



EIA Initial Screening Form – Committee Decision

Analysis of the options being considered for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Name and Job title/role of person completing Initial Screening	Emma Gadsby, Policy & Performance Manager
What is the main purpose of the policy decision under discussion?	<p>Council Tax Benefit (CTB) is a means tested benefit to help residents pay their Council Tax. From April 2013 the Government is abolishing this benefit, and it is being replaced by a new scheme called Council Tax Support.</p> <p>The new support scheme has to be delivered with a budget reduced by 10%, so the Council is seeking views on ways to meet this shortfall, while protecting pensioners, as prescribed by the legislation.</p>
List the main activities of the Service or Policy under discussion	<p>There are four options being considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1 – Review Council Tax discounts and exemptions to make up the funding shortfall • Option 2 – Introduce a minimum charge of between 15% and 25% before any discount is calculated, for all working age Council Tax Support claimants • Option 3 – Withdrawal of the scheme known as Second Adult Rebate. • Option 4 – Development of a local scheme that provides short term financial support for those in protected groups suffering severe financial hardship.
Who are the main beneficiaries of the Service or Policy under discussion?	Any East Northamptonshire resident who qualifies for CTB either now or in the future.
How is the success of the Service or Policy under discussion measured?	<p>Council Tax collection rates are currently recorded as a performance measure and monitored via Performance Clinics. This would continue to be measured, although it is anticipated that collection rates would drop, possibly to 70%, as collecting an additional £523,000 (the total shortfall for the district, including precepts for the County Council, Police and parishes) from people on minimum income will be challenging.</p> <p>Measures of success of the options being considered would include whether the Council is able to recover the shortfall from the reduced government funding, and the extent to which any hardship fund was accessed, which would give an indication of how recipients of the new system are coping with the change.</p>

<p>Are equality monitoring systems for the Service or Policy under discussion in place?</p>	<p>We collect information on our Council Tax Benefit claim form that captures information on all of the protected characteristics listed below EXCEPT Sexual Orientation and Religion/Belief.</p>
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Using the table below please indicate for each of the options whether the decision is likely to have a positive, negative or neutral impact on any of the groups listed below and provide reasons.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
	<p>Review Council Tax discounts and exemptions to make up the funding shortfall</p> <p>This option could raise an extra £750,000 of council tax per year.</p>	<p>Introduce a minimum charge of between 15% and 25% before any discount is calculated, for all working age Council Tax Support claimants.</p> <p>This option could raise between £260,000 and £430,000 extra council tax depending on which percentage was chosen (<i>based on an estimated 70% collection rate</i>).</p>	<p>Withdrawal of the scheme known as Second Adult Rebate.</p> <p>This option could save the council £10,000 a year.</p>	<p>Development of a local scheme that provides short term financial support for those in protected groups suffering severe financial hardship.</p>
	<p>Options 1,2 and 3 will have a negative financial impact on everyone currently receiving either a discount/exemption or CTB as they will have to pay more. The remainder of this assessment will look at how people with protected characteristics are specifically affected. Further analysis will be included in the final assessment following on from the consultation.</p>			
<p>Gender</p>	<p>We do not monitor the protected characteristics of recipients of discounts and exemptions.</p>	<p>Of the 37566 Council Tax payers in the district 5460 (14.5%) are in receipt of Council Tax Benefit.</p>	<p>There are 1.3% (38) claimants of second adult rebate, of these 27 are female and 11 male.</p>	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>If the option to develop a local hardship scheme is</p>

		<p>Only claimants of working age will be affected by this option as pensioners are protected.</p> <p>There are 2926 (7.8%) claimants who are of working age and therefore likely to be affected by this change.</p> <p>Working age CTB claimants are predominantly female.</p> <p>A breakdown of the gender of claimants will be provided in the second stage analysis.</p>		<p>chosen the criteria for assessing who would qualify to receive this benefit would be robustly considered to ensure equality across all of the protected characteristics.</p>
Sexual Orientation	See above	This information is not collected.	This information is not collected.	
Race/Ethnicity	See above	Although we ask CTB claimants to tell us their race/ethnicity, this question is optional and so few complete it the data is not considered to be valid.	Although we ask CTB claimants to tell us their race/ethnicity, this question is optional and so few complete it the data is not considered to be valid.	
Disability	See above	A total of 24.2% (709) working age claimants receive a disability premium (extra money	This information is not currently available but will be included in the second stage of this	

		for people aged under 60 with long term health problems), 561 the disability premium and another 148 a severe disability premium.	analysis.	<p style="text-align: center;">Positive impact</p> <p>If the option to develop a local hardship scheme is chosen the criteria for assessing who would qualify to receive this benefit would be robustly considered to ensure equality across all of the protected characteristics.</p>
Age	See above	People of pensionable age will not be affected. 55.3% (1617) people who receive CTB have dependent children, of whom 24.3% (710) have children aged under 5.	All 38 of the Council Tax payers who receive the second adult rebate are aged between 32 and 61. The majority of “second adults” living in the property are young adults aged under 28 (27) and the remainder (11) are aged over 60.	
Religion/Belief	See above	This Information is not collected.	This Information is not collected.	
Rural Isolation – People who live in rural areas e.g isolated geographically, lack of internet access	See above	86% (2515) of CTB recipients live in one of the towns in the district (Higham Ferrers 220, Irthlingborough 437, Oundle 108, Raunds 301, Rushden 1321, Thrapston 128).	32 of the recipients of this benefit live in one of the towns and the remaining 6 live in one of the more rural villages.	
Socio-economic Exclusion – e.g. people who are on benefits, have low educational attainment, single	This could have a negative impact.	All CTB claimants fit into this category.	All 38 of the recipients of this benefit are either on passported benefits	

parents, people living in poor quality housing, people who have poor access to services, the unemployed or any combination of these and the other protected strands.	Currently owners of repossessed properties are not liable for Council Tax but this may change.	8.4% (246) CTB recipients also receive a Carers Premium. We do not know how many other CTB recipients have carers responsibilities for which they do not receive an allowance.	or low earnings.	
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If you have indicated that there is a negative impact on any group:

a) Is that impact against legislation?	No
b) What is the level of impact?	High
Could you minimise or remove any negative impact that is of low significance?	N/A
Could you improve a positive impact of the decision?	N/A
If there is no evidence that the decision promotes equality of opportunity or improved relations, could it be adapted so that it does?	N/A

If you have indicated that there is a negative impact on any protected group you must complete a Full EIA Assessment

Head of service signature	
Date of initial screening	27 Sept 2012