

COUNCIL - 8 DECEMBER 2020

PART I

5. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021/22 (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

1.4 In 2018/19 some minor changes were made to the scheme to assist with easier administration of the scheme. These changes did not require consultation and were:

- 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.

There were no changes made to the scheme in 2019/20 or 2020/21 other than the uprating's to incomes and premiums as per the prescribed regulations as set by the DWP.

2 Details

- 2.1 The scheme for 2021/22 to be adopted by Three Rivers Council must be agreed by Full Council before 11 March 2021 for introduction from April 2021.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council should continue with the same scheme that was operated in 2020/21 for 2021/22 which will include the annual uprating's to incomes and premiums as set by the DWP.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 4.1 The current policy is entitled Council Tax Reduction Scheme and was agreed on 10 December 2019.

5 Financial Implications

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

6 Legal Implications, Equal Opportunities Implications, Staffing, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Customer Services Centre Implications

- 6.1 None specific.

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

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

- 8.1 None Specific

9 Communications and Website Implications

- 9.1 The website will need to be updated with the 2021/22 scheme once the prescribed regulations are available for 2021/22 and the necessary changes have been made.

10 Risk 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 Benefits 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.

11 Recommendation

That the Council adopts the scheme as operated in 2020/21 for 2021/22.

Report prepared by: Jane Walker, Head of Revenues and Benefits

Background Papers

None

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

Current scheme details can be found at www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/counciltax-suppport-scheme-2013