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Thundersley, Benfleet,
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A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL of the Borough of Castle Point will be held in the **Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kiln Road, Thundersley**, on **WEDNESDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER 2022 at 7p.m. NB Time**, and all Members of the Council, listed below, are hereby summoned to attend to transact the undermentioned business.

Councillors, M.A Tucker (The Worshipful the Mayor), Ms L. McCarthy-Calvert,(Deputy Mayor), A. Acott, Ms S.A Ainsley, J. Anderson, Ms H.L Barton-Brown, D. Blackwell, Mrs. J.A Blissett, K. Bowker, B. Campagna, S. Cole, J.M. Cutler, M. Dixon, A.E Edwards, Mrs. B. Egan, E. Egan, M. J Fuller, T.Gibson, W. Gibson, P.C. Greig, S. Hart, N. Harvey, G.I. Isaacs, C.A. MacLean, P. May, S Mountford, C. Mumford, Mrs. S. Mumford, B.A. Palmer, J.A. Payne, Mrs. J Payne, C.R Riley, Mrs. C.J Sach, R. Savage, T.F. Skipp, A. Taylor, D.J. Thomas, A. Thornton, Mrs. J Thornton, Walter and G.St.J. Withers

Angela Hutchings
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

(Business to be taken in public)

1. Apologies for absence

2. Members' Interests

3. Minutes

To receive the following:

- Minutes of the meeting of the Ordinary Council held on 5th October 2022.

4. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor will report announcements if any at the meeting.

5. Questions from members of the public of which Notice has been received

Questions have been received and are attached.

6. Questions from Members of the Council of which Notice has been received

Questions have been received and are attached.

- 7. To deal with any business from the last Council Meeting**
There is none.
- 8. Any explanations for urgent decisions taken by Cabinet**
There are none.
- 9. Consideration of recommendations from Cabinet:**
 - Council is asked to approve the recommendation from Cabinet regarding the Local Council Tax Scheme. A report is attached separately.
- 10. Any References from the Scrutiny/Policy and Scrutiny or Regulatory Committees**
Council is asked to approve a recommendation from the Licensing Committee which took place on 23rd November 2023 to approve the Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy.
- 11. The Castle Point Plan**
A report is attached.
- 12. Staff Appointments and Review Panel**
A report is attached.
- 13. Constitution Update**
A report is attached.
- 14. Report from the Leader of the Council/Cabinet Member**
The Leader is to report at the meeting.
- 15. Notices of Motion**
These are attached.
- 16. Petitions submitted by Members of the Council of which Notice has been given.**
None have been received.

PART 2

(Business to be taken in private)

(Item to be considered with the press and public excluded from the meeting)

There was no business to be taken at the time of publication of the agenda.



ORDINARY COUNCIL MINUTES

5th OCTOBER 2022

MINUTES of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council of the Borough of Castle Point held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kiln Road, Thundersley, on Wednesday, 5th October 2022.

PRESENT:

Councillors, M.A Tucker (The Worshipful the Mayor), Ms L. McCarthy-Calvert, (Deputy Mayor), A. Acott, Ms S.A Ainsley, J. Anderson, Ms H.L Barton-Brown, D. Blackwell, Mrs. J.A Blissett, K. Bowker, B. Campagna, S. Cole, J.M. Cutler, M. Dixon, A.E Edwards, Mrs. B. Egan, E. Egan, M. J Fuller, T.Gibson, W. Gibson, S. Hart, N. Harvey, G.I. Isaacs, C.A. MacLean, P. May, S Mountford, C. Mumford, Mrs. S. Mumford, B.A. Palmer, Mrs. J Payne, J.A. Payne, C.R Riley, R. Savage, T.F. Skipp, A. Taylor, A. Thornton, Mrs. J Thornton, Walter and G.St.J. Withers

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.C. Greig, Mrs. C.J Sach and D.J. Thomas.

As this was the first formal meeting of the Full Council following the death of the Late Queen Elizabeth II all present stood in silence in memory of the late Sovereign to give thanks for her unstinting and devoted service to this Country.

16. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Palmer declared a Non Pecuniary interest in respect of Minute 26d and 26e as he was a member of the Canvey Island Town Council.

Councillor Blackwell declared a Non Pecuniary interest in respect of Minute 26d and 26e as he was a member of the Canvey Island Town Council.

Councillor Acott declared a Non Pecuniary interest in respect of Minute 26d and 26e as he was a member of the Canvey Island Town Council.

Councillor Anderson declared a Non Pecuniary interest in respect of Minute 26d and 26e as he was a member of the Canvey Island Town Council.

Councillor Harvey declared a Non Pecuniary interest in respect of Minute 26d and 26e as he was a member of the Canvey Island Town Council.

Councillor May declared a Non Pecuniary interest in respect of Minute 26d and 26e as he was a member of the Canvey Island Town Council.

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Ordinary Council held on 23rd March 2022 were taken as read and agreed as a correct record.

The Minutes of the Special Council meeting held on 15th June 2022 were taken as read and agreed as a correct record.

With regard to the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 18th May 2022, Minute 13, Councillor Blackwell proposed an amendment as follows:

“I would like to bring Members’ attention to Item 13 on the Annual Council Meeting, I believe the Minutes are not totally correct. On the appointments of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Services, the Minutes state that the terms of reference for that panel was agreed at Annual Council. Mr Mayor that was not agreed and I would move that that Minute is removed from the Annual Council agenda item. “

The motion was seconded by Councillor Cole.

A vote was taken which was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY and RESOLVED accordingly.

18. MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor thanked the staff for their hard work in making local arrangements for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June, the Borough’s formal mourning on the passing of the late Queen Elizabeth II and the formal accession of King Charles III.

The Mayor announced that he had visited a number of junior schools in the Borough over the past few months and had been very impressed with the hard work of the pupils.

The Mayor commended Councillors Riley and Skipp on their participation in the Havens March. Councillor Riley thanked the Mayor and Mayoress for their support.

19. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN RECEIVED

There were none.

20. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN RECEIVED

There were none.

21. TO DEAL WITH ANY BUSINESS FROM THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The business scheduled for the Council meeting postponed from 27th July 2022 had been incorporated into the agenda for this meeting.

22. ANY EXPLANATIONS FOR URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET

There were none.

23. CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET

Council was asked to approve the recommendation from Cabinet on 15th June 2022 to ratify the Local Energy Bills Rebate Discretionary Fund Scheme.

Resolved - That Council notes the content of the report and ratifies the Local Energy Bills Rebate Discretionary Fund Scheme.

24. ANY REFERENCES FROM THE SCRUTINY/POLICY OR REGULATORY COMMITTEES

There were none.

25. REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL / CABINET MEMBER

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Blackwell, reported on the following:

- The 'Cost of Living Crisis' and how the Council could help residents.
- Discussions with Thurrock Council regarding a third access route to Canvey Island.
- The Paddocks Task and Finish Group.
- Multi agency meeting regarding Canvey Lake to discuss its long-term future.
- Partnership working with the Fire Authority and Police
- A meeting between the Fire Authority and landowners to consider preventative measures to stop the fires on Canvey Island during the summer.
- A meeting with Essex Chambers of Commerce.
- Promotion of customer service and community engagement.
- Establishing a multi-party Local Plan Working Group.

26. NOTICE OF MOTION

(1) Councillor J Thornton had given notice of the following:

"Following the announcement that the last remaining bank in Hadleigh is to close, we call on this Council to assist residents and explore the possibility of working with Partners to establish a Banking Hub, similar to that recently opened in Rochford, in order to support our local business community and ensure

residents unable to utilise online banking for any reason are able to continue to receive a face-to-face banking service.”

The Motion was moved by Councillor J Thornton. During debate the following amendment was moved and seconded

“Following the closure of the last bank in Hadleigh we call on the officers of this Council to work with the Cash for Action Group and Essex County Council to establish a Banking Hub throughout Castle Point”

The amendment having been accepted by the proposer became the substantive Motion. A vote was taken which was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY and RESOLVED accordingly.

26. NOTICE OF MOTION

- (2) Councillor Walter had given notice of the following:

“In an effort to reduce this Councils carbon footprint and save taxpayers money, we call upon the Council to investigate the possibility of installing photovoltaic panels on all suitable large council owned buildings in the Borough and to also investigate the possibility of installing solar hot water panels on Waterside Farm and Runnymede leisure complexes.”

The Motion was moved by Councillor Walter and seconded by Councillor Riley. During debate the following amendment was moved and seconded:

In an effort to reduce this Council’s carbon footprint and save taxpayers’ monies we call upon the Council to investigate the possibility of installing photovoltaic panels on all suitable large council owned buildings in the Borough and to also investigate the possibility of installing solar hot water panels on Waterside Farm and Runnymede leisure complexes exploring all grant options and commercial options.”

The amendment was not accepted. Debate took place at the conclusion a vote was taken on the original Motion which was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY and RESOLVED accordingly.

26. NOTICE OF MOTION

- (3) Councillor Walter had given notice of the following:

We call on the Council to investigate the possibility of replacing the atmospheric pollution instrumentation in Hadleigh Old Fire Station with modern equipment that samples, records and uploads data online. We also ask for the location to be moved to the council offices, historically one of the areas with the highest air pollution in Castle Point. Up to date evidence on air pollution is an essential part of the decision-making process when considering the future of our Borough.

The Motion was moved by Councillor Walter and seconded by Councillor Cutler. Debate took place at the conclusion a vote was taken on the Motion which was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY and RESOLVED accordingly.

26. NOTICE OF MOTION

- (4) Councillor Dixon had given notice of the following Motion:

“Castle Point Council laments the loss of wildlife at Canvey lake over the summer and calls on Canvey Town Council to take all necessary action to prevent it happening again. Castle Point Council also calls on the Leader of Canvey Town Council to publicly explain the town council’s failure to preserve the interests of the wildlife at the lake and why it was left to concerned residents to take action on behalf of the community.”

The Motion was moved by Councillor Dixon and seconded by Councillor Mumford. During debate the following amendment was moved and seconded.

“That this Council continues to work with Canvey Town Council, the Environment Agency, Essex County Council, Anglian Water and DEFRA on an action plan for the long term management of Canvey Lake.”

The proposer and seconder did not accept the amendment. A vote was taken on the amendment to the Motion which was CARRIED and RESOLVED accordingly.

26. NOTICE OF MOTION

- (5) Councillor Dixon had given notice of the following:

“Castle Point Council directs the Environment Health Department to conduct an immediate investigation into the potential harms to the public from toxin and bacterial build up in Canvey Lake over the course of the summer.”

The Motion was moved by Councillor Dixon and seconded by Councillor Mumford but subsequently withdrawn by Councillor Dixon.

27. PETITIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF WHICH NOTICE HAD BEEN GIVEN

There were none.

Ordinary Council 5.10.2022

Mayor

ORDINARY COUNCIL

30th November 2022

Subject: Questions from Member of the Public

1. Purpose of Report

To present to Council Notice of Questions from received residents to be put to the Leader of the Council for response at this meeting.

a. Question to the Leader of the Council

From Sean Quartermaine:

What is your administration's position on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's proposal for the future wards of Castle Point? In addition, do you oppose the current proposal to abolish the Canvey Island West ward and its two councillors?

b. Question to the Leader of the Council

From Robert Lillis:

This October, the Secretary General of the United Nations stated that: 'There has been a tendency to put climate change on the back burner. If we are not able to reverse the present trend, we will be doomed.' He also stated that: 'This is the defining issue of our time'.

Sadly, the previous Conservative administration failed to declare a Climate Emergency here in Castle Point. Is now the time to do so?

c. Question to the Leader of the Council

From Tim Copsey:

Castle Point Borough Council is part of a partnership of local authorities known as ASELA and has been since 2017. There seems to be no method for the residents of our borough to hold it accountable for its decisions and actions. I would like to request that a review be undertaken to see if there have been any tangible benefits for the residents of Castle Point from being part of ASELA and comparing that to the costs of membership both in monetary terms and councillor/officer time. I would request that the findings of the review be made public. Thank you.

ORDINARY COUNCIL

30th November 2022

Subject: Questions from Councillors

1. Purpose of Report

To present to Council Notice of Questions from received from Councillors under Council Procedure Rule 9.2 to be put at this meeting.

a. Question to the Councillor Cole Cabinet Member

As this is a matter falling within your responsibility will you arrange for work to continue with the Castle Point Community Allotment Group to assess and advise the necessary requirements to make the access pathway to the site safely accessible and equality compliant for our mobility impaired and more vulnerable residents, and explore the feasibility of the Council implementing the works themselves, or guiding the group to where suitable grant funding might be available.'

b. Question to the Councillor Thomas Chairman of the Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee

"Will the Chairman of the Environment Policy & Scrutiny Committee when reviewing the Climate Action Plan to reinforce its commitment made to tackling climate change through the continuation of work already identified through its Climate Action Plan, consider action to introduce an easy to navigate dedicated presence on its website in order that residents can quickly access details of this councils Climate Action strategies, including but not limited to:

Regularly updated versions of the Climate Action Plan,

Advice to residents and businesses on reducing their carbon footprint

Regularly updated data on the current Air, Pollution and Water Quality in the borough.

Advice to residents on waste reduction and recycling

Links to initiatives, projects and schemes available through our Partner Organisations.

Also will the committee revisit the question of whether it feels now is the time to declare a Climate Emergency linked to its CAP"

ORDINARY COUNCIL

30TH NOVEMBER 2022

Subject: Council Tax Support

Cabinet Member: Councillor Fuller – Resources

1. Purpose of Report

To provide Council with a summary of the results of the public consultation on the proposed Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme for 2023-24 and to provide Council with full details of the proposed scheme and seek approval to adopt the scheme from 1st April 2023.

2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives

Efficient and Effective Customer Focussed Services

3. Recommendations

1. That Members note the consultation results as outlined in section 5 and Appendix A of this report.
2. That Members note the details of the CTR Impact Analysis and the full Stage 2 EQIA, contained in Appendix B and C of this report.
3. That Members note and approve for adoption from 1 April 2023, the CTR Scheme 2023/24 and CTR Transitional Protection Scheme 2023/24, at Appendix D and E of this report.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 This report follows earlier reports to Council setting out the requirement for Council to review and approve the Local Council Tax Support scheme (LCTS) for 2023/24.
- 4.2 At its meeting in September 2022 Cabinet approved adoption of a banded CTR scheme for working age customers, subject to a 6 week public consultation.
- 4.3 The consultation period has now concluded, and this report sets out the results along with a full EQIA assessment and full details of the final recommended scheme for members consideration and approval.

5. Consultation Results

- 5.1 The consultation was publicised to both existing LCTS claimants and residents of the borough generally.
- 5.2 In total 1,800 existing LCTS claimants were directly written to and invited to take part, four social media posts were issued (which achieved a reach of 3,311), and details were added to 'Latest News' on the Council's website, which attracted 812 visitors.
- 5.3 The consultation was also made available in a variety of formats and venues, including all four local libraries and key partner organisations and major precepting authorities were encouraged to help publicise it to customers.
- 5.4 Within the consultation customers were invited to register their agreement/disagreement with each of the proposed elements and were invited to provide comments.
- 5.5 The consultation closed on 13th November and a total of 276 responses and 674 comments were received and a summary of the results and most frequently commented queries/concerns is provided at **Appendix A**, along with further details about the scheme and demographics of the LCTS caseload to address the queries/concerns that have been highlighted through the consultation process.

6. EQIA & Transitional Protection

- 6.1 The consultation results and comments particularly highlighted concerns over those who may lose entitlement as a result of the move from LCTS to CTR, and concerns over the impact of the scheme on households and communities with large families.
- 6.2 Analysis has therefore been undertaken with regards to these two specific concerns (**Appendix B**) and a full Stage 2 EQIA has also subsequently been completed (**Appendix C**).
- 6.3 As a result of this work, a Council Tax Reduction Transitional Protection scheme has been developed (**Appendix D**) to sit as an addendum to the current Exceptional Hardship Scheme which forms part of the recommended CTR scheme (**Appendix E**).
- 6.4 The CTR scheme and the CTR Transitional Protection Scheme are legally required to be reviewed and approved annually, and as such it proposed that the ongoing impacts highlighted in para 6.1 will be monitored across 2023/24 to help inform the recommended scheme for 2024/25 in due course.

7. Corporate Implications

a) Financial Implications

- 7.1 The overall cost of the CTR scheme – based on 2021/22 caseload has been estimated at £1.5m. Although this figure makes no assumptions regarding uplifts to Council Tax or caseload, the overall cost of the scheme is broadly in line with the previously budgeted provision for LCTS.

Costs for implementing the simplified CTR scheme are currently estimated at £87k for 2022/23, with ongoing annual costs of £15.9k. This is a slight increase from earlier estimations (£60K and £14.5K respectively) reported to Cabinet in September, and is largely attributable to resources required to release capacity to undertake implementation work.

It is impossible at this stage to quantify the level of efficiencies the scheme will deliver. Some efficiencies are expected to be non-cashable (e.g. freeing up skilled resources within the service which can either be used for other skilled tasks or at, very least, will help reduce the current dependency on agency staff. Some cashable reductions in print and postage costs are also anticipated once the scheme has commenced.

The Transitional Protection Scheme is expected to increase demand on the Exceptional Hardship Scheme by £25k.

b) Legal Implications

- 7.2 The Council has a legal responsibility to create, maintain and renew its CTS scheme on annual basis. These powers are contained in Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended.

c) Human resources/equality/human rights

- 7.3 Movement to a simpler and less admin-heavy scheme is expected to lift some of the burden on First Contact and Benefit staff – freeing up valuable resources to deliver other key initiatives i.e. Energy Rebate payments and supporting residents through the current Cost of Living crisis.

Since the pandemic the Revenues and Benefits job sector has been under significant strain with specialist skills under increasing demand, and low supply resulting in higher costs.

The simplified nature of the CTR scheme requires less specialist skills and is therefore expected to be easier to resource and reduce reliance on agency staff.

A full Stage 2 EQiA has been completed to inform the design of the final scheme and the Transitional Protection arrangements – this has given due regard to the impact on large working families and has sought to mitigate any inequalities identified as a result of consultation and analysis.

8. Timescale for implementation and risk factors

Key milestones are as follows:

Milestone	Timeframe	Purpose
Council approves final scheme	30 Nov 2022	Adoption and implementation
Test software	Dec - Jan '23	Software fully tested
Set Council Tax for 2023/24	Feb '23	LCTS cases converted to CTR
Go Live	1 Apr 2023	CTR in operation

Risks are recorded on the Corporate Risk Register and are reviewed on a monthly basis.

Appendix A – Consultation Results

Appendix B – CTR Impact Analysis

Appendix C – Stage 2 EQIA

Appendix D – CTR Transitional Protection Scheme 2023/24

Appendix E – CTR Scheme 2023/24

Report Author:

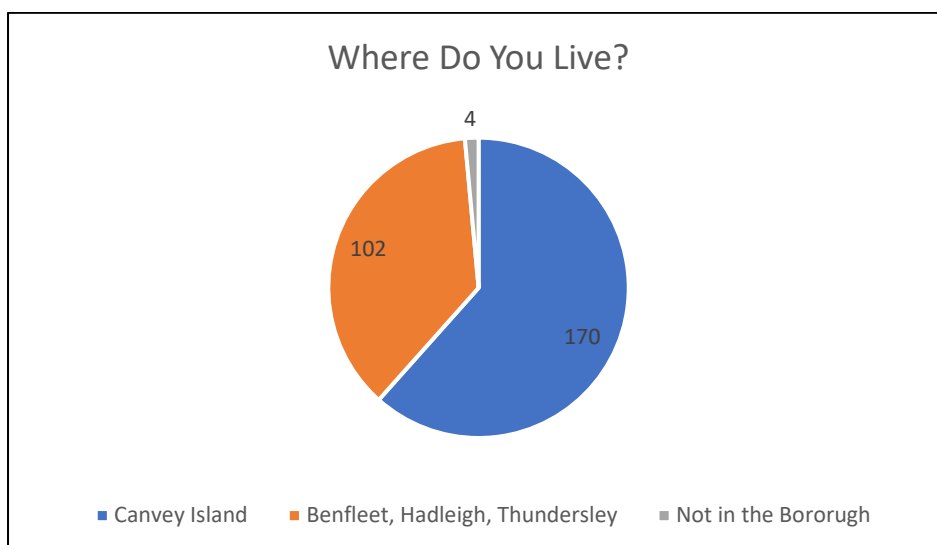
Edwina Mosuro – Head of Customer & Digital Services



2023/24 CTR Consultation – Results

This document summarises the results of the consultation, highlights some of the key points raised by customers about various elements of the proposed scheme and provides some response/commentary on those points.

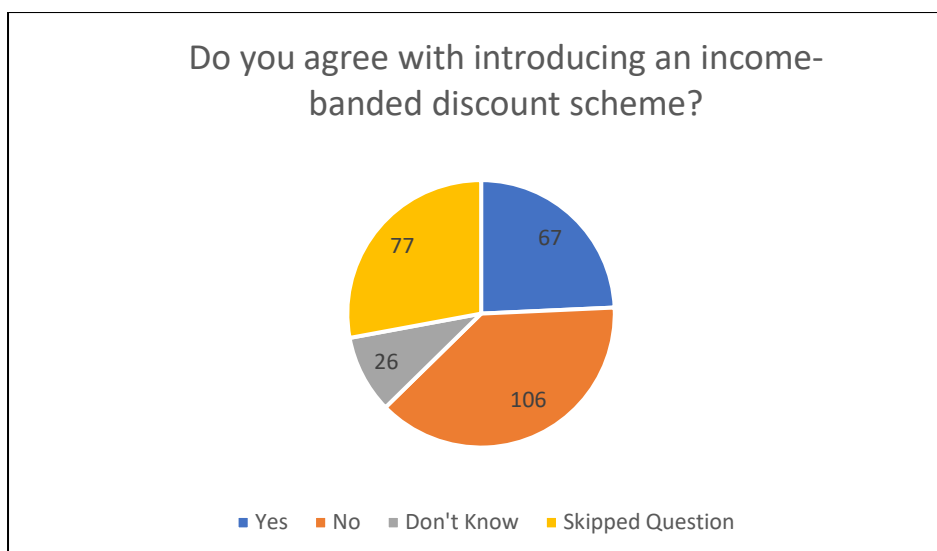
1.0 Q2 – Where Do You Live



1.1 There were 276 responses in total. This equates to a 0.31% response rate compared to the borough-wide population of 89,000, and a 15.16% response rate compared to the existing working age LCTS caseload (1,821).

1.2 Most responders (61.59%) live on Canvey Island. This is broadly representative of the demographic split within the general population and the Local Council Tax Support caseload.

2.0 Q3 - Implementing a Banded Income Scheme



2.1 53.27% of respondents said they did not agree with introducing a banded-discount scheme. 101 people commented on this question and the following examples highlight the key points raised;

a) *"It doesn't mention about disregards for carers or the mentally unwell. So don't know if this is to be scrapped?"*

Disability and Carer related benefits will not be considered when calculating income.

- b) *“I am worried about people on the lowest limit of a higher income band, may not receive the same amount of support as they would currently be entitled to, and how families and householders in this situation can be supported.”*

Those who lose entitlement when they move from the LCTS scheme to the CTR scheme will be able to claim support through the Exceptional Hardship scheme. The Exceptional Hardship scheme will allow those that lose up to 74% of their entitlement to LCTS when migrating to CTR to apply for additional support for the 2023/ 2024 financial year. Those that lose between 75% and 100% of their entitlement to LCTS when migrating to CTR will be automatically supported by Transitional Protection for the 2023/2024 financial year.

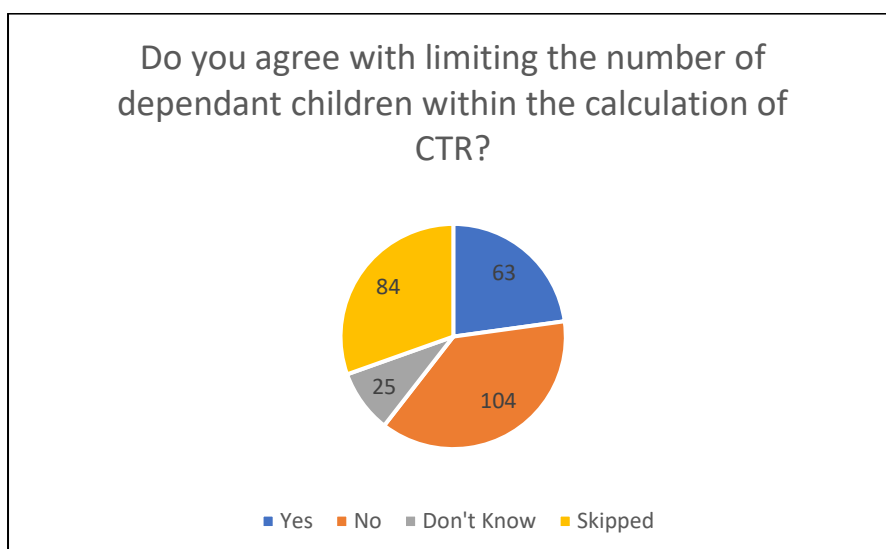
- c) *“The council also mention that the administration costs will be less, I would be interested to know how these savings can be used to directly help those households who may have lost out if a scheme like this is introduced.”*

We will be increasing the funding for the Exceptional Hardship Scheme so that we can support existing customers who may lose out from moving to the new scheme. Any other savings released through the change to the scheme will be directed back into council budgets and will be used to drive through corporate-wide service improvements and ensure we deliver value for money for all residents of the borough.

- d) *“Income banded schemes fail to take larger families into account.”*

Larger families and those that will lose entitlement when they move from the LCTS scheme to the CTR scheme have been considered and this, amongst other factors, is why we have devised the Transitional Protection policy and will be utilising the existing Exceptional Hardship scheme.

3.0 Q5 Limiting the number of dependent children in the calculation



- 3.1 54.17% of respondents said they did not agree with limiting the number of children within the calculation for CTR. 96 people commented on this question and the following examples highlight the key points raised;

a) *“This scheme impacts larger families disproportionately.”*

A response to this point has been raised under Q3 point 4.

b) *“The scheme is inconsistent with DWP’s position on children born before 6 April 2017, because DWP benefits are paid for all children born before 6 April 2017.”*

The CTR scheme does not fall under the same legislation as DWP benefits – it falls under the Localism Act 2011, and it is therefore at the Local Authorities discretion to set its working age scheme as it sees fit.

Additionally, the manner in which CTR and LCTS schemes are calculated is fundamentally different – it is therefore more appropriate to compare the impact to customers in terms of the amount of support they will receive rather than compare the formula for the calculation.

To illustrate;

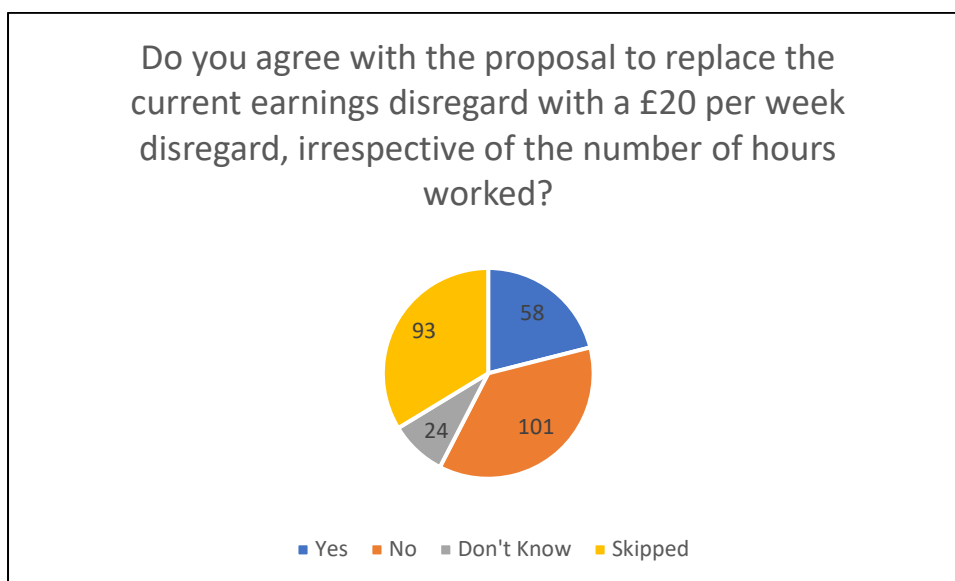
Under LCTS, Child Benefit was fully taken into account for all children when calculating household income. Under CTR Child Benefit is fully disregarded when calculating household income.

Equally, under LCTS, Applicable Amounts were awarded for each child to reduce the effect Child Benefit income had on the final award level granted. Under CTR Applicable Amounts have been removed and have effectively been replaced by the bands which are sufficiently wide enough to ensure most families receive the same, or very similar, levels of support.

c) *“The DWP child element of universal credit is not awarded for post 2017 children, however housing costs still take these children into account to calculate bedroom entitlement.”*

The CTR scheme does not fall under the same legislation as Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. The Housing Benefit scheme will remain unchanged and continue to take children into account where they are born prior to the 6th of April 2017. This is in line with Universal Credit.

4.0 Q7 Implementing a £20 earnings disregard



- 4.1 55.19% of respondents said they did not agree with changing the earnings disregard to £20 per week. 89 people commented on this question and the following example highlights the key points raised;

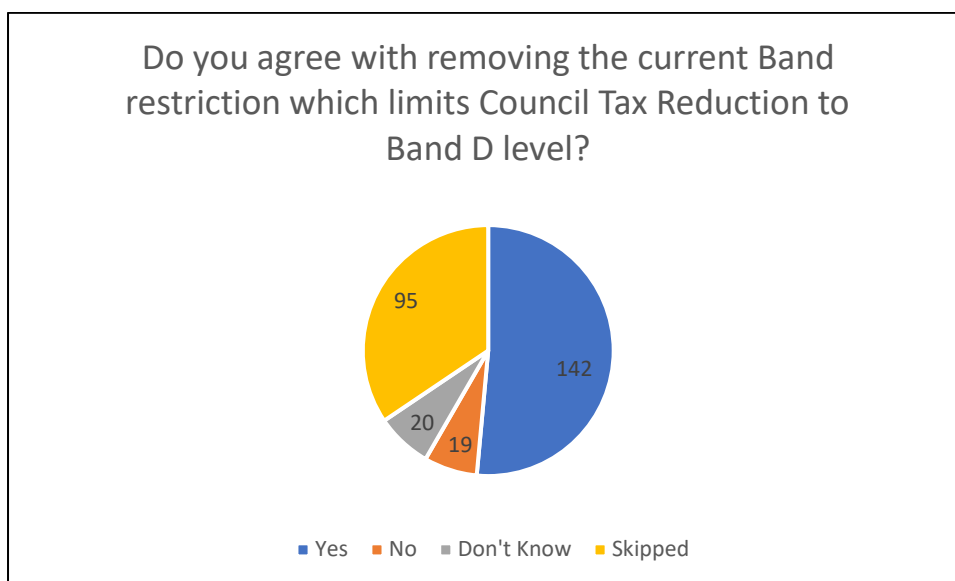
a) *"I disagree with an introduction of a flat rate of £20 earnings disregard as it would adversely affect working families. This is a disincentive to working families to work harder to move out of the poverty trap."*

We have modelled the proposed CTR scheme on our current caseload and have considered the possible effects on our existing customers and the potential requirement for support from our Exceptional Hardship fund and Transitional Protection (TP) scheme. We have also factored in potential increase and decrease in our caseload.

The reduction in the earnings disregard is mitigated by the adoption of income bands which ensures most households receive the same, or a very similar, level of support under CTR.

An earnings disregard – no matter the level it is set at – remains an incentive to work as it disregards an element of earned income that would otherwise be fully counted in the calculation.

5.0 Q9 Removing the Band D restriction



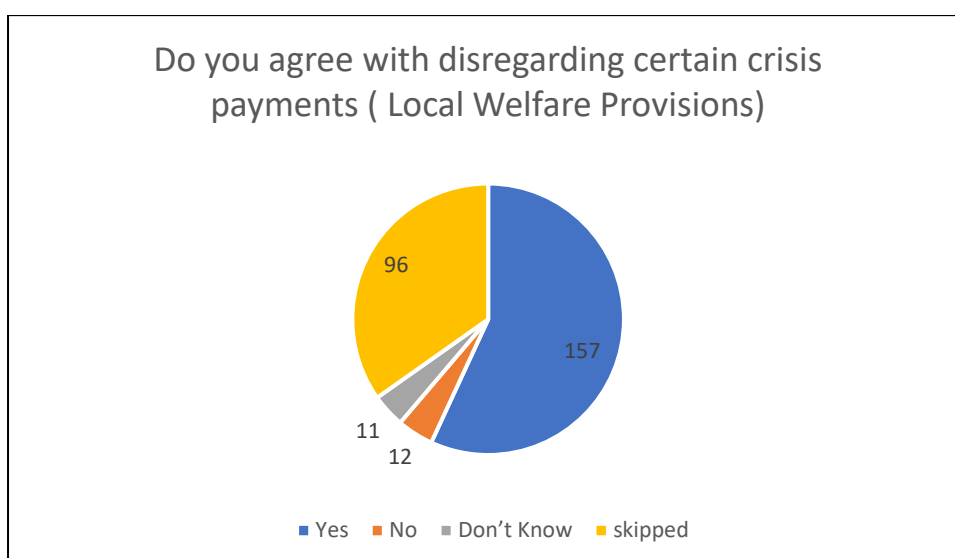
- 5.1 78.45% of respondents agreed with removing the Band D restriction. 8 people commented on this question and the following example highlights the key points raised;

a) *"It should remain the same."*

The majority of respondents who provided commentary simply stated that they wished Band D restriction to remain but did not provide an explanation for their answer.

Removing the Band D restriction ensures a proportionate level of support for those who may have equally limited income but live in larger properties

6.0 Q11 Local Welfare Provision (The Exceptional Hardship Scheme)



- 6.1 87.22% of respondents agreed with disregarding any crisis payments under the Local Welfare Provision. 8 people commented on this question and the following examples highlight the key points raised;

a) "You have always disregarded this."

The Authority has always disregarded this as we recognise it is a support payment and it will remain disregarded.

b) "All Income should be taken into consideration including PIP & Disability payments"

Many payments like PIP and DLA are disregarded due to the payment being made to assist the person with additional costs due to their disability. All government bodies disregard this income, and we feel that we should be consistent with this.

c) "The burden of applying for the Councils Exceptional Hardship Scheme is a drain on people's resources without guarantee of success."

The Exceptional Hardship Scheme has always been a discretionary scheme. As such it cannot be a 'guaranteed' award. Applications made under the scheme are carefully and holistically assessed to ensure that support is provided where appropriate.

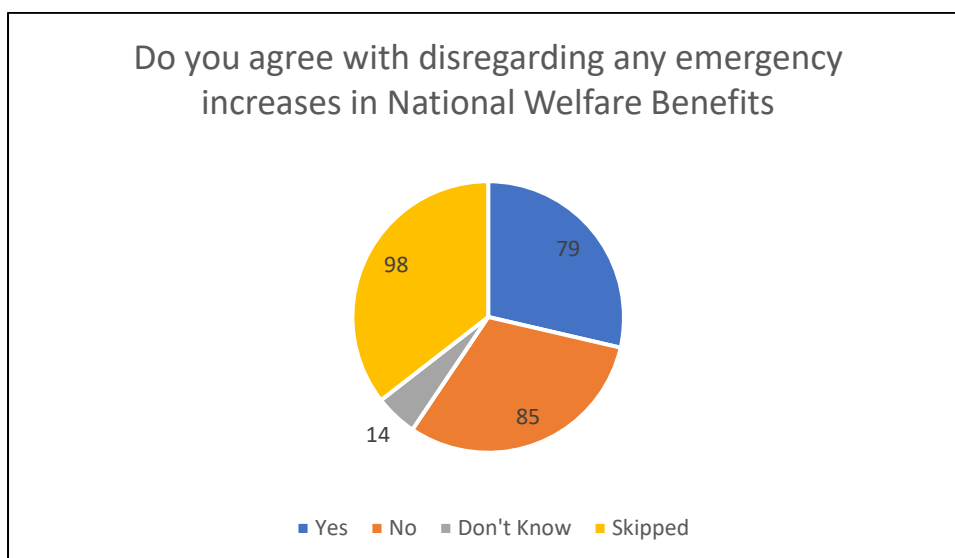
d) "The Councils Exceptional Hardship Scheme could result in more costs to council which could offset any Council Tax reduction staff savings."

The additional costs of the Exceptional Hardship and Transitional Protection schemes are estimated based on existing caseload. The costs and savings associated with CTR will be closely monitored over the coming year and will be used to inform the scheme recommendations for 2024/25.

e) "Families could be worse off if the hardship scheme is oversubscribed."

Analysis of the caseload has identified only a small caseload requiring Transitional Protection – this has been costed into the scheme. The demand for Exceptional Hardship is always unknown but is carefully monitored across the year to identify and manage any unexpected increase.

7.0 Q13 Disregarding emergency increases in National Welfare Benefits



- 7.1 47.75% of respondents disagreed with disregarding this emergency National Welfare increase and 44.38% agreed. 4 commented on this question and the following example highlights the key points raised;

- a) *“The description above is confusing because it describes that the council has the discretion to disregard these payments. In the benefits and drawbacks sections, the description suggests that the council will disregard the payment. My proposal is that it should be disregarding and not at the discretion of the council.”*

By implementing this terminology into the scheme, it allows us to act immediately and not at the annual review of our scheme should such payments be introduced by Government and require disregard mid-year. If we did not implement this terminology into our scheme, it could mean that such payments, depending on the type of payment interpreted by HB Law, are not lawfully allowed to be disregarded until the annual review of the scheme – this would be detrimental to customers.

8.0 Alternatives to changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and suggestions of other options

- 8.1 102 responses were received to alternatives and 96 responses were received for other options, the following examples highlight some of the suggestions raised;

- a) *“A separate banding for every additional child above two children.”*

Having done extensive modelling on the CTR scheme, we felt that there was no requirement for further banding. We have modelled on our current caseload and have considered the possible effects on our existing customers and the potential requirement for additional support. Additional support has been factored in using the Exceptional Hardship and Transitional Protection schemes.

- b) *Recently there have been many changes to payments single parents can receive, child benefit has even been targeted with some having to start paying this back. Single families due to the one person living in the home do not use the services as much as a 2 adult household yet we have the same bills as a one adult household. Leaving us with less disposable income. The council tax reduction for a single person should not be means based.*

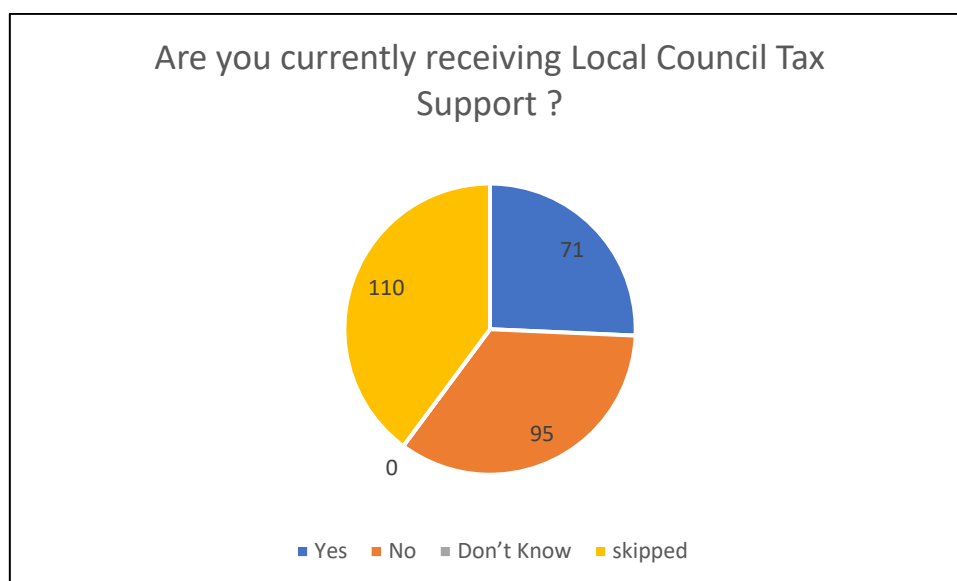
The Single Person Discount (25% off your liability) is not means tested and the CTR scheme does not affect your right to claim this discount. Additional support for those suffering hardship will continue to be available through the existing Exceptional Hardship Fund.

9.0 Further comments

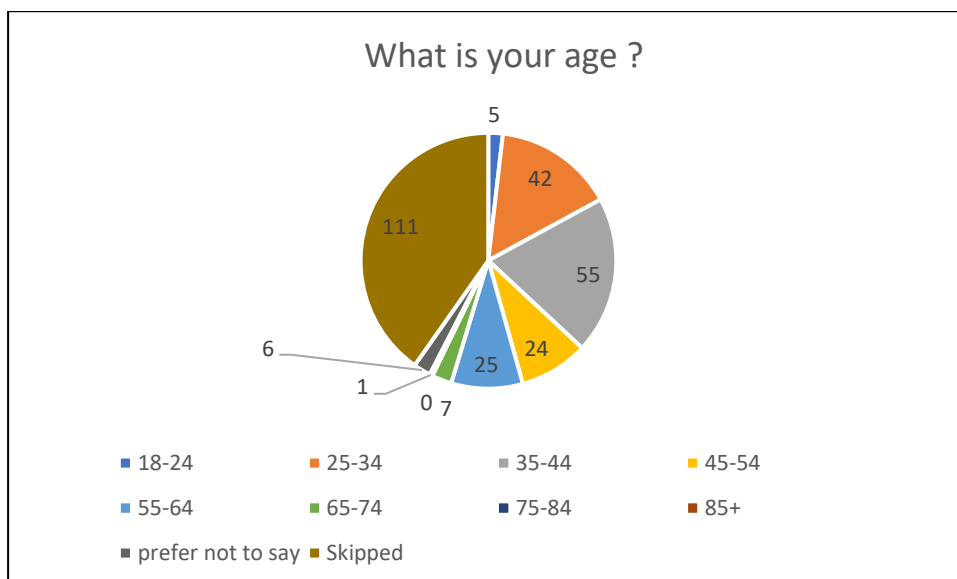
- 9.1 88 responses were received in this section. Most of the responses related to additional support for those that are in receipt of disability benefits and support for those with larger families. These points have been covered above.

10.0 Demographics

- 10.1 The following charts show just some of the demographics captured as part of the consultation.



42.77% of respondents indicated that they were currently in receipt of LCTS whilst 57.23% stated they were not currently in receipt of LCTS. This shows that responses were generally equally representative across LCTS and non-LCTS claiming sectors.



From the data received for the age demographic, 88.48% of respondents indicated they were of working age (aged 18 to 65)> This indicates that the consultation achieved a high response rate from the age groups most likely to be affected by the scheme.



From the data received, 62.58% of respondents indicated they were in work or self-employed.

Council Report: CTR Impact Analysis

1.0 The Proposed Scheme

- 1.1 The proposed scheme is set out in Appendix D and will operate using the following bands to determine the award level based on income and household type;

OPTION 2								
Income Band	£0- £75.00	£75.01- £150.00	£150.01- £225.00	£225.01- £300.00	£300.01- £375.00	£375.01- £450.00	£450.01- £500.00	£500.01+
Household Type	Percentage Discount							
single no children	70.00%	70.00%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%
couple no children	70.00%	70.00%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%
single one child	70.00%	70.00%	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%
couple one child	70.00%	70.00%	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%
single 2 or more children	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
couple 2 or more children	70.00%	70.00%	70.00%	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%

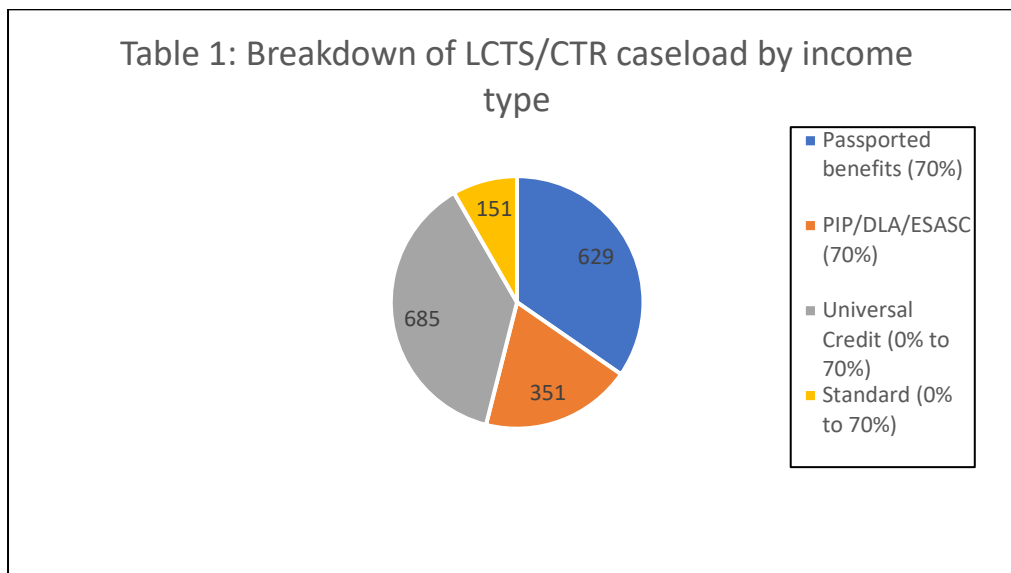
- 1.2 The scheme also incorporates the following key elements;

- a) As directed by central government, all pensioners are paid under the prescribed Pension Age scheme.
- b) CTR incentivises work by disregarding £20 per week of earned income.
- c) CTR cannot be back dated.
- d) As far as possible CTR allows for expected growth in demand and is easy to claim and administer.
- e) Second Adult Rebate, previously available under Council Tax Benefit, is not part of the CTR working age scheme.
- f) The savings limit remains fixed at £6,000, meaning that claimants with capital exceeding this level are not entitled to CTR.
- g) Income received in respect of War Pensions for disablement or bereavement are fully disregarded when calculating CTR.
- h) Underlying Entitlement, previously awarded when an overpayment occurred under Council Tax Benefit, is not applicable under CTR.
- i) The period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive CTR is limited to a maximum of 4 weeks (subject to specific exceptions).
- j) Child Benefit and Child Maintenance will not be counted as income in the CTR calculation.
- k) Benefits that are paid to cover child care costs will not be counted as income in the CTR calculation.
- l) Universal Credit Limited Capacity To Work element will not be counted as income in the CTR calculation.
- m) Universal Credit Housing element will not be counted as income in the CTR calculation.
- n) If any claimant, partner, child in the household is in receipt of PIP, or DLA the claim will automatically be granted the maximum 70% award.

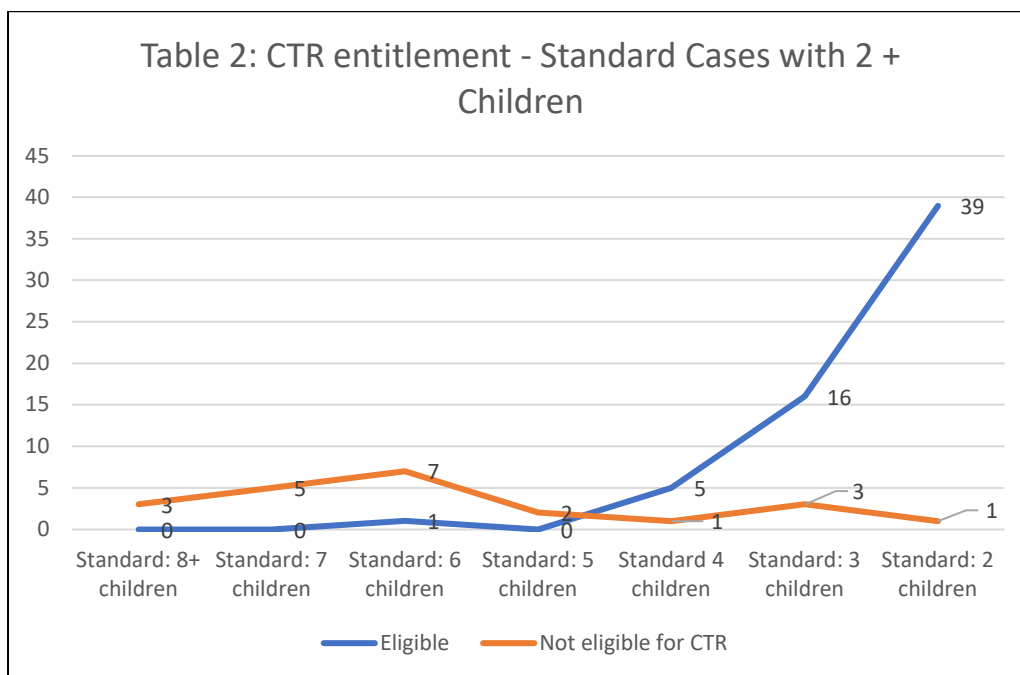
o) No Band Restriction will apply to the CTR scheme.

2.0 Analysis of Caseload

2.1 Table 1 below shows the breakdown of the existing LCTS caseload based on income type.



- 2.2 Those in receipt of passported benefits, Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, and Employment Support Allowance SC – 54% of the total caseload - will continue to receive support under CTR at the maximum level (i.e. 70% of their Council Tax liability).
- 2.3 Those in receipt of Universal Credit or on a 'standard' income – 46% of the total caseload - will receive 0%, 20%, 40%, or 70% under CTR, depending where they fall within the table at para 1.1 based on income and household makeup.
- 2.4 Further analysis has been undertaken across these groups (and specifically those with larger families – i.e. 2+ children) to understand the impact of the CTR scheme on their entitlement.
- 2.5 This identified 193 Universal Credit claims and 83 'standard' claims with families of 2 or more children.
- 2.6 Most of the Universal Credit claims were found to still qualify under CTR for support that was generally in line with the level awarded under LCTS.
- 2.7 In contrast, 22 of the 83 'standard' claims – predominantly those where the family receives earned income and has 5 or more children - do not qualify at all under CTR (see Table 2 below).



- 2.8 These 22 claims equate to 1.2% of the entire LCTS caseload and, in all cases, they fail to qualify because their net income (after childcare, child benefit, and the flat rate £20 earnings disregard is discounted) exceeds the top income bracket in the banded table (i.e. £500+ per week).
- 2.9 Given the small number of cases impacted in this way a Transitional Protection Scheme (Appendix D) has been developed to allow automatic 'top ups' to be issued to existing LCTS customers who suffer a loss of 75% or more in support, as a direct result of moving from CTR to LCTS.
- 2.10 A Transitional Protection Scheme is deemed the easiest way to mitigate and monitor the impact of the scheme to help inform the scheme design for 2024/25.



Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023-24

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

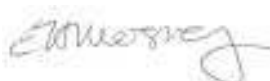
Nov 2022

Strategy and Policy EqIA

All strategies and policies must be initially screened for their positive and negative equality impacts.

This initial screening will determine whether or not it is necessary to carry out a full EqIA for the strategy or policy.

This template has been designed to help you initially screen your strategy or policy and, if necessary, undertake a full EqIA .

Title of strategy or policy:	Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Person undertaking EqIA:	Nick Bale
Head of Service:	 Eddie Mosuro
Department:	Customer & Digital Services
Date EqIA completed:	22.11.22

Strategy and policy overview

Strategy and policy overview	
What is the strategy or policy intending to achieve?	To fulfil the Local Authorities legal obligation under the Localism Act to provide a Localised Council Tax Support Scheme with effect from 1 st April 2023.
What are the summary aims and objectives of the strategy or policy?	<p>To provide a simplified Council Tax Reduction Scheme that replaces the current Local Council Tax Support (LCTS).</p> <p>The Council has the ability to determine the level of support given to working age applicants only - the scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by Central Government, and therefore not something which the Council can vary.</p> <p>CTR provides support to working age council tax payers who have a low income. The level of support (the % by which their Council Tax liability is reduced) is determined by the total income and household make up.</p> <p>Since the introduction of LCTS in 2013, the overall scheme adopted by the Council has remained broadly the same, with only minor technical changes allowed, to replicate changes to the wider Central Government welfare system, changes to Housing Benefit legislation, and to reflect the roll out of Universal Credit.</p>

Appendix C

Who will benefit from implementing the strategy or policy?	<p>The proposed CTR scheme for 2022/23 will benefit working age people on low incomes by providing them with support to pay their Council Tax.</p>
What are the links to the Council's corporate priorities?	<p>This Policy is an essential 'Enabler' to Resources within the Council's Corporate Plan - sound and strategic financial management is essential to ensuring that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and to help maintain and/or improve services.</p>
What are the links to other Council strategies and policies?	<p>The CTR scheme links to;</p> <p>The Exceptional Hardship Policy The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy: <u>Castle Point Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2024</u></p>
What are the links to other community strategies and policies?	<p>The National Child Poverty Strategy: <u>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-new-approach-to-child-poverty-tackling-the-causes-of-disadvantage-and-transforming-families-lives</u></p>

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 introduces 2 specific statutory duties on public bodies such as local authorities:

- **Socio-economic duty:**
 - Have due regard when making strategic decisions to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage
- **Single (integrated) equality duty:**
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation or any other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not
 - Foster good relations between people who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not

The Equality Act 2010 brings together all of the different equality strands and refers to them as “**protected characteristics**”:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Initial screening

This initial screening template will determine whether or not the strategy or policy requires a full EqlA
If any of the answers to the 6 screening questions is “yes”, then a full EqlA will be required.

Initial screening		
Does the strategy or policy aim to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage?	Yes / No	The Policy fundamentally aims to provide financial assistance in meeting Council Tax costs for those disadvantaged by socio-economic factors.
Does the strategy or policy aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	Yes / No	The pension age scheme is prescribed by Central Government. The working age scheme is prescribed by the Council with due regard to Guidance that has previously been issued by government in relation to the treatment of vulnerable groups and work incentives. The design of the working age scheme seeks to eliminate discrimination.
Does the strategy or policy aim to advance equality of opportunity?	Yes / No	The Policy aims to provide support with Council Tax for those who are socio-economically disadvantaged whilst also encouraging people into work. It is recognised that opportunities for some groups may not be equal and therefore the Policy has been designed to provide protection for those groups where advancement of equal opportunity would be restricted.

Appendix C

Does the strategy or policy aim to foster good community relations?	Yes / No	Not applicable.
Does the strategy or policy have the potential to make a negative contribution to equality?	Yes / No	The scheme may make a negative contribution to equality for certain groups – children, families, lone parents etc.
Does the strategy or policy make a positive contribution to equality?	Yes / No	Pension age people are specifically protected under Government Regulations.
Initial screening outcome	Full EqlA is required	Initial screening outcome

Full assessment

Information gathering	
What quantitative and qualitative information is there?	<p>Appendix A of the September 2022 Cabinet Report sets out some of the qualitative information considered when proposing the preferred options for the 2023/24 CTR scheme to Council for public consultation.</p> <p>Analysis was undertaken across a sample of cases from each household type/ income band to understand the average financial impact the scheme would have in range of different scenarios and as a consequence enhancements were added to the basic scheme option to 'smooth out' the impact.</p>
What additional information is required?	<p>Following consultation, further analysis was undertaken with specific regard to the impact on large families and those existing claimants who may 'lose out' from the transition from LCTS to CTR;</p> <p>S:\Corporate\LCTS\Reports\2023 - 24 Scheme Reports\2023 - 24 Council Reports 30.11.22\Council Report - CTR Impact Analysis APPENDIX B.docx</p> <p>This identified the need for a Transitional Protection Policy aimed at mitigating the impact to those existing customers who would lose 75% or more in support as a result of the transition from LCTS to LCTR;</p> <p>\\cpbc-data02.cpbpc.local\Shared\Corporate\LCTS\Reports\2023 - 24 Scheme Reports\2023 - 24 Council Reports 30.11.22\Council Report - Transitional Protection Policy 2023.24 APPENDIX D.docx</p>
What are the outcomes of any internal and/or external consultation with stakeholders?	<p>Consultation on the scheme took place between September and November 2022. The results of the consultation are available here:</p>

Appendix C

What further consultation is required?	<p>S:\Corporate\LCTS\Reports\2023 - 24 Scheme Reports\2023 - 24 Council Reports 30.11.22\Council Report - CTR Consultation Results APPENDIX A.docx</p> <p>No further consultation is required.</p>
What examples are there of existing good practice?	<p>The scheme mirrors the CTR schemes adopted by Basildon and Brentwood Council's, however the configuration of the banding table and the disregarding of certain income types has been designed to meet the local needs of Castle Point residents and minimise the impact to customers of the move from the existing LCTS scheme to the new CTR scheme. As such the scheme is regarded as still reflecting the guidance from DCLG outlining good practice with regards to treatment of vulnerable groups and incentives to work (both published in May 2012) which were previously used to inform the LCTS scheme design;</p> <p>http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscvulnerablepeople</p> <p>http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lscworkincentives</p> <p>The Local Government Finance Bill: Localizing Support for Council Tax – Updated Impact Assessment (published Aug 2011) also informed the LCTS scheme and has therefore been reflected into the CTR scheme.</p> <p>http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/lgfblocalisingcounciltax</p>

Making a judgement	
How will the strategy or policy eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	<p>Higher Rate Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long-term conditions. and customers may also receive additional financial support through the Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p> <p>Without these elements the policy could potentially be discriminatory to those who fall within the 'disability' characteristic group.</p> <p>No other impacts on protected groups have been identified.</p>
How will the strategy or policy advance equality of opportunity?	<p>The Policy is compliant with prescribed Regulations that protect Pension Age people. This advances equality of opportunity for those who fall within the 'age' characteristic group (specifically those of Pension age) who would otherwise be disadvantaged by the schemes fundamental incentives to work.</p> <p>Working parents will continue to receive an earnings disregard, as part of the calculation of their income.</p> <p>Higher Rate Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions.</p> <p>People with disabilities may also receive additional financial support through the Exceptional Hardship Fund.</p>

Appendix C

	<p>This advances equality of opportunity for those who fall within the 'disability' characteristic group who would otherwise be disadvantaged and may have less opportunity to improve their financial circumstances through work.</p> <p>The policy seeks to advance equality of opportunity for those within communities that are more likely to have larger families for religious reasons, through the adoption of a CTR Transitional Protection Scheme – which will afford automatic additional support those who might otherwise see their support levels significantly reduced under CTR.</p> <p>No other impacts on protected groups have been identified.</p>
How will the strategy or policy foster good community relations?	No impacts on protected groups identified – not applicable.
<p>Does the strategy or policy have the potential to make a negative contribution to equality?</p> <p>If so, which groups with “protected characteristics” will be affected and what are the reasons?</p>	<p>Working Age people aged over 18 will be required to pay more than those of Pension Age.</p> <p>People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more than those above pension age. This is due to the Prescribed Regulations which automatically protect people of Pension Age.</p> <p>The locally funded nature of the scheme that applies to those of working age, compared to the Prescribed Regulations that apply to those of pension age, mean it is not financially viable to completely protect all protected characteristic groups from the full effects of this scheme.</p>
What can be done to address any contribution to inequality caused by the strategy or policy?	Working Age people aged over 18 will be required to pay more:

Appendix C

	<p>The Council actively supports customers with information and advice on income maximisation, financial capability, and debt management. A flat rate earnings disregard remains part of the scheme to incentivise work.</p> <p>People with disabilities who are below pensionable age will need to pay more:</p> <p>Higher Rate Disability Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions.</p> <p>A discretionary Exceptional Hardship Fund is available to provide additional financial assistance to those who are particularly vulnerable and suffering exceptional financial hardship.</p>
What can be done to assist understanding of the strategy or policy?	<p>Details of the scheme will be publicised on the Council's website.</p> <p>Hard copy and alternative formats of the scheme documents will be made available (i.e. Braille, Large Print, Audio) on request.</p> <p>An on-line 'Calculator' is available to assist those who want to find out if they would be entitled to CTR.</p> <p>First Contact staff are available to explain the scheme to any individuals or organisations who require assistance.</p> <p>Partners, national bodies, and local advice and support agencies are notified of the scheme adopted each year.</p>

Appendix C

Action plan					
Equality objective	Action(s)	Lead responsibility	Resources	Timescale(s)	Outcome(s)
Assist understanding of the Policy	Refresh website and hard copy information once 2023/24 Final Scheme is formally adopted.	First Contact Manager	Staff time	Jan '23 – Mar '23	All affected groups fully aware of the Policy and how it will affect them.
Assist understanding of the Policy	Engage with and raise awareness amongst local advice and support groups.	Benefits Manager	Staff time	Jan '23 - Mar '23	All local advice and support groups fully aware of the policy and how it will affect their customers.
Advancing equality of opportunity	Proactively identify suitable cases for Exceptional Hardship and Transitional Protection awards, using internal knowledge of debts and losses of more than 75% of CTR compared to LCTS, and administer awards accordingly.	Benefits Manager	Staff time, Exceptional Hardship funding	Apr '23 – Mar '24	Reduce impact of the scheme on those suffering exceptional financial hardship.
Advancing equality of opportunity	Maintain an effective range of advice and support services to	Head of Customer & Digital Services	Staff time, General Advice & Support Services funding	Apr '23 – Mar '24	Customers adequately supported and equipped with

Appendix C

	ensure robust assistance with financial capability, budgeting, and debt related issues.				skills to manage financial impact.
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**Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Transitional Protection
for
Working Age Claimants
2023/24**

Appendix 1

1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 1st April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was withdrawn and replaced by “Local Council Tax Support ” (LCTS).
- 1.2 Under LCTS legislation, the scheme for pensioner age applicants is prescribed by Central government, whilst the scheme for working age applicants is prescribed by each Local Authority.
- 1.3 Castle Point Borough Council designed and consulted upon an LCTS scheme for working age applicants and this came into effect on 1st April 2013 and since then the scheme has been reviewed, approved, and published annually on the Council’s website.
- 1.4 Following a review and public consultation Castle Point Borough Council has decided to move from a LCTS scheme to a more simplified Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme from 1st April 2023.
- 1.5 Whilst the CTR scheme continues to retain all the provisions of the existing Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) scheme it is recognised that the transition from LCTS to CTR will inevitably impact some customers and the Council has therefore decided to mitigate these impacts through a Transitional Protection arrangement.
- 1.6 This document therefore acts as an addendum to the existing EHF Policy and sets out new and additional criteria under which the EHF scheme can be used to award Transitional Protection for the year 2023/24.

2.0 Objective of Transitional Protection (TP)

- 2.1 Transitional Protection is intended to help existing LCTS claimants who have been detrimentally impacted as a consequence of the move from LCTS to CTR by;
 - a) assisting them to meet their Council Tax liability,
 - b) preventing exceptional hardship where possible,
 - c) reducing potential write offs of Council Tax debt,

3.0 Who will be eligible for TP

- 3.1 Customers will be eligible for TP where they satisfy all of the following criteria;
 - a) they have a liability for Council Tax for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

- b) they have been in receipt of Local Council Tax Support for a continuous period of at least three months up to and including the 31st of March 2023.
- c) the transition from LCTS to CTR in 2023/24 has resulted in them losing Council Tax Support of 75% or more based on the weekly award levels compared as at 31st March 2023 and 1st April 2023.

3.2 Customers who experience a reduction in CTR support of less than 75% based on the weekly award levels compared as at 31st March 2023 and 1st April 2023 and will not be eligible for TP but may still be eligible for additional support under the main EHF scheme if they can demonstrate exceptional hardship.

4.0 How will customers be identified for TP

4.1 There is no application process.

4.2 Cases that are receiving LCTS on the 31st of March 2023 will be migrated over to the new CTR scheme from the 1st of April 2023.

4.3 During the migration process, cases who have satisfied all of the conditions set out in para 3.1 will be manually identified by Officers for an automatic TP award.

5.0 How will TP be calculated, awarded, and notified

5.1 The TP award will be calculated as follows;

The weekly LCTS award as at 31st March 2023
Less
The weekly CTR award as at 1st April 2023
X
52 weeks

For example;

Weekly LCTS award	= £20.00
Weekly CTR award	= £5.00
Weekly Reduction	= £15.00
£15.00 x 52 weeks	= £780.00 TP award for 2023/24

- 5.2 The TP award will be awarded as a one-off credit against the customers Council Tax Account.
- 5.3 The customer will be sent a new Council Tax Bill reflecting the TP award.
- 5.4 Customers remain responsible for notifying the Local Authority of changes to their circumstances during 2023/24.
- 5.5 The TP award will only be altered where changes or errors come to light that retrospectively alter the LCTS/CTR weekly award levels as at 31st March 2023 and/or 1st April 2023.

6.0 General Information

- 6.1 This TP arrangement only applies to the year 2023/24.
- 6.2 The requirement for the TP arrangement to be extended beyond 2023/24 will be decided year to year, as the CTR scheme undergoes its annual review.
- 6.3 The award of TP does not negate the right for customers to apply for additional support under the main EHF scheme where they are experiencing exceptional hardship.