

## COUNCIL – 11 DECEMBER 2018

### LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2019 (DoF)

#### 1 Summary

- 1.1 In April 2013, as part of the national welfare reform, the government changed the way financial support for council tax was managed. This meant the national council tax benefit system, which helped people with a low income meet their council tax obligations, was replaced by new local council tax reduction schemes designed, administrated and managed by Local Authorities.
- 1.2 Up until April 2018 Three Rivers District Council's scheme replicated the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme with the following amendments:
  - A limitation on the amount payable based on the band of the property;
  - Changes to capital levels;
  - The removal of Second Adult Rebate benefit; and
  - Increases in Non-Dependent deductions
- 1.3 During 2017/18 consultation was undertaken to consider further changes to the scheme to be introduced from 1 April 2018. The majority of those consulted agreed to make the following changes to the scheme and these changes were then agreed at Full Council on 12 December 2017;
  - Introduce a fixed period assessment
  - Mirror changes that have been made to Housing
  - Minimum Income Floor

#### 2 Details

- 2.1 The scheme for 2019/20 to be adopted by Three Rivers Council must be agreed by Full Council before 11 March 2019 for introduction from April 2019.
- 2.1.1 Although there has been no formal consultation during 2018/19 for changes to the scheme from 2019/20, there are a number of minor changes we could make to the scheme to assist with easier administration of the scheme that do not require consultation. These changes are;
  - Accept Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) information as a claim for Council Tax Support. This would mean Council Tax Support could be processed automatically once information is received from the DWP and will maximise entitlement.
  - Reduce the amount of documentation requested i.e. if a claimant completes a form and states their capital is below the limit we do not write and request proof.
  - Reduce documentation issued to claimants. There is no requirement to send claimants a notification letter. The amount of Council Tax Support awarded can be shown on the annual Council Tax Bill and any subsequent adjustment

notices. This will save staff time, print and postage and avoid confusion for the customer.

### **3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The Council should continue with the same scheme that was operated in 2018/19 for 2019/20 which will include the annual uprating's to incomes and premiums as set by the DWP and include the minor changes above that do not need formal consultation.

3.2 If it is decided not to include the minor changes in the 2019/20 scheme then the 2019/20 scheme will mirror the 2018/19 scheme with the annual uprating's applied.

### **4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

4.1 The current policy is entitled Council Tax Reduction Scheme and was agreed on 12 December 2018. .

### **5 Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no new financial implications at this time as a result of agreeing this scheme.

### **6 Legal Implications**

6.1 There are no specific legal implications at this time.

### **7 Equal Opportunities Implications**

7.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	Yes
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	Yes

7.2 Impact Assessment

### **8 Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre, Implications**

8.1 None specific.

### **9 Communications and Website Implications**

9.1 The website will need to be updated with the 2019/20 scheme.

### **10 Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

10.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

10.2 The subject of this report is covered by the Revenues and Benefit service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

10.3 There are no risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s).

## **11 Recommendation**

11.1 That Three Rivers Council adopts the scheme as operated in 2018/19 for 2019/20 and also introduce the minor changes not requiring consultation as stipulated 2.1.1.

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## **Background Papers**

## **APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS**

Current scheme details can be found at [www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/council-tax-support-scheme-2013](http://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/council-tax-support-scheme-2013).