

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND SHARED SERVICES**

**Report prepared by Stephen McGinnes**

**Date Issued: 27 January 2014**

#### **1. Local Council Tax Support Scheme (Amendment)**

##### **1.1 Key Issue for Decision**

1.1.1 To consider changes required to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme to be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

##### **1.2 Recommendation of Head of Revenues and Benefits**

1.2.1 That the changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, as outlined in appendix A are introduced from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

##### **1.3 Reasons for Recommendation**

1.3.1 The Local Council Tax Support Scheme to be introduced from April 2014 was considered and approved at a meeting of Full Council on the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

1.3.2 In making that decision it was accepted that further changes may be required with delegated authority to make such changes given to the Director of Environment and Shared Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, with the proviso that any changes that would lead to a change in the level of discount given to eligible residents should come to the Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to implementation.

1.3.3 The nature of the changes are typical of the uprating that is made to benefit awards each year and do not principally change the approach which the council has set out with regards to the administration of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

1.3.4 The changes provided within Appendix A are necessary for the future operation of the scheme and can be summarised as follows.

- Minor amendments to reflect corrections in the drafting of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Prescribed Requirements) 2012.
- Uprating of personal allowances and premiums used within the calculation of Council Tax Support to mirror increases to be implemented by the DWP with regard to housing benefit and wider welfare system.
- An increase in the level of non dependent deduction applied across working age and pensioner claims, to reflect the increase announced within the Department for Communities and local Government (DCLG) arrangements.
- An increase in the income bands used within the calculation of alternative council tax reduction (second adult rebate) across working age and pensioner claims, to reflect the increase announced within the DCLG default arrangements.
- Technical change to the treatment of persons from abroad.

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The scheme could be implemented without the proposed changes to working age households, however, the changes are in the main intended to allow for wider inflationary increases within the benefit system. Such a decision would therefore unfairly reduce awards.

1.4.2 The council are required to protect awards for pensioner households and if the inflationary increases were not made, the council would have to make wider changes to compensate and achieve a similar outcome. Such an approach would be administratively complex and provide no identified benefit.

#### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The change supports the council's commitment to assist vulnerable households and reduce deprivation.

#### 1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 If the council failed to make the proposed changes there would be an increased risk of complaint and legal challenge.

#### 1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	X
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	

1.7.2 Financial – the proposed changes are in line with the financial projections put forward for the 2014 scheme.

1.7.3 Equality Impact Assessment – the proposed changes are in line with the equality impact assessment that was undertaken for the 2014 scheme.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix A – Table of Changes

1.8.2 Background Documents

Local Council Tax Discount Scheme 2014

**IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?**

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

.....

This is a Key Decision because: ...Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the area of the local authority. ....

.....

Wards/Parishes affected: ...All.....

.....

**How to Comment**

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

Cllr Brian Moss

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services  
Telephone: 01622 761998  
E-mail: brianmoss@maidstone.gov.uk

Stephen McGinnes

Head of Revenues and Benefits  
Telephone: 01622 602310  
E-mail: stephenmcginnes@maidstone.gov.uk