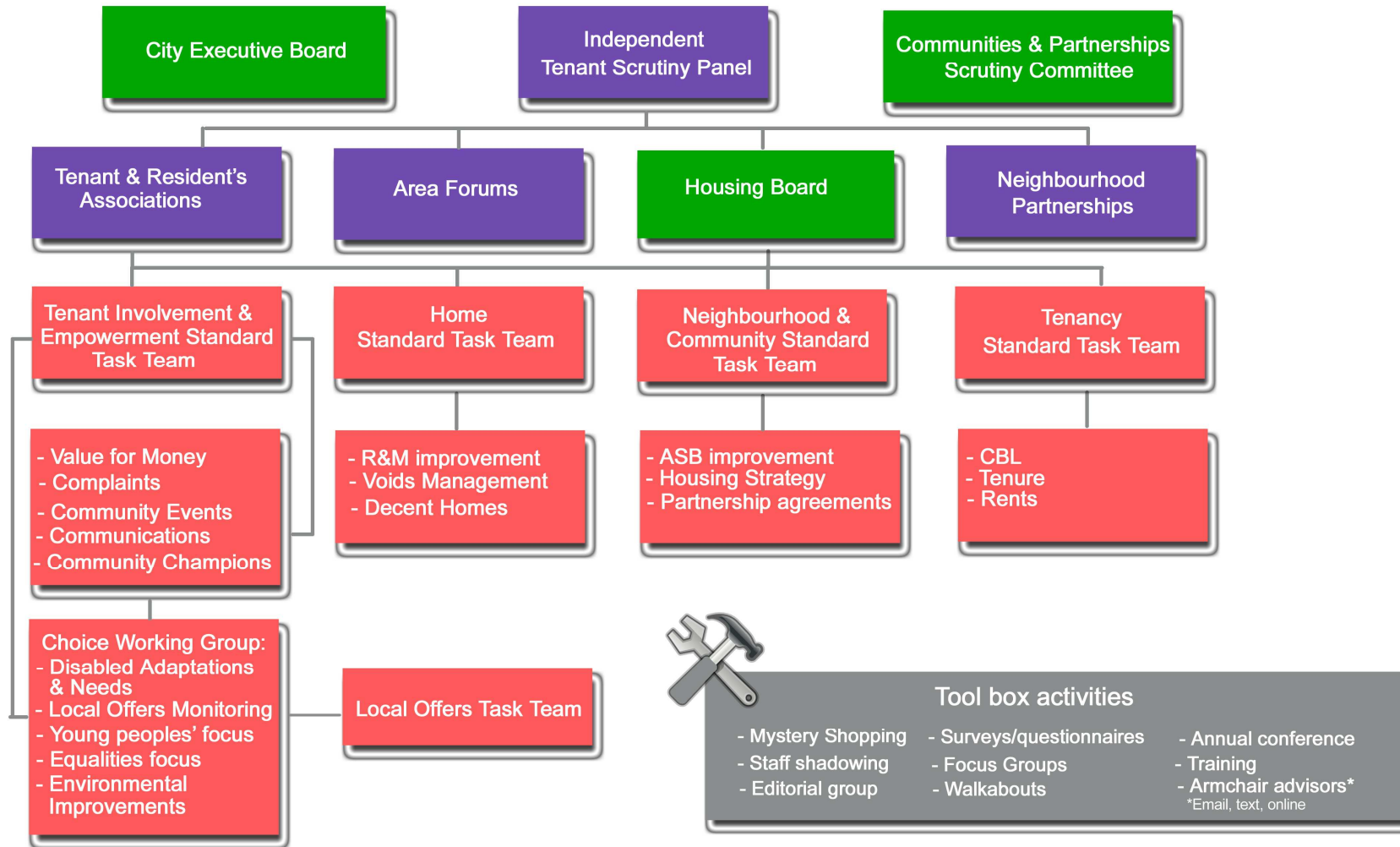
The Localism Act contains a requirement for a 'democratic filter' to be developed to resolve more complaints at a local level. This will involve giving power to tenant's panels, Councillors or MPs to resolve complaints before they are referred to the Ombudsman.

We will work with tenants and leaseholders to design this 'filter' and develop the terms under which it will work.

5. Resident Involvement Wheel



5. Resident Involvement Structure



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We Do: These activities will be undertaken by the Council, both elected members and staff in consultation with residents and subject to your influence.

You Recommend: These activities are those in which residents take the lead (tenants and leaseholders only in the case of the Independent tenant Scrutiny Panel). They require a high time commitment and specific knowledge, for which training and support is available.

You Say: These activities are undertaken in partnership with Council staff and provide opportunities for you to provide feedback and for your views to influence decisions and what happens next. They offer you the opportunity to be involved to the degree and level that you choose, including how much time you put in. Some activities such as Mystery Shopping require specific skills for which training and support is available.

Over the life of this strategy, we will:

- Develop this structure including all support documentation (terms of reference, codes of conduct etc.) and provide the support and resources required to ensure involvement effectively delivers the outcomes set out in section 1
- Promote involvement and effectively recruit to increase the numbers and broaden the diversity of those residents who are involved
- Assess the impact of our involvement activities and review the methods of involvement on an annual basis, focussing our time and resources on the most popular and effective and on developing new and innovative involvement opportunities to replace those which are proven not to work

Independent Tenant Scrutiny Panel

This Panel will work on behalf of all Tenants and Leaseholders of Oxford City Council to ensure that it provides excellent, customer focussed services and delivers value for money.

It will provide an independent check of the services provided by Oxford City Council and where needed challenge the delivery of services and the performance of the landlord, making recommendations for improvements in service delivery, performance and efficiency, and resident satisfaction.

The Independent Tenant Scrutiny Panel will utilise the feedback of residents from all other aspects of the Involvement Structure and will be accountable to all tenants and leaseholders.

Tenants & Residents Associations

Tenants and Residents Associations (TRA's) are independent organisations run for and by residents in a voluntary capacity. They aim to improve their local area and work with the Council and other agencies to improve services and community cohesion.

Subject to meeting agreed recognition criteria, we will provide support and resources to help TRA's effectively meet their aims.

Standards Task Teams

As part of the co-regulatory approach, the responsibility for regulating consumer standards (the services delivered to tenants and leaseholders) has passed to the Council and its tenants and leaseholders.

Standard Task Teams will be developed in each of the four consumer standards, providing an opportunity for:

- Information
- Consultation
- Participation and
- Empowerment

Each team will consist of a database of interested residents who have expressed interest in a specific area of service.

Involvement activities will operate on a 'task and finish' basis, meaning that we will only ask for your time when there is a specific task to complete.

The nature of the task will depend very much on the outcome required but tasks will utilise the tool box activities to effectively engage with residents.

Overall responsibility for ensuring that the task teams are effectively engaged lies with the relevant Housing Revenue Account Board staff member, who will set specific targets (in consultation with residents) for staff in relation to involving residents in:

- Decision-making
- Shaping and developing services
- Scrutinising and monitoring performance
- Complaints

Choice Working Group

The Choice Working Group (or groups) will meet on a quarterly basis to:

- Monitor and review Local Offers
- Develop and monitor a 'need to reach strategy' aimed at broadening the diversity of involvement and ensuring that those underrepresented through involvement have opportunities to influence what we do (this could involve developing specific 'community of interest groups', subject to demand)
- Develop a process through which residents can influence the allocation of small-scale environmental improvement monies

Area Forums

Area Forums are quarterly meetings across the six areas of the city, providing an opportunity for local people to discuss priority issues for the community and agree actions with other residents, councillors, city council teams and other partners.

Neighbourhood Partnerships

Neighbourhood Partnerships help residents work in partnership with local organisations and community groups. They involve

residents working with service providers, local councils, community groups and businesses to make local services more responsive to their priorities.

Neighbourhood Partnerships bring many benefits including residents having more influence over how the neighbourhood develops, getting resources targeted to local needs and service providers and community groups working together to have more impact in the area.

Tool Box Activities

The tool box provides a range of ways to involve residents from their point of interest as follows:

- **Mystery Shopping:** Provides us information about how we are doing from your perspective as a customer so that we can check if standards are being met and identify areas where services can be improved
- **Staff Shadowing:** Provides an opportunity for you to spend time with our staff to understand what is involved on a daily basis. You can then use this information when we consult you about how we can improve or change services
- **Editorial Group:** Ensures that any customer communications such as leaflets and newsletters are subject to resident influence, contribution and/or approval
- **Surveys/Questionnaires:** Will continue to be used when we need the views of larger numbers of residents
- **Focus Groups:** Are a one-off meeting aimed at understanding views of people on a single issue or range of issues, along with finding out why people feel the way they do. Focus Groups are very useful as a tool for residents to express their views about the services they receive or the communities that they live in.
- **Walkabouts:** Provide either regular opportunities for residents to walk their estate with their housing officer, or the opportunity to 'spot check' estates as part of a wider consultation or scrutiny exercise.
- **Armchair Advisers:** Comment on services and performance and complete short consultations through emails, sms/instant messaging and through the website.

6. Support & Resources

To make sure that support and resources are available for effective involvement, we will:

- Develop a clear expenses, incentives and rewards policy
- Provide/arrange transport to and from venues for involvement activities if you are unable to do so
- Ensure venues are accessible to all, and meet the needs of all residents, taking account of cultural diversity
- Vary times and locations of involvement activities to ensure that all residents have access to involvement
- Provide the appropriate staff to support involvement activities
- Provide dedicated financial resources and equipment to support involvement
- Ensure that appropriate independent advice is available to individuals and groups if they require it
- Assess the training and support needs of individuals and groups and provide the necessary resources to meet need
- Ensure residents groups have access to funding and resources to support activities whether as part of a Tenants and Residents Group, access to training and development, or improvements to their local environment

7. Diversity and Inclusion

We will make sure that in delivering services, we continue to be inclusive and representative. We want all residents to be involved regardless of age, ability and background and will provide the support needed to enable this.

We want to be effective in enabling wider involvement and to do this, we will develop a 'need to reach strategy' and ensure that information is available in a variety of formats, including different languages, on audio cassette and large print.

8. Monitoring and Review

We will make sure that there is a cohesive approach to resident involvement and that activities are monitored for effectiveness. Information will be analysed to make sure that the needs and priorities of residents are taken into account.

Information from involvement activities will be dealt with in a joined up way with service areas using results to enhance and shape

their services to residents. We want to be sure that residents who are involved see what has been achieved and believe that they have made a real difference.

We will continually work to improve the feedback and monitoring systems in place to make sure they are relevant and meet the needs of the service. Progress of the strategy will be reviewed annually to make sure that involvement is working well. We will review the decisions that have been taken to demonstrate evidence of resident involvement.

We will work alongside residents to monitor the successful delivery of this strategy, through the Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard Task Team and will drive forward the action plan to make sure that the key milestones are met and delivered.

9. Next Steps

Although this strategy is intended to provide a framework for the Resident Involvement Service from 2013-16, there are a number of areas of the action plan that we have begun working on already.

During the first year of the strategy, we will:

- Communicate the aims of our approach and launch the new structure of involvement, recruiting to Standards Task Teams and establishing the Independent Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Develop the tool box approach to provide a broad range of involvement opportunities, including staff and resident training
- Develop involvement plans for each service task team and work with members of the Independent Tenant Scrutiny Panel to produce a clear programme of service-based reviews.

We know that your priorities for involvement are:

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Anti-Social Behaviour

We will therefore ensure that the first Involvement Tasks carried out by the Home; and Neighbourhood & Communities Standards

Task Teams will focus on opportunities to influence and improve these service areas.

In addition, we will also establish a tenant steering group/s through the Involvement & Empowerment Task Team to:

- Influence the design and format of the published strategy
- Support and promote the launch event for Standards Task Teams
- Develop all support documentation including terms of reference; expenses, incentives and rewards policy; involvement leaflet and expression of interest form; annual statement of impact; and other support documentation required to bring the strategy to life
- Develop our approach to Tenant-Led Scrutiny

There will also be a monitoring group set up immediately to be led by the Landlord Services Manager to review and monitor the current Local Offers.

Annex 1 Strategy Action Plan –

Aims	Actions	Task	Time	Lead	Progress
<p>1. We will ensure that there is a Strategic Commitment to Involvement & Empowerment</p> <p>06</p>	<p>1. Communicate aims and approach to involvement and empowerment and ensure these aims are influence by residents priorities</p> <p>2. Routinely review the impact and cost of RI and identify outcomes in collaboration with residents</p> <p>3. Promote all aspects of RI including the principles of tenant management</p>	<p>1. Publish strategy and summary document</p> <p>2. Hold launch event for Standard Task Teams</p> <p>3. Develop database of involvement</p> <p>1. Develop template forms to assess the impact of involvement across services, including basic cost-benefit analysis</p> <p>2. Work with the TI&E STT to develop and publish an annual statement of impact</p> <p>3. Review involvement activities and assess VFM with residents annually</p> <p>1. Develop involvement leaflet including expression of interest and feedback form</p> <p>2. Undertake RI roadshow promoting strategy and involvement activities</p> <p>3. Quarterly newsletter articles plus an annual focus on RI incorporating resident-led articles and Intro to tenant management</p>	<p>2012/3</p> <p>2012/13</p> <p>2012/on-going</p> <p>2012/13</p> <p>2013/on-going</p> <p>2013/on-going</p> <p>2013</p> <p>2013</p> <p>On-going</p>		

Aims	Actions	Task	Time	Lead	Progress
<p data-bbox="69 349 524 443">2. We will ensure that there are opportunities to Involve & Influence</p> <p data-bbox="85 730 129 783">87</p>	<p data-bbox="613 349 943 480">1. Develop a broad and accessible range of involvement opportunities</p> <p data-bbox="613 788 958 954">2. Provide easily accessible information that is prepared in collaboration with residents</p>	<p data-bbox="1010 349 1585 443">1. Develop terms of reference and appropriate support documentation for all involvement activities</p> <p data-bbox="1010 448 1547 512">2. Develop a clear expenses, incentives and rewards policy</p> <p data-bbox="1010 517 1585 683">3. Develop service and estate based involvement plans at STT and neighbourhood level and incorporate the use of informal feedback opportunities and the use of modern technology</p> <p data-bbox="1010 687 1563 751">4. Review involvement activities annually with residents</p> <p data-bbox="1010 788 1509 852">1. Produce information in a variety of formats</p> <p data-bbox="1010 857 1576 1054">2. Develop communications and work with members to ensure customer facing information is subject to resident influence, plain language and customer focussed and ensure input into newsletter</p> <p data-bbox="1010 1059 1585 1225">3. Work with residents to identify key areas of under-representation and develop a 'need to reach' strategy, including specialist partner support where required</p> <p data-bbox="1010 1230 1576 1324">4. Design and deliver an annual staff roadshow and info. pack to ensure staff are well informed about involvement</p>	<p data-bbox="1615 349 1733 373">2012/13</p> <p data-bbox="1615 448 1733 472">2012/13</p> <p data-bbox="1615 517 1733 541">2013/14</p> <p data-bbox="1615 687 1733 751">2013/on-going</p> <p data-bbox="1615 788 1733 882">2013/0n-going 2013</p> <p data-bbox="1615 1023 1733 1046">2013/14</p> <p data-bbox="1615 1193 1733 1257">2013/on-going</p>		

	3. Provide a range of opportunities for residents to exercise meaningful influence over strategic direction	1. Terms of Reference to include clear statement about the 'scope of involvement' and decision-making responsibilities.	2012/12		
		2. Develop opportunities and training for residents to be involved in staff recruitment and procurement	2013		
		3. Utilise the STT's in the development of service improvement plans and strategies	2013/on-going		
	4. Provide a range of opportunities for residents to exercise meaningful influence over local services	1. Engage with residents locally to build on local offers and develop neighbourhood involvement plans	2013		
		2. Review local offer annually at neighbourhood level	2013/on-going		
		3. Ensure local feedback informs the work of STT's and ITSP	2013/on-going		
	5. Understand and respond to the diverse needs of residents	1. Undertake local consultation of specific 'communities of interest' e.g. young people	2014		
		2. As action 2.2.3 above	2013/on-going		
		3. Develop and deliver twice-yearly equality and diversity (involving everyone) training for involved residents	2013/on-going		
		4. Develop systems and profile of residents to 95%	By 2015		

Aims	Actions	Task	Time	Lead	Progress
<p>68</p> <p>3. We will make better use of Resident Intelligence</p>	<p>1. Capture meaningful intelligence from residents so that we have a clear view of our residents profile</p> <p>2. Use this information to influence its approach to Resident Involvement</p>	<p>1. Action 2.5.4 above</p> <p>2. Undertake satisfaction survey to STAR methodology every 2 years</p> <p>3. Develop central database for customer comments, compliments and complaints and publish 'you said, we did' annually</p> <p>4. Develop central 'survey map' to ensure resident intelligence is systematically captured and used to improve services</p> <p>5. Introduce 'Head of Service' trigger for investigation of instances of dissatisfaction</p> <p>1. Provide TI&E STT with profiling, customer satisfaction and impact data annually and support them to develop future action plans</p> <p>2. Consult residents to establish levels of interest in tenant-led surveying</p> <p>3. Provide training and support for tenant-led approach</p>	<p>2015/on-going 2013</p> <p>2013/on-going</p> <p>2013</p> <p>2014/on-going</p> <p>2014/15</p> <p>2015</p>		

Aims	Actions	Task	Time	Lead	Progress
<p>4. We will deliver resident-led scrutiny and involvement that can demonstrate Value for Money for both residents and the organisation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">06</p>	1. Involve residents in setting standards, performance indicators and targets and report on our performance	1. Utilise STT's and local involvement activities to negotiate resident-focussed service standards including performance indicators and targets and publish (leaflets and internet)	2014/15		
		2. Systematically provide performance management and benchmarking information and provide training and support to STT members to engage in monitoring and review	2013		
		3. Engage the TI&E STT in the development of an annual report to tenants	2013/on-going		
	2. Develop robust processes to ensure our accountability to residents for services	1. Include clear expectations for organisational response and systems of redress in development of tenant-led scrutiny	2013		
	3. Measure impact and efficiency	1. Actions 1.2.1, 1.2.2 & 1.2.3 above			
	4. Support resident-led scrutiny	1. Establish project steering group	2013		
		2. Develop communications and promotion plan including negotiating relationships with key stakeholders and involvement groups	2013		
		3. Prepare initial support documentation	2013		

		<p>including role profile, terms of reference, application pack etc.</p> <p>4. Design and deliver information and awareness raising sessions</p> <p>5. Design and deliver recruitment & selection</p> <p>6. Design and deliver initial induction</p> <p>7. Design on-going training programme and design and implement succession plan</p> <p>8. Initiate test-case scrutiny review</p> <p>9. Report and refine</p>	<p>2013</p> <p>2013</p> <p>2013</p> <p>2013</p> <p>2013</p> <p>2013/14</p>		
Aims	Actions	Task	Time	Lead	Progress
<p>16</p> <p>5. We will provide training opportunities that will empower residents to be involved in improving communities, neighbourhoods and homes.</p>	<p>1. Support and resource RI&E skills development</p>	<p>1. Design and complete an RI skills and needs assessment annually</p> <p>2. Design and deliver and annual programme of training which meets identified need</p> <p>3. Agree and publish an annual budget for RI</p> <p>4. Action 2.1.2 above</p> <p>5. Review levels of support annually through the TI&E STT</p> <p>6. In consultation with residents develop a clear procedure for grants and other support</p> <p>7. Include a clear commitment to support groups to access external funding opportunities</p>	<p>2013/on-going</p> <p>2013/on-going</p> <p>2013/on-going</p> <p>2014/on-going</p> <p>2013/14</p> <p>2013/14</p>		

92	2. Ensure that staff aware of the role of resident involvement, have resident involvement targets, and are positive about resident involvement ensuring that staff are skilled in RI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Action 2.2.4 above 2. Develop annual induction/basic staff training in RI 3. Establish annual performance targets for all staff in relation to RI. 4. Develop staff volunteering days to offer opportunities for staff to volunteer in support of local involvement/community projects 5. Provide all frontline staff with advance copies of consultations to enhance neighbourhood promotion and support 6. Develop an annual 'they said, we did' staff briefing 	2013/14		
			2013/14		
			2014/15		
			2013/on-going		
			2013/on-going		
	3. Support and celebrate resident involvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actions 5.1.1 & 5.1.2 above 2. Design and implement effective post-course evaluation for all RI training 3. Develop and deliver annual resident involvement conference incorporating 'time awards' for involved residents 	2013/on-going		
			2013/on-going		

**Appendix 4:
Initial screening Equality Impact Assessment:
Tenants Involvement Strategy**

1. Which group (s) of people has been identified as being disadvantaged by your proposals? What are the equality impacts?

The overall project has been co-ordinated through TPAS and aligned with the TPAS Resident Involvement Quality Standards.

The consultation that took place to develop the strategy had a good response rate from tenants and leaseholders and the equalities data reflected the profile of residents within Oxford City Council Housing stock. Data was collected across all seven equality strands.

One area to be developed is to engage more young people and the strategy embraces this by ensuring that there are a range of mechanisms and tools used to engage more young people. This has already started to be addressed through development of social media tools and working directly with young people to address local issues e.g. through using video.

To achieve TPAS accreditation, all future resident involvement should be run in accordance to Equality and Diversity principles. Future involvement should seek to understand and reflect the views of all diverse groups of residents and be accessible to the wider community. TPAS also recommend that OCC compile data of the resident profile across all 7 Equality Strands by house type and local management area to help establish what is representative and link resident profile information to involvement and develop a more targeted approach to increase under represented groups.

2. In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your current or proposed new or changed policy, strategy, procedure, project or service to minimise or eliminate the adverse equality impacts?
Please provide further details of the proposed actions, timetable for making the changes and the person(s) responsible for making the changes on the resultant action plan

The strategy has been developed through an Officer/Tenant steering group and been led by TPAS. The strategy has a comprehensive action plan which details specific actions and timescales.

To support co-regulation, Oxford City Council Housing will:

- Offer all tenants/leaseholders a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing related policies, and the delivery of housing resident services
- Consult with tenants and act reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
- Provide tenants with a range of opportunities to scrutinise performance against all standards and in the development of the Annual Report
- Provide support to tenants to build their capacity to be more actively involved.

3. Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

Please note that you are required to involve disabled people in decisions that impact on them

The consultation undertaken to develop the Tenants Involvement Strategy was approved through the Public Involvement Project Board. It was sent to all OCC Households and was also available online. The strategy details that over the life of the strategy, we will:

- Develop this structure including all support documentation (terms of reference, codes of conduct etc.) and provide the support and resources required to ensure involvement effectively delivers the outcomes set out
- Promote involvement and effectively recruit to increase the numbers and broaden the diversity of those residents who are involved
- Assess the impact of our involvement activities and review the methods of involvement on an annual basis, focussing our time and resources on the most popular and effective and on developing new and innovative involvement opportunities to replace those which are proven not to work

4. Can the adverse impacts you identified during the initial screening be justified without making any adjustments to the existing or new policy, strategy, procedure, project or service?

Please set out the basis on which you justify making no adjustments

The adverse impacts are minimal as the strategy and action plan include details of monitoring the resident profile of those involved against the profile of all OCC tenants/leaseholders. We have already identified that young people are a group that needs to be targeted by appropriate engagement methods. We want to be effective in enabling wider involvement and to do this, the action plan includes the development of a 'need to reach strategy' and we will also ensure that information is available in a variety of formats and actively involves tenants/leaseholders in its development.

5. You are legally required to monitor and review the proposed changes after implementation to check they work as planned and to screen for unexpected equality impacts.

Please provide details of how you will monitor/evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place

Monitoring and review is detailed in the action plan which is included in the strategy. The action plan will be regularly reported on to the Housing Board.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA: Stephen Clarke and Angela Cristofoli

Role: Head of Housing / Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager

Date: 22nd October 2012

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APPENDIX 5 - RISK REGISTER

Risk Score: Impact Score: 1=insignificant; 2=minor ;3=moderate; 4=major; 5=catastrophic Probability Score: 1=Rare;2=Unlikely;3=Possible'4=Likely'5=Almost Certain

No	Risk description link to corporate obj.	Gross risk		Cause of risk	Mitigation	Net risk		Further Management of Risk Transfer/Accept/Reduce/Avoid		Monitoring Effectiveness				Control Risk	
		I	P			I	P			Q	Q	Q	Q	I	P
1. 97	Tenants scrutiny panel not established by April 2013. (Strong and Active Communities)	3	3	Action plan not implemented robustly.	Key dates booked with TPAS to take forward task group. Task group selected by December. Staff member in Housing with specific remit to ensure programme is implemented.	2	2	Action plan reviewed regularly: Head of Housing/Housing Board	Tenants Housing Scrutiny Panel set up for April 2013	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	I	P
2.	Limited number of tenants respond to getting more involved. (Strong and Active	I 4	P 3	Range of methods for engagement not implemented effectively.	Ensure range of tools used for engagement and build up database.	I 3	P 2	Publicise outcomes of tenants involvement regularly to promote and encourage more tenants to be	Database of tenants/leaseholders numbers to be regularly reported on website and to Housing Board.						

	Communities)							involved: C&N Manager							
3.	Tenants Strategy not fully embraced by relevant OCC services and do not offer sufficient topics of interest for tenants. (Efficient and Effective Council).	3	3	OCC services not fully aware of regulatory background for greater tenants involvement	Ensure training for Heads of Service and key staff is implemented in Dec/Jan 2013.	2	1	Housing Board to develop and regularly review programme of service involvement with tenants: Head of Housing	Monitored through quarterly review of Hosuing Board						

To: City Executive Board

Date: 23rd November 2012

Item No:

Report of: Head of Corporate Property

Title of Report: Oxpens Meadow – Dedication as QEII Field

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To consider the dedication of part of Oxpens Meadow as a Queen Elizabeth II Field, by imposing restrictive covenants in favour of the Field In Trust/National Playing Fields Association, to remain as public open space in perpetuity.

Key decision – No

Executive lead member: Councillor Bob Price and Colin Cook

Report Approved by:
Executive Director, City Regeneration:
Finance:
Legal:
Head of Environmental Development

Policy Framework: Improve the local environment, economy and quality of life policy objective of the Oxford City Council Corporate Plan. West End Area Action Plan.

Recommendation(s): The City Executive Board is recommended to:

1. Agree to the dedication of part of Oxpens Meadow (as specified on the attached plan) as a QEII Field as a lasting legacy to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in her Diamond Jubilee year.
2. Agree to amend the resolution of CEB 8/2/12 and instead to agree for the Council to enter into a Deed of Dedication with Fields In Trust (FIT) for the area highlighted on the attached plan, as detailed herein and otherwise on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Head of Corporate Property.

Introduction

1. The Council has extensive land holdings in the Oxpens Road area of the city which includes the Ice Rink and adjacent sites. The area known as Oxpens Meadow lies immediately adjacent to the east of the Ice Rink and has boundaries to the east and south with Castle Mill Stream and the River Thames respectively.
2. Access onto the site is via an unmade footpath leading from the Oxpens Road entrance across the Meadow towards the river, whilst the site can be accessed from two points to the south of the site via a made up footpath which runs parallel to the river.
3. The meadow comprises of publicly accessible green open space which is primarily used for sports, pastimes, or informal recreational or reflective space. It is popular with local residents and tourists given the extensive river views, and has in the past been used as a area for organised public events such as fun fairs or the circus etc.
4. Notwithstanding the medium to long term development and regeneration potential of the Oxpens area, the Council have in the past expressed their desire to protect the Meadow as public open space in perpetuity.
5. Accordingly at Council on 25th January 2010 the following Motion was adopted by general assent.

“Council invites the City Executive Board to apply to the County Council to register the area shown in green on the Identified Sites Map at page 5 of Part 1 of the adopted West End Area Action Plan as a Town Green under the Commons Act 2006 as the best means of securing the long term protection of the Meadow from encroachment.”

6. A plan is attached to this report which shows the area concerned.
7. The motion follows on from the application submitted by SENDRA (St. Ebbes New Development Residents' Association) that Oxpens Meadow, comprising 5 acres (2,2ha), be designated a Town Green under s.15 of the commons Act 2006. This application is with the County Council, as the relevant authority, for consideration.
8. A report was issued to CEB on 8 February 2012, where a resolution was approved to:
 - Apply for Town Green status for Oxpens Meadow after works to the area for compensatory flood storage are completed.

Background

9. Oxpens Meadow was acquired by the City Council from Christchurch College in 1923. In all some 16 acres of land was acquired as public open space under section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875. This land included what is now the Ice Rink and adjacent car park, part of the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College site together with Oxpens Meadows.
10. The recent West End Area Action Plan of June 2008 confirmed the Oxpens site as a development site and Oxpens Field (WE 8) as an open space to be enhanced. However the policy also explained that flood compensation measures would need to be implemented on this space.
11. A flood risk assessment study had indicated that part of the developable part of the Oxpens site was within the flood risk area. However, through providing a comparable volume of flood storage elsewhere this would enable the flood risk to be overcome. The proposal in the West End AAP was that this would be achieved through removing the higher tipped material on the Oxpens Meadow, adjacent to the Ice Rink, re-profiling and restoring the Meadow as open space.

QEII Field – Deed of Dedication

12. As an alternative to Town Green registration officers consider that an initiative by Fields In Trust (FIT), part of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), could be an effective way of protecting Oxpens Meadow in this way. The initiative aims to commemorate the Queen Elizabeth II diamond jubilee year by dedicating sites as open spaces to be protected in perpetuity. This is achieved by the landowner entering into a Deed of Dedication for the benefit of FIT/NPFA, which will preserve the status of the Meadow as public open space.
13. The QEII Fields Challenge aims to safeguard hundreds of outdoor recreational spaces in perpetuity for future generations in celebration of the Diamond Jubilee and as a permanent tribute to Queen Elizabeth II.
14. Officers believe that this site would qualify for the FIT scheme, and the dedication in this way would form a lasting legacy to Her Majesty within central Oxford. The timing of this dedication within 2012 could mark a turning point for the Oxpens area, as the West End Regeneration Area Action Plan is brought forward in the coming years.
15. It is thought that this initiative will afford the Meadow the protection that has been sought by stakeholders that have also initiated the application to register the site as a Town Green. The Council is advised that it has a robust case against a Town Green designation on this land, if it chose to exercise this. It is proposed that the Deed of Dedication will be agreed between SENDRA and the FIT/NPFA, in

return for an undertaking from SENDRA to withdraw/not pursue the application for Town Green status. SENDRA have been engaged on the proposals and made initial comments on the draft Deed of Dedication.

16. The Deed of Dedication that will be executed between the Council and FIT/NPFA will be drafted in such a way to permit flood mitigation as required, in accordance with the master planning and likely future development of the Oxpens area.
17. The ownership of the site will remain with the Council and will continue to be maintained by the City Council's Parks and Leisure team. The existing uses of the park will be protected, including the possibility of public events etc.
18. For the avoidance of doubt the area behind the Ice Rink will not be included as part of the Dedication of the Meadow.
19. This initiative is proposed as an alternative to the land being transferred by the City Council to a form of Community Trust, however it will not preclude this possibility in the future. The FIT initiative will allow the immediate protection of the Meadow, without the need to form and constitute a trust to take on the liability of the Meadow and demonstrate a viable and sustainable business plan for the medium and long term operation of it. All such opportunities could continue to be explored in the medium to long term if required.
20. In order to reserve the Council's ability to pursue this opportunity, officers have initiated an application for the site to be considered as a possible QEIII field. The formal adoption as a QEII field will be subject to approval by CEB and the agreement and execution of the Deed of Dedication, and registration of the deed with the Land Registry.
21. The dedication of the site in this way will mean that the site will acquire the QEII status, however there is no requirement for an actual name change where sites are instantly recognisable with their current name. This will operate in the same way that King George V Fields often do, which members may be familiar with.

Level of Risk

22. A risk assessment has been undertaken and the risk register is attached (**Appendix 2**). The main potential risk for the City Council is that someone or a body other than SENDRA seeks to start the process afresh of making a Town Green application.

Climate Change/Environmental Impact

23. The continued use of Oxpens Meadows as open space would protect an important urban green spaces.

Equalities Impact

24. Oxpens Meadow is already accessible to all. This proposal would maintain this.

Financial Implications

25. The assumption is that the only costs to the Council are the legal and registration costs of the Deed of Dedication. The Council will not be responsible for any costs incurred by FIT/NPFA.

Legal Implications

26. This registration of the Deed of Dedication on the Meadow will restrict the land to the use outlined in the Deed.
27. All day to day decisions will continue to be the responsibility of the Council. However NPFA would need to approve any change of uses, alterations, building works, construction, leases, wayleaves, transfers and sales etc.
28. Nothing in these proposals is intended to prejudice the Council's ability to oppose a town green application on the land should this be appropriate, and the Council would do so, particularly in the event that any such application were made before the flood remediation work had been completed.

Conclusion

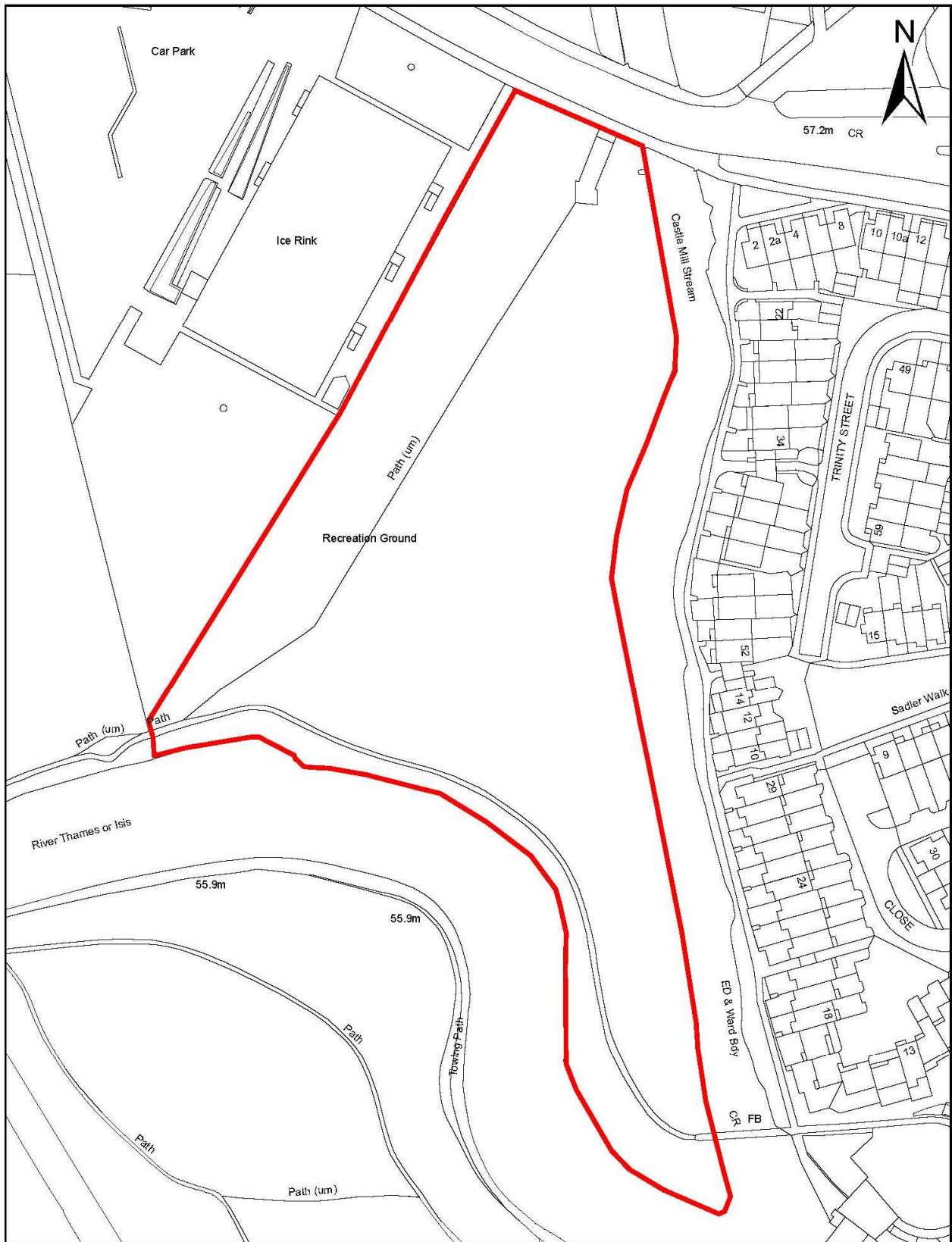
29. Officers believe that the FIT scheme is ideally suited to this site, and the scheme provides an effective and immediate measure to protect and preserve the status of Oxpens Meadow as an area of public open space. This will alleviate the need for a Town Green application by either the Council or stakeholder groups, whilst retaining rights to implement flood attenuation measures as part of the wider Oxpens regeneration plans in the future.

Name and contact details of author:-

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List of background papers:

Version number: 3



Title;

Scale: 1:1,250

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Appendix 2

Risk Register

Risk Score **Impact Score:** 1 =Insignificant; 2 = Minor; 3 = Moderate; 4 = Major; 5 = Catastrophic **Probability Score:** 1 = Rare; 2 = Unlikely; 3 = Possible; 4 = Likely; 5 = Almost Certain

No.	Risk Description Link to Corporate Obj	Gross Risk		Cause of Risk	Mitigation	Net Risk		Further Management of Risk: Transfer/Accept/Reduce/Avoid		Monitoring Effectiveness				Current Risk		
		I	P			I	P	Action: Action Owner:	Outcome required: Milestone Date:	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	I	P	
					Mitigating Control: Level of Effectiveness: (HML)			Action: Action Owner: Mitigating Control: Control Owner:			☹	☹	☹	☹		
1	Someone else submits a fresh Town Green bid	4	2	SENDRA agree to withdraw application but a n other starts the process again. The County Council need to formally agree with the approach.	Mitigating Control: Good communication with the community of the offer and progress with SENDRA Level of Effectiveness: M	4	1	Action: Close dialogue with SENDRA and the County Council. Appropriate joint communication to the wider community (meetings, press, newsletters) Action Owner: Head of Corporate Property Mitigating Control: Control Owner:	Outcome required: Milestone Date: 1 st . within one month of CEB.							
3	SENDRA do not agree to the withdraw Town Green application	4	2	Any offer from the City Council would require an undertaking from SENDRA. These have to be negotiated yet.	Mitigating Control: Give time and care to dialogue with SENDRA Level of Effectiveness: M	4	1	Action: Accept Action Owner: Mitigating Control: Control Owner:	Outcome required: Milestone Date:							

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