

Public Consultation on the Council Tax Support Scheme

The Council intends to consult on proposed changes to its Council Tax Support scheme with the public and preceptors. Any new scheme must be in place by 31st January 2015.

The Consultation will last from September 29th until December 29th. The outcome of the consultation will be evaluated and fully considered prior to a final Cabinet decision on the changes being referred to full Council on 28th January 2015.

The consultation will be with Borough residents and the GLA.

Strategic objectives

The objectives of the public consultation are:

- To promote a wider and deeper understanding of proposed changes to the Council Tax Scheme which are aimed at delivering necessary savings.
- To undertake robust consultation, seeking the views of the general public and stakeholder on the proposed changes.

Approach

All relevant information pertaining to the Council Tax Support consultation will be provided through the havering.gov.uk website – in line with the general budget consultation and other statutory consultations. The consultation will be well publicised through a range of communications channels.

Channel	Audience	Details	Timescale
Formal consultation	Greater London Authority	One of the requirements placed on local authorities is that we include major preceptors in the consultation process. We have advised the GLA of the proposed changes to the scheme and, at their request, will consult them formally when the consultation period starts.	Ongoing
Havering.gov.uk	Residents	For residents, the consultation will run from September 2014 to December 2014. A description of the changes and a questionnaire will be available on line.	Sept - November
<i>Living in Havering</i>	All residents	Summary of the council tax support proposals within the context of all budget proposals.	October

		Promotion of feedback mechanisms.	
Community Group meetings	Meetings with range of partners and providers	During this period we will meet with representatives from Havering's community groups, social landlords, internal staff and voluntary organisations to separately canvas their views on the proposed changes.	Sept - Nov

Questions

The amount of funding for council tax support is being reduced and local authorities will be **expected to manage this reduction in subsidised expenditure.**

Every household will now be expected to pay something towards their council tax. The Council considered a range of schemes and liability reductions.

In line with a number of other councils, we believe introducing a 15% reduction for working age claimants will not cause undue financial hardship and could save up to £1.6 million.

1. Is it reasonable to introduce a 15% liability reduction for working age claimants? [yes/no and comments]

Currently working age claimants can have savings or investments of up to £16,000 before they are disqualified from receiving help with their Council Tax. From 2015/16 it is proposed that this limit is reduced to £6,000.

2. Should working age council tax payers have no more than £6,000 savings or investments before claiming Council Tax Support? [yes/no and comments]

Currently council tax payers whose incomes are too high to qualify for Council Tax Support can receive assistance if other adults living in the household are on a low income. This is called Second Adult Rebate. The Council proposes that Second Adult Rebate is removed from the scheme for working age claimants.

3. Should working age council tax payers, who do not qualify for Council Tax Support, receive a reduction in their Council Tax through Second Adult Rebate? [yes/no and comments]

People who own or rent an empty property are currently charged 100% of the Council Tax. The Council is considering increasing the council tax by 50% where the property has been empty for more than two years.

4. Should people who own or rent a property which has been empty for more than two years, be charged 150% council tax? [yes/no and comments]