

COUNCIL ADDENDUM – CONSULTATION RESPONSE UPDATE	AGENDA ITEM No. 10(b)
27 JANUARY 2016	PUBLIC REPORT

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/17

Addendum to Council for consultation responses – 27 January 2016

1. This addendum is presented to Council at the meeting of 27 January as additional information as referenced in section 6 of the Cabinet Budget report (Item 8):

6.1 *The proposed changes outlined in this report, having regard to feedback from consultation, will become Peterborough’s council tax support scheme for 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 including an introduction of a discretionary hardship policy. Cabinet launched the consultation after 25 November 2015 and will be remain open until 25 January 2016.*

6.4 *The consultation remains open. An update will be provided to Cabinet at their meeting, **and the final picture will be reported to Council.***

Consultation feedback

2. Since the Cabinet meeting 18 January, a further four online responses were received and can be seen in Appendix 1. This brings the total consultation responses received to nine survey responses and one letter from Peterborough Citizen Advice Bureau.
3. The overall survey results have been summarised in the table below.

Analysis of survey responses	Yes	No
Do you agree with maintaining an overall reduction in entitlement of 30 per cent from all working age claimants?	5	4
Do you agree with the proposed amendment to limit backdating of council tax support to one month?	5	4
Do you agree with the proposed amendment to remove family premiums from all new claimants with effect from 1 May 2016?	5	4
Do you agree that the council should implement a council tax discretionary hardship policy?	7	2

4. Two of the four ‘No’ responses to maintaining an overall reduction in entitlement of 30 per cent from all working age claimants proposed an increase over and above the current 30 per cent scheme. Only one of the four requested a decrease in the current entitlement.
5. Overall, responses to the consultation were low and views were given for both those in agreement and not in agreement to the proposed amendments to the council tax support scheme for 2016/17 with the exception of the introduction of the council tax discretionary hardship policy. The response from Peterborough Citizen Advice Bureau recognised the financial constraints that the council were under and had no issues with the proposed

technical changes, welcoming the introduction of the council tax discretionary hardship policy.

6. The council believes changes proposed for next year strike the right balance in difficult choices that the council has to make in setting its budget for next year, minimising the impact on vulnerable people and creating opportunities to get people into work and therefore come off benefit. Cabinet therefore continue to recommend to Council approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17.
7. Under legislation, pensioners are protected and therefore not eligible under the council tax support scheme

Appendix 1 - Further Responses

	Do you agree with maintaining an overall reduction in entitlement of 30 per cent from all working age claimants?		Do you agree with the proposed amendment to limit backdating of council tax support to one month?		Do you agree with the proposed amendment to remove family premiums from all new claimants with effect from 1 May 2016?		Do you agree that the council should implement a council tax discretionary hardship policy?
	Response	If not, why not?	Response	If not, why not?	Response	If not, why not?	Response
1	Yes		No	Most claimants do not know about the scheme, and new claimants whom are in arrears will have little to no means to manage arrears if backdating is cut to one month only	Yes		Yes - This is a great idea, as it will give claimants a chance to resolve council tax issues before it comes to bailiffs and debt collectors - with their own charges and fees added. Ensuring claimants seek help with budgeting will empower claimants
2	No	Would rather see it increased	No	This would not enable the likes of those moving house to have their claim backdated to when they left their previous house completed - I had the experience of a 3 month claim time	No	Don't understand what 'Family Premium' is....	Yes
3	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes
4	No	should be decreased to 25%	Yes		Yes		Yes
	<p><i>In assessing the scheme for 2016/17, council officers and Cabinet considered a range of options including level of benefit against the council's budget position and how it may impact on households.</i></p>		<p><i>The council believes that aligning the council tax support scheme to Housing Benefit Rules will make it easier and simpler for claimants to understand and claim for benefits in which they are entitled to.</i></p> <p><i>The backdating issue always requires people to submit a claim as soon as possible, because the qualifying condition is that there has to be continuous good cause for the delay in applying</i></p>		<p><i>The family premium is an amount of £17.45 included in your benefit calculation when you have at least one dependant child. If you are already claiming benefit and have a child you will keep the family premium. However, you will be affected if you need to make a new claim in the future, for example, if you make a new claim after 1st May 2015 or have a break in your current claim.</i></p>		<p><i>Cabinet have approved the introduction of a council tax discretionary hardship policy from 1 April 2016</i></p>

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