

# Community Impact Assessment

## Full Assessment Form v3 Nov 2010

<b>Service</b>	Revenues and Benefits
----------------	-----------------------

<b>Title of Policy, Function Or Service</b>	Council Tax Support scheme - Consultation
---	---

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Zoe Kent
---------------------	----------

<b>People Involved With the CIA</b>	David Clifford
-------------------------------------	----------------

<b>Type of Policy, Function Or Service</b>	Existing	
	New/proposed	x
	Changed	

### Step 1 – Identify Aims

#### What are the aims of your policy, service or function?

From 1st April 2013 every Council has to introduce its own localised Council Tax Support scheme to replace the nationally designed Council Tax Benefit scheme. Between 11-14% of current funding is being removed by the Government. Councils have the discretion to design their own local scheme and decide who to financially support. There are some nationally prescribed elements to the scheme including the full protection of pensioners (i.e. we cannot reduce the benefit currently paid to pensioners as a direct result of developing our own scheme) Our approach has been to develop a scheme that is fair to all which also takes into account the reality of the funding cut. Wherever possible we are looking to protect the vulnerable and those who are least able to afford to pay more Council Tax.

#### Who is going to benefit from this policy, service or function and how?

All current and future recipients of Council Tax Benefit / Council Tax support are affected by the changes. In addition, as we are considering changes to the Council Tax discounts/exemptions relating to second homes and empty properties then all current and future recipients of these discounts/exemptions will also be affected.

**What outcomes do you want to achieve?**

To ensure that all groups of the community who will be claiming Council Tax Support are treated fairly. Many claimants will be paying towards Council Tax for the first time. The scheme needs to balance between the groups that may have higher expenditure because of their needs who however may receive higher benefits because of those needs and those who are seen to not have any extra needs i.e. disability or children who may not have extra expenditure but will be living on a lower income.

**What could prevent people from getting the most out of the policy, service or function?**

**How will you tell people about it?**

A consultation was carried out from 30<sup>th</sup> July 2012 – 7<sup>th</sup> October 2012. When the scheme has been agreed by Members an advertising campaign will be launched and all current Council Tax Benefit customers will be contacted.

**Step 2 – Collect and Use Evidence**

**What Existing Data Do You Have?**

Data from the Academy software system including the modelling tool which can be used to analysis the amount of claimants and the groups they fall into and how they will be affected by the scheme.  
Data from the recent Council Tax Support Scheme consultation.

**Using your existing data what does it tell you?**

Results can be found in the analysis of the consultation exercise and the analysis of current working age claimants using the Academy modelling tool.

**Breakdown of working age claimants:**

<b>Group</b>	<b>No of passported claims</b>	<b>No of Non-Passported claims</b>	<b>Total</b>
Severe disability	340	71	<b>411</b>
Disability	616	326	<b>942</b>

Disabled child premium	280	135	<b>415</b>
Lone parent child under 5	887	236	<b>1,123</b>
Child under 5	405	303	<b>708</b>
Family Premium 5 or more children	19	1	<b>20</b>
Family Premium 4 children	28	21	<b>49</b>
Family Premium 3 children	118	93	<b>211</b>
Family Premium 2 children	305	250	<b>555</b>
Family Premium 1 child	486	404	<b>890</b>
Family Premium	112	91	<b>203</b>
Working	5	313	<b>318</b>
Other	1,674	248	<b>1,922</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,275</b>	<b>2,492</b>	<b>7,767</b>

#### **Do You Need To Plug Any Gaps?**

We will need to ensure that all customers who will be entitled to claim Council Tax Support are aware of how they are affected by the scheme.

#### **How Can You Do This?**

An advertising campaign will take place to ensure all current claimants are aware of the scheme. The Revenues and Benefits section will also work with the voluntary sector to ensure claimants receive appropriate advice and help where necessary.

#### **Are You Using Your Partners, Stakeholders and Councillors effectively?**

We set up a Council Tax Support group consisting of Lead officers, senior managers and Members to look into setting up the scheme. We have worked together with stakeholders and we have worked closely with all Kent authorities including the major preceptors.

<b>Step 3 – Assess the Impact</b>
<b>Who are the users of the policy, function or service?</b>
Residents of Swale who are currently claiming Council Tax Benefit who will move on to Council Tax Support in April 2013 and new claimants from April 2013.
<b>Is the take up representative of the community?</b>
Yes
<b>Who else could or should be users?</b>
Anyone on a low income who may be entitled to help towards their Council Tax.
<b>How does the service impact on different groups?</b>
<b>Race or Ethnicity</b>
The scheme should not have an effect on residents due to their race or ethnicity.
<b>Sex</b>
The scheme should not have an effect on residents due to their sex.
<b>Disability</b>
<p>311 respondents out of 668 responses (47%) to the CTS consultation stated that they have a disability or a long term health condition which affects their day-to-day life. In response to the consultation questions. In response to the questions asked, the amount of respondents who had answered yes, no or don't know/no opinion/ left the question blank was almost the same percentage as the respondents as a whole. Although claimant's who are disabled may have higher living expenses due to their disability, for example higher heating and travelling costs. They normally receive extra income to pay towards these expenses such as Disability Living Allowance care and/or mobility paid at the rate to meet the level of their disability. If they are in receipt of Housing Benefit and do not receive full (passported) benefit they will receive extra premiums to cover their disability which means they should receive a higher amount of Housing Benefit.</p> <p>The Council Tax Support scheme will be likely to give the same premiums to disabled claimants which will mean that the applicable amount setting the level of income that they need to live on will include a premium to allow for their disability.</p>

The consequences of not awarding a special exemption to disabled claimants may include:

- Disabled claimants may be unable to work to increase income to pay towards the cost of Council Tax.
- Disabled claimants may have to use income that is normally used towards activities outside of the home. This could lead to disabled customers becoming isolated
- Income may be used towards Council Tax in preference to electricity/gas costs which may lead to heating not be used which could lead to health problems.
- Income may be used towards Council Tax instead of buying healthier food which may lead to further health complications.

### **Sexual Orientation**

The scheme should not have an effect on residents due to their sexual orientation.

### **Age**

Claimants who are under 25 receive lower amounts of benefits if single or couples with no children. This means they have lower amounts of income to live on. The consequences are, claimants who are under 25 may find they have not got enough income to pay towards their other general living expenses. This may lead to them not having enough money towards heating and food costs. The Borough may find this leads to an increase in crime in the area.

### **Religion or belief**

The scheme should not have an effect on residents due to their religion or belief

### **Gender Reassignment**

The scheme should not have an effect on residents due to gender reassignment

### **Marriage and Civil Partnerships**

The scheme should not have an effect on residents who are married or in a civil partnership

### **Pregnancy and Maternity**

Claimants who are pregnant need a healthier diet, the money for this could be used

towards Council Tax. Pregnancy may also make it harder for claimants to find employment.

### Other Socially Excluded Groups or Communities

Carers – The consequences of this scheme could mean that carers may feel that they either need to give up caring to earn extra income. They may also have to use income that would normally be used for other expenses towards their Council Tax.

### Are some people benefitting more than others? If so, why?

No, by designing a scheme which reduces Council Tax Support by the same percentage for all claimants (except pensioners who are protected) it means that no person should benefit more than another. The same percentage will be deducted at the end of the Council Tax Support calculation on every claim.

### Who have you consulted with?

The consultation was carried out on the website to give all interested parties a chance to respond. We have consulted with current Council Tax Benefit claimants, voluntary groups, external and internal partners, landlords, major preceptors parish councils. The consultation was advertised in local papers, road shows were held in Faversham, Sheerness and Sittingbourne. Meetings were held with local voluntary groups, partners and landlords.

### Do you need to consult further?

Yes		No	x
-----	--	----	---

### If you need to consult further or have not consulted yet please list who and how are you are going to consult with specific groups or communities

Who

--

How

--

## Step 4 – Ensure Fairness

**Are any groups affected in a different way to others as a result of the policy, function or service?**

One of the intended effects of the Council Tax Support scheme is to support the improved work incentives to be delivered through Universal Credit as part of the Government's programme of welfare reform. Some disabled claimants may find they do not have the same opportunities to move in to work as other claimants. Claimant's with young or disabled children may also find this a problem.

**If this benefits a particular group is it clear why that needs to be the case?**

**Does your policy, function or service either directly or indirectly discriminate?**

Yes		No	x
-----	--	----	---

**Does your policy, function or service either discriminate by association or perception?**

Yes		No	x
-----	--	----	---

**Is there a possible impact on community relations?**

No this should not have an impact on community relations

**If yes, how are you going to change this?**

**Step 5 – Finalise Your Decision**

**What changes or benefits have been made as a result of your consultation?**

Many consultation respondents said that they understood that they would have to pay something towards their Council Tax. They requested that the lower the Borough could keep the amount they would have to pay the more likely it would be that they would be able to meet the payments.

The Borough is recommending that the extra grant payment from DCLG is taken and the scheme is set at 8.5%. This would mean that claimants receiving full Council Tax Benefit will (based on 2012/13 Council Tax Charges) lose the following amounts from their Benefit:

Band	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
No	£80.14	£93.50	£106.86	£120.22	£146.93	£173.65	£200.36	£240.44

SPD	£1.54 pw	£1.80 pw	£2.06 pw	£2.31 pw	£2.83 pw	£3.34 pw	£3.85 pw	£4.62 pw
SPD (1 adult)	£60.11 £1.16 pw	£70.13 £1.35 pw	£80.15 £1.54 pw	£90.16 £1.73 pw	£110.20 £2.12 pw	£130.24 £2.50 pw	£150.27 £2.89 pw	£180.33 £3.47 pw

**What outcome have you reached?**

**Can you explain how the decision was reached?**

**If you are in a position to introduce the policy, project or service but still have information to collect or actions to complete to ensure all equality groups have been covered please list with timescales.**

**How is your decision making process is recorded?**

**Have you involved your councillors and senior officers if needed?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	-------------------------------------	----	--------------------------

**If yes please give further details**

A Council Tax Support group was set up which comprised of councillors and senior officers. Senior officer across Kent also met to design the scheme which was taken to the Kent Chief's group and Kent Forum (Kent leaders).

**Have you involved stakeholders if needed?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	-------------------------------------	----	--------------------------

**If yes please give further details**

Meetings were held with stakeholders during the consultation period.

**Example - Contact Centre CIA**

**Step 6 – Communicate What Has Happened**

**Do the users know?**



Yes		No	
<b>Have you told partners?</b>			
Yes		No	
<b>Have you addressed any consultation responses in a positive way?</b>			
Yes		No	
<b>If yes please give further details</b>			
To mitigate the effects of the scheme extra staff have been taken on to help claimants with payment arrangements and general advice.			

<b>Step 7 – Monitor and Review Your Decision</b>			
<b>How are you going to monitor this policy, function or service? Provide details of how often and who will be responsible?</b>			
<b>Does the service policy or function do what you intended?</b>			
Yes		No	
<b>Has anything changed?</b>			
Yes		No	
<b>If yes please give further details</b>			
<b>If yes, how have you revised the policy, function or service?</b>			

<b>Step 8 – CIA Group Approval</b>			
Please send a copy of your completed CIA to the <b>Community Impact Assessment Group for approval</b> . We will contact you any comments or queries			

<b>about your full CIA.</b>			
<b>CIA Approval</b>			
<b>The Community Impact Assessment Group has approved this CIA</b>			
<b>The Community Impact Assessment Group as approved this CIA in principle subject to further evidence being provided</b>			
<b>Name of Lead Officer</b>			
<b>Signature</b>			
<b>Date</b>		<b>Contact number</b>	

<b>Step 9 – Publish Your Approved CIA</b>	
<b>Please confirm an electronic copy of the approved CIA has been sent to the <b>Website Officer</b> to be published on the Council’s website</b>	