

# West Devon Hub Committee



West Devon  
Borough  
Council

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Agenda</b>								
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Tuesday, 7th June, 2016</b>								
<b>Time:</b>	<b>2.00 pm</b>								
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Chamber - Kilworthy Park</b>								
<b>Full Members:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chairman</b> Sanders</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Vice Chairman</b> Baldwin</p> <p><i>Members:</i></p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">Cllr M J R Benson</td> <td>Parker</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Edmonds</td> <td>Sampson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moody</td> <td>Samuel</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oxborough</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Cllr M J R Benson	Parker	Edmonds	Sampson	Moody	Samuel	Oxborough	
Cllr M J R Benson	Parker								
Edmonds	Sampson								
Moody	Samuel								
Oxborough									
<b>Substitutes:</b>	Councillors:								
<b>Interests – Declaration and Restriction on Participation:</b>	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest not entered in the Authority's register or local non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda (subject to the exception for sensitive information) and to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on an item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.								
<b>Committee administrator:</b>	Member.Services@swdevon.gov.uk								

**1. Apologies for absence**

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Members are invited to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting.

If Councillors have any questions relating to predetermination, bias or interests in items on this Agenda, then please contact the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

**3. Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

To consider those items which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered by the Meeting as matters of urgency (if any)

**4. Confirmation of Minutes**

**1 - 8**

Minutes of meeting held 19 April 2016 (previously circulated)

**5. Future garden waste service design (Cllr Sampson)**

**9 - 20**

**6. Tavistock Business Improvement District (Cllr Oxborough)**

**21 - 28**

**7. Consultation on proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/18 (Cllr Samuel)**

**29 - 50**

**8. Planning Obligations Thresholds (Cllr Parker)**

**51 - 58**

**9. Transitional Resources (Cllr Edmonds)**

**59 - 70**

# Agenda Item 4

At a Meeting of the **HUB COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, **TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the **19<sup>th</sup>** day of **APRIL, 2016** at **2.00pm**

**Present:**

	Cllr P R Sanders – Chairman
	Cllr R E Baldwin – Vice-Chairman
Cllr M J R Benson	Cllr W G Cann OBE
Cllr J B Moody	Cllr R J Oxborough
Cllr R D Sampson	Cllr L Samuel

**Apologies:** Cllr G Parker

**In attendance:** Executive Director (Strategy and Commissioning)  
Executive Director (Service Delivery and Commercial Development)  
Operational Manager – Environment Services  
Group Manager Business Development  
Senior Case Manager

**Other Members in attendance:**

Cllrs Ball, Cheadle, Cloke, Edmonds, Leech, Moyse, Musgrave, Pearce and Yelland

**\*HC71      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed but none were made.

**\*HC 72      MINUTES**  
The Minutes of the Hub Committee Meeting held on 22 March 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**HC 73      OPTIONS FOR FUTURE GARDEN WASTE SERVICE DESIGN**  
The Lead Hub Member for Commercial Services presented a report that sought approval of recommendations from the Waste Working Group in relation to the future of the garden waste service. As part of his introduction, the Lead Hub Member amended the first recommendation to reflect the fact that the matter required the approval of full Council.

During discussion on this item, a number of Members expressed disquiet at the proposal to charge for collection of garden waste, although some Members appreciated the need to introduce the proposal at this stage rather than wait until a new contract was in place. One Member expressed the view that the first recommendation was of such significance that it should be discussed at full Council.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. Council be **RECOMMENDED** that Waste Working Group Option C as set out in the presented report – to provide an opt in, charged garden service with collection from reusable sacks, be approved, to take effect from 1 April 2017 or on commencement of the waste contract if later;
2. The Council steps up the promotion of home composting as the best environmental option for garden waste and a targeted campaign in tandem with any changes brought about by recommendation 1 be introduced; and
3. Any changes considered necessary to the terms as highlighted are delegated to the Lead Specialist Waste Strategy (Strategy and Commissioning) in consultation with the Lead Hub Member for Commercial Services.

#### **HC 74**

#### **REVIEW OF LONG TERM PARKING SCHEME**

The Lead Hub Member for Commercial Services presented a report that recommended to Council to approve the continuation of the long stay parking scheme in Okehampton and Tavistock. He referred to the detailed information contained within the appendices and the information circulated separately.

The majority of Members were in favour of the proposal. The Operations Manager Environment Services reported that both local Chambers of Commerce were in favour of the proposals. One Member admitted he had initially been sceptical of the proposals when introduced, but accepted that they had proven to increase income and footfall to the towns. Another Member raised concerns and felt the number of empty shops indicated that the proposal was not increasing footfall into the town centres.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the continuation of the long stay parking scheme in Okehampton and Tavistock.

#### **HC 75**

#### **REVIEW OF CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The Lead Hub Member for Performance and Resources introduced a report that sought approval to adopt the revised Corporate Complaints Policy. The Executive Director (SD & CD) advised that the document presented at Appendix 1 set out the formal procedure, but that in all possible instances the intention would be to deal with a complaint before it reached the formal stage. A number of staff were receiving complaints training and complaints should be seen as an opportunity to solve a problem rather than a position to be defended.

It was then **RESOLVED** that Council be **RECOMMENDED**:

1. To adopt the revised Corporate Complaints Policy as presented at Appendix 1 to the report; and
2. That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Lead Hub Member to make any minor amendments as necessary.

**HC 76 DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The Leader presented a report that set out the draft calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2016/17.

The Executive Director (S&C) requested that an eighteen month calendar be presented to full Council to enable better forward planning for both Members and officers over the summer season.

It was then **RESOLVED**:

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to approve the calendar of meetings for 2016/17 as set out in presented Appendix A.

**HC 77 RESOURCES TO DELIVER INCOME GENERATION PROPOSALS**

The Deputy Leader introduced a report that set out the rationale for the recruitment of a Development Surveyor. He noted that neither West Devon Borough Council nor South Hams District Council had the appropriate expertise at the present time to bring forward income generation capital projects. In responding to questions, he confirmed that it would be important to monitor the performance of the post holder. The Leader noted that this post could refer to third party reasons for lack of achievement and appropriate performance management would be essential. The Executive Director (S&C) explained how the postholder performance would be monitored. It was also confirmed that this post would be reviewed and evaluated after two years.

It was then **RESOLVED**:

That Council be **RECOMMENDED** to recruit a permanent level four grade specialist post, shared between South Hams and West Devon, on a 60% SH/40% WD split to support the further investigation and delivery of income generation proposals approved at full council on 5 April 2016, as detailed in para 3 of the presented report.

(The Meeting terminated at 3.15 pm)

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Chairman

## DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016 - 2017

### May 2016

- 10 WD ANNUAL COUNCIL
- 12 Devon County Council
- 12 West Devon Site Inspections
- 19-21 Devon County Show
- 24 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 30 Bank Holiday

### June 2016

- 07 Hub Committee
- 09 WD Site Inspections
- 14 Overview and Scrutiny External Committee
- 16 WD Site Inspections
- 20-24 EU Referendum this week
- 28 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 28 Special Council meeting

### July 2016

- 05-07 LGA Conference
- 05 WD Audit Committee
- 12 Hub Committee
- 14 WD Site Inspections
- 15 Devon Building Control Partnership
- 19 WD Audit Committee am
- 19 Overview and Scrutiny Internal Committee
- 23 July – 31 August – School Holiday
- 26 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 26 Special Council

### August 2016

- 02 Overview and Scrutiny External Committee
- 11 WD Site Inspections
- 23 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 29 Bank Holiday

## DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016 - 2017

### September 2016

- 06 Overview and Scrutiny Internal Committee
- 08 WD Site Inspections
- 20 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 20 Hub Committee pm
- 27 WD Audit Committee am

### October 2016

- 04 WD Council
- 06 Devon County Council meeting
- 06 WD Site Inspections
- 11 Overview and Scrutiny External Committee
- 12-14 SOLACE Conference
- 18 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 24-28 Half Term

### November 2016

- 01 Hub Committee
- 03 WD Site Inspections
- 08 Overview and Scrutiny Internal Committee
- 11 Devon Building Control Partnership
- 15 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 29 Standards Committee
- 29 Hub Committee

### December 2016

- 01 WD Site Inspections
- 06 WD Council
- 08 Devon County Council meeting
- 13 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 17 – 2 Jan School Holidays
- 22 WD Site Inspections

### January 2017

- 10 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 10 WD Audit Committee
- 17 WD Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016 - 2017

- 24 Hub Committee
- 26 WD Site Inspections

### February 2017

- 07 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 07 WD Council
- 13-17 Half Term
- 16 Devon County Council meeting
- 21 WD CTSP
- 23 WD Site Inspections
- 28 Hub Committee

### March 2017

- 07 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 07 Overview and Scrutiny External Committee
- 14 WD Audit Committee
- 23 WD Site Inspections
- 24 Devon Building Control Partnership
- 28 Hub Committee

### April 2017

- 03-17 School Holidays
- 04 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 11 WD Council
- 13 WD Site Inspections
- 14 Good Friday
- 17 Easter Monday
- 18 Overview and Scrutiny Internal Committee
- 25 Planning and Licensing Committee

### May 2017

- 01 Bank Holiday
- 02 Hub Committee
- 09 Overview and Scrutiny External Committee
- 18 WD Site Inspections
- 23 WD Annual Council
- 30 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 30-2 June Half Term



## DRAFT CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016 - 2017

### June 2017

- 06 Overview and Scrutiny Internal Committee
- 15 WD Site Inspections
- 20 Hub Committee
- 20 WD Audit Committee
- 27 Planning and Licensing Committee

### July 2017

- 10 Overview and Scrutiny External Committee
- 13 WD Site Inspections
- 18 WD Audit Committee
- 18 Hub Committee pm
- 25 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 27 School Holidays

### August 2017

- 01 WD Council
- 10 WD Site Inspections
- 22 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 28 Bank Holiday

### September 2017

- 07 WD Site Inspections
- 12 Hub Committee
- 19 Planning and Licensing Committee
- 26 WD Council

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# Agenda Item 5

Report to: **Hub**  
Date: **7 June 2016**  
Title: **Future garden waste service design**  
Portfolio Area: **Cllr R F D Sampson Commercial Services**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:

Author: **Jane Savage** Role: **Lead Specialist Waste Strategy (Strategy & Commissioning)**

Contact: **01822 813657**  
**jane.savage@swdevon.gov.uk**

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## **Recommendations:**

**The Waste Working Group recommends that at the time that the waste services contract is formally procured:**

1. An opt-in, financially sustainable, garden waste recycling service with collection from reusable sacks be approved
2. Concessions to the service are applied for residents on low incomes
3. A comprehensive publicity campaign is delivered highlighting the positive messaging around the retention of the service despite budgetary cuts and that the Council has considered the fairest method for residents
4. A structured campaign is delivered to promote home composting, as the best environmental option, along with community composting
5. Any changes considered necessary to the terms as highlighted are delegated to the Lead Specialist Waste Strategy (Strategy & Commissioning) in consultation with the Lead Hub Member for Commercial Services

## **1. Executive summary**

1.1 During 2015/16 the Council reviewed its priorities and agreed that the top priority is to achieve financial sustainability. The Council also stated that they do not want to see a reduction in the level and quality of the services delivered to their communities. Whilst the T18 programme has delivered programme efficiencies, more needs to be done to generate income and reduce cost from 2018 onwards if the Council is to meet its aims. Based on current financial modelling, by 2020/21, an additional £1.07m must be generated each year, by way of savings and/or additional income, to achieve a balanced budget.

1.2 A report entitled "Income Generation Proposals" was taken to Hub on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016 which highlighted a number of initiatives that when delivered will help to reduce this predicted budget gap. Charging for garden waste collection is one of the measures which can contribute towards funding this gap. It is recognised that there is a tension between service delivery perception and commercial decision making in this instance.

1.3 Nationally, councils are considering the frequency of their overall collection services, the need for chargeable green waste services, and other variants in terms of service delivery in order to provide both successful and affordable services. It is acknowledged that Members would have preferred for the service to remain unaffected.

1.4 The Waste Working Group presented the report 'Options for future garden waste service design' before Hub on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2016. At Council on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, it was resolved that an expanded report from the Group be presented to the next available Hub expanding Option C, to provide an opt-in charged garden service with collection from reusable sacks, in terms of financial implications, fly tipping risk and more detailed proposals for the promotion of home composting.

1.5 This further report of the Waste Working Group considers these points and recommends a financially sustainable option for the continuation of a garden waste collection service in West Devon which is insulated against potential additional cost threats from the waste disposal authority and future changes in legislation. The service would pay for itself, allowing the popular service to be retained and offering good value when viewed against other similar schemes both locally and around the country.

1.6 A decision is required now to inform the specification which will be sent to prospective bidders for the waste contract in early July. Should the future service be provided through a Local Authority Controlled Company, then the decision could be made in principle with a delayed introduction to suit future service needs.

1.7 The Group recommends that an opt-in, garden waste recycling service retaining collections from reusable sacks be adopted. This service would potentially reduce operational costs, and ensure that the service becomes financially sustainable. The standard service would be a fortnightly collection of four reusable sacks with a competitively set annual charge. Concessions would be applied to residents on low income including Pension Credits. Residents who choose not to opt in, would benefit from other concessions such as subsidised compost bins. A structured campaign on home composting would be supplemented by the promotion of community composting and food waste reduction.

1.8 The benefits of this change in service include:

- a) A financially sustainable service
- b) A fairer system for residents who do use the current system and a means of delivering a more bespoke service for residents who take up the service.
- c) Potential significant reduction in operational costs.
- d) Annual income may be expected of around £135,000 in the first year and £190,000 in subsequent years. If the service goes out to tender, the first year would be 2017-18.

1.9 The risks of this change include:

- a) A loss in public satisfaction
- b) A potential fall in recycling rate of between 2-6%
- c) A potential diversion of some of this waste into the residual waste stream
- d) A potential increase in fly tipping and bonfires though these are not expected to be significant

1.10 This report fits with the Council's core objectives of Environment and Resources.

## 2. Background

2.1.1 During 2015/16 the Council reviewed its priorities and agreed that the top priority is to achieve financial sustainability. The Council also stated that they do not want to see a reduction in the level and quality of the services delivered to their communities. It is acknowledged that whilst the T18 programme has been very effective at making delivered programme efficiencies, more needs to be done to generate income and reduce cost from 2018 onwards if the Council is to meet its aims. The following table illustrates the predicted budget (surplus)/gap from 2016/17 onwards as reported to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy:

	<b>2016/17</b> <b>£</b>	<b>2017/18</b> <b>£</b>	<b>2018/19</b> <b>£</b>	<b>2019/20</b> <b>£</b>	<b>2020/21</b> <b>£</b>
Annual budget (surplus)/gap	(669,292) budget surplus (One-off)	506,617 budget gap	571,781 budget gap	17,823 budget gap	(27,547) budget surplus
<b>TOTAL BUDGET GAP OVER THE 4 YEARS TO 2020/21</b>					<b>1,068,674</b>

2.1.2 Based on current financial modelling, this means by the financial year 2020/21, an additional £1.07m must be generated each year, by way of savings and/or additional income, to achieve a balanced budget.

2.1.3 A report entitled "Income Generation Proposals" was taken to Hub on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016 which highlighted a number of initiatives that when delivered will help to reduce this predicted budget gap. Charging for green waste is one of the income generation measures which can contribute towards funding this gap. It is recognised that there is a tension between service delivery perception and commercial decision making in this instance.

2.1.4 Whilst it is understood that the current garden waste service is highly regarded and Members would have preferred for the service to remain unaffected, changes in central Government thinking in relation to waste have led to the need for the Waste Working Group to consider service efficiencies for the future waste services contract. Nationally, many Councils are considering the frequency of their collection services with some already opting for 3 weekly collections of refuse. Many are also considering other variations in service delivery in order to provide both successful and affordable services, including chargeable garden waste collections.

2.1.5 Before 2004 West Devon did not offer a garden waste service to households. The current comprehensive service was introduced in 2010-11 with the support of central government funding. This funding also extended to disposal authorities and therefore the ability to collect this recycling stream from the household was created.

2.1.6 Austerity measures have reversed this position which leaves collection authorities in the position of wishing to support the householder in offering a robust, valued service but now recognising the financial costs of the service, which have changed since its introduction.

2.1.7 The garden waste collection service is not a statutory function of the Council and, if provided, can be charged for. The cost is currently shared by all council tax payers whether they use the service or not.

2.1.8 Most residents value the service and there would be significant reputational damage to the Council if it was withdrawn. Bearing this, along with the current budgetary position in mind, in considering the future specification for the waste service, the Waste Working Group brought the report 'Options for future garden waste service design' before Hub on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The report set out three options for the future of the service once the current contract expires on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Option C, to provide an opt-in, charged garden service with collection from reusable sacks, was resolved by Hub subject to full Council approval.

2.1.9 This option provides a financially sustainable option for the continuation of a garden waste collection service in West Devon which is insulated against potential additional cost threats from the waste disposal authority and future changes in legislation. The service recommended by

the Group, would pay for itself, allowing it to be retained indefinitely and offering good value when viewed against other local authority schemes.

2.1.10 About 45% of English local authorities already apply an annual charge for this service and more are considering introducing one in the near future. Annual charges range considerably from one authority to another with some London boroughs charging almost £100 per year. About half of the Devon Authorities apply charges which range from £34 to £47 per year. East Devon do not provide any garden waste service although a local community group provides a limited, charged service. North Devon are currently considering charges which if approved, would leave only West Devon and South Hams Councils offering uncharged services in Devon. Cornwall apply charges across the county. No concessions are offered by any of these authorities.

2.1.11 At Council on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016, it was *"RESOLVED that the Council urgently refer back to the Waste Working Group "Option C" for further consideration. Specifically the service is to be considered in terms of financial implications, risk of an increase in fly-tipping in the event of charges being introduced and more detailed proposals for the promotion of home composting. An expanded report is requested to be presented to the next available Hub Committee meeting."* This report aims to address these points.

2.2 This report is pertinent now in the event that the Council decides to continue to deliver the service through an external provider as this decision will inform the specification which will be sent to prospective bidders in early July 2016.

2.2.1 Should the future service be provided through a Local Authority Controlled Company, then any decision taken now would be more flexible in terms of introduction as a decision could be made in principle but the introduction of any chosen option could be delayed until such a time that it is needed to inform future service needs.

2.3 This report fits with the Council's core objectives of Environment and Resources. It is also in line with developing action plans from the Devon Authorities Strategic Waste Committee and follows the principals of the international waste hierarchy.

2.4 The garden waste service affects all households in the Borough.

### **3. Outcomes/outputs**

3.1 The recommendations offer a financially sustainable garden waste recycling service which enables the Council to continue to provide a much valued service for residents. It will be competitive against other schemes, offers concession for those on low incomes, and promotes home composting and supports those households that choose to compost their garden waste.

3.2 If the service is tendered, the first year of operation will be 2017-18.

#### 4. Options available and consideration of risk

4.1 The two options considered here are the current service against a self-funding service where an annual charge is applied to all except those with low incomes which includes those on Pension Credits.

Opportunity/Risk	Current service	Self-funding service with concessions for low income households including those in receipt of Pension Credits
Financial implications	Would miss the opportunity for delivering financial savings which would ensure future sustainability for the service. Potential risk that the Waste Disposal Authority may charge for this type of waste in the future. If it subsequently became desirable to charge during the lifetime of a future contract to counteract this, then full operational savings of up to *£135,000 per year would be unlikely to be passed on to the Council by the contractor.	Potential operational savings of around £135,000 per year*.  Net income from charges of around £135,000 in the first year with around £190,000 in subsequent years**.  If the service continues to be outsourced to an external contractor, then the first year is expected to be 2017-18.
Public satisfaction	Assume no change	Negatively affected though some residents would perceive it as a fairer option. Mitigated by offering concessions and targeted promotional campaign as detailed in 5.6 and 5.10.
Recycling rate	Assume no change	Research shows a fall in recycling rate of between 2-6% would be expected. Mitigated by offering incentives for home composting which would reduce overall waste arisings as detailed in 5.6 and 5.10.
Bespoke service	Not bespoke as 4 sacks offered with no provision for additional sacks	Additional sacks could be purchased



Garden waste entering residual waste stream	Assume no change	Increased risk, though expected to be minimal due to the inconvenience of using sacks to for garden waste, and it being easy to identify, and therefore deal with, by this containment method.
Fly tips	Assume no change	Increased risk, though expected to be minimal based on research in other districts. Additional monitoring with education/enforcement if necessary.
Bonfires	Assume no change	Increased risk, though not quantifiable at present. Additional monitoring with education/enforcement if necessary.

\* Operational savings from reduction in participation is difficult to quantify as it is determined by participation rate, level of the charge levied, round size, local demographics and geography. However, potentially these could amount to around £135,000 per year.

\*\* As West Devon already has a free service, it would be reasonable to expect, based upon the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) nearest neighbours classification, that an annual charge of £38 would produce a participation rate of around 35%. *Please note that this level of charge has been used for illustration purposes only and any actual charge would be set by Members at a later date.*

## 5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1 Members of the Waste Working Group recommend that an opt-in, financially sustainable, garden waste recycling service with collection from reusable sacks be approved, subject to the concessions and promotional campaigns detailed at 5.6 and 5.9 below.

5.2 Should the future service be provided through a Local Authority Controlled Company, then a decision in principle is recommended to inform the future waste service.

5.3 It is recommended that four garden waste sacks are offered as the standard service. Most other local authorities provide 180 litre wheeled bins which equate in volume to two garden sacks. This would demonstrate significant value for money for West Devon residents compared with elsewhere where charges are made. This also compares favourably with a local community group which charges 40p per sack and which residents have to transport themselves to site; the charges suggested in this report equate to 36.5p per sack which are collected from the resident's home. Additional sacks to the standard service could be purchased, offering a more bespoke service than is currently provided.

5.4 The Group agreed to recommend to Hub that concessions should apply to householders in receipt of key benefits and all those over 65. However, once full costing were determined, this option was shown to have a significant impact on net income projections which in turn will have an impact on the Council's ability to meet future budget shortfalls.

5.5 In order for Members to assess the variance between the option recommended and an option where concessions are applied to those in receipt of key benefits, and all residents over 65, both sets of costings are compared below.

First year (2017-18)	Concessions for low incomes (in receipt of Council Tax Reduction / Housing Benefit / Pension Credit)	Concessions for low incomes and all over 65
Potential income	£250,000	£155,000
Expected expenditure	£115,000	£145,000
Net income	£135,000	£10,000

Subsequent years	Concessions for low incomes (in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit)	Concessions for low incomes and all over 65
Potential income	£240,000	£155,000
Expected expenditure	£50,000	£90,000
Net income	£190,000	£65,000

5.6 The Group therefore recommends that concessions are applied as follows:

- A free of charge standard collection service, or compost bin, is offered to householders on low incomes i.e. those in receipt of housing benefit and/or the council tax reduction scheme and/or pension credit.
- Subsidised compost bins, in a range of sizes, will be offered to those householders who choose not to take up the collection service.

5.7 In addition, an Assisted Collection will be offered in line with the current policy for all other waste collections. The option of paying by direct debit will be explored to help the householder spread the cost over the year.

5.8 The Group considered the risk of potential increase in fly tipping. Teignbridge District Council recently introduced an annual charge which coincided with an increase of around 1.5 flytips per month. However, research from other districts show little evidence of an increase in incidents. Appendix 1 is a graph showing the number of incidents of fly

tipping in West Devon since 2010-11. The overall trend over this period does not show an increase in numbers despite charges being introduced at the Household Waste Recycling Centres for certain types of waste on two occasions in the time monitored. However, it is acknowledged that annual fly tip numbers are not consistent and therefore trends are difficult to determine precisely. The Group recommend additional monitoring with education/enforcement follow up if required.

5.9 The Group also considered the risk of increased domestic bonfires and any effects this may have. The advice from the specialist COP lead is that regular garden bonfires are not illegal and can be burnt without any issue in the majority of cases. Some garden bonfires have the potential to cause a Statutory Nuisance to neighbours and this depends on their frequency, duration and location. Bonfires will have detrimental effect on local air quality, particularly in more built up areas. The Group recommend additional monitoring with education/enforcement follow up if required.

5.10 The Group recommend a campaign to promote home composting as the best environmental option which would include dedicated roadshows with a local compost expert on hand, the setting up of a tips and advice page on the website and higher profile promotion of community compost groups. The campaign would link to synergies with information on food waste. This is in line with the Devon Authorities Waste and Resource Strategy and support has been offered by Devon County Council who would provide the resource for a professional advertising campaign which may include adshels at supermarkets and bus stops.

5.11 Greater emphasis will also be placed on promoting the two Household Waste Recycling Centres in the Borough, where garden waste can be taken free of charge.

5.12 This recommendation fits with the Council's core objectives of Environment and Resources. It promotes and encourages home composting which is the best environmental option for garden waste.

## 6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Members' approval to the proposal is required as the recommendation involves a change in the way that the Council delivers its services. Controlled Waste Regulations 2012.
Financial	Y	Potential annual revenue income of £250,000, providing a net income of £135,000 in the first year and £190,000 in subsequent years. Potential reduction of up to £135,000 in operational costs.

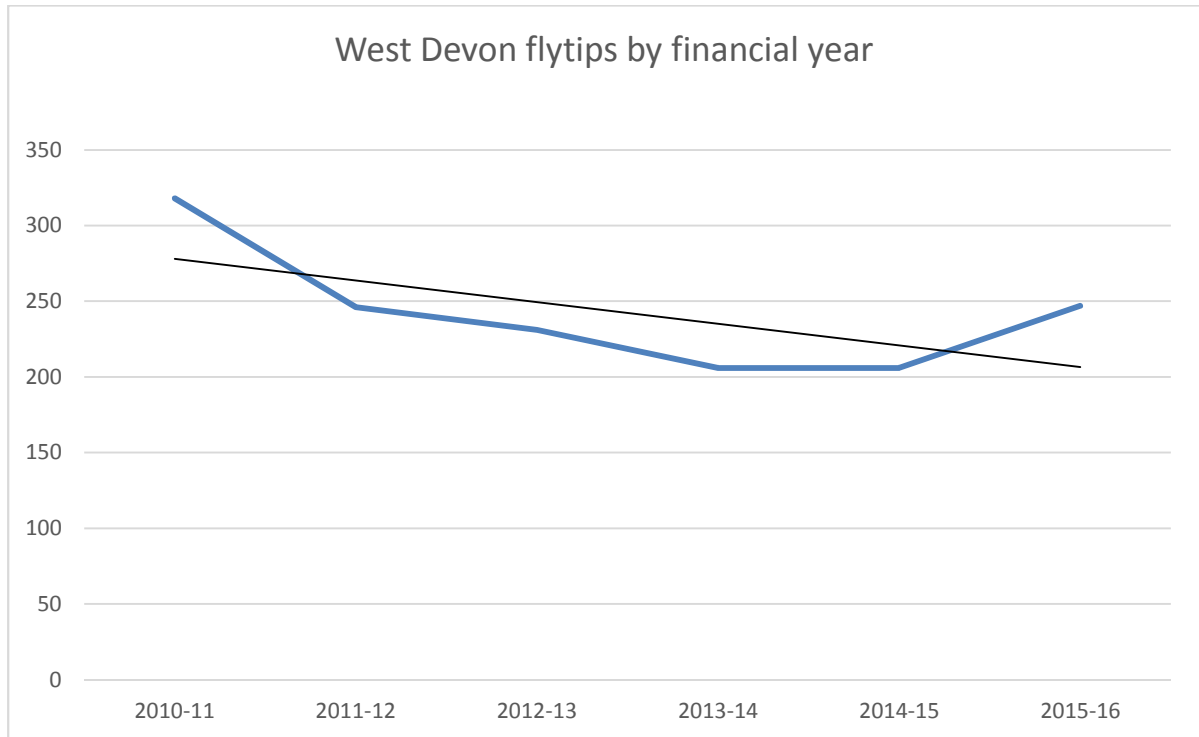
Risk	Y	Potential reduction in recycling rate of between 2-6%. Loss of public satisfaction mitigated by comprehensive publicity campaign. Potential increase in fly tipping and bonfires mitigated by monitoring and educational campaign.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		The impacts on residents on low incomes, those over 65 and those with reduced mobility have been considered.
Safeguarding		None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None
Other implications		None

### **Supporting Information**

**Background Papers: None**

<b>Process checklist</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Portfolio Holder briefed	yes
SLT Rep briefed	yes
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	
Data protection issues considered	yes
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Cabinet/Scrutiny)	n/a

## APPENDIX 1 West Devon flytips by financial year



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# Agenda Item 6

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **7 June 2016**

Title: **Tavistock Business Improvement District (BID)**

Portfolio Area: **Economy – Cllr R Oxborough**

Wards Affected: **Tavistock**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **External Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Author: **Lisa Buckle** Role: **Finance Community of Practice Lead**

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## **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Group Manager (Business Development), in consultation with the Leader and the Hub Committee Lead Member:-

- i) To vote on behalf of the Council at the BID ballot (as the owner and operator of business rated properties within the BID area), based on the merits of the BID business plan.

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The Tavistock BID is at the end of the five year term. Following consultation, a business plan is being drafted in preparation for a ballot of affected businesses on 14 July 2016 for the next five year period.

## **2. WHAT IS A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)**

2.1 The aim of a BID is to enable the implementation of a multi year programme to improve trading conditions within an area through the payment of a small levy by all businesses within a scheme area. The detail of the legislation empowering the creation of a BID is contained within Statutory Instrument 2443 (2004). The key points are as follows;

- The BID can be all businesses or just some business, by type (shops, offices, factories etc.), within a specified geographical area.
- The period must be specified in the BID and can be up to five years.
- The BID proposal must set out, including existing baseline services, what new services are to be provided and who will benefit. It must also demonstrate what consultation has taken place.
- To approve the BID, a vote of all affected businesses must be held.

## **3. BACKGROUND ON HOW A BID WORKS**

### **3.1 Ballot**

A BID can only be formed following consultation and a ballot in which businesses vote on a BID Proposal or Business Plan for the area. The ballot is run by the local authority or outsourced by the local authority to a third party (eg Electoral Reform Society).

3.2 All businesses eligible to pay the levy are balloted. In the UK, for a BID to go ahead the ballot must be won on two counts: straight majority and majority of rateable value. This ensures that the interests of large and small businesses are protected. There is no minimum turnout threshold.

### **3.3 BID documents**

The BID Proposal or Business Plan sets out businesses' priorities for improvements for the area and area services, as well as how the BID will be managed and operated. This document becomes legally binding once a ballot has been won and becomes the framework within which the BID will operate.



- 3.4 An Operating Agreement is entered into between a BID and the local authority governing how the BID levy monies are collected, administered and passed over to the BID. This agreement is in place for the Tavistock BID.
- 3.5 Where a BID proposes to use its levy to supplement existing services, BIDs enter into baseline agreements with the local authority and other service providers to ensure that any services the BID provides are truly additional.
- 3.6 **BID levy and funding**  
A BID is funded through the BID levy, which is a small percentage of a businesses' rateable value.
- 3.7 Once a ballot is successful, the BID levy is mandatory for all eligible businesses. BIDs can choose to exclude certain businesses from paying the levy (and, therefore, from voting in the BID ballot).
- 3.8 The BID levy is collected by the local authority into a ring-fenced account and passed to the BID Company for use on the projects and services set out in the BID proposal.
- 3.9 The BID levy is on business occupiers rather than property owners. This is in line with the business rates system in the UK.
- 3.10 **Benefits to Businesses**  
The benefits of BIDs include:
- Businesses decide and direct what they want for the area
  - Business are represented and have a voice in issues affecting the area
  - BID levy money is ring fenced for use only in the BID area
  - Increased footfall
  - Increased staff retention
  - Business cost reduction (shrinkage, crime, joint procurement)
  - Area promotion
  - Facilitated networking opportunities with neighbouring businesses
- 3.11 **Renewal**  
BIDs operate for a maximum of five years.

#### **4. TAVISTOCK BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)**

- 4.1 The Tavistock BID is at the end of its first term of five years and must go through a renewal ballot process to secure another BID term of up to five years.
- 4.2 The Tavistock BID website address is:  
<http://www.tavistockbid.co.uk/index.cfm>
- 4.3 The BID's business plan proposes a levy based on 1.5% of rateable value (RV). The total levy value is annually uplifted by inflation (say 2%) cumulatively over the five year period.
- 4.4 So in Year 1 a business with a RV of 1,000 would pay £15 in a BID levy. In Year 2 the inflationary 2% would be added to the total value of the Levy (the £15), so in Year 2 a business would pay £15.30. In Year 3 a business would pay £15.61 to the BID etc.
- 4.5 The objectives of the BID business plan are as follows:
- Review Dickensian Evening
  - Better promotion of events
  - Subsidise advertising
  - Develop the town map
  - Update the Visit Tavistock website and social media
  - Increase coach parking and gain Coach Friendly status
  - Increase the amount of lit Christmas trees
  - Support a Tavistock in Bloom entry
  - Keeping Tavistock clean
  - To see if the Pannier Market could open on a Monday
  - CCTV
  - Parking
  - Business support and lobbying

#### **5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL**

- 5.1 The legislation requires the Council to carry out certain tasks in developing and implementing the BID proposal.
- 5.2 Formal consideration of the BID business plan:-  
The Council must consider the plan to ensure that it meets the requirements of the BID legislation. It can only veto the proposal on two grounds:
- i) That it materially conflicts with a policy of the authority
  - ii) That it places a significantly disproportionate financial burden on any person or class of persons through manipulation of the geographic boundary or being inequitable.

5.3 The Council has instructed the Electoral Reform Society, to conduct the ballot. A postal vote is taken, with two outcomes to be determined: first there must be a simple majority of those entitled to vote and secondly those voting in favour must represent a majority (by rateable value) of the rateable properties that are eligible to vote.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/ Governance	Y	<p>The ability to set up a BID is set out in Statutory Instrument 2004 No 2443, The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004.</p> <p>It is required that the local authority formally considers the BID proposal to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Regulations. The local authority can veto the proposal on two grounds only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) That it materially conflicts with a policy of the authority</li> <li>ii) That it places a significantly disproportionate financial burden on any person or class of persons through manipulation of the geographic boundary or being inequitable.</li> </ul>
Financial	Y	<p>A BID levy of £2,775 will be due on the Council's properties within the BID area, uplifted annually for inflation, as explained in Section 4. (This is for all of the Council's properties within the BID area). These are mainly car parks, public conveniences, the bus station and some offices on Plymouth Road.</p> <p>It is hoped this levy will be offset by additional car parking revenue generated by the BID proposals to bring additional visitors to Tavistock.</p>

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
		<p>If the BID vote is successful, there are financial implications for the Council:</p> <p>Maintenance of the BID collection will require on-going resources from Revenue &amp; Benefits and Finance. The BID pays an annual sum of £4,000 to the Council for administration costs.</p>
Risk	Y	<p>It is possible that some businesses may not be able to afford the BID levy and there is a risk that a business may cease trading, potentially leading to a temporary loss of business rate income to the Council.</p> <p>However, the levy is being kept at the same percentage as for the previous term and the BID area covers the same area as before.</p> <p>The BID aims to improve the economic environment in which it operates and the proposed ballot of affected businesses will determine whether the affected businesses support the BID in its work and are willing to financially contribute to its work.</p>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		None directly arising from this report.
Safeguarding		None directly arising from this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None directly arising from this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None directly arising from this report.
Other implications		None directly arising from this report.

### **Approval and clearance of report**

<b>Process checklist</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Portfolio Holder briefed	<b>Yes</b>
SLT Rep briefed	<b>Yes</b>
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	<b>Yes</b>
Data protection issues considered	<b>Yes</b>
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Committee/Scrutiny)	<b>N/A</b>

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# Agenda Item 7

Report to: **Hub Committee**  
Date: **7 June 2016**  
Title: **Consultation on proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/18**  
Portfolio Area: **Health and Wellbeing – Cllr L Samuel**

Wards Affected: **all**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **Overview & Scrutiny Internal**

Urgent Decision: **Y** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:  
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision)

Author: **Lorraine Mullineaux & Allison Lewis** Role: **Housing Benefit Specialist & Case Manager**

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## Recommendations:

1. To approve the proposed public consultation document (Appendix 1) on the changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, aligning the current scheme with Housing Benefit & Universal Credit

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 It is an annual requirement for Councils to revisit their existing council tax support scheme and make a decision as to whether to replace or revise it.

- 1.2 In the 2015 summer budget and autumn statement a number of welfare changes were announced. In order that these changes are reflected in our scheme it is a key time to revisit our existing requirements and ensure it is still aligning itself with relevant benefit legislation.
- 1.3 In order to make changes to our scheme for 2017/18 we are required by law to:
  - Consult with the major precepting authorities
  - Consult with other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.
- 1.4 The final Council Tax Reduction Scheme must be adopted by Full Council, and cannot be delegated to an Officer or Committee.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Council Tax Support (CTS also known as Council Tax Reduction - CTR) was introduced in April 2013 and replaced the national Council Tax Benefit Scheme, with a 10% funding reduction. The CTR scheme for working-age customers is a local scheme, however the scheme that exists for pension age recipients is a national scheme prescribed by regulations and cannot be varied locally. Therefore any savings to the scheme must come from working age customers.
- 2.2 Local Schemes must take account of and:
  - Support work incentives and in particular avoid disincentives for those moving into work
  - Our duties to protect vulnerable people (these duties already exist under the Equality Act 2010, The Care Act 2014, Child Poverty Act 2010, The Housing Act 1996)
  - The Armed Forces Covenant.

## **2.3 The Current Scheme**

- 2.4 The working age scheme adopted by this council in 2013 retained the main elements of the former council tax benefit scheme but with the following;
  - Liability limit (maximum support) of 80%. This means that everyone pays at least the 20% of their Council Tax.
  - Limiting CTR to a Band D Council Tax charge. This means that customers living in a home with a Council Tax band greater than D must pay the additional charge.
  - No second adult reduction
  - A vulnerability/hardship fund to provide additional financial help.
- 2.5 By retaining the core elements of the Council Tax Benefit scheme, albeit with the above changes, meant that we had preserved the means test in its current form, together with the protections and work incentives that have been refined over many years. This



means that our scheme allows for the annual uprating's such as; living allowances, permitted earnings and non-dependant deductions in-line with the relevant regulations.

- 2.6 The scheme adopted by this Council also took account of the outcomes following public consultation.
- 2.7 The administration of HB and UC is subject to complex legislation. By keeping our scheme aligned with the national schemes means that we are mirroring the same principles in our means test and there is also less risk of error being made when assessing claims. It also means that we can administer claims for both HB and CTR at the same time using the same information. This is particularly important when we are experiencing year on year reductions in our administration grants for both HB and CTR.
- 2.8 Since the start of CTR there have been a number of legal challenges to Billing Authorities schemes. Most of these challenges have been made against the consultation process and whether due regard was given to the equality impact assessment when making changes to the scheme. A Supreme Court ruling in 2014 – [\*R \(Moseley\) v London Borough of Haringey\*](#) has meant that consultation on changes to Council Tax Reduction schemes must also include an option on how the current scheme could be retained on the same level of funding, which comes from other sources of reductions in services.

### 3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 Since 2013/14 funding for Council Tax Reduction has been included within the overall local government funding grant. The Authority therefore decides how much funding is available to support the Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- 3.2 The aim of the local scheme was for it to be 'cost neutral'. By this we mean that the level of Government grant would equal forecasted Council Tax Reduction expenditure for 2016/17

The following table sets out the annual expenditure and caseload:

	Total caseload	Working age caseload	Pension age caseload	Working age expenditure £	Pension age expenditure £	Total expenditure £
April 14	3,805	1,817	1,988	1,371,905	1,997,878	3,369,783
April 15	3,732	1,801	1,931	1,344,328	1,932,119	3,276,447
April 16	3,482	1,683	1,799	1,283,718	1,830,880	3,114,598

- 3.3 There are a number of reasons for the reduction in expenditure and caseload:

- changes made to our CTR Scheme for working age from April 2013 has reduced potential entitlement;
  - improvements in the economic climate (less dependency on means tested benefits);
  - increase in the statutory pension age so people are remaining in work for longer
- 3.4 Due to the level of increase in council tax for 2016/17 (the introduction of an additional 2% for adult social care) and a number of houses being built then we are likely to see expenditure and caseload increase for this financial year. Also, any downturn in the local economy is likely to result in an increase in costs.
- 3.5 With further reductions in Government grants and the localisation of Business Rates, Council Tax is becoming one of the main sources of income. This is particularly relevant to Devon County Council.

#### **4. Options available and consideration of risk**

- 4.1 There were a number of welfare changes announced in the 2015 Summer Budget and the Autumn Statement. It would make sense to reflect these changes in our Council Tax working age scheme in order to keep the scheme aligned with Housing Benefit (HB), Pensioner Council Tax Support Scheme and Universal Credit (UC).
- 4.2 The Devon Local Government Steering Group (DLGSG) met on 15 April 2016 to consider a report from County and District Heads of Finance on Council Tax – Future Strategy. In this report they were asked to consider whether changes should be made to the council tax support scheme for 2017/18. There were 4 options presented:
- Option 1 – No change.
  - Option 2 – Further restrictions in liability level.
  - Option 3 – Administration changes to align with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.
  - Option 4 – Option 3 plus the introduction of a minimum income floor for self-employed.

All Members of the DLGSG agreed to progress with option 4. This option would deliver savings both to the cost of the scheme and in its administration.

#### **Changes in detail**

##### **To align with Housing Benefit**

1. Removal of family premium for new claims or break in claims made after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 or where this premium would apply for the first time to existing claims.
2. Remove the element of a work related activity component for new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). This will only apply to new applicants for ESA after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

3. Reduce the period for which a person absent from Great Britain can still receive CTR from 13 to 4 weeks.
4. To limit the number of dependent children additions within the calculation for CTS to a maximum of 2. This will only affect households who have a third or subsequent child born on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

### **To align with Universal Credit**

1. Remove the additional earnings disregard and apply the standard disregards to all applicants that are in remunerative work regardless of hours.
  2. To remove entitlement to the Severe Disability premium where another person is paid UC (Carers Element) to look after them.
  3. Introduce a Minimum Income Floor (MIF) for Self-employed after a 12 month start-up period. Linked to National Living wage (7.20) or National Minimum wage (6.70 or £5.30 depending on age).
- 4.3 The cost of the scheme is met through the Council Tax collection fund and all the major precepting authorities need to continue to make significant savings due to cuts in funding.
- 4.4 All the Devon Authorities (including the two unitary authorities) are proposing the same changes to their 2017/18 schemes

### **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 5.1 At this stage we are seeking Member approval to consult on our draft scheme which is our current scheme plus the changes outlined above. Also to take into account the Supreme Court ruling we are also asking for the public to consider the other alternatives to reducing the amount of help provided by the CTR scheme.
- 5.2 If the draft scheme is approved then the aim is to complete a Devon wide public consultation with all other Authorities at the same time. This consultation is likely to take place in-between late June and September 2016.
- 5.3 Once the outcome of the consultation is known the results will be analysed and the results presented to Members with the proposed way forward, for a final decision on the 2017/18 scheme.

### **6. Implications**

Implications	Relevant to proposals	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The relevant powers for this report are contained within the following legislation;  Clause 34 of the Welfare Reform Bill provides for the abolition of Council Tax Benefit from 31 <sup>st</sup> March

		2013 and introduces the Local Council Tax Support Schemes to be administered by Local Authorities
Financial	Y	<p>In April 2013 the Government abolished the national Council Tax Benefit scheme and Districts were, as Billing Authorities, required to bring in a Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR). Funding for this localised scheme was reduced by the equivalent of 10% from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to Authorities under the previous national benefit scheme.</p> <p>Council Tax Reduction funding is included within the overall Settlement Funding Assessment. The scheme is designed to be cost neutral and covers the shortfall in funding of approximately £562,000. Based on current calculations (see 3) officers are confident that the difference between actual and forecasted figures as the end of the financial year will be minimal. The modelling carried out last year which informed the decision to adopt the current scheme is proving to be consistent with what is happening since the Council Tax Reduction Scheme went live.</p>
Risk	<p>Agreement on scheme</p> <p>Financial</p> <p>Financial</p> <p>Financial</p>	<p>Failure to agree a scheme by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017.</p> <p>Failure to agree will mean the Council is bound to continue with scheme adopted for 2016/17.</p> <p>Detrimental impact on collection rates</p> <p>Business case in place with all preceptors agreeing financial support to fund extra resource to Undertake early intervention and money advice.</p> <p>Future funding reductions could mean that the proposed scheme will not remain fit for purpose</p> <p>Annual review and close monitoring of announcements and national forums</p> <p>Impact on wider economy and most vulnerable</p> <p>Business case in place with all preceptors agreeing financial support to provide Exceptional Hardship Fund to assist those in extreme financial need.</p>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		

Equality and Diversity	Y	An equality impact assessment is still being finalised by County, however it will be an essential part of the consultation exercise.
Safeguarding		
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		
Other implications		

### **Supporting Information**

#### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 Draft consultation questionnaire

#### **Background Papers:**

Welfare Reform Act

### **Approval and clearance of report**

<b>Process checklist</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Portfolio Holder briefed	<b>Yes/No</b>
SLT Rep briefed	<b>Yes/No</b>
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	<b>Yes/No</b>
Data protection issues considered	<b>Yes/No</b>
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Cabinet/Scrutiny)	<b>Yes/No</b>

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## XXXXXXXXXX Council

# Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2017/18 Consultation Questionnaire

### What is this consultation about?

Each year the Council has to decide whether to change the Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants in its area. This year the Council has decided that changes should be made to bring the Council Tax Reduction scheme in line with the changes made by Central Government in Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

### What is Council Tax Reduction?

Council Tax Reduction is a discount for Council Tax, The level of discount is based on the income of the household. Currently the maximum discount is xxxx% of Council Tax for working age households and up to 100% for pensioners.

### Why is a change to the Council Tax Reduction scheme being considered?

Until April 2013 there was a national scheme called Council Tax Benefit. The Government made local Councils responsible for replacement schemes from 1 April 2013. As the Council is keen to keep Council Tax Reduction aligned with major benefits such as Housing Benefit and Universal Credit to assist in administration, this means that, as those benefits change, similar changes need to be made to the Council Tax Reduction scheme. Each of the changes may affect certain claimants and the changes to both Housing Benefit and Universal Credit are to encourage work and reduce the levels of benefit available in some cases. This will be reflected in Council Tax Reduction if the changes are made.

### Who will this affect?

Working age households in the Borough (/District) who currently receive or will apply for Council Tax Reduction.  
Pension age households will not be affected as Central Government prescribe the scheme.

### Are there any alternatives to changing the existing Council Tax Reduction scheme?

We have also thought about other ways to make the administration simpler and also to replicate the changes in the benefit system generally. These have not been completely rejected and you are asked about them in the Questionnaire, but at the moment we do not think we should implement them for the reasons given.

### We have considered:

#### 1 Continuing with the current scheme

This would mean higher administration costs and scheme costs generally. This would increase the costs for all council tax payers in the Borough/ District paying towards the scheme. The decision to increase Council Tax may need to be made by voting in a local referendum.

#### 2 Reduce funding to other Council services

Keeping the current Council Tax Reduction scheme will mean less money available to deliver other Council services; or

#### 3 Use the Council's savings to keep the Council Tax Reduction scheme

Using savings would be a short-term option. Once used they will no longer be available to support and invest in other Council services.

This is a complex issue. We would like you to read the full background information before giving your opinion.

## Questionnaire

### Have Your Say on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Q1.

I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme:

Yes  No

This question must be answered before you can continue.

### Paying for the Scheme

Q2.

Should the Council keep the current Council Tax Reduction scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme and have the same level of support as it does at the moment?)

No  Yes  Don't know

Q3.

Please use the space below to make any comments you have on protecting the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from these changes.

### Options to change the current Local Council Tax Reduction scheme

As explained in the background information, the Council is primarily consulting on the following proposals to change the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017, which would reduce the cost of the scheme generally and importantly align the scheme with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit to assist in its administration. Your responses are a part of this consultation. Set out below are the proposals being considered.



## Option 1 – Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants

The removal of family premium from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 for new claims will bring the Council Tax Reduction scheme in line with Housing Benefit. The family premium is part of how we assess the 'needs' (Applicable Amounts) of any claimant, which is compared with their income. Family Premium is normally given when a claimant has at least one dependant child living with them. Removing the family premium will mean that when we assess a claimant's needs it would not include the family premium (currently £17.45 per week). This change would **not** affect those on Universal Credit, Income Support, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance or Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance.

### The benefit of this is:

- It brings the working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme in line with Housing Benefit changes proposed by Central Government. The change has already been introduced for pension age claimants by Central Government;

### The drawbacks of doing this are:

- New working age residents may see a reduction in the amount of support they received.
- Some households with children will pay more

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Q4. Do you agree with the Option 1?

Yes  No  Don't know

Q5.

Your comments on Option 1

## Option 2 - Reducing Backdating to 1 month

Currently claims for Council Tax Reduction from working age claimants can be backdated for up to 6 months where an applicant shows they could not claim at an earlier time. Central Government has reduced the period for Housing Benefit claims to 1 month. It is proposed that the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme be aligned with the changes for Housing Benefit.

### The benefit of this is:

- It is a simple alteration to the scheme which is easy to understand when claiming Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.

### The drawback of this is:

- New working age claimants may see a reduction in the amount of support they received if they are unable to claim on time.

Q6.

Do you agree with the Option 2?

Yes  No  Don't know

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Your comments on Option 2

### **Option 3 - Using a set income for self-employed earners after 1 year's self-employment**

In order to align Council Tax Reduction with Universal Credit, the Council proposes to use a minimum level of income (minimum income floor) for those who are self-employed. This would be in line with the National Living Wage for 35 hours worked per week. Any income above this amount would be taken into account based on the actual amount earned. The income would not apply for a designated start-up period of one year from the start of the business. Variations would apply to any person who is both employed and self employed.

#### **The benefits of this are:**

- The treatment of income for self-employed claimants for Council Tax Reduction will be brought broadly into line with Universal Credit.
- It should encourage self-employed working age applicants to expand and develop their business
- 

#### **The drawback of this is:**

- Where a working age claimant is self-employed and continues to run a business where their income is below the minimum living wage level, the Council will assume they earn at least the minimum level (based on a 35-hour week, regardless of the hours they work).

#### **Questions on Option 3**

**Q8.**

**Do you agree with the principle that claimants who are self employed for more than one year should have a minimum income floor applied to their claim?**

**4/1**

Yes  No  Don't know

**Q9.**

**Your comments on Option 3**

## **Option 4 - Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to 4 weeks**

Within the current scheme, applicants can be temporarily absent from their homes for 13 weeks (or 52 weeks in certain cases) without it affecting the Council Tax Reduction. This replicated the rule within Housing Benefit. Housing Benefit has been changed so that if a person is absent from Great Britain for a period of more than 4 weeks, their benefit will cease. It is proposed that the Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme is amended to reflect the changes in Housing Benefit. There will be exceptions for certain occupations such as mariners and the armed forces.

### **The benefits of the Council this are:**

- The treatment of temporary absence will be brought into line with Housing Benefit
- It is seen as fair
- There are exceptions for certain occupations including the armed forces and mariners.

### **The drawback of this is:**

- If a person is absent from Great Britain for a period which is likely to exceed 4 weeks, their Council Tax Reduction will cease from when they leave the Country. They will need to re-apply on return

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**Do you agree with the change to the temporary absence rule?**

Yes  No  Don't know

**Q11.**

**Your comments on Option 4**

**Option 5 - To remove the element of a Work Related Activity Component in the calculation of the current scheme for new Employment and Support Allowance applicants.**

From April 2017, all new applicants of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) who fall within the Work Related Activity Group will no longer receive the work related activity component in either their ESA or within the calculation of Housing Benefit. It is proposed that the Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme is amended to reflect the changes.

**The benefits of the Council doing this are:**

- The treatment of ESA will be brought into line with Housing Benefit
- It avoids additional costs to the Council Tax Reduction scheme.
- Persons receiving ESA will not experience any reduction in Council Tax Reduction.

**There are no drawbacks to this change**

Q12.

**Do you agree with this change to the scheme?**

Yes  No  Don't know

Q13.

**Your comments on Option 5**

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## **Option 6 - To limit the number of dependant children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two**

Within the current scheme, claimants who have children are awarded a dependant's addition of £66.90 per child within the calculation of their needs (Applicable Amounts). There is no limit to the number of dependant's additions that can be awarded. From April 2017 Central Government will be limiting dependant's additions in Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits to a maximum of two. This will only affect households who have a third or subsequent child on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. It is proposed that the Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme is amended to reflect the changes in Housing Benefit and Central Government Benefits. There will be exceptions where: there are multiple births after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 (and the household is not already at their maximum of two dependants within the calculation); adopted children or where households merge.

### **The benefits of the Council doing this are:**

- Council Tax Reduction will be brought into line with Housing Benefit, Universal Credit and Tax Credits
- It is simple and administratively easy

### **The drawbacks of doing this are:**

- Claimants who have a third or subsequent child after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 (and are not excepted from the rules) may receive less Council Tax reduction than claimants who have more children born before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017

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### **Q14. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?**

Yes  No  Don't know

**Q15.**

**Your comments on Option 6 – please type in below**

## **Option 7 – To remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carers Element) to look after them**

Currently when another person is paid Carers Allowance to look after a Council Tax Reduction claimant, then the Severe Disability Premium is not included when working out their needs (Applicable Amounts). The reason for this is that it avoids paying for the same care twice. This proposed change will align the scheme with Housing Benefit by treating persons who receive the Universal Credit (Carers Element) in the same way as anyone receiving Carers Allowance

### **The benefit of this is:**

- Council Tax Reduction will be brought into line with Housing Benefit;
- It is simple and administratively easy

### **The drawbacks of doing this are:**

- There are no drawbacks to this change as persons receiving Universal Credit (Carers Element) will be treated in the same way as those receiving Carers Allowance who look after any person who claims Council Tax Reduction

Page 6.

Do you agree with this change to the scheme?

Yes  No  Don't know

Q17.

Your comments on Option 7

## Alternatives to reducing the amount of help provided by the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

If the Council keeps the current scheme, it will be administratively more complex (as it will not align with Housing Benefit which is also administered by the Council) and it will cost taxpayers more. If this happens we will need to find savings from other services to help meet the increase in costs. The proposals set out in this consultation could deliver savings. The alternatives are set out in the background information.

**Q18.**

**Do you think we should choose any of the following options rather than the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme?**

**Please select one answer for each source of funding.**

**Q18.1.**

**Increase the level of Council Tax**

Yes  No  Don't know

**Q18.2.**

**Find savings from cutting other Council Services**

Yes  No  Don't know

**Q18.3.**

**Use the Council's savings**

Yes  No  Don't know



**Q19.**

**If the Council were to choose these other options to make savings, what would be your order of preference? Please rank in order of preference by writing a number from 1 – 3 in the boxes below, where 1 is the option that you would most prefer and 3 is the least.**

Increase the level of Council Tax

Reduce funding available for other Council Services

Use the Council's savings

**Q20.**

**Please use this space to make any other comments on the scheme.**

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**Q21.**

**Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).**

**Q22.**

**If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Council Tax Reduction scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere please use the space below.**

## About You

We ask these questions:

1. To find out if different groups of people in the Council's population have been able to take part in the consultation and identify if any groups have been excluded. This means it is not about you as an individual but to find out if people with similar characteristics have had their say.
2. To find out if different groups of people feel differently about the options and proposals in comparison to each other and all respondents. This means it is not about you as an individual but to find out if people with similar characteristics have answered in the same way or not.

**This information is completely confidential and anonymous.** Your personal information will not be passed on to anyone and your personal details will not be reported alongside your responses.

Q23.

Are you, or someone in your household, getting a Council Tax Reduction at this time?

Yes  No  Don't know/Not sure

Q24.

What is your sex?

Male  Female  Prefer not to say

Q25.

Age

18-24  25-34  35-44  45-54  55-64  65-74  75-84  85+  Prefer not to say

Q26.

**Disability: Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?**

Yes  No  Don't know/Not sure  Prefer not to say

Q27.

**Ethnic Origin: What is your ethnic group?**

**Prefer not to say**

**White**

British  Irish  Gypsy or Irish Traveller  Any other White background

**Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups**

White & Black African  White & Black Caribbean  White & Asian  Any other multi mixed background

**Asian or Asian British**

Pakistani  Indian  Bangladeshi  Chinese  Any other Asian background

**Black/African/Caribbean/Black British**

African  Caribbean  Any other Black background

**Other Ethnic Group**

Arab  Other – please specify below:

**Next steps....**

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Progress reports on the consultation will be added to our website: XXXX

You may submit further evidence, ideas or comments by email ([XXXconsultations@XXX.gov.uk](mailto:XXXconsultations@XXX.gov.uk))

The consultation closes on **dd/mmm/yyyy**.

We will listen carefully to what residents tell us and take the responses into consideration when making a final decision on the 2017/18 scheme.

Following the decision, the full results from the consultation will be available on the Council's website.

The new scheme will start on **1 April 2017**. The Council will consider the impact of the scheme annually and consult again if it thinks further changes need to be made.

## Planning Obligations

Report to: **Hub Committee**  
Date: **7 June 2016**  
Title: **Planning Obligations Thresholds**  
Portfolio Area: **Strategic Planning and Housing**  
**Cllr G Parker**  
Wards Affected: **All**  
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:  
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision)

Author: **Alex Rehaag** Role: **Place & Strategy Specialist**

Contact: [alex.rehaag@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:alex.rehaag@swdevon.gov.uk) **01822 813722**

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### Recommendations:

1. The Hub Committee is asked to note that the NPPG incorporating revised policies 013-020 is a material planning consideration carrying great weight in the determination of planning applications.
2. The Hub Committee **recommends to Council** that, with the exception of applications within the settlement boundaries of Tavistock, Okehampton and areas with special designations i.e. AONB, planning obligations to provide Affordable Housing in accordance with the Core Strategy will be sought from planning applications for 6 or more units of residential accommodation.
3. In Tavistock and Okehampton if the planning site does not fall within a designated special area i.e. AONB, planning obligations will be sought on 11 units or more.

## **Planning Obligations**

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 On the 28th November 2014 the government announced changes to national planning policy with regard to affordable housing thresholds and other tariff style contributions such as open space. This resulted in the authority being unable to collect commuted sums or on site provision where 10 units or less of housing was proposed. A Lower threshold of 6 units or more could be implemented for authorities whose boundaries covered Designated Rural Areas, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 1.2 At the full council meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015 the proposal to adopt and implement the lower threshold of 6 or 10 units was agreed.
- 1.3 Subsequently on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015 the government's decision to implement the change in policy was quashed by the High Court. This followed a successful legal challenge by Reading and West Berkshire Councils. West Devon Borough Council provided letters of support to Reading and West Berks in their legal challenge. This legal challenge resulted in paragraphs 012-023 of the guidance on planning obligations being removed. The Judgement is available under R (on the application of West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2015] EWHC 2222 (Admin).
- 1.4 The government successfully challenged the West Berkshire and Reading decision in the Court of Appeal. As a result the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was revised on 20 May 2016 to re-introduce the thresholds first mooted in the guidance of 28th November 2014.
- 1.5 The revised NPPG is a material consideration for the Council when determining planning applications, to be weighed against the Core Strategy.
- 1.6 The loss of on-site units and commuted sums in our rural areas could jeopardise delivery of affordable housing and, therefore, officers advise that the lower threshold should be introduced. Therefore, it is recommended that in respect of Affordable Housing requirements of planning applications, determined from the date of the Full Council Meeting, the Council:
  - Should not seek contributions on developments of less than 6 units in the rural areas or application sites which fall within the AONB.

## Planning Obligations

- Should not seek contributions on applications for residential accommodation of 10 or less dwellings in Tavistock and Okehampton.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Following the government's successful appeal against the High Court's decision in the case R (on the application of West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council) v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2015] EWHC 2222 (Admin) the government has revised the National Planning Policy Guidance to remove the requirement for small developments (over 10 dwellings) to provide Affordable Housing.
- 2.2 There are exceptions to the over 10 threshold if the authority falls within a Designated Rural Area, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or a National Park. In those exceptional areas, an authority could adopt a lower threshold of 6 units or more. In West Devon, the lower threshold could be applied everywhere except Tavistock and Okehampton unless a proposal for the Tavistock area falls within the AONB. The Authority may also ask for contributions where the floor space of the proposed development exceeded 1000m<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.3 To assist members in understanding the revisions authorised by the appeal court, Paragraphs 013-020 are attached (appendix 1).
- 2.4 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act, the local planning authority must take decisions in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations (including the NPPG) indicate otherwise.
- 2.5 New paragraphs 013 – 020, introducing the thresholds are set out in appendix 1, are not yet incorporated into legislation but are likely to be incorporated in the near future. Therefore it is considered that they should be accorded great weight.  
The Council has a corporate priority to deliver homes including much needed affordable housing for people currently on the Devon Home Choice register. There is an acute need for affordable housing throughout the Borough and the changes to the grant regime over the years have resulted in these contributions made via planning applications being invaluable in order to deliver projects.

## Planning Obligations

- 2.6 A significant number of planning applications comprise small developments. Therefore, if the Council does not take up the government's invitation to implement the lower thresholds, our communities and partners will undoubtedly miss out on affordable housing within their area.

### 3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 Affordable Housing contributions are monitored by the Place Making Community of Practice, and use of these funds are agreed by members in order to bring forward specific housing projects.
- 3.2 There is an acute shortage of affordable housing across the UK, and West Devon is no different. By having regard to the NPPG and implementing the lower thresholds, this will help to address the needs of our communities.
- 3.3 Providing timescales for members to see results will be difficult as this is dependent on planning applications being approved, schemes being viable, the properties being developed, projects identified and the money being paid to the council. Regular reports on the amount of commuted sums held can be provided to Overview & Scrutiny.

### 4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The only alternative to the Council implementing the thresholds set out by government is to choose not to implement them. This is likely to lead to successful appeals by developers at some cost and no benefit to the community.

### 5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Members are asked to note that the revised NPPG is a material consideration with considerable weight and to agree to seek Affordable Housing contributions based on the lower thresholds.

### 6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The legal implications are set out in detail throughout the report but are particularly detailed



## Planning Obligations

		in Sections 1 and 2. Legal advice has been sought throughout and when drafting this report. The report is necessary in order to provide clarity and certainty to the planning process, to avoid potential challenges to the Council's decisions
Financial	Y	The financial position and risks are highlighted throughout the report.
Risk		The risks are detailed throughout the report however, the particular risks is the planning appeals process and the costs to the authority following any challenge.  Discussions have taken place with SLT and Legal with regard to the risks and they have been captured throughout the report.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	No issues identified
Safeguarding	N	No issues identified.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	None	No issues identified
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	None	Maximise housing available to meet the need.
Other implications	None	None.

## **Supporting Information**

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Paragraphs 013 – 020 of the NPPG

### **Background Papers:**

Planning Obligations Thresholds of 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2015  
PPG paragraphs 013 - 020

## **Planning Obligations**

### **Approval and clearance of report**

<b>Process checklist</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Portfolio Holder briefed	<b>Yes</b>
SLT Rep briefed	<b>Yes</b>
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	<b>Yes</b>
Data protection issues considered	<b>Yes</b>
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Committee/Scrutiny)	<b>Yes/No</b>

**Paragraph 013**

Do the restrictions on seeking planning obligations apply to Rural Exception Sites?

The restrictions on seeking planning obligations contributions do not apply to development on Rural Exception Sites - although affordable housing and tariff-style contributions should not be sought from any development consisting only of the construction of a residential annex or extension within the curtilage of the buildings comprising an existing home.

What are tariff-style contributions?

Some authorities seek planning obligations contributions to pooled funding 'pots' intended to provide common types of infrastructure for the wider area.

**Paragraph 014**

Planning obligations mitigate the impact of development which benefits local communities and supports the provision of local infrastructure. In applying the planning obligations local planning authorities must ensure that these meet the three tests that are set out as statutory tests in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 and as policy tests in the National Planning Policy Framework. These are: that they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind. For sites where the threshold applies, planning obligations should not be sought to contribute to pooled funding 'pots' intended to fund the provision of general infrastructure in the wider area.

**Paragraph 015**

Can planning obligations be pooled where the threshold does apply?

For sites where the threshold applies, planning obligations should not be sought to contribute to pooled funding 'pots' intended to fund the provision of general infrastructure in the wider area.

**Paragraph 016**

How does the 10-unit threshold relate to the statutory definition of major development?

For the purposes of section 106 planning obligations only the definition of 10-units or less applies. This is distinct from the definition of major development in article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010

**Paragraph 017**

Are there any exceptions to the 10-unit threshold?

Local planning authorities may choose to apply a lower threshold of 5-units or less to development in designated rural areas being areas as described under section 157 of the Housing Act 1985, which includes National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. No affordable housing or tariff-style contributions should then be sought from these developments.

Where this lower threshold is applied, local planning authorities should only seek affordable housing contributions from developments of between 6 to 10-units as financial contributions and not affordable housing units on site. Any payments made (whether as an affordable housing contribution or contribution to a pooled funding pot for general infrastructure provision) should also be commuted until after completion of units within the development.

### **Paragraph 019**

What is the procedure for claiming a commuted contribution under a planning obligation?

The terms of commuted contributions should form part of the discussions between a developer and a local planning authority and be reflected in any planning obligations agreement. Agreements should include clauses stating when the local planning authority should be notified of the completion of units within the development and when the funds should be paid. Both parties may wish to use the issue of a building regulations compliance certificate (called a completion certificate when given by a local authority and a final certificate when given by an approved inspector) as a trigger for payment.

### **Paragraph 020**

Does this mean that no planning obligations can be sought for development under these 5 or 10-unit thresholds?

Some planning obligations may still be required to make a development acceptable in planning terms. For sites where a threshold applies, planning obligations should not be sought to contribute to affordable housing or to pooled funding 'pots' intended to fund the provision of general infrastructure in the wider area. Authorities can still seek obligations for site specific infrastructure - such as improving road access and the provision of adequate street lighting - where this is appropriate, to make a site acceptable in planning terms. They may also seek contributions to fund measures with the purpose of facilitating development that would otherwise be unable to proceed because of regulatory or EU Directive requirements.

# Agenda Item 9

Report to: **Hub Committee**  
Date: **7 June 2016**  
Title: **Transitional Resources report**  
Portfolio Area: **Cllr C Edmonds Resources and Performance**  
Wards Affected: **All**  
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Author: **Steve Mullineaux** Role: **Group Manager – Support Services / Customer First**

Contact: [steve.mullineaux@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:steve.mullineaux@swdevon.gov.uk), (01803) 861412

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## **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Hub Committee recommends to Council to::

1. Approve the use of temporary, fixed term transitional resources to improve service levels and customer satisfaction.
2. It is recommended to approve the use of £215,522 of unused New Homes Bonus funding (as shown in Section 5) to fund the temporary transitional staffing resources set out in Appendix A.
3. It is recommended to allocate the remaining £58,478 (of the £274,000 unused New Homes Bonus funding as shown in Section 5) as a contingency budget for Disabled Facilities Grants.

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 This report will provide members with the rationale for temporary, fixed term transitional resources to improve customer satisfaction and public perception of the Council. This can be achieved by reducing backlogs, call volumes and call answering times.
- 1.2 Recognises that resource allocations of the future model were based on the end of programme state, technology delivered and embedded, and channel shift having occurred over a period of time. Council services have been operating against these assumptions.
- 1.3 Explains how the proposal for temporary, fixed term transitional resources can be funded through the NHB money originally allocated to DFG funding in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The T18 programme was designed to meet the challenges of reduced budgets without cutting statutory frontline services. The programme was designed to improve customer satisfaction by providing the customer with improved access to services and delivering efficiencies by streamlined service delivery.

Whilst the budget reductions have been achieved, the transition to the new model has resulted in increased call volumes, increased call waiting times and service backlogs.

- 2.2 The resourcing model and staff numbers developed by Ignite were based on:
  - 2.2.1 The new technology being delivered and more importantly embedded across the organisation.
  - 2.2.2 New more efficient and streamlined processes implemented and embedded.
  - 2.2.3 Customers would have been using the new technology and process to self-serve rather than calling or visiting.
- 2.3 Due to a number of factors listed below the technology has been delayed:
  - 2.3.1 The councils IT resources were reduced at the start of the programme.
  - 2.3.2 The delivery of the technology solutions from the supplier has suffered delays.
  - 2.3.3 A number of the solutions have needed significant development to meet the requirements of the council.

2.3.4 The availability of staff for testing and training has been limited due to the need to carry on day to day customer activity.

2.4 The impact of the technology delays has impacted on the roll-out of new processes, channel shift and as a result, the delivery of online services has been severely impacted.

### **3. Current position**

3.1 Call volumes are currently at the highest level for a number of years and as a result call waiting times are unacceptably long. This is leading to increased customer dissatisfaction and complaints, which members have experienced and have been expressing their concerns regarding service performance over a number of months.

3.2 A number of services have backlogs of work, which in turn is generating increased call volumes and higher levels of customer dissatisfaction. The services of particular concern are;

- Planning
- Waste
- Car Parking
- Council Tax
- Housing Benefit
- DFG's

3.3 There is a danger that whilst trying to divert existing resources to these services there will be a 'knock on' effect to other service areas.

3.4 The current technology implementation (including new contact centre phone system and in cab technology) should be completed by end of July at the latest.

3.5 Over 300 new processes will be live by end of May. Around 150 low volume processes still require implementing.

3.6 The technology and processes need fully embedding across the organisation.

3.7 Channel shift needs significant resources to ensure that the services are easy to use. These services then need promoting and must meet the customer expectations to ensure a step change in customer behaviour and activity.

3.8 The recent staff survey highlighted the concerns of staff in relation to their welfare.

- 68% of those surveyed disagreed with the statement ‘I think morale is good where I work’
- 47% of those surveyed disagreed with the statement ‘I am comfortable with the level of pressure placed on me at work’
- 77% of those surveyed disagreed with the statement ‘I think there are enough people to do the job’.

#### 4. Proposal

- 4.1 Additional temporary, fixed term transitional resources are required over a 12-18 month period to ensure that there is an improved customer experience and improve staff morale This will be achieved by;
- 4.2 Increasing contact centre resources to reduce call waiting times.
- 4.3 Increasing case management resources across the following service areas to eliminate backlogs and provide transitional support whilst technology and processes are embedded throughout the organisation. The resources will be deployed across case management on the following services:

Planning	Improve responsiveness to customer telephone queries. Reduce backlog. Support whilst new processes are implemented. Reduce validation times and implement Peer Review recommendations.
Waste	Support whilst new processes are implemented and embedded.
Car Parking	Reduce backlogs and reduce the risk of income reducing. Provide support whilst new technology is purchased and implemented.
Environmental Health and Licensing	Support for licensing and high risk inspections whilst new processes are implemented. Reduce the risk of income reducing. Support additional DFG workloads.
Council Tax and Housing Benefits	Support to reduce backlogs. Training and support to contact centre Additional capacity whilst channel shift technologies go live. Protect income and proactive enforcement.



Housing Advice	Support to protect vulnerable customers whilst new processes are introduced.
Support Services	Consolidation and streamlining of all invoice processing to reduce burden on Customer First, Commercial Services and Strategy & Commissioning case management.
Assets	Support to aid transfer of work from specialist to case management.
Strategic Planning & Place	Support to aid transfer of work from specialist to case management Additional support for local and neighbourhood plans, TAP and community grants.

- 4.4 Additional fixed term resources to ensure that councils meet the estimated demand for Disabled Facilities Grants as highlighted in section 5.
- 4.5 Free up a management resource to provide capacity to drive process improvement and to ensure technology and processes are contributing positively to demand reduction and improvements customer satisfaction. The resource will be sourced from Support Services so that existing Customer First managers can remain focussed on service delivery.
- 4.6 Recruit a number of apprentices into roles across the organisation to build capacity, provide additional resilience as transitional resources end, provide future capacity to backfill against natural wastage and ensure we meet our commitments to the national apprentice programme
- 4.7 Additional fixed term resource to review and redesign of the council's website (look, feel and content) to improve the customer access and journey. Aiding channel shift and reducing the burden on the contact centre.
- 4.8 Monitoring.
- 4.8.1 In addition to the council's quarterly performance reports, it is proposed that an additional report is presented to Hub Committee each quarter which will provide an update on:
- Deployment of temporary fixed term resources across the service areas identified above.
  - Detailed performance by service.
  - A breakdown of call volumes and contact centre performance by service areas.

- Progress on channel shift by service area
- Issues and emerging risks.

4.9 It is recommended to approve the use of temporary, fixed term transitional resources outlined above to improve service levels and customer satisfaction. A breakdown of the costs is shown in Appendix A.

## **5. Disabled Facilities Grant funding**

5.1 Public Health England have been directed to provide sufficient funding for Councils to ensure that they can meet the need for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) within the area. On an annual basis the Council receives an allocation of Better Care Funding (BCF) from Devon County Council. This is Government grant money towards the cost of funding Disabled Facilities Grants.

5.2 The tables below show that the additional funding provided from the Better Care Fund in 2016/17 and the New Homes Bonus funding, which had previously been allocated to meet our statutory obligations for DFG's, can now be reallocated.

5.2.1 In 15/16 the Council budgeted to spend £450k on DFG's and this was to be funded from an allocation of £239k from the BCF and £211k from the Council's NHB allocation. The actual spend on DFG's in 15/16 was £219k, as a result there is £20k of BCF unspent in 15/16 and £211k of NHB unspent in 15/16.

5.2.2 In 16/17 the Council budgeted a further £400k of DFG spend, to be funded from an estimated allocation of £239k from BCF and £161k from the Council's NHB allocation. The Council has now been notified that its BCF allocation for 16/17 is significantly higher at £361k. The Council is also now estimating that total demand for DFG's would be in the region of £450,000 for 16/17. In order to process the required amount of DFG expenditure (£450,000), two additional case managers would be needed. West Devon's share of this cost would be approximately £29,000.

## 5.3

Table 1 – Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's)						
	Financial Year 2015/16			Financial Year 2016/17		
	Budget (£)	Actual spend (£)	Amount of 15/16 New Homes Bonus funding not required	Original Budget set Feb 2016 (£)	*Revised Budget allocation May 2016 (£)	Amount of 16/17 New Homes Bonus funding not required
Better Care Funding for DFG's (Government Grant)	239,000	219,000	-	239,000  (estimated grant allocation)	361,000 + 20,000 BCF underspend from 15/16  (final grant allocation)	-
New Homes Bonus funding	211,000	-	211,000	161,000	69,000	92,000
TOTAL	450,000	219,000		400,000	450,000	

\*The Budget allocation for 2016/17 has been revised based on the fact that the Council has now received its allocation of the 2016/17 Better Care Funding (Government Grant funding for Disabled Facilities Grants). The BCF allocation of £361,000 is considerably higher than the original estimate of £239,000 made in February 2016.

5.4 Table 1 shows that there is a total of £303,000 (£211,000 + £92,000) of New Homes Bonus funding between 15/16 and 16/17 which is not required to fund the expenditure on DFG's in these years. After deducting the £29,000 to fund two additional case managers in 16/17, there remains £274,000 of New Homes Bonus money which is unused. This funding is available to finance the temporary transitional staffing resources set out in this report.

## 5.5

Table 2 - Unused New Homes Bonus Funding	(£)
Amount of 15/16 New Homes Bonus funding not required to fund 15/16 Disabled Facilities Grants spend (as above)	211,000
Amount of 16/17 New Homes Bonus funding not required to fund 16/17 Disabled Facilities Grants spend (as above)	92,000
Sub Total - Unused New Homes Bonus Funding	303,000
Less: Funding required for two case managers to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants at the estimated demand level (WDBC share of the cost)	(29,000)
Unused New Homes Bonus funding remaining which is not required to fund Disabled Facilities Grants in 15/16 and 16/17. (This funding is available to finance the temporary transitional staffing resources set out in this report.)	274,000

5.6 It is recommended to approve the use of £215,522 of Unused New Homes Bonus funding to fund the temporary transitional staffing resources set out in Appendix A.

5.7 It is also recommended to allocate the remaining £58,478 (of the £274,000 unused NHB) as a contingency budget for Disabled Facilities Grants. Therefore if the actual expenditure in 2016/17 exceeds the expected level of demand of £450,000, funding could be taken from the contingency budget of £58,478.

## 6. Financial Implications

Appendix A sets out the additional fixed term, temporary transitional resources required, of which the WDBC share of the cost is £215,522.

This can be funded from available NHB funding as set out in section 5.

## 7. Risks

7.1 The council is already seeing damage to its reputation from customers, Town and Parish councils, and other agencies. This is due to delays in answering phone calls and poor service delivery.

7.2 Staff welfare remains a concern as highlighted in section 3.

- 7.3 Whilst the funding is for 12 months of temporary, fixed term resources, these will be profiled over an 18 month period to ensure service continuity.
- 7.4 In addition to normal performance monitoring reports at O&S committee. A detailed quarterly progress report will be presented to Hub committee as highlighted in section 4.

## 8. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The report is presented to Members as only full Council can approve the reallocation of New Homes Bonus funding.
Financial	Y	See Section 6.
Risk	Y	See Section 7.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	None
Safeguarding	N	None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	The report recognises staff welfare concerns and the proposals will support permanent staff.
Other implications	N	None

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed	<b>Yes</b>
SLT Rep briefed	<b>Yes</b>
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	<b>Yes</b>
Data protection issues considered	<b>Yes</b>
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Committee/Scrutiny)	<b>N/A</b>

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## West Devon Transitional Resources - Appendix A

Cost of temporary, fixed term transitional resources

Service Area (Community of Practice)	Function	Issues to be addressed	Proportion of cost to be met by WDBC (£)
Development Management	Customer First Case Management	Improve responsiveness to customer telephone queries. Reduce backlog. Support whilst new processes are implemented. Reduce validation times and implement Peer Review recommendations	53,759
Revenues and Benefits	Customer First Case Management	Support to reduce backlogs. Training and support to contact centre Additional capacity whilst channel shift technologies go live. Protect income and proactive enforcement.	19,444
Housing Advice	Customer First Case Management	Support to protect vulnerable customers whilst new processes are introduced.	20,464
Environmental Health	Customer First Case Management	Support for licensing and high risk inspections whilst new processes are implemented. Reduce the risk of income reducing. Support additional DFG workloads.	4,735
Assets	Customer First Case Management	Support to aid transfer of work from specialist to case management	9,459
Commercial Services	Customer First Case Management	Waste - support whilst new processes are implemented and embedded. Car Parking - Reduce backlogs and reduce the risk of income reducing. Provide support whilst new technology is purchased and implemented.	15,765
Strategic Planning	Customer First Case Management	Support to aid transfer of work from specialist to case management Additional support for local and neighbourhood plans, TAP and community grants.	12,612
Customer Services	Customer First Contact Centre	Reduce call waiting times and provide additional capacity to enable additional training to improve quality.	32,550
Support Services	Support Services Case Management	Consolidation and streamlining of all invoice processing to reduce burden and free up capacity across Customer First, Commercial Services and Strategy & Commissioning case management.	25,224
Support Services	Support Services Case Management	Backfill to free up a management resource to provide capacity to drive process improvement and to ensure technology and processes are contributing positively to demand reduction and improvements customer satisfaction.	11,000
Support Services	Support Services Case Management	Review and fundamental redesign of the councils website (look, feel and content) to improve the customer access and journey. Aiding channel shift and reducing the burden on the contact centre.	10,510
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>215,522</b>

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