

CABINET

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham. S60
2TH**

Date: Wednesday, 19 December 2012

Time: 10.30 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. To consider questions from Members of the Public.
2. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.
3. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.
4. Declarations of Interest.
5. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 5th December, 2012 (copy supplied separately)
6. Council Tax Support/Council Tax Discount and Exemption - Consultation Findings (Pages 2 - 62)
 - Strategic Director of Resources to report.
7. No Stone Unturned in Pursuit Of Growth – The Heseltine Review (Pages 63 - 78)
 - Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services to report
8. Focused Changes to Rotherham's Core Strategy (Pages 79 - 83)
 - Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services to report.
9. Amendment to Standing Orders (Pages 84 - 86)
 - Director of Legal and Democratic Services to report
10. Delegation of Powers - Revenues (Pages 87 - 88)
 - Director of Legal and Democratic Services to report
11. Rotherham's Strategic Tenancy Policy (Pages 89 - 96)
 - Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services to report.

Extra Report:-

12. Rotherham Festive Food Fund - offering safe, affordable borrowing to vulnerable people in Rotherham over the Christmas period (report herewith) (Pages 97 - 100)
 - Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services to report.

13. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

The following item is likely to be considered in the absence of the press and public as being exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended March 2006) (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person)

14. Approval of tender for Flanderwell Primary School's New Classroom Extension (Pages 101 - 103)
 - Strategic Director of Resources to report.

In accordance with Section (7) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed that those items marked (*) contain decisions which need to be acted upon as a matter of urgency and which cannot be reasonably deferred (see notice attached)

Cabinet Meeting – 19th December, 2012

Take notice, in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, that the following report is to be considered in the private part of the meeting without having provided the required twenty-eight days' notice:-

- **Approval of Tender for Flanderwell Primary School's New Classroom Extension**

An exemption under Paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 is requested, as this report asks that the tender submitted be approved.

Freedom of Information Act: Exemption under Paragraph 3 (which refers to Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the authority holding that information) of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 is requested as this report contains commercially sensitive details.

The report recommends that a decision be made to authorise acceptance of a tender for the provision of a new classroom building comprising of one foundation and four classrooms, an administration office and staffroom including extensive remodelling to the existing building.

Accordingly the report needs to be considered as a matter of urgency.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has agreed that the meeting is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

Jacqueline Collins
Director of Legal and Democratic Services
11th December, 2012.

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	19th December 2012
3.	Title:	Council Tax Support / Council Tax Discount and Exemption - Consultation Findings
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

This report provides key headlines of the outcomes from the recent public consultation on the proposals for Rotherham's new Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme and the related changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions. The public consultation was intended to inform the Council's final decision on its proposed CTS scheme and Council Tax discount and exemption changes and was active from 24th September 2012 to 19th November 2012. A further report will be brought forward in January, when details of the planned 2013/14 Local Government Finance Settlement are known.

The report also provides details of the CTS Transitional Grant announced on 18th October.

6. Recommendations

Cabinet are asked to:

- **Note the headline messages arising from the analysis of the consultation.**
- **Consider how the consultation findings align with and can / should influence the decisions on the Council's new CTS scheme and proposed discount and exemption changes.**
- **Note the details of the CTS Transitional Grant.**
- **Agree that the contents of this report are shared with the South Yorkshire Joint Authorities**
- **Note that a further report will be brought forward early in the New Year when draft details of the Local Government Finance Settlement are known, including how this may influence the Scheme ultimately implemented.**

7. Proposals and Details

This paper discusses the findings from the consultation with the public about the Council's proposed new CTS scheme and the related changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions. An analysis of the results is provided in order to inform the final decision of the Council.

Overall there were 177 responses to the consultation of which 42 were currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit and 53 were currently in receipt of Council Tax discount or exemptions. Although the number of responses was low in comparison with the volume of communications that were issued, this appears to be in line with a national low response level experienced by the majority of Councils who have consulted.

Overall, the analysis shows that a majority of respondents supported each proposal, although the results varied reflecting the potentially differing effect of each of the proposals on individual's dependant upon their status as a respondent. (i.e. Those in currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit or discounts and exemptions – and those not.). The following sections of the report provide a summary of the different methods of that were undertaken and the headline results.

Consultation programme

A wide variety of consultation methods were used during the exercise with the aim to ensure the approach was inclusive of all groups affected, including those currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit or Council Tax discounts and exemptions. The consultation methods consisted of the following:

Press

- A public notice was placed in both the Rotherham Advertiser and Dinnington Guardian on 21/9/2012 advising of the consultation
- A press release appeared in the Rotherham Advertiser on 21st September 2012

Face to face consultation

- Advice with regards to the forthcoming changes was given from the Welfare Reform group's stall at the Rotherham show on 8th September 2012 prior to consultation going live
- Consultation meetings were held with Voluntary Action Rotherham both before the consultation commenced and on 8th November 2012 during the consultation period.
- Consultation presentations were made to Housing Associations, Representative groups such as Rotherfed and Area Assemblies for Wentworth and Rother valley
- Canvassing of the public was undertaken in Riverside Customer Services Centre (CSC) through the distribution of flyers to customers from 25th October 2012 by CSC staff and a separate proactive exercise in Riverside foyer on 7th November 2012

Promotion of the on-line consultation by post and electronic communication

Promotion of on-line consultation was undertaken by letter, SMS and email. Additionally, promotional flyers were issued with some benefit notifications and Council Tax bills

A total of 5,462 letters/flyers, 7,826 emails and 21,197 SMS were sent promoting the consultation process.

Summary of findings

The analysis shows that overall the majority of the 177 respondents supported all of the proposals. Within the overall support for the Council's proposed CTS scheme this it was possible to identify some specific trends:

- Although benefit claimants as a separate group opposed the principle of a benefit cut, a majority of them agreed with all the proposals within the CTS scheme which would bring about that cut, including a maximum benefit entitlement which has yet to be set.
- Similarly, although discount and exemption recipients opposed the principle of cuts that would affect them, a majority of this group agreed with all the proposals for the individual changes to reduce specific discounts and exemptions

The findings of the consultation are broken down to the three main areas of questioning below. Further analysis can be found in Appendix A.

It should be noted that for the purposes of the summary "strongly" and "tend to" responses have been combined for both those supporting and those opposing proposals. Percentages of respondents stating "no opinion" are not listed in the summary.

Making up the shortfall in funding

Overall the majority of respondents supported all three options:

- **Cuts to Council Tax Support to reduce expenditure**

Overall 60% of respondents supported this proposal while 28% opposed.

The results for this proposal varied greatly between current benefit claimants (29% supported and 55% opposed) and non-benefit claimants (70% supported and 19% opposed). This is understandable in light of the fact that benefit claimants are the people who will be adversely affected financially should this change be implemented.

- **Changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions to increase income**

Overall 53% of respondents supported this proposal while 40% opposed.

The results for this proposal varied greatly between current recipients of discounts and exemptions (42% supported and 57% opposed) and non-recipients (57% supported and 33% opposed). Again this is understandable

in light of the fact that current recipients are the people who will be adversely affected financially should these changes be implemented..

- **Meeting some of the shortfall from Council funds**

Overall 57% of respondents supported this proposal while 34% opposed. Additionally 64% of benefit claimants and 55% of non claimants also supported this proposal.

Proposed Council Tax Support scheme

The overall majority of respondents supported all proposals for the new scheme – and this pattern held true both for the individual groups of benefit claimants and non-benefit claimants. The table below summarises respondent support levels in total and for both groups.

Scheme Proposal for	Benefit Claimants	Non- Benefit Claimants	Overall
Maximum % benefit entitlement	57%	81%	75%
Safeguarding vulnerable groups	76%	72%	73%
Promoting work incentives	83%	67%	71%
Armed forces covenant	71%	76%	75%
Abolishing second adult rebate	71%	76%	75%

Additionally, analysis of the proposed measures to safeguard vulnerable people saw 70% of carers and 69% of disabled responders agreeing with the proposals.

Proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions

Again all proposals for specific changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions received agreement from the majority respondents overall, as well from current recipients and non-recipients groups. The table below shows the percentages in agreement for the respondents overall and the two groups.

Scheme Proposal for	Discount Recipients	Non- Discount Recipients	Overall
Remove second home discount	79%	78%	79%
Reduce vacant undergoing structural repair to 25% discount	51%	67%	62%
Reduce vacant first six months 25% discount	60%	68%	66%
Remove vacant over 6 months discount	68%	73%	72%
50% premium for properties empty over 2 years	77%	75%	76%

Council Tax Support Transitional Grant

In mid October, whilst the Council's consultation process was underway, the Government announced a one year Transitional Grant worth to £100m nationally to support the localisation of Council Tax Support. The transitional funding is intended to provide "support for all local authorities to develop schemes that protect the poorest".

To qualify for the CTS Transitional Grant the Council's Local Scheme must:

- Ensure those who would be entitled to 100% support under current council tax benefit scheme should pay no more than 8.5% of their net council tax liability
- Have a taper rate (i.e. the rate at which support is withdrawn as claimant's income rises) not greater than 25%;
- There must also be no sharp reduction in benefit support for those entering work- i.e. the taper should continue to operate as under the current Council Tax Benefit regulations;

And, although not one of the criteria, the Government would also not expect local authorities to impose large additional increases in non-dependent deductions.

We believe the Council's proposed Scheme could meet these criteria, if the maximum level of support was set at 91.5% (leaving the contribution from claimants at 8.5%), compared with the 80% maximum support and 20% contribution that had been modelled. The other provisions within the scheme are thought to be consistent with Government's requirements.

The Government has released details of the Transitional Grant allocations and the value of Transitional Grant for Rotherham is £0.468m. This figure will not change in the Local Government finance Settlement.

The offer of transitional funding will require a decision from elected Members on whether to amend the Council's proposed Council Tax Support scheme to potentially qualify for the grant. The deadline for applications for the funding is mid February and it is proposed that a decision is not taken regarding whether to apply for the grant until details of the local Government Finance Settlement are known which will provide details of other funding streams such as the Council Tax Support Grant. The provisional settlement is expected in mid to late December.

In deciding whether to apply for the Transitional Grant there are several factors and risks that will need to be taken into account:

- If the Council decides to apply for this grant we will not know until March whether our application has been successful.
- If this Council is successful in applying for the grant, the amount passed-through to be recovered from Claimants is estimated to be around £1m (at 8.5% limit). Although current Council Tax Collection Rates remain high (c97%) it is felt that there is a significantly greater risk with collecting this £1m pass-through as:
 - We will be collecting payments from claimants who have not previously been required to contribute to their Council Tax
 - The amounts to be collected are relatively small and collection powers are limited for many benefit claimants
- This is a Transitional Grant and will be non-recurrent. If the grant is accepted, a further decision will be required for 2014/15 about how this lost income is covered. This could be from further savings across the Council or from pass-

through to Claimants. To pass-through the costs to Claimants would require amendments to the Scheme and should this happen these additional charges to Claimants would come into effect at the same time the Universal Credit is fully implemented – April 2014.

If it is decided not to apply for the Grant, it is estimated that £2m would be passed through to Claimants. This represents a pass-through of 20%. The caveats around being able to collect the monies from Claimants remain.

Next Steps

It is planned that a further report detailing Rotherham's proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme will be brought forward in January 2013 for approval by Full Council on January 30th (as required by regulation – the scheme must be approved by Full Council by 31st January). This report will include the recommendation on whether to apply for the Transitional Funding.

As part of the consultation process it is intended that this report will be shared with the Joint Secretariat during December. The South Yorkshire Police and Fire and Rescue Authorities, like the Council, will receive Council Tax Support Grant to replace Benefit and, should the Council apply for Transitional Grant they will also receive an allocation from the £100m national pot.

8. Finance

The total cost of the Council Tax Scheme consultation was funded by an additional £80k grant from DCLG.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The main risk and uncertainty was that failure to consult correctly on the new Council Tax Support scheme would risk a judicial review which could have meant Rotherham having to adopt the default scheme, which is in effect to continue the current benefit scheme, this would be substantially more expensive than the current proposals.

The Council's proposals (whether or not it is decided to apply for Transitional Grant) include passing through some element of the Council Tax to claimants. These risks are included within Section 7 of this report.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

This consultation is intended to inform the Council's final decision on its Council Tax Support scheme and changes to Council tax discounts and exemptions. The full Council must adopt the final Council Tax Support scheme by 31st January 2013 otherwise the Council will have to adopt the Government's default scheme.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Headline Consultation Results (Appendix 1)
Consultation Full Report
Equality Impact Assessment

Contact Name:

Robert Cutts (Service and Development Manager, Revenues and Benefits, email: robert.cutts@rotherham.gov.uk Tel No: x23320

Stuart Booth (Director of Finance), email: stuart.booth@rotherham.gov.uk Tel No: 22034

Appendix 1

Headline Consultation Results

Overall there were 177 responses to the consultation. Although the number of responses was low in comparison with the volume of communications that were issued this appears to be in line with a national low response level experienced by the majority of Councils who have consulted.

Further breakdown of the respondents completing equality questions shows:

- The vast majority of respondents 87% were of working age which would be expected as pensioners are protected from changes to Council Tax Benefit.
- There was slightly larger female response 56% to the consultation
- 24% of respondents were disabled.
- 14% of responders were carers
- 9% were BME.

Results from the General Public

The following results suggest that people broadly agreed with the Council proposals. This level of agreement understandably varied between groups with benefit claimants tending to oppose benefit cuts while discount and exemption recipients tended to oppose discount cuts. Further in depth detail of the breakdown of results can be found in the full consultation report.

Question 1

People were asked whether Rotherham should reduce expenditure through cuts to the new CTS scheme

Strongly Support	27.68%
Tend to Support	32.77%
Tend to Oppose	9.6%
Strongly Oppose	18.08%
No Opinion	11.87%

Question 2

People were asked whether Rotherham should increase Council Tax income through changes to discounts and exemptions

Strongly Support	22.6%
Tend to Support	29.94%
Tend to Oppose	14.12%
Strongly Oppose	25.99%
No Opinion	7.35%

Question 3

People were asked whether Rotherham should meet some of the shortfall from Council funds

Strongly Support	24.86%
Tend to Support	32.2%
Tend to Oppose	18.64%
Strongly Oppose	15.25%
No Opinion	9.05%

Question 4

People were asked whether they agreed that all claimants of a working age should pay a minimum percentage of their Council tax bill themselves

Strongly Support	50.85%
Tend to Support	24.29%
Tend to Oppose	7.91%
Strongly Oppose	14.69%
No Opinion	2.26%

Question 5

People were asked whether they agreed with the Councils proposal to retain the present scheme of allowances, premiums and income disregards as the best way of recognising the particular needs of families, carers and people with disabilities.

Strongly Support	34.46%
Tend to Support	38.42%
Tend to Oppose	11.3%
Strongly Oppose	9.04%
No Opinion	6.78%

Question 6

People were asked if they agreed with the Councils proposal to retain the 4 week run on period in order to incentivise work

Strongly Support	37.85%
Tend to Support	33.33%
Tend to Oppose	9.04%
Strongly Oppose	10.17%
No Opinion	9.61%

Question 7

People were asked if they agreed with the Councils proposals to continue to disregard all monies received in respect of war widows and war disablement pensions

Strongly Support	53.11%
Tend to Support	21.47%
Tend to Oppose	8.47%
Strongly Oppose	9.6%
No Opinion	7.35%

Question 8

People were asked if they agreed with the Council should not offer Second adult rebate

Strongly Support	42.94%
Tend to Support	31.64%
Tend to Oppose	9.04%
Strongly Oppose	11.3%
No Opinion	5.08%

Question 9

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should remove the 50% discount currently granted to second homes

Strongly Support	63.28%
Tend to Support	15.25%
Tend to Oppose	3.95%
Strongly Oppose	12.99%
No Opinion	4.53%

Question 10

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should reduce the 12 month 100% discount for homes undergoing structural repair to 25%

Strongly Support	36.16%
Tend to Support	25.99%
Tend to Oppose	19.77%
Strongly Oppose	13.56%
No Opinion	4.52%

Question 11

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should reduce the 6 month 100% discount for vacant and unfurnished homes to 25%

Strongly Support	40.11%
Tend to Support	25.42%
Tend to Oppose	12.43%
Strongly Oppose	19.21%
No Opinion	2.83%

Question 12

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should remove the current 50% discount for homes vacant and unfurnished after 6 months

Strongly Support	48.02%
Tend to Support	23.73%
Tend to Oppose	11.3%
Strongly Oppose	13.56%
No Opinion	3.39%

Question 13

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should charge a 50% premium on properties vacant and unfurnished for a period of over 2 years

Strongly Support	51.98%
Tend to Support	23.73%
Tend to Oppose	6.21%
Strongly Oppose	11.86%
No Opinion	6.22%

Council Tax Support and Council Tax Technical Changes Full Consultation Report

Confidentiality Statement

All information in this document is provided in confidence for the sole purpose of adjudication of the document and shall not be used for any other purpose and shall not be published or disclosed wholly or in part to any other party without RMBC's prior permission in writing and shall be held in safe custody. These obligations shall not apply to information, which is published or becomes known legitimately from some source other than RMBC.

Many of the products, services and company names referred to in this document are trademarks or registered trademarks.

They are all hereby acknowledged.

Approvers

Name	Date
Peter Hudson	22 nd June 2012

Distribution

Name	Location
Operational Managers, Revenues & Benefits	Riverside House
Stuart Booth	Riverside House
Peter Hudson	Riverside House
Anne Ellis	Riverside House
SLT	Riverside House

Table of Contents

Council Tax Support and Council Tax Technical Changes	1
Full Consultation Report.....	1
Confidentiality Statement	2
1 Introduction	4
1.1 Objectives and Scope	4
2 Consultation Programme.....	5
2.1 Press	5
2.2 Face to face consultation.....	5
2.3 Promotion of consultation by post and electronic communication.....	5
3 Detailed Consultation Results.....	6
3.1 Making up the shortfall in funding	6
3.1.1 Cuts to the new Council Tax Support scheme	6
3.1.2 Changes to discounts and exemptions.....	7
3.1.3 Meet some of the shortfall from Council funds	7
3.2 Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme.....	8
3.2.1 Maximum Council Tax Support	8
3.2.2 Safeguarding vulnerable groups.....	9
3.2.3 Promoting work incentives.....	10
3.2.4 Armed Forces covenant	11
3.2.5 Abolish Second Adult Rebate.....	12
3.3 Proposed changes to Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions.....	12
3.3.1 Second homes.....	12
3.3.2 Vacant properties undergoing major structural repair	13
3.3.3 Vacant and unfurnished properties (first six months).....	14
3.3.4 Vacant and unfurnished properties (vacant for over six months).....	14
3.3.5 Long term vacant and unfurnished properties (vacant for over two years)	15
4 Summary of consultation results.....	16
5 Additional consultation comments.....	18
6 Equalities data	19
7 Glossary of Terms	21
8 Change History.....	22
Appendix A – Additional Consultation Comments.....	23
Consultation comments	23
Comments through the Councils web site or by e-mail.....	36

1 Introduction

Council Tax Support

From April 2013, The Government is abolishing the current national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme and asking local authorities to set up their own local schemes to meet the needs of their local area.

Our local scheme will be known as Council Tax Support (CTS). In making these changes the Coalition Government is reducing the amount of funding to Rotherham Council to provide Council Tax support.

At present the Government funds 100% of the current Council Tax Benefit scheme. However under the new Council Tax Support scheme Rotherham will receive a set figure as an annual grant. The government will reduce the grant by 10% of the amount paid out in Council Tax benefit from 1st April 2013.

Any spend on Council Tax Support above the grant level will have to be met out of the Councils own funds to the detriment of other Council services.

As a result we will have to make some difficult decisions about who will get financial help to pay their Council Tax and how much help they will receive.

Changes to Council Tax Discount and Exemptions

From 1st April 2013 the government is allowing Councils local discretion on the levels of some Council Tax discount and exemptions. The Council is proposing therefore to make changes to discounts and exemptions in order to raise additional funds to meet some of the losses in government funding for the new Council tax Support scheme.

1.1 Objectives and Scope

As part of the processes of creating the local CTS scheme the council is required to consult with the public on its proposals.

The Public consultation on the proposed CTS scheme and changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions started on 24th September 2012 and ended on 19th November 2012.

This document seeks to analyse the consultation results in order that they can be considered by Members in reaching a final decision on the final CTS scheme and the changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions which will come into effect on 1st April 2013.

2 Consultation Programme

A wide variety of methods were used as part of the Consultation process with the aim of ensuring the approach was inclusive of all groups including those currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit or Council Tax discounts and exemptions.

Overall there were 177 responses to the consultation of which 42 were currently in receipt of Council tax Benefit and 53 were currently in receipt of Council Tax discount or exemptions. Although the number of responses was low in comparison with the volume of communications that were issued this appears to be in line with a national low response level experienced by the majority of Councils who have consulted. A further breakdown of the respondents based on the equalities data can be found in section 8.

The consultation methods consisted of the following.

2.1 Press

- A public notice was placed in both the Rotherham Advertiser and Dinnington Guardian on 21st September 2012
- A press release in the Rotherham Advertiser on 21st September 2012

2.2 Face to face consultation

- Advice was given with regards to the forthcoming changes at the Rotherham show on 8th September 2012 prior to consultation going live
- Consultation meetings were held with Voluntary Action Rotherham both before the consultation commenced and on 8th November 2012 during the consultation period
- Consultation presentations were made to Housing Associations, Representative groups and Area Assemblies
- Canvassing of public was undertaken in Riverside customer services centre

2.3 Promotion of consultation by post and electronic communication

Promotion of on-line consultation was undertaken by letter, SMS and email together with the inclusion of promotional flyer with benefit notifications and Council Tax bills.

A total of 5,462 letters/flyers, 7,826 emails and 21,197 SMS were sent promoting the consultation process.

3 Detailed Consultation Results

This section details the responses to the three sections of the consultation which asked the respondents opinions on:

- How the authority should make up the shortfall in funding (3.1)
- The proposed design of the CTS scheme (3.2)
- The proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions (3.3)

This section shows the overall results for each question but also breaks down those results further to show responses for the relevant groups. Therefore for questions regarding reductions in benefits the results are split between those claiming benefit and those not. Similarly for questions regarding reductions in Council Tax discounts and exemptions the results are split between recipients and non recipients.

Additionally in respect of some questions there has been further analysis by other criteria where this was considered appropriate. Where this additional analysis has been carried out on data contained in the equalities section it should be remembered that respondents have the option not to answer, consequently results are not based on the full data set.

3.1 Making up the shortfall in funding

As part of the consultation we initially asked respondents to give their opinions on the following three options to make up the shortfall in funding:

3.1.1 Cuts to the new Council Tax Support scheme

People were asked whether Rotherham should reduce benefit expenditure through cuts to the new CTS scheme.

The responses in Table 1 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 1

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Support	9.52%	33.33%	27.68%
Tend to Support	19.05%	37.04%	32.77%
Tend to Oppose	14.29%	8.15%	9.6%
Strongly Oppose	40.48%	11.11%	18.08%
No Opinion	16.66%	10.37%	11.87%

Overall 60% of respondents supported this proposal while 28% opposed.

Only 29% of benefit claimants as a separate group supported the proposal which is understandable in light of the fact that benefit claimants are the people who will be adversely affected financially should this change be implemented.

As pensioners are protected from any cuts to CTS the data has been further analysed to show the split in responses between those of pensionable age and those of working age. Table 2 shows the split in responses between pensionable and work age for all respondents who completed the equalities section of the consultation.

Table 2

	Pensioners	Work Age
Strongly Support	40%	27.08%
Tend to Support	35%	33.33%
Tend to Oppose	0%	9.72%
Strongly Oppose	20%	18.06%
No Opinion	5%	11.81%

This further analysis based on age showed the proposal supported by both Pensioners 75% and work age 60%.

3.1.2 Changes to discounts and exemptions

People were asked whether Rotherham should increase Council Tax income through changes to discounts and exemptions.

The responses in Table 3 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 3

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	11.32%	27.42%	22.6%
Tend to Support	30.19%	29.84%	29.94%
Tend to Oppose	20.75%	11.29%	14.12%
Strongly Oppose	35.85%	21.77%	25.99%
No Opinion	1.89%	9.68%	7.35%

Overall 53% of respondents supported this proposal while 40% opposed.

Only 42% of current discount or exemption recipients as a separate group supported the proposal which is understandable in light of the fact that benefit claimants are the people who will be adversely affected financially should this change be implemented.

3.1.3 Meet some of the shortfall from Council funds

People were asked whether Rotherham should meet some of the shortfall from council funds including a potential increase in Council Tax levels.

The responses in Table 4 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 4

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Support	23.81%	25.19%	24.86%
Tend to Support	40.48%	29.63%	32.2%
Tend to Oppose	7.14%	22.22%	18.64%
Strongly Oppose	14.29%	15.56%	15.25%
No Opinion	14.28%	7.4%	9.05%

Overall 57% of respondents supported this proposal and this pattern held true both for the individual groups of benefit claimants 64% and non-benefit claimants 55%

3.2 Proposed Council Tax Support Scheme

The Council produced a draft Council Tax Support scheme based largely upon the existing Council Tax Benefit rules which was available to respondents as part of the consultation process.

3.2.1 Maximum Council Tax Support

The main proposed change to the current Council Tax Benefit scheme was to introduce a maximum Council Tax Support level. This would be set at a percentage of the Council Tax entitlement which is sufficient to meet the likely shortfall in government funding.

At present a claimant may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit to meet 100% of their Council Tax bill. However it was proposed that the maximum entitlement for Council Tax Support will be reduced to a percentage yet to be decided. This will mean all working age CTS claimants will have to make some payment towards their Council Tax.

The maximum percentage entitlement is dependant on decisions made regarding funding the shortfall through other changes to the scheme, additional income raised from changes to Council Tax and subsidy from Council funds and will be made at a later date.

People were asked whether they agreed that all claimants of a working age should pay a minimum percentage of their Council Tax bill themselves.

The responses in Table 5 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 5

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	26.19%	58.52%	50.85%
Tend to Agree	30.95%	22.22%	24.29%
Tend to Disagree	14.29%	5.93%	7.91%
Strongly Disagree	26.19%	11.11%	14.69%
No Opinion	2.38%	2.22%	2.26%

Overall 75% of respondents agreed this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for the individual groups of benefit claimants 57% and non-benefit claimants 81%

3.2.2 Safeguarding vulnerable groups

When designing a scheme the Council must also have regard to:

- Equalities Act 2010

The Council must have regard to disabilities when making decisions of a strategic nature in order to reduce any inequalities. There is a duty on the Local Authority to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

- Child Poverty Act 2010

Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act 2010, sections 19-25, place a duty on Local Authorities to reduce child poverty in their area.

- Guidance issued by the Secretary of State to safeguard vulnerable groups.

The rules for Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) means-tested benefits have a scheme of allowances and premiums that take into account the make-up of the claimant's household, including responsibility for children, caring responsibilities and varying degrees of ill health and disability. Additionally some types of income related to children (Child benefit and child maintenance) or income related to disability (Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance) are not counted in assessing a claimant's income for Council Tax Benefit.

The Council proposes that it retains the present scheme of allowances, premiums and income disregards in the Council Tax Support scheme as the best way of recognising the particular needs of families, carers and people with disabilities.

People were asked whether they agreed with the Councils proposal to retain the present scheme of allowances, premiums and income disregards as the best way of recognising the particular needs of families, carers and people with disabilities.

The responses in Table 6 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 6

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	61.9%	25.93%	34.46%
Tend to Agree	14.29%	45.93%	38.42%
Tend to Disagree	9.52%	11.85%	11.3%
Strongly Disagree	9.52%	8.89%	9.04%
No Opinion	4.77%	7.4%	6.78%

Overall 73% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both for the individual groups of benefit claimants 76% and non-benefit claimants 72%

Table 7 below shows further analysis of the responses from those indicating they were a carer or disabled, two of the groups we were seeking to safeguard. A total of 23 respondents identified themselves as a carer and 39 as disabled.

Table 7

	Carer	Disabled
Strongly Agree	43.48%	36.11%
Tend to Agree	26.09%	33.33%
Tend to Disagree	13.04%	16.67%
Strongly Disagree	13.04%	11.11%
No Opinion	4.35%	2.78%

For both groups we saw majority agreement of 70% for carers and 69% for the disabled.

3.2.3 Promoting work incentives

When designing a scheme the Council must also have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State to promote work incentives.

With this in mind the Council proposes to maintain the current 4 week run on period in order to incentivise work. This means that a claimant entering work or increasing their hours will, as at present, not see their Council Tax Support entitlement reduce for a period of 4 weeks.

Additionally the proposal is that the 20% taper will be retained meaning employed claimants will lose only 20p benefit for every additional £1 they earn.

People were asked if they agreed with the Councils proposal to retain the 4 week run on period in order to incentivise work

The responses in Table 8 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 8

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	57.14%	31.85%	37.85%
Tend to Agree	26.19%	35.56%	33.33%
Tend to Disagree	4.76%	10.37%	9.04%
Strongly Disagree	4.76%	11.85%	10.17%
No Opinion	7.15%	10.37%	9.61%

Overall 71% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of benefit claimants 83% and non-benefit claimants 67%

3.2.4 Armed Forces covenant

When designing a scheme the Council must also have regard to have regard to the Armed Forces Covenant.

With the covenant in mind the Council proposes to retain the existing disregard of 100% of all monies received in respect of war widows and war disablement pensions.

People were asked if they agreed with the Councils proposals to continue to disregard all monies received in respect of war widows and war disablement pensions.

The responses in Table 9 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 9

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	47.62%	54.81%	53.11%
Tend to Agree	23.81%	20.74%	21.47%
Tend to Disagree	9.52%	8.15%	8.47%
Strongly Disagree	9.52%	9.63%	9.6%
No Opinion	9.53%	6.67%	7.35%

Overall 75% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of benefit claimants 71% and non-benefit claimants 76%

3.2.5 Abolish Second Adult Rebate

Currently, claimants whose income and capital is too high to for them to be entitled to Council Tax Benefit, but who have other adult(s) in the household with low income, can receive a Second Adult Rebate of up to 25%. This is designed to compensate people who would normally qualify for a single person discount if a second adult did not live with them regardless of how much income they receive.

The Council proposes to abolish the current second adult rebate scheme for single working age claimants which would affect 232 claimants and save £51,000.

People were asked if they agreed that the Council should not offer Second adult rebate

The responses in Table 10 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of CTB and those not.

Table 10

	Benefit Claimants	Non Benefit Claimants	Overall
Strongly Agree	30.95%	46.67%	42.94%
Tend to Agree	40.48%	28.89%	31.64%
Tend to Disagree	11.9%	8.15%	9.04%
Strongly Disagree	14.29%	10.37%	11.3%
No Opinion	2.38%	5.93%	5.08%

Overall 75% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of benefit claimants 71% and non-benefit claimants 76%

3.3 Proposed changes to Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions

From 1st April 2013 the government is allowing Councils local discretion on the levels of some Council Tax discount and exemptions. Although there was no legal requirement to consult on these changes it was felt that it was appropriate to do so alongside the CTS consultation.

The Council proposes to make the following changes in order to raise additional funds to meet some of the losses in government funding for the new Council tax Support scheme and people were asked their opinions of the proposals.

3.3.1 Second homes

At present the authority grants 50% discount on second homes but proposes to remove this discount making Council Tax payable in full for such properties.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should remove the 50% discount currently granted to second homes.

The responses in Table 11 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 11

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	60.38%	64.52%	63.28%
Tend to Support	18.87%	13.71%	15.25%
Tend to Oppose	7.55%	2.42%	3.95%
Strongly Oppose	9.43%	14.52%	12.99%
No Opinion	3.77%	4.83%	4.53%

Overall 79% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 79% and non-recipients 78%

3.3.2 Vacant properties undergoing major structural repair

At present these properties are exempt from Council Charge for the first 12 months. The Council proposes to replace this exemption with a 25% discount.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should reduce the 12 month 100% discount for homes undergoing structural repair to 25%.

The responses in Table 12 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 12

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	28.3%	39.52%	36.16%
Tend to Support	22.64%	27.42%	25.99%
Tend to Oppose	28.3%	16.13%	19.77%
Strongly Oppose	15.09%	12.9%	13.56%
No Opinion	5.67%	4.03%	4.52%

Overall 62% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 51% and non-recipients 67%

3.3.3 Vacant and unfurnished properties (first six months)

At present these properties are exempt from Council Tax. The Council proposes to replace this exemption with a 25% discount.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should reduce the 6 month 100% discount for vacant and unfurnished homes to 25%.

The responses in Table 13 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 13

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	35.85%	41.94%	40.11%
Tend to Support	24.53%	25.81%	25.42%
Tend to Oppose	18.87%	9.68%	12.43%
Strongly Oppose	18.87%	19.35%	19.21%
No Opinion	1.88%	3.22%	2.83%

Overall 66% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 60% and non-recipients 68%

3.3.4 Vacant and unfurnished properties (vacant for over six months)

At present these properties receive a discretionary 50%. The Council proposes to remove this discount making Council Tax payable in full for such properties.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should remove the current 50% discount for homes vacant and unfurnished after 6 months.

The responses in Table 14 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 14

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	41.51%	50.81%	48.02%
Tend to Support	26.42%	22.58%	23.73%
Tend to Oppose	13.21%	10.48%	11.3%
Strongly Oppose	16.98%	12.1%	13.56%
No Opinion	1.88%	4.03%	3.39%

Overall 72% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 68% and non-recipients 73%

3.3.5 Long term vacant and unfurnished properties (vacant for over two years)

At present these properties receive a discretionary 50% Council Tax discount regardless of how long they are empty. The Council proposes to introduce a premium 150% charge. This is intended to encourage owners of long term empty properties to bring them back into use.

People were asked whether they agreed the Council should charge a 50% premium on properties vacant and unfurnished for a period of over 2 years.

The responses in Table 15 show the overall results for all respondents together with the split between those currently in receipt of a Council Tax discount or exemption.

Table 15

	Discount or Exemption Recipients	Non Discount or Exemption Recipients	Overall
Strongly Support	50.94%	52.42%	51.98%
Tend to Support	26.42%	22.58%	23.73%
Tend to Oppose	1.89%	8.06%	6.21%
Strongly Oppose	13.21%	11.29%	11.86%
No Opinion	7.54%	5.65%	6.22%

Overall 76% of respondents agreed with this proposal. There was also a majority agreement for both individual groups of discount or exemption recipients 77% and non-recipients 75%

4 Summary of consultation results

The analysis shows that overall a majority the 177 respondents supported all of the proposals. Within the overall support for the Council's proposed CTS scheme it was possible to identify some specific trends:

- Although benefit claimants as a separate group opposed the principle of a benefit cut, a majority of them agreed with all the proposals within the CTS scheme which would bring about that cut, including a maximum benefit entitlement which had yet to be set.
- Similarly, although discount and exemption recipients opposed the principle of cuts that would affect them, a majority of this group agreed with all the proposals for the individual changes to reduce specific discounts and exemptions

The findings of the consultation are broken down to the three main areas of questioning below.

It should be noted that for the purposes of the summary "strongly" and "tend to" responses have been combined for both those supporting and those opposing proposals. Percentages of respondents stating "no opinion" are not listed in the summary.

Making up the shortfall in funding

Overall the majority of respondents supported all three options:

- **Cuts to Council Tax Support to reduce expenditure**

Overall 60% of respondents supported this proposal while 28% opposed.

The results for this proposal varied greatly between current benefit claimants (29% supported and 55% opposed) and non-benefit claimants (70% supported and 19% opposed). This is understandable in light of the fact that benefit claimants are the people who will be adversely affected financially should this change be implemented.

- **Changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions to increase income**

Overall 53% of respondents supported this proposal while 40% opposed.

The results for this proposal varied greatly between current recipients of discounts and exemptions (42% supported and 57% opposed) and non-recipients (57% supported and 33% opposed). Again this is understandable in light of the fact that current recipients are the people who will be adversely affected financially should these changes be implemented..

- **Meeting some of the shortfall from Council funds**

Overall 57% of respondents supported this proposal while 34% opposed. Additionally 64% of benefit claimants and 55% of non claimants also supported this proposal.

Proposed Council Tax Support scheme

The overall majority of respondents supported all proposals for the new scheme – and this pattern held true both for the individual groups of benefit claimants and non-benefit claimants. The table below summarises respondent support levels in total and for both groups.

Scheme Proposal for	Benefit Claimants	Non- Benefit Claimants	Overall
Maximum % benefit entitlement	57%	81%	75%
Safeguarding vulnerable groups	76%	72%	73%
Promoting work incentives	83%	67%	71%
Armed forces covenant	71%	76%	75%
Abolishing second adult rebate	71%	76%	75%

Additionally, analysis of the proposed measures to safeguard vulnerable people saw 70% of carers and 69% of disabled responders agreeing with the proposals.

Proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions

Again all proposals for specific changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions received agreement from the majority respondents overall, as well from current recipients and non-recipients groups. The table below shows the percentages in agreement for the respondents overall and the two groups.

Scheme Proposal for	Discount Recipients	Non- Discount Recipients	Overall
Remove second home discount	79%	78%	79%
Reduce vacant undergoing structural repair to 25% discount	51%	67%	62%
Reduce vacant first six months 25% discount	60%	68%	66%
Remove vacant over 6 months discount	68%	73%	72%
50% premium for properties empty over 2 years	77%	75%	76%

5 Additional consultation comments

We received additional free text comments through:

- the consultation itself which allowed respondents to make additional comments at each stage
- the councils web site general comment box or through email to the authority

All additional comments through both sources are listed in full in Appendix A.

6 Equalities data

The following data details the equalities information provided by respondents to the consultation. The numbers and rounded percentages are only for those who completed this section as some opted not to.

Gender (166)

Female	56% (93)
Male	44% (73)

Age (166)

16 to 24	3% (5)
25 to 34	20% (33)
35 to 44	23% (38)
45 to 54	25% (42)
55 to 64	16% (26)
65 to 74	11% (19)
75 to 84	1% (1)
85 and over	1% (2)

Disabled (162)

No	76% (123)
Yes	24% (39)

The breakdown of the disabilities were as follows:

(15) Long-standing illness or health condition (such as Stroke, cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy)

(11) Physical or mobility impairment (such as difficulty using your arms or mobility issues which means using a wheelchair or crutches)

(9) Mental health condition (such as dementia, depression or schizophrenia)

(2) Sensory impairment (Such as being blind / having a serious visual impairment or being deaf / having a serious hearing impairment)

(2) Learning disability/difficulty (such as Down's syndrome or dyslexia) or cognitive impairment (such as autistic spectrum disorder)

Carer (160)

No	86% (137)
Yes	14% (23)

Ethnic Origin (167)

White British	91% (152)
White Irish	1% (1)
Other White background	2% (4)
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1% (1)

Black or Black British – African	1% (1)
Asian and white	1% (1)
Other Multiple Heritage	1% (1)
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1% (1)
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1% (2)
Asian or Asian British – Kashmiri	2% (3)

Other ethnic groups were available as options such as Chinese, Yemeni etc however were not selected by respondents

Religion / Belief (141)

Christianity	63% (89)
Islam	5% (7)
None	26% (37)
Other	6% (8)

Other religions Buddhism, Hinduism, Humanism, Sikhism were available as options however were not selected by respondents

Sexual Orientation / Sexuality (141)

Heterosexual	95% (134)
Bisexual	1% (1)
Lesbian / Gay	4% (6)

7 Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation	Explanation
CTB	Council Tax Benefit – National scheme to cease on 31/3/2013
CTS	Council Tax Support – Localised scheme to commence on 1/4/2013
RMBC	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

8 Change History

Issue	Owner	Date	Change Details
1, 1 st Draft	R.Cutts	19/11/12	Initial Draft
1	R.Cutts	22/11/12	Issue 1

Appendix A – Additional Consultation Comments

Consultation comments

The following are the comments in full which were included in consultation responses together with the question on the consultation.

In all these cases those posting comments have also completed the consultation itself and their views on proposals will be included in the results.

Maximum Council Tax Support

If you have any further comments to make on the proposals that all working age claimants will have some Council Tax to pay, could you please specify?

I am claiming council tax benefit and I think that my working children should pay a part of my council tax. The house is not in their name so this should not be their debt.

No representation without direct taxation. There are too many who contribute little or nothing are are happy to support spending of the money handed over by the few. Everyone needs to be reminded there is no free lunch any more.

This would be too subjective. Where will the poverty line start?

YEAH AND WHY SHOULD PEOPLE WHO GET MOBILY/DLA AND OTHER BENEFITS EVEN IF THEY HAVE A PERSON LIVING THERE AND WORKING FULL TIME WITH WAGES OVER £1000 DO NOT HAVE TO PAY RENT OR COUNCIL TAX THIS IS WRONG AND NEEDS TO BE CHANGED.

All claimants should make some contribution to Council Tax.....why should it fall on pensioners and tax payers to foot the bill all the time.

I think the house and street needs to be assessed for tax, such as Doe Quarry Lane has old small dated houses, so this road should be made less compared to somewhere like Woodsetts which is a better area and well deserved people should live there but with the tax a bit higher then Doe Quarry Lane. As streets and houses are different, this may even help parish councils have a voice.

If these people dont pay then I effectively have to pay twice, once directly and the second through my higher taxes.

If those in this catagory can afford to smoke and drink, or run a car, they can afford to pay their fair share of taxes.

Council Tax contribution should relate to income. There are benefit claimants who have a higher income than some of those working.

anyone using any council a service (housing etc) should have to pay towards the service and think your payments of £200 more than fair.

This would be ok if the working age claimants was above a certain Pay Bracket as people on low income would suffer .

This is a proposal to get the poll tax back in through the back door

I hope that this does not mean an increase to single persons council tax. I live alone and am currently paying £60 per month on a one bedroom flat! I will refuse to pay if that increases! I agree that benefit scroungers should have to pull their finger out and make a contribution. I work hard to pay for the layabouts.

I think it is fair to ask working age claimants to contribute a minimum amount and based on number of people in the household. £ 3.85 per week is less than the cost of a packet of cigarettes so not unreasonable.

A person who is at working age should not pay any council tax if they are currently not in work. When a person is in this position money is extremely tight now. The thought of having to pay some money out towards this is fearful. When will the poor get help, instead of having their money cut cut and cut again.????

Please don't punish households that pay the maximum council tax by raising standard council tax bands. It shouldn't be those who work hard and already pay that have to make up the shortfall.

I agree that everyone should contribute towards their council tax

I personally think council tax should always be based on 2 adults at a address and a bigger discount than is currently offered should be in place for just 1 adult.

It may be that a person is of working age, however what if that person cannot work for some reason, or is on a very low income or a fixed income - it is scandalous that a labour council should consider this benefit cut. Perhaps the council should focus it's energy on fighting the central government cuts instead of welcoming them. Or even better - make cuts elsewhere in the Authority - there is plenty of 'FAT' to go at....

If they are of working age they should be able to get work

As long as consideration is given to other changes to benefits then a minimum charge would be favourable to demonstrate that everyone contributes in some way.

I HAVE WORKED 16 YEARS SINCE I LEFT SCHOOL AND IN 2009 I HAD A BREAKDOWN AND DIDNT PAY MY BILLS. BAILLIFFS ARRIVED AT MY HOUSES. WHAT ABOUT THESE PEOPLE THAT HAVE NEVER WORKED AND NEVER PAID. ITS DISCUSTING

If they are on benefits already and especially single they won't have enough money to pay the rest of their bills or eat properly sending them further into poverty.

People suffering from long term ill health

This is fairer than by property. Currently i pay as much for a tiny one bedroom flat than people in 3 bedroom semis with large gardens with 3 adults living in it.

While I dont object to people paying a small amount of the council tax bill themselves, I feel that you need to look at the individuals circumstances as to what the minimum payment should be.

everyone who can pay should pay

Many people expect to pay a certain amount, and are surprised when told they have nothing to pay

The minimum amount should be increased if the claimant is showing no signs of looking for a job, or benefits reduced to account for this.

I would support everyone eligible should contribute something towards the council tax,

including those on benefits. Everyone benefits from what the council tax supports - schools, fire, police etc, so I would support everyone contributing even if this is a small percentage

I am inclined to think that if an individual is receiving JSA, that taking any more money from the small amount they receive could result in further unrest amongst them.

the council should be chasing the people unfairly dodging council tax instead of punishing the working people who are easy targets to keep putting my/their bills up

I know that a lot of elderly people could more than afford to pay at least something towards council tax.

There should be a some sort of back up system for people as I think circumstances are all different for different households and each case could be looked at individually if problems paying arise. Under 25's seem to be particularly hard hit at the moment. They may be working but frequently they are on low wages and at least they are working.

The proposals will be unfair and inefficient.

Single people in 3 bed houses who do not work, due to them getting rent/ council tax paid should pay may give them incentive to get off their behinds and get a job.people with children are a different matter, except those that have children so they dont have to work, and keep having kids and dont name the father, and laughing at such as me that has always worked.I know a few that need to get sorted.2 that live near me in 3 bed houses and dont work and they complaining about the empty bed proposal, so i said why should I pay and they get help for their empty rooms, also a family could live in their houses, they should be re-housed in flats. thats my opinion I think the council should check up on their tenants in 3 bed and get these people sorted asap.

The council should look at its own expenses which should be cut.

Government should make up the shortfall

All under 25s should not be eligible to claim council tax unless on presentation of extenuating circumstances.

cut how much is payed to the top managers who don't do a lot of work and stop making up a lot of jobs that are not needed

yes, although there should be exemptions for people with disabilities etc

single people with no other benefit than income support cannot afford another tax. It would not be paid in many cases and enforcement would be costly and in humane.

The unemployed single people will find this proposal very hard

This is less than a packet of cigarettes a week so should be able to affordablke, many low income families smoke and find the money. There should however be a claus for those who truely cannot afford this.

Residents living on JSA only recive £71 per week if over 25 and single. The cost of keeping a home on this amount of money is extrmely difficult. During winter it costs approximately £12 per week for Gas and £12 per week for electricity. Water rates are approx £8 per week. this equates to £32. This leaves £39 to live on per week which would be reduced further if residents had to contribute to council tax. For those under 25, the JSA income is reduced further so would have even less income each week

providing that said claimants are in work

It is grossly unfair that in a time of austerity there are still some that refuse to pay their way. We as a society cannot continue to expect those who work hard and believe in a meritocracy to fund those who are happy to have their entire life funded by handouts. Perhaps introducing people to the reality of the world may prove beneficial to the long term health of society. In saying this I also believe an accommodation must be made for those of pensionable age and those with a disability or severe medical condition as this is the area where the welfare state should be focused and real benefits to people's lives achieved.

Yes the system is fraught with problems and re-calculations on a monthly basis that need sorting out and this should cut costs if masses of paperwork with weekly amounts are taken out of the system.

Every one should contribute if everyone matters

providing they are working

Everyone should pay their council tax and any concession should come from central government benefit

The only drawback I see to this is that some people who have originally had a 100% exemption and then being asked to pay something will be opposed to this and simply not pay their bill. This could cost the Council in debt collection.

5 - 10% of tax bill should also include contributions from unemployed of working age living in property.

Many claimants struggle to live on income below the applicable amount. I, for example struggle to live on £30 per week and have to rely on savings to pay larger bills. Any reduction in council tax benefit would therefore prove catastrophic as I am living below the poverty line.

As a working family on a low wage but paying full council tax I feel those who cannot be bothered to should like anyone else maybe this will encourage people to work or cut down on fags, booze & drugs. As long as tax payers do not have to foot this bill I strongly agree.

Safeguarding vulnerable groups

How else do you think the Council could recognise the needs of households with children, disabled people and people with caring responsibilities while managing the reductions in funding for Council Tax support?

by reducing the income of top executives

Vigorously investigate false claims and reclaim all incorrectly given overpayments.

any recognition of the extra burdens carried by these people should be accommodated in any scheme proposed. They have many extra financial burdens caused by disability.

WHY SHOULD JUST BECAUSE A MOTHER AS A LIMP AND AS MANAGED TO GET MOBILY AND DLA BUT AS A SON LIVING WITH HER THAT WORKS FULL TIME SO CAN NOT BE DOING MUCH CARING AND GETTING OVER £1000 POUNDS A MONTH WHY SOME ONE WHO WORKS AND IS ON LESS MONEY HAVE TO PAY FULL RENT AND COUNCIL TAX THIS IS WRONG THEY SHOULD BE MADE TO PAY SOMETHING.

Stop throwing money down the drain on non essential committees, paperwork and translation services.

I feel this is going to cost more to complete these tasks in the long run. But I think it's simple put the Council Tax up and people on Benefits pay so much towards the Council Tax and the government pay the rest.

It is peoples choice to have additional children and why should they get more benefit because they choose to have more children when on average studies show that when people have more than 3 children, the childrens IQ drops so are less useful to society.

'Families' i.e. young women who deliberately get themselves pregnant with no support from the male sperm donor, so as to obtain a benifits lifestyle and accomodation should recieve NOTHING

Again, benefit claimants' incomes should be taken into account. Checks be made to ensure co-habiting adults are all accounted for - sometimes benefits claimants do not always honestly given the names of all residents.

anyone with who is disabled or as a mental illness should have a discount according to their needs as i am sure they do. anyone with children could be allowed a discount for the first two children and any maintenance payments should be taken into account.

People on benefits are struggling at the moment as the cost of living has gone up , but Benefits have not changed Schools are introducing new uniform etc ... So income is stretched. I personally have gone with out a meal so my family can eat.

ALL household income should be taken into account - money is still money no matter where it comes from, and it is doubtful that child related income is actually spent purely on the child that it is intended for. Child Benefit and Child Maintenance/Support

By looking nationally and regionally to see what other concils are doing to protect the most vunerable in our society

The Council should take into account especially working families with children who are on a low income. Maybe a 'comfortable' threshold of income would reduce the amount. Strongly agree with discounts for legitimate disability and their carers.

People with disabilitys are no different to people without and i have no idea why they would be entitled to any bigger discount.

If they get disability allowance a percentage of that shoul go towards council tax

GO AND ACTUALLY LOOK

The disabled should be left alone most of their benefits have been halved and in some cases stopped since the conservatives came into government.

With households with children that receive family allowance and child tax benefit, there is no need to add on extra money for their needs, as this is taken care of by family allowance and child tax benefit.

Apply the tax on each adult, regardless of where they live, then give benefit according to income e.g. workers pay, people on benefit pay a proportion

Propoer monitoring need to take place to ensure that they system is not abused. At present this is not strong enough

Individual assessments

Child Maintenance payments should be included as an income

need to reflect rising cost of living e.g. utilities

Give vouchers specifically to be used for clothing and food for the children, instead of just money. Make more efforts encouraging people to work, if they can, and penalise when they don't want to.

Carers save local government, millions of pounds every year, to take away any support financially could impact on carers. I support that the council should keep the scheme that supports carers

Should the carer be a family member and they live under the same roof, then I believe that a small reduction should be met.

Individual assessment for long term conditions that are not severe enough for DLA payments, but do prevent the individual from securing employment.

the council need to look more into the financial situation of some claimants as they would be if they were to not be working

It should be based on income by all who live at the property regardless of why they do

I think the discount should be on a sliding scale dependant on how disabled the person living there is. I know families that have children receiving DLA because the child has been diagnosed with social behaviour disorder. I do not think that the same help should be given to that household as for instance another household that has a child who is in a wheelchair and impaired mobility (obviously the second example would need more help).

Child benefit is a regular and substantial income and should be included in calculations of household income.

make sure that the claimants are genuine, not can't be bothered to check them out and take the form at face value.

Forget people with genuine needs, look into the scroungers who are on their own in 3 beds and don't think they should get off their backsides and get a job when they are fitter than me, I work and they just laugh and why should I when I get everything paid.

just take an honest look...

government should make up shortfall

Those caring for the disabled should be given full support, whereas those with able bodied children should be paid a capped minimum amount and encouraged to top it up by working.

Means testing including all benefits

By making sure claimants really are disabled.

People on benefits with children should pay more council tax than a single person with no children. Proportionately more per child as they use council tax services more.

I strongly agree with disabilities and carers and only tend to agree with children. Although not the child's fault it is still a fact that some people will get themselves pregnant for extra income or a bigger house. I have seen this in practice myself and it is a depressing manipulation of a system designed to support those who need it.

From other funding resources available at this time and from central government funding.

It is very hard to be a carer, we receive very little money and are on call 24/7. I get no housing

benefit, so have to pay rent out of my son's DLA, we have very little left to live on. Maybe the local councils should run a lottery. This seems to work in other felds & could be another way of raising money. (My son is 40 years old).

help them more people who's got kids and findingthem homes to live in instead of taking housing benefits and council tax benefit off them

My husbands sister has 4 children, 1st partner killed himself + 3 others in a car accident while high on drugs Now with brother she has never worked or payed c/tax. her life is much less of a struggle than mine + when benefits & discounts added up she has more money than me & my husband who have to work. Yes make them pay like the rest of us have to.

Promoting work incentives

Do you have any further comments to make regarding Councils proposal to promote work?

1) Cut benifits for single people of working age who have are on long term benifits.2) Take the issue of disorder seriously and stop benifits of those families who cause disturbances in communities.

4 weeks reduced benefits is no incentive whatsoever to long term unemployed people to look for work

almost everyone could make some payment to running costs of running the council and i think it is more than fair to increase their payments on a level with their earnings or benefits.

Council Tax Support entitlement should be reduced as soon a soon as possible.

Discriminates against those already working

Find and advertise local jobs

giving people a set time while starting work is a good idea and gives insentive to people looking for work

great as i gives more incentive to get out into work and be productive

I agree with this as it will give people a chance to sort out their finances once thry have returned to work. Consideration should also be given for fluctuating working hours.

I dont know enough about this scheme to comment.

I strongly agree with this as it helps people get on their feet before they see their own income being increased through getting in to work. As getting into work/increasing your hours can sometimes see day to day living costs increasing ie:- bus fares/ext

I think the council should look at other expenditure in the budget before looking to cut benefits which help people in work.

I think this payment could be spread out over a year, but once someone is earning, they should pay same as everyone else working

I think this should be extended to 8 weeks as mostly people who find work have to work a month in hand and starting work can be an expensive time i.e travel expenses etc.

in some cases it may need to be longer, look at it on a 1 to 1

Incentives should still be from central government

It will make no difference to people who want to work that they get 4 weeks extra council tax paid. I know I used to work in housing benefit, just defer the first council tax payment for 8 weeks in order for them to get paid.

Low earners sometimes lose out and this will given help in the interim.

Maybe extend this slightly, giving more time to let the person find their feet.

Offer training programmes within the council section plus building and works section.

Reduce benefits, if people are not making the effort to find a job.

Retaining the 4 week run on period seems fair, I totally agree with the current system.

Suggest increasind it to 12 weeks

The 4 week run on does not necessarily promote work. Charge from the date of change in line with current regs before the run on is applied, but allow an additional payment period at the end of the council tax year so that payments could be made over a total of 13 months. This would still allow claimants an additional month to make payments, but would mean that the council gets an extra 4 weeks money into the coffers from each return to work claim.

The 4 weeks run on gives the claimant time to organise themselves, as quite often they will not get a wage until 1 month after starting work

This needs to be encouraged.

Unfortunately I am not in a position to fully understand what this entails.

Yes, anything that encourages people back into work without making their lifes more difficult should stay. 4 weeks seems fair but a gradual reduction over a longer period may be more helpful to help take into account probationary periods in a new job and give the clamant time to make the neccesaary adjustment

yes,cut benefits more to the work shy of Rotherham,and make them take any jobs that are going.All you see when you walk round town are gangs of yobs smoking and drinking who are obviously not short of money.

You cannot expect someone who has just started work to be able to pay immediately, also if they are paid on a monthly basis they will not have the income in the first month to pay.

You have been changing details on a weekly basis with us so why are you saying your going to do this on a four weekly basis when you are clearly not doing this at this time.

Armed Forces covenant

Do you have any further comments to make regarding Councils proposal to continue disregarding all monies received in respect of war widows and war disablement pensions?

Apart from the pensions of people above the state retirement age, after that the income should be counted.

Especially with regard to disability/death from service.

I believe it speaks for itself.

I don't agree that they should be treated differently to anyone who may have lost a spouse or a spouse who is ill/injured and no longer able to work. Anyone entering the armed forces are

fully aware of the consequences and there are other job opportunities.

It is a noble proposal.

Lobby government to provide adequate pensions to live a full life including paying taxes. Old age pensioners have to pay tax.

Money is money from whatever source. We can no longer afford these disregards of income. Support should be calculated on TOTAL income from all sources.

Only those who really need it should be given the extra support.

The armed forces pay a high price for the job they do and more than "earn" any benefits and should be allowed to keep them untouched.

The Council should keep their hands off all war widows and all war disablement pensions the families of war have enough to worry about after serving this overflowing country without having to worry about pensions and disability allowances

They deserve it. People who have served in this country need some support. People who can't be bothered to work and claim benefit should still have to pay.

they have done their bit and should not be penalised

They have provided for the country, this deserves recognition

They thought for our country we should respect them.

This is income. Should be classed as if they work.

Those who are injured, disabled and bereaved as a result of service should be given exemption and continue to be supported fully regardless of the extra income from other sources. They sacrificed for the country, therefore they deserve some form of recognition

We cannot ask these people to pay, they have served everyone to their best and to ask for them to suffer with a reduced income would be a disgrace

Yes leave the vulnerable alone.

Abolish Second Adult Rebate

Do you have any further comments to make on the proposals regarding second adult rebate?

A determination needs to be made as to whether that individual contributes towards the household, if they either do or can but aren't then they should not be able to claim a rebate. Again, it should be income based.

Again, total income for the household should be considered.

Both incomes should be taken into account and totalled as 1 income and council tax based on the total income.

Charge all adults the same regardless of what they earn. Only if they are not working should they get a benefit whether this is sickness, disability, pension or unemployment.

Could this be means tested in future?

Council tax is based on a property being occupied by two adults. One person occupancy receives a 25% discount. Surely it would be equitable, when a property is occupied by more than two adults, that those additional occupiers should be required to pay a council tax surcharge of, say 25% each. At present there must be a the full benefits of council services without paying anything towards the cost.

Did not know such rebate existed. My housemate is low income but I don't get a rebate. Scrap it

I agree in principle, particularly if they co-habit voluntarily.

I didn't realise this existed! Totally misconceived. Whilst it only costs £51,000 it should be scrapped immediately.

I disagree that the council charge a portion of wages from my adult children.

I don,t receive Second adult re bate. Also after being alone parent I think It,s about time I had time on my own and be able to live my life. Unfortunately I,m still waiting.

I feel that the total income of the household should be taken into consideration in properties with more than one occupant.

I think the single person should be increased

i would think most people claiming second adult rebate are most likley family or close freinds

If the 2nd Adult is a lodger it would be ok . If it is a partner or a young adult who is your daughter or son then their has to be help in this working.

income should be taken into account.

income should be taken into concideration.

It is not costing the council £51,000 they are not paying this out. They are just not getting £51,000

It should be scraped as it's costing and adding extra burden to the council budget.

IVE NEVER HAD A REBATE AND STRUGGLE - IN HARSHIP STARVING

Look at people's incomes first, if the earn more then £20,000 then they have to start paying but depending on a band they fall into.

Many people do not know the scheme exists anyway

my mum who is a disabled pensioner has to pay full council tax and rent due to my income - so she is penalised because i work - i think second adult rebate should be discontinued

Only if after serious assessment of ability to pay, for instance a single person may have an infirm relative come to live with them with no ability to pay whatsoever

Should be means tested on first resident if in work and partners

some sort of support should be put in place for people who can prove they cannot pay the extra if the second adult rebate is taken away. Some sort of sliding scale would be better to help take all circumstances into account

Students should not have to pay council tax, and a person living with them should not have to carry a burden for them.

The decision on how much they pay should be based on joint income.

This is farcical as to no checks made to ascertain if certain residents are able to pay full Council Tax.

this is open to fraud

This should be adapted so if the second adult is working they should pay - the whole income of the household should be considered make the shortfall payable by the second adult. If the second adult is a student or young adult trying to find work (ie older child) they should not have to pay extra, this should stay in place for them.

When a second person is in the house who is working then household income increases to agree that the benefit should not be available.

Proposed Council Tax Support scheme

Do you have any further comments to make on the Councils proposed Council Tax Support scheme?

Any senior citizen over the age of 80 living alone should be exempt from paying council tax

As some of the council tax is based on emptying of bins, consider how often the refuse is collected? for instance my bins are emptied only once per month as I do not create a lot of waste, and I recycle and use garden waste, veg waste in compost? surely someone can come up with a scheme that benefits the house owner and the council?

Difficult decisions need to be made and it needs to be advertised better whatever is decided. Not just the advertiser but also the free local newspapers.

DONT SUPPORT ANYONE LIKE YOU HAVENT ME SCROUNGING SCUM

everyone who can pay should pay, i agree with removal of benefit on 2nd properties, if people are rich enough to have more than one house they should be rich enough to pay the bills for each of these

I am concerned that you have not mentioned the Single Person Discount of 25%. Do you intend to keep this discount? I do not think this should be removed. As a single working mother it is hard enough to manage and to find another 25% of an increasing Council Tax bill will be extremely difficult.

I am of the opinion that the best way forward to assist with Council Taxes that people who own subsequent homes should pay in full. Particularly if these homes have been vacant for sometime.

I and my wife are in our mid 70s, 'grafted' all our lives and because we were careful in paying a pension for our retirement, we are penalised by the additional charge on our council tax for the groups who receive tax benefits, and those who refuse to pay. **LET EVERY ONE PAY THEIR SHARE, DON'T INCREASE OUR TAX TO COMPENSATE FOR GOVERNMENT REDUCTIONS**

I do not understand why a three bedroom property in band a and a one bedroom property is also in band a. if you are serious about your council tax shurley this should be given same consideration.

I feel government should not be making cuts to council tax benefit scheme or any other benefit scheme for people who are in need of any genuine needs benefits schemes due to circumstances beyond their control.

I feel that an increase in council tax for the average working adult/family who have not benefited in the past from benefits/rebates is unfair. Council Tax is already a significant drain on income and services will not improve due to the increase.

I would hope that as a single parent and that there is only 1 adult in the household, that I would continue to receive support from the council by way of discount for council tax.

In increasing the amount of council tax people have to pay this could make people claim sickness benefit or not want to go out to work.

It needs to be looked at carefully with people getting plenty of notice of any proposed changes to the rate they pay.

It should be stay as it is.

It will have a massive impact on the vulnerable adults in our community
lets make it fair if we all pay a bit it will ease the situation for those who have always paid no matter where in the world we are from.

Many people are co-habiting with single parents but keep tenancies on flats in case of a breakdown in the relationship. Often they are unemployed these tenancies should be identified (utility bills) and terminated releasing properties to tax payers.

Multiple children families should pay proportionally more depending on the number of children they have

No charges should be made for houses that are empty.

No, but I would be very interested in seeing the results !

Stop spending money on things that are not needed just cos you think they look good e.g mucking up roads and things instead of helping people

Stop supporting foreigners and paying their bills. I lived abroad for 3 years If you didn,t have a job you got nothing no hand outs or anything the same should apply. the country I lived in is part of the EU.

'Support scheme' should be the predominant word, something to support you in times of trouble, this, as with all other benefits should not be a sustainable optional alternate lifestyle to work.

Target the Streets, depending on the street depends how much Tax they pay. Doe Quarry, with dated house should be lowest band, as woodsetts due to location and good houses higher up.

Tax the scroungers and make them start to pay, it would be worthwhile to invest in finding the scroungers and stop their monies, they are the ones now complaining about losing money, I say tough get a job!

The council should look at the whole low incomes issue and should have a cap of say 8-10,000 of earned income before having to pay any council tax. Having to pay council tax when receiving income support or other benefits for low income workers is just plain silly.

This must not discriminate against the people who are already working but struggling to pay their bills, please do not increase my charges to offset others' - treat me fairly!

Why is it possible that certain residents in Rotherham are able to drink (alcohol) , smoke, drive, walk, talk, but not able to get out of bed for work or pay full Council tax.

yes it will be the usual people who will have to pay and all the people who cheat and lie will get away with it.

Proposed changes to Council tax discounts and exemptions

Do you have any further comments to make on the proposals regarding changes to Council Tax discounts?

A lot of people with second homes are council tenants, If they move back into their empty properties it should free up some council homes for those that need them.

Again, I am concerned that you have not mentioned the Single Person Discount of 25%. Do you intend to keep this discount? I do not think this should be removed. As a single working mother it is hard enough to manage and to find another 25% of an increasing Council Tax bill will be extremely difficult.

All the above allowances should NEVER have been given in the 1st place!

All the above should have been implemented before now.

Anyone who has two homes or leaves a home empty deserves to pay full council tax. If you can afford two homes then you can afford two council taxes. Many people would love just one home,

CHARGE THEM ALL IF YOU NEED MONEY THEN IT SHOULD BE RAN LIKE A BUSINESS

Council tax is supposed to be aimed at households paying a fair share of the costs of local services, how can that be fair if no one is living in a property? what benefit does the property receive in local services?

How can you justify charging council tax for an empty property - Bricks don't use any services - and any property which is being renovated is adding to the value of any area - charging this may mean more properties fall into disrepair, and create even more problems " costing money " for the council - such as vermin infestation, rubbish tipping, vandalism, etc etc.

i agree with most of them.

i believe most discounts on council tax are claimed dishonestly and the council could save thousands a year looking into this

I believe that you should carry on empty property exemption for atleast 3 months (if not six months). It can take landlords atleast 3 months to rent out the property again. After 3 months if the property is still empty the exemption should be removed and discount of 25% should be applied.

I strongly agree with all of these. Also, more needs to be done with empty houses to bring them back into use

I think that the 100%discount for empty and unfurnished homes should only be reduced to 50%, not to 25%. Homes inherited and proven to be on the market should be charged, but should have actual payment of the charges deferred until the property is sold and monies received by the beneficiary of the inheritance.

If it is being repaired structural no one can live in it so why should you get money from it. If someone is living in it then ok

If people have 2 homes they have enough money to pay the full amount of council tax.

Landlords encouraged to let properties if no incentive to keep empty is removed.

People who can afford a 2nd home can easily afford 2 lots of Council Tax.

Private landlords should be liable for 100% of council tax on empty properties as it is a money making scheme to 'buy to let'. Second homes should be 100% charge as nobody needs 2 homes it is a luxury

Proposal 5 - I think the council should charge 100% rates - there are too many empty houses that could be homes for some familys.

Re Q2, it should be taken into account why the home is in a state of repair. for cases such as flood damage or fire then they should get an exception, however if the repairs are due to the householder doing cosmetic wor, I feel that they should pay council tax.

Second homes should have to pay 100% council tax as alot of people struggle to have and pay for one home, why should people who can afford two homes eg, not buy to lets etc, benefit from this. Also, for question 2, maybe 50% would be more appropriate.

Section 5 is a nice idea but the hole point of council tax was 50% tax on peoples home and a 50% tax on the people in the homes, you cant remove people exemptions because they own a home they either dont use or dont use all the time. I understand this would be an easy win in a labour council were people with more than one property are seen as weathly and therefore the devil but i for one would not like to see myself as a landlord have to pay for council services multiple times because I have houses with no one in them, if no one is in them they are costing me money anyway, increasing my costs would mean that I would reduce my profit and therefore reduce my income tax bill not solving anything for the country as a whole just making me worse off, my tenants worse off as i would charge the ones i can rent out more money to compensate and making national coventry less money because of lower income tax receipts.

The above would encourage landlords to repair their second homes for use as rental residences leading to a better area which is less run-down. If they can afford a 2nd house they should pay the council tax for it!

The length of time taken to sell houses means that this could punish some people for aspiring to mive up the ladder

These changes will make sellers/developers stop hanging on for inflated prices.

These properties should include business premises

These proposals may speed the re letting of 'vacant' homes, meaning fewer people waiting for housing.

This again smacks of greed by a Labour Council. They are frightened to death that someone has got more than them.

Those people who have second homes or can afford renovations on additional properties should pay for this, vacant properties should be treated the same.

Very sensible proposals.

When a property is being renovated and is not lived in, you should not have to pay council tax until you have moved in. There could be a cap on this e.g. 6 months

whether you own one or one hundred homes they should all be paying full council tax the main amount of people with more than 2 houses are usually property developers and this is stopping young people from owning there own home so let them pay so money back into the system.

Why should people with a property portfolio that has worked hard to get it have to pay council tax on an empty property that they can't let out and people on benefits get away with it!

Would fully support the increase / removal of discounts for empty properties and second homes. Anythin which encourages empty proeprties to be brought back into use, especially the longer term properties, is positive.

Comments through the Councils web site or by e-mail

The following are the comments were received through the council's web site general comment box or through email to the authority.

Although it was not possible to feed these into the numeric results the respondents may have also completed the consultation. All comments are listed here in full.

I was alarmed to see that I may have my 50% reduction in the community charge for limited occupation reassessed. We purchased this property on May 8th this year due to a loss of confidence in the Spanish banking system and this benefit played a major part in our decision to complete. We intend to be in our holiday home for only three months during any year and find it hard to understand why we should be asked to contribute more than we are paying at the moment. I appreciate that we are living in troubled times at the moment and we all have to pull our belts tighter. However having our standard running costs placed in danger of being increased so soon is a major upset. Would you please place on record our disappointment with the news and do what you can to make our decision to purchase the correct one.

I have read the report and several things came to my mind.

The Council have an opportunity to try to make the system fairer. This might involve making it simpler and cheaper to operate. Creating more tax bands could be an answer and upping the tax on the higher value property groups. Taxing the rich a bit more is going to be the long term solution for many taxation problems in Britain in the future.

Similarly taxing empty houses where clearly no attempts are being made to repair or sell to someone who might. Many residents who live in communities where more housing has been proposed look at the numbers of empty houses wondering why these lie empty and new ones are being built.

Any second homes need full tax payable despite what may be an infrequent use. It still needs its bin emptying, road cleaning etc. All the things a full time occupied house needs.

The Poll Tax which this system replaced had many disadvantages and was in many cases unfair. Where it was perhaps not unfair was the taxation of households where there were a number of earners. Basically if exemptions and discounts are available to households where there are people genuinely in need of care, then the households where ther a people getting a better value out of the system ought to pay more. Two pensioners who are struggling to pay council tax for the services, should not be disadvantaged by a family of four earners in a next door similar house.

 If there is a target figure of tax revenue to be obtained it should be taken in the fairest way. Property is often the fairest indication of income provided that the system can be tweaked for some glaring inequalities.

Re: changes to council tax benefit entitlement. I feel that since that the reduction in council revenues is a result of government cutting benefits generally then it is the people who are on benefits who should foot the bill. That would mean that the people currently paying no council tax should be expected to pay at least 10% since that is the percentage cut the government is imposing. As for single adult occupancy rebate - I feel that this charge is justified and merely balances the many households where adult occupancy is over and above the usual 2 adults.

i think everyone every people on benefits even if its £5 a month should pay council tax us what pay council tax get no different priveleges to them what dont pay it they get everything for nothing they can afford luxerys like booze and cigs and some are much better off on benefits then us taxpayers I am disappointed to read your proposals. We are considering letting our property to allow us to move to Wath. We cannot sell it. We will just about cover loan with the mortgage and after insurance and repairs we will not be in profit. I am worried that during periods of no tenant we will have to pay. I can understand that you need to make savings... Could a compromise of say 3 months exemption be allowed. After all, we will be paying council tax on the one we live in.

I am concerned that abolition of an exempt period for vacant lets will cause an unnecessary amount of admin for landlords and the council alike. Suggest it would be better to reduce it from 6 to 3 or 2 months to allow time for re-letting without any unnecessary short term billing.

I wish to put my point across regarding Council tax exemption proposals.

I currently own a property which is vacant and which is currently on the market and so I am therefore still paying a mortgage on the property. It is vacant as I am living with my boyfriend who is paying full council tax on his property. I would like nothing better than to sell my property as we are currently funding two mortgages and paying various bills. If I should have to pay full council tax for a property that I am not living in this would make day to day living extremely difficult (it is difficult enough at the moment anyway).

As the property is empty I am not using any services provided by the Local Authority and therefore think it is unreasonable to have to pay Council tax for services which are not being used by the property. I would like my views to be taken into account when the proposals are considered. I would object strongly to any change made to the single occupancy discount. Why not consider adding a little to multiple occupancy properties as it seems to me that these households could afford this change rather than the other way round. [I would assume there are a lot more of them as well.]

The other suggestion I have to make is that [and this is not going to be received well] each local authority person receiving a pension, past and present should sacrifice a small amount for the good of the majority. I say this as a person aged 68 still working and doing a job most people would be horrified at the suggestion that they do. I have never claimed benefits other than the one we are now discussing and object strongly to subsidising anyone else in their retirement.

I work at my age because I have no pension public or private, and prefer to retain some self respect for as long as I can. Please look at the multiple properties that are dishonestly claiming benefits. I can say this as I witness it very frequently.

A very frustrated council tax payer

We have looked at the Council Tax Proposals and feel it is necessary to object to Proposal 3. We currently rent out a property, there are short periods between tenants and feel it is inappropriate and would require excessive management time from the Council and us to administer the payments. We suggest a short period ie a minimum of 3 months of being except from Council Tax should remain. We are in this predicament (landlords) not through choice and feel we should not be further penalised.

I think that everyone of working age should be made to make a contribution towards their council tax, however small that may be, this would encourage them to look for a job. I do not think that it is a good idea for council tax bills to increase to cover the cost of people who cannot be bothered to work. Those sorts of people make it hard for the genuine people who really need support and help when they are faced with life changing issues. I think that if someone can afford to buy a second property (not to rent out) they can probably afford to pay council tax with a lesser or no discount.

I don't agree with the new proposal's, i'm a single mum with 2 children, i get no support from their father and struggle to pay my bills and put food on the table. Try taking more money from people who earn ridiculous amount's of money or better still stop letting thousands of illegal immigrants into the country. British people are fed-up having to hand over hard earned cash to people that should simply not be in this country. The government let's these people in, so the government should pay for these people, not everyday tax payer's. One other thing to mention is why do we need green bin collection's every 2 weeks in the winter. When they come do the bin's on our road, there might be 1 or 2 bins put out, but chances are that they're not even full, so why waste money sending the dustbin men out, to empty a handfull of bins.

It would be unfair to not allow some level of discount to single people and stopping this might cause real additional hardship where there is a single parent.

I don't think there should be a limit on council tax rebate as this would be affecting the poorest who are already being unfaily penalised in spending cuts.

I would like to voice my opinion that I totally disagree with your proposal to remove the current 6 months free council tax charge on empty properties and would urge you to ensure that this free period of grace is maintained. Many people, including myself, have been unable to sell our properties due to the current financial difficulties whilst having been forced to move through a variety of circumstances. Whilst my house is currently rented out, and the council tax paid in full by the tenant, there is a possibility that the property may be left vacant for a short period in between tenants. I would strongly resent having to pay council tax on a property for which I am receiving no benefits - there is no need to empty bins, provide schools etc. etc. because nobody is living there in these periods.

As an alternative, I would urge the council to consider making cuts in other unnecessary areas such as the wasting of money on council lunches, meetings, training courses, hospitality, the ever increasing incidence of speed humps, the contributions to the safety camera partnership, and so on. I am sure that savings in these areas would more than make up for any shortfall in the central government grant and would allow all Rotherham residents to continue to enjoy the benefits to which they are currently entitled. This would truly show thatthis is the borough "Where Everyone Matters" to coin a phrase!

I have read this article and dread what is coming. Once again it will be people like me who will bear the full cost. We both live on very small pensions. Try collecting Council tax from people who will not pay or those that fiddle the system. If I have to pay then so should everyone who lives in Rotherham. I am fed up with subsidising everyone who arrives here.

my suggestion is that people who buy a three bedroom semi-detached in a band B or C then proceed to have a huge extension which then turns the property into a five or six bedroomed house should therefore pay double the council tax bill. It was our choice to live in a small two bedroomed bungalow in a D band area, so why should we pay more for living in a smaller property. If you start in the Broom area and Grange estate you would get thousands and thousands of extra council tax money. It should be based on how many bedrooms and people live in the house. Another suggestion is, do we need a chief executive and a leader of the council, that would save a least a £100,000 a year and in these cost cutting days do we need a mayor who must run up large expenses and councillor's who are on equivalent of a scale two clerical, plus all their expenses. Also may I suggest that people pay for computer use in the Libraries and that it does not come out of the council tax. £2 an hour is not an ! unreasonable amount, and it would stop time wasters playing games on them and listening to music.

With regard to your letter on council tax benefit cuts. I think vulnerable people on benefits through disability who are declared unfit or unable to work and who have need of a live in carer should be exempt. It would put such people in more poverty as they would be unable to make up the shortfall in their income by working. Their live in carer should also be exempt depending on the level of care supplied because if they are to take a job to pay for their council tax then they will not be available to provide support and care for the vulnerable person. I also think that single parents on benefits with preschool children should be exempt as a young child should not have to go hungry. If the parents do not have support of their family they would need to pay someone to look after their child while they worked and this may not be feasible if the parent is unskilled. It's no use saying a person who cannot afford children should not have them, the fact is if they do have a child then that child should not have to suffer or go hungry. As for parents with children of school age we are already reading in the local papers of children been sent to school hungry in the Canklow area and I am concerned also that cuts could put additional pressure on families such as these. I hope the council will be able to make savings where it can without putting undue pressure on the most vulnerable people in its care.

I think that this new council tax scheme is unfair as you are going to make people who live on their own and not working pay money towards council tax, when they have the lowest income. A person on jobseekers allowance living on their own receives £65 per week that is barely enough to live on as it is without paying council tax at £4 a week. You say your not going to touch pensioners but they receive double the amount of benefit per week than a single working age person. As per usual the poor are going to suffer. Perhaps you could save £4.8 million on something else you waste money on and help people that need it. For instance you could stop wasting money on painting shed doors and gutters and make sure people can afford to live in their homes instead. Or stop sending the grass cutters out on bank holidays and sundays when you have to pay them more. I hope you abolish this ridiculous idea of making people struggle with money more than they do already. I pay my council tax! so my views are not for myself but people on low incomes. In fact I would rather pay an extra £5 a month on my council tax if it meant someone else wasn't going without.

just had text about new scheme which is taking part in april i think it is wrong and if we looked after our own we wouldn't be in such a mess to start with why should our people suffer and our pensioners who most have worked all their lives to be able to have a great retirement i think on the other hand people who don't want to work and is just claiming cause there too lazy then yes i agree with this change but don't take it out of our pensioners

Let those who have paid into the system over the years and deserve benefits have funding Those who haven'tget no help

These changes will not affect me however I do think that a person who is in employment and living on their own should retain the 25% discount. I do think that people who have a second home should pay full council tax on that property.

My comments relate to Proposals 2, 3 and 4 - proposed changes to council tax for empty properties. These are outrageous proposals, to which I would object most strongly. Aside from the fact that property owners would, in effect be paying in full for services not used (waste collection etc), they would have a severe financial effect on people already reeling from continual attacks on living standards. These proposals would represent a savage increase for people caught in the position of having an empty property, which is already not desirable for the owner, for a number of obvious reasons. They would severely penalise those who are struggling to sell an empty property or are trying to fund the renovation of an empty property, for whatever reason (including the lethargic property market), and who may already be in financial difficulties.

It would also be a real deterrent to those people who are in a position to buy a new property before the sale completes on their existing home (although there may be few of these in the current economic climate). These measures would further stagnate the property market.

Buy to let investors would be deterred from investing in properties, for fear of the inevitable periods during which they lie empty. To compensate, rents would increase, as landlords try to compensate for these additional costs. Fewer people would enter the buy to let market, creating further increases in rents. If buy to let landlords sell their properties, it clearly would impact on housing waiting lists and the demand for rented property which is not met by local authorities.

This proposal is ill considered, short sighted and demonstrates an ignorance of the economic impact on those affected and the local economy. Local authorities who engage in such savage additional taxation methods would see an exodus of property investors to other areas, where local authorities take the more intelligent, broader view. As for me I believe the council is made up of people experienced enough with the daily problems and needs of their own people and should try to protect and look to help them in such a way that people will be contented..and in addition the councils should try reconsider their amount of tax benefit

I believe single adult discount should remain for folks who live on their own with no other adults in the house. It's hard enough making ends meet on your own without the need of reducing the 25% discount. Also may be an idea to look at the way child benefit has been re-structured on household income, one can then create council tax bans on household income

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

<p>Under the Equality Act 2010 Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexuality, civil partnerships and marriage, pregnancy and maternity. Page 6 of guidance. Other areas to note see guidance appendix 1</p>	
<p>Name of policy, service or function. If a policy, list any associated policies:</p>	<p>Local Council Tax Support Scheme</p>
<p>Name of service and Directorate</p>	<p>Revenues and Benefits, Resources Directorate</p>
<p>Lead manager</p>	<p>Rob Cutts, Service and Development Manager,</p>
<p>Date of Equality Analysis (EA)</p>	<p>24th September 20112</p>
<p>Names of those involved in the EA (Should include at least two other people)</p>	<p>Andrew Sheldon, Operational Manager- Assessment Zafar Saleem, Community Engagement Manager</p>
<p>Aim/Scope (who the Policy /Service affects and intended outcomes if known) See page 7 of guidance step 1</p> <p>From April 2013, The Government is abolishing the current national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme and asking local authorities to set up their own local schemes to meet the needs of their local area. Our local scheme will be known as Council Tax Support (CTS). In making these changes the Coalition Government is cutting the amount that Rotherham Council has to provide Council Tax support by £4.1million.</p> <p>During 2011-2012, Rotherham Council awarded £22.8 Million to 31,000 claimants of whom 15,000 were pensioners. It should be noted that the Government has stated that where the claimant and partner are both pensioners they will be protected from any changes.</p> <p>At present the Government funds 100% of the current Council Tax Benefit scheme. However under the new Council Tax Support scheme Rotherham will receive a set figure as an annual grant. The government will reduce the grant by 10% of the amount paid out in Council Tax benefit. In Rotherham's case it is estimated that under the Coalition Government's proposals this will result in a funding cut of £4.1 million for 2013/2014.</p> <p>Any spend on Council Tax Support above the grant level will have to be met out of the Councils own funds to the detriment of other Council services.</p> <p>As a result we will have to make some difficult decisions about who will get financial help to pay their Council Tax and how much help they will receive.</p> <p>The aim of the policy is therefore to:</p> <p>Introduce a local CTB scheme to be known as the Rotherham local Council Tax Support scheme (CTS).</p> <p>To save £4.1million as part of the introduction of the local CTS due to a reduction in</p>	

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

grant funding by central government.

To protect the most vulnerable as far as possible by taking into account guidance issued by the Secretary of State and giving due consideration to the Child Poverty Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010.

To simplify administration.

To ensure that the scheme is clear and easy to understand for claimants.

What equality information is available? Include any engagement undertaken and identify any information gaps you are aware of. What monitoring arrangements have you made to monitor the impact of the policy or service on communities/groups according to their protected characteristics? See page 7 of guidance step 2

The demographic and other data held on claimants shows:

16,314 working claimants in total which can be broken down as follows

4,607 couples (3,126 with dependants and 1,481 with no dependants)

11,707 single claimants (4,639 female with dependants, 2,900 female with no dependants, 3,898 male with no dependants and 270 male with dependants)

1,157 standard claims with some kind of disability premium include in the calculation of their council tax benefit

11,772 passported claims in receipt of either income support, job seekers income based and employment & support allowance (ESA) income based.

3,385 other claimants including earners.

The data available on claimants on passported benefit is limited, we do not know if they get a disability premium or not but one way to split the data would be based on Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) eligibility criteria i.e.:- need to be available for work or not.

Based on this the 11,772 could be split as follows

5,353 Income Support claimants (do not need to be available for work),

3,944 Job Seekers Allowance income based (needs to be available for work)

2,475 ESA claimants (estimates are that 743 will be in the support group and therefore not expect to prepare for work and the remaining 1732 will be in the work activity who are expect to look/prepare for suitable work with the help/support of DWP.

Other demographic data

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

At the time of publication data split by race, disability, gender and age is limited and not readily accessible but a task within the action plan is to address this. No information is held on religion or belief or sexual orientation and consideration will be given to whether it is necessary to collect this information in the future.

Engagement undertaken with customers. (date and group(s) consulted and key findings) See page 7 of guidance step 3

The Council will enter into public consultation for eight weeks from the start of 24th September 2012. The consultation will consist of publication of a questionnaire on the council website www.rotherham.gov.uk/consultations sending a SMS text to customers to direct them to the website, possibly a direct mail shot to certain groups to get a view from some customers and groups, There will also be press releases.

Potential changes to the CTB system were also publicized at Rotherham Show on 8th & 9th September 2012.

Meetings are also scheduled with the local voluntary and community sector in October 2012.

The final proposal will be adopted by the full Council by 31st January 2013 and the findings from the consultation will be published on the Council's website and taken into account prior to the final approval of the policy.

Engagement undertaken with staff about the implications on service users (date and group(s) consulted and key findings) See page 7 of guidance step 3

There will be internal consultation with key officers and senior managers including the Council's Senior Leadership Team.

The Analysis

How do you think the Policy/Service meets the needs of different communities and groups? Protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexuality, Civil Partnerships and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity. Rotherham also includes Carers as a specific group. Other areas to note are Financial Inclusion, Fuel Poverty, and other social economic factors. This list is not exhaustive - see guidance appendix 1 and page 8 of guidance step 4

The Council has produced a draft Council Tax Support scheme based largely upon the existing Council Tax Benefit rules. We have also introduced a number of simplifications to

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

ease administration and to ensure that the scheme is clear and easy to understand for claimants.

The main proposed change to the current Council Tax Benefit scheme is to introduce a maximum Council Tax Support level. This will be set at a percentage of the Council Tax entitlement which is sufficient to meet the likely shortfall in funding.

At present a claimant may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit to meet 100% of their Council Tax bill. However it is proposed that the maximum entitlement for Council Tax Support will be reduced to a percentage yet to be decided. This will mean all working age Council Tax Support claimants will have to make some payment towards their Council Tax.

The maximum percentage entitlement will vary dependant on decisions made regarding funding the shortfall through other changes to the scheme, additional income raised from changes to Council Tax and subsidy from Council funds.

If none of the other options are implemented the maximum Council Tax Support a working age claimant would receive is likely to be 80% of the Council Tax liability.

If a maximum Council Tax entitlement of 80% was introduced, someone currently living in a Band A property who is entitled to full Council Tax Benefit would pay a minimum of £190 per year or £3.65 per week.

In addition to the maximum entitlement the council is considering abolishing Second Adult Rebate

Currently, claimants whose income and capital is too high to for them to be entitled to Council Tax Benefit, but who have other adult(s) in the household with low income, can receive a Second Adult Rebate up to 25%. This is designed to compensate people who would normally qualify for a single person discount if a second adult did not live with them regardless of how much income they receive.

The authority proposes to abolish the current second adult rebate scheme for single working age claimants which would affect 232 claimants and save £51,000.

Should Second Adult Rebate be abolished following the consultation, claimants currently receiving it would be able to make application for Council Tax Support based on their own income and capital. Our records indicate that these numbers would be very low as the average income above the Council Tax Benefit entitlement level for these claimants is £122 per week.

For someone in receipt of full second adult rebate in a Band A property this will mean they would pay an additional £238 per year or £4.58 per week.

Analysis of the actual or likely effect of the Policy or Service:

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

See page 8 of guidance step 4 and 5

Does your Policy/Service present any problems or barriers to communities or Group? Identify by protected characteristics **Does the Service/Policy provide any improvements/remove barriers?** Identify by protected characteristics

We are restricting CTB to a maximum award of 80% down from the current maximum award of 100%. The implications of this are:

1. Under the current scheme there are 16082 claimants in receipt of CTB with the average weekly CTB being £14.81 with the highest number of claimants living in the following wards – Rawmarsh (1390); Maltby (1151); Eastwood (2372) and Scholes (1665).

2. Under the new scheme there will be 15856 claimants in receipt of CTS which is a net loss of 226 claimants. The new average weekly CTS payment will be £11.63 which represents a net reduction of £3.18. The average reduction for the 226 claimants that would no longer qualify for support is £1.92 per week.

Removal of second adult rebates - Second adult rebates are paid to single claimants whose own income is too high to receive Council Tax Benefit, but have another adult or adults living in the household whose income is low. The implications of this are:

1. Currently there are 231 claimants in receipt of second adult rebate with the highest number of claimants living in the following wards - Eastwood 35, Maltby 19 and Scholes 19. These claimants would lose their council tax support with the average weekly loss of £4.13.

When designing a scheme the Council must also have regard to any guidance and principles issued by the Secretary of State including:

The Equality Act 2010

The Council must have regard to disabilities when making decisions of a strategic nature in order to reduce any inequalities. There is a duty on the Local Authority to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

With this in mind the Council proposes that it retains the present scheme of allowances, premiums and income disregards as the best way of recognising the particular needs of families, carers and people with disabilities.

Child Poverty Act 2010

Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act 2010, sections 19-25, place a duty on Local Authorities to reduce child poverty in their area.

With this in mind the Council intends to continue to disregard child benefit and child maintenance when calculating Council Tax Support

Safeguard vulnerable groups

The rules for Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit and DWP means-tested benefits have a scheme of allowances and premiums that take into account the make-up of the

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

claimant's household, including responsibility for children, caring responsibilities and varying degrees of ill health and disability. Additionally some types of income related to children or disability are not counted in assessing a claimant's income for Council Tax Benefit.

The Council proposes that it retains the present scheme of allowances, premiums and income disregards in the Council Tax Support scheme as the best way of recognising the particular needs of families, carers and people with disabilities.

Promote work incentives

With this in mind the authority proposes to maintain the current 4 week run on period in order to incentivise work. This means that a claimant entering work or increasing their hours will, as at present, not see their Council Tax Support entitlement reduce for a period of 4 weeks. Additionally the 20% taper will be retained meaning employed claimants will lose only 20p benefit for every additional £1 they earn.

Have regard to the Armed Forces Covenant

With the covenant in mind the Council proposes to retain the existing disregard of 100% of all monies received in respect of war widows and war disablement pensions.

Comply with any prescribed requirements in legislation issued by DCLG.

All prescribed requirements will be included in the new Council Tax Support scheme.

What affect will the Policy/Service have on community relations? Identify by protected characteristics

Probably unlikely to cause community tensions however tensions will be monitored.

Please list any **actions and targets** by Protected Characteristic that need to be taken as a consequence of this assessment and ensure that they are added into your service plan.

Website Key Findings Summary: To meet legislative requirements a summary of the Equality Analysis needs to be completed and published.

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

Equality Analysis Action Plan - See page 9 of guidance step 6 and 7

Time Period

Manager:....Rob Cutts..... Service Area:....Revenue & Benefits..... Tel:.... 01709 823320

Title of Equality Analysis:

If the analysis is done at the right time, i.e. early before decisions are made, changes should be built in before the policy or change is signed off. This will remove the need for remedial actions. Where this is achieved, the only action required will be to monitor the impact of the policy/service/change on communities or groups according to their protected characteristic.

List all the Actions and Equality Targets identified

Action/Target	State Protected Characteristics (A,D,RE,RoB,G,GI O, SO, PM,CPM, C or All)*	Target date (MM/YY)
We will be monitoring the effect of changes on areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discretionary Housing Payment requests • Council tax collection rates • Council tax recovery action volumes (including court action, bailiffs etc) 	All	31st March 2014
We will be offering assist to those in difficulty by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting to advice agencies and money advice • Being flexible on payment arrangements • Discretionary Housing Payments in some cases • Section 13a discretionary relief on Council Tax where hardship is shown 	All	31st March 2014

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

Address gaps in demographic data collected.		All	31 st March 2014
Name Of Director who approved Plan	Stuart Booth	Date	24 th September 2012

*A = Age, C= Carers D= Disability, G = Gender, GI Gender Identity, O= other groups, RE= Race/ Ethnicity, RoB= Religion or Belief, SO= Sexual Orientation, PM= Pregnancy/Maternity, CPM = Civil Partnership or Marriage.

Website Summary – Please complete for publishing on our website and append to any reports to Elected Members, SLT or Directorate Management Teams

Completed equality analysis	Key findings	Future actions
--------------------------------	--------------	----------------

RMBC - Equality Analysis Form for Commissioning, Decommissioning, Decision making, Projects, Policies, Services, Strategies or Functions (CDDPPSSF)

Completed equality analysis	Key findings	Future actions
<p>Directorate: Resources Function, policy or proposal name: Local Council Tax Scheme (CTS), Revenue & Benefits Service</p> <p>Function or policy status: New (new, changing or existing)</p> <p>Name of lead officer completing the assessment:</p> <p>Rob Cutts, Andrew Sheldon, Zafar Saleem</p> <p>Date of assessment: 24th Sept 2012</p>	<p>We are proposing to restrict CTB to a maximum award of 80% down from the current maximum award of 100%.</p> <p>Under the new scheme there will be 15856 claimants in receipt of CTS which is a net loss of 226 claimants. The new average weekly CTS payment will be £11.63 which represents a net reduction of £3.18. The average reduction for the 226 claimants that would no longer qualify for support is £1.92 per week.</p> <p>We are also proposing the removal of second adult rebates.</p> <p>Currently there are 231 claimants in receipt of second adult rebate and these claimants would lose their council tax support with the average weekly loss of £4.13.</p>	<p>We will be monitoring the effect of changes on areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) requests • Council tax collection rates • Council tax recovery action volumes (including court action, bailiffs etc) <p>We will be offering assist to those in difficulty by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signposting to advice agencies and money advice • Being flexible on payment arrangements • Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) in some cases • Section 13a discretionary relief on Council Tax where hardship is shown <p>We will address gaps in the demographic data we hold on claimants by assessing what information needs to be collected and how such information will be used for policy setting and reviewing the local Council Tax Scheme.</p>

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	19th December 2012
3.	Title:	No stone unturned; in pursuit of growth – The Heseltine Review
4.	Programme Area:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

This report updates Cabinet on Lord Heseltine's recent growth review, its main recommendations and their possible impact on Rotherham and the Sheffield City region.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet:-

- 1) **Note the report and the potential opportunities and impacts for Rotherham.**

7. Proposals and Details

Background

In March 2012, Lord Heseltine was commissioned by the Prime Minister to produce a report on how economic growth can be most effectively encouraged in the UK. This report; running to 233 pages and including 89 recommendations was launched on 31st October 2012.

The report, "No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth," recommends a major rebalancing of responsibilities between central and local government, and between government and the private sector and makes recommendations on how business, central government and local leaders should be organised and structured in order to encourage economic growth more effectively.

To achieve this, Lord Heseltine believes that Government needs to ensure the following:

- local communities empowered and incentivised to collaborate for growth
- a rejuvenated partnership between the public and private sectors involving both local and central government
- a dynamic, strategic central government with wealth creation at its heart, working more effectively in the national interest to support wealth creation and embracing a culture of both public and private sector decision making
- a private sector led business support infrastructure accessible everywhere
- a system for producing the skills that our economy needs now and in the future
- businesses, irrespective of size, sector or location which are engaged with their wider communities and ambitious to grow.

A key theme is further devolution and the report calls for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to receive more authority and resources. This would allow them to lead on developing an economic strategy, bidding for government funding and be "free to implement its strategy; accountable to its local community but free from central government diktat."

In a section on "Effective and empowered local authorities" the report states that LEPs will need effective and empowered local authority partners that are more active in exploring opportunities for greater collaboration. He recommends that government provide an overarching legal duty for local authorities to have regard to economic development across all their activities and in the exercise of all their functions.

Other recommendations include two-tier authorities moving towards unitary status and council members being elected using the same electoral cycle across the whole of England where the entire council is elected at the same time every four years.

Heseltine also outlines a vision for a new business support infrastructure based around Chambers of Commerce.

With functions including promoting the economic interests of local businesses, facilitating the provision of information, advice and support to local businesses and providing a channel for the communication of national and local government information to business and visa versa, Heseltine envisages Chambers having a central role:

- working as the LEPs' delivery partners, taking responsibility for co-ordinating and organising the delivery of the business support services set out in each LEP's local economic plan
- providing a one stop shop for businesses so that they have easy access to business services, including practical advice and support on exporting and training and access to business networks and mentors
- acting as a focus for business engagement with the wider community, particularly engagement with schools and colleges
- using their increased legitimacy as broad-based business bodies to put wealth creation at the centre of local agendas, influencing decisions about infrastructure, planning and other aspects of the local business environment
- providing central government with a streamlined route for engaging with local business communities
- providing advice on routes to international markets for small and mid size companies.

Heseltine said: "I would expect chambers and other business bodies to collaborate closely and creatively at local level – far more than they do at the moment – to ensure that business support provision as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the review and its recommendations have been resoundingly welcomed by LEPs and Chambers of Commerce.

The Government will consider the recommendations over the coming months although it is still unclear which of them, how and when will be taken forward within Whitehall.

Recommendations of particular interest to local authorities include:

Localism – building on our strengths

(1) Central government should identify the budgets administered by different departments which support growth. These should be brought together into a single funding pot [of some £49 billion] for local areas, without internal ring fences.

(2) Local partnerships should bid for the funds from central government on a competitive basis. Bids should be for a minimum of five years starting from 2015/16

(3) Government should streamline its management of EU Common Strategic Framework funds in England, strip out the bureaucracy of multiple programmes and align local allocations from the four funds with the single funding pot. One option in the report is LEPs to prioritise this fund to ensure fit with non-EU projects; with local projects and providers feeding into the LEPs

(4) Taking full account of the Government's national growth strategy, all LEPs, in collaboration with local stakeholders, should lead the development of a long term strategy and business plan for their area that will be used to bid for economic growth funds from central government.

(6) The Government should invite LEPs to review their boundaries within a three month period to ensure they have a good match with their functional economic market area and that they do not overlap.

(8) At the earliest opportunity civil servants based across the country should be brigaded into Local Growth Teams, structured around clusters of LEPs, primarily tasked with joining up government and local partners in the areas of their responsibilities to facilitate, identify and realise economic opportunities.

(9) Ministers and permanent secretaries should be associated with individual LEPs, not to advocate individual plans but to add an understanding of place to the existing culture of function.

(10) Local authorities should have an overarching legal duty to have regard to economic development in the exercise of all their activities and functions. Where local authorities share a functional economic market area they should be required to collaborate on economic development.

(11) All two-tier English local authorities outside London should pursue a path towards unitary status. The Government should encourage this and work with authorities to clarify the process and enable it to happen.

(12) Proposals for formal collaboration between local authorities that reinforce the standing of the LEP and enhance the partnership with the private sector across a functional economic market area should be encouraged and prioritised for government approval. All proposals to move to unitary or combined authority models should be scrutinised by the Prime Minister's Growth Council.

(13) The government should remove all legislative barriers that are preventing local authorities from collaborating with functional economic market areas, including moving to unitary status.

(14) Local authority council members should be elected using the same electoral cycle across England where the whole council is elected at the same time every four years.

(15) Legislation should be passed to enable combined local authorities and other combinations of authorities that wish to elect a conurbation mayor to do so.

Government and Growth

(41) The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Technology Strategy Board must set out a clear statement explaining how they and other government agencies will work with LEPs and the devolved administrations to better connect national strategy with local initiative.

(55) The planning inspectorate should be given powers to investigate planning decisions proactively. The Government should also consider on a rolling basis all the possible options to inject urgency and purpose into the planning system.

(56) The government should consider the effectiveness of local Development orders and extend their use after consultation with affected parties to establish best practice.

(57) The government should consider using Special Development orders to speed up specific planning decisions of strategic significance.

(58) The Government Property unit should work with local authorities to identify and publish details of all surplus and derelict public land on the PMS database so that LEPS and local authorities can collaborate to bring this land back into reuse in support of the local economic strategy.

Private Sector – broadening the capacity for excellence

(65) Local authorities should publish the list of all businesses paying non-domestic business rates so that chambers and other business representative bodies can identify businesses in their area more reliably, and seek to draw them into the local business support infrastructure. There should be exceptions for businesses where the identification of business premises could give rise to security concerns.

(70) The development of leadership and management skills should be integrated where appropriate into the education and skills system at every level from schools through to higher education and vocational skills training. We need to see individuals having opportunities to develop their leadership and management capabilities earlier on in their working lives alongside the development of technical or academic competencies.

Education and Skills – the foundation for growth and prosperity

(74) All failing schools should be subject to the intervention process forthwith. There should be a clear timetable within which an improvement strategy for each school is agreed, with the education authorities using their powers to intervene if the head teacher and governors fail to act. If local authorities delay, central government should intervene.

(75) The regional directors being appointed to lead Ofsted's new regional structure should be given formal powers to act swiftly where they identify problems in local schools.

(76) Business engagement should be incorporated far deeper into the school curriculum in order to develop young people's understanding of business, increase their employability, and further their understanding of career and future training options and where they might lead. LEPS should consider how they engage with local schools and work with chambers to facilitate this.

(78) All boards of governors in secondary schools should include two influential local employers, at least one of whom should have good connections with the wider business community. This could be coordinated by the local chambers of commerce.

(79) Local authorities should publish the Destination Measures for all secondary schools in their areas alongside academic attainment so that parents can make better informed choices, and to incentivise schools to give a higher priority to developing the employability of their leavers.

(80) The existing budget lines for adult careers advice should be included in the single funding pot. Each LEP, as part of its local economic plan, should consider how careers advice is best provided in its area to meet the needs of both the adult population and the requirement under the Education Act 2011 for careers advice in schools.

(81) The budget for vocational training for learners aged 19 and over, and all funding currently set aside for apprenticeships for those aged 16 and over, should be devolved to local areas through the single funding pot described in Chapter 2. This therefore calls into

question the continuation of the Skills Funding Agency. Each LEP should incorporate skills needs within their local economic plans driven by the needs of local employers and the practical experience of FE colleges.

(82) All FE learning providers must consult and agree their provision with LEPs to ensure that the courses they offer to 16-18 year olds reflect local labour market requirements. In addition, any vocational courses delivered by FE providers to learners of any age must conform to the defined national standards set by employers and industry.

(83) Action to address NEETs is best taken at the local level. Resources to tackle the problem should therefore be available from the single pot. Youth unemployment will not be a problem or priority for action in every area, but where it is, LEPs working with local authorities, employers and other local partners should develop proposals for reducing NEET numbers as part of their local economic plans.

The government has said that it will closely study the full report and respond in the coming months.

Rotherham – issues and opportunities

- If the report's recommendations are implemented then LEPs will be taking on the lead role in driving local economic growth at City Region level. This will range from producing an Economic Strategy, identifying priorities for future EU funds, to leading on the bidding for UK government funds. In the context of the report the LEP could be seen as a strategic functioning geography as much as an organisation in its own right. Either way local authorities will have a major input into this area through the Membership of the current LEP Board and also on their proposed Combined Authority (CA). The LEP has a relatively small number of staff working for it, therefore a lot of the work to implement decisions made by the LEP/CA is likely to end up with the local authority economic development staff.
- Civil servants based across the country should be brigaded into Local Growth Teams, structured around LEPs (recommendation 8). RMBC will need to decide what functions we want these teams to have, and lobby accordingly.
- Local authorities may be given an overarching legal duty to have regard to economic development in the exercise of all their activities and functions (Recommendation 10). Also, where they share a functional economic market area (ie. South Yorkshire and/or Sheffield City Region) they would be required to collaborate on economic development, which is already firmly established at both South Yorkshire and City Region level.
- The report recommends that Chambers of Commerce (CoC) have a much greater role in delivering economic growth; acting as the main voice of the private sector in the region. While the CoC are a major partner of the Council and heavily involved in the LSP, the Economy Board, etc they are only one of a number of private sector partners, a number of who are not Chamber Members. This needs to be taken into account in any future structures for private sector input to strategic economic work.
- If all two tier authorities follow a path toward unitary status (recommendation 11) this will have an impact on the structure and voting rights of any City Region Combined

Authority, where the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire districts could not currently be full voting members of the CA.

- A number of recommendations relate to planning (No. 55-57); seeking to speed up the process, extend the use of Local Development Orders (LDOs) and the use of special development orders to speed up specific strategic decisions. With the pre-application process we provide RMBC rarely go over the suggested 6 month intervention period. Three LDOs have already been put in place as part of the Enterprise Zone around the AMP, but as yet no developers have taken advantage of the simplified planning process they deliver.
- Business engagement should be incorporated far deeper into the school curriculum in order to develop young people's understanding of business, increase their employability, and further their understanding of career and future training options (recommendation 76). RMBC are already leading on this through Rotherham Ready, which has been widely identified as a national example of good practice in embedding enterprise into schools.
- Actions for tackling youth unemployment should be led by the LEP in conjunction with local partnerships including the local authorities (Recommendation 83). This is something that RMBC currently deliver a large amount of activity on and will need to continue to have a major local input if the correct people are to be targeted for the right type of assistance.

8. Finance

There is no money specifically attached to the report and its recommendations. However, the plan recommends future central government money for economic growth (i.e. Regional Growth Fund, future EU funds, etc) would be bid for by "Local Partnerships" based around plans and priorities covering 5 years or longer.

The government is proposing that future European Funding programmes will be delivered at a LEP level, or combination of LEP areas, and will be based on priorities set out in the LEP's "Economic Plans." Over recent years ERDF and ESF have been two of the largest sources of regeneration funding into Rotherham and South Yorkshire.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The government has yet to decide which of the recommendations to accept and when they will implement them.

Details are still to be agreed on how a Combined Authority (CA) and the LEP will operate in future, should the CA be agreed and implemented.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Review will contribute to a wide range of economic priorities included within the Community Strategy. These Include:-

- Promote innovation, enterprising behaviour, competitiveness and sustainability.
- Promote business start ups, growth and inward investment.
- Improve access and remove barriers to employment
- Promote business growth and improved productivity by supporting employers to develop and train existing staff.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The full review document can be accessed by following the link below:-

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/heseltine-review>

The Finance, Planning and Commissioning, Policy & Performance teams of RMBC were all consulted on the report.

The LEP are writing to government regarding the Heseltine report on behalf of the City Region, setting out areas of support and also concern. RMBC will be contributing to this response.

Contact Name:

Simeon Leach, Regeneration Manager, Ext 23828

Email simeon.leach@rotherham.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Summary of recommendations

Localism – building on our strengths

1. Central government should identify the budgets administered by different departments which support growth. These should be brought together into a single funding pot for local areas, without internal ring fences.
- 2 Local partnerships should bid for funds from central government on a competitive basis. Bids should be for a minimum of five years starting from 2015/16.
3. Government should streamline its management of EU Common Strategic Framework funds in England, strip out the bureaucracy of multiple programmes and align local allocations from the four funds with the single funding pot.
4. Taking full account of the Government's national growth strategy, all LEPs, in collaboration with local stakeholders, should lead the development of a long term strategy and business plan for their area that will be used to bid for economic growth funds from central government.
5. The Government should allocate LEPS up to £250,000 of new public funding, resourced through departmental efficiency savings and underspends, in each of years 2013/14 and 2014/15 specifically to devise their local economic strategies, and create the foundations for their implementation.
6. The Government should invite LEPs to review their boundaries within a three month period to ensure they have a good match with their functional economic market area and that they do not overlap.
7. In light of the new role and vision for LEPs, each LEP should ensure that their board has the necessary skills and expertise to deliver their expanded functions and pay particular attention to the representation of employees from both private and public sector.
8. At the earliest opportunity civil servants based across the country should be brigaded into Local Growth Teams, structured around clusters of LEPs, primarily tasked with joining up government and local partners in the areas of their responsibilities to facilitate, identify and realise economic opportunities.
9. Ministers and permanent secretaries should be associated with individual LEPs, not to advocate individual plans but to add an understanding of place to the existing culture of function.
10. Local authorities should have a new overarching legal duty to have regard to economic development in the exercise of all their activities and functions. Where local authorities share a functional economic market area they should be required to collaborate on economic development.

- 11.** All two-tier English local authorities outside London should pursue a path towards unitary status. The Government should encourage this and work with authorities to clarify the process and enable it to happen.
- 12.** Proposals for formal collaboration between local authorities that reinforce the standing of the LEP and enhance the partnership with the private sector across a functional economic market area should be encouraged and prioritised for government approval. All proposals to move to unitary or combined authority models should be scrutinised by the Prime Minister's Growth Council.
- 13.** The Government should remove all legislative barriers that are preventing local authorities from collaborating within functional economic market areas, including moving to a unitary status.
- 14.** Local authority council members should be elected using the same electoral cycle across England where the whole council is elected at the same time every four years.
- 15.** Legislation should be passed to enable combined local authorities, and other combinations of authorities, that wish to elect a conurbation mayor to do so.
- 16.** The Government should produce an overarching and long term National Growth Strategy and its vision for wealth creation, with concrete commitments against which it can be held to account.
- 17.** A new National Growth Council should be established, chaired by the Prime Minister and with a strong, cross-government focus on driving growth and wealth creation.
- 18.** Operational responsibility for implementation of the National Growth Strategy should rest with a designated minister, supported by a secretariat.
- 19.** Government should establish a shadow Growth Council of permanent secretaries and Non-Executives chaired by the designated minister to drive implementation of the Growth Strategy across all departments.
- 20.** Departments should include a growth commitment in their annual business plans setting out their contribution to the Growth Strategy over the previous year and planned action for the coming year. This should explicitly include how departments will use the economic levers available to them to support growth over the long term.
- 21.** The role of Non-Executives in the development of growth commitments and departmental business plans should be strengthened and formalised. Non-Executives should have access to the Growth Council secretariat to support their enhanced role.
- 22.** Departments should work with the public bodies they sponsor to ensure they explicitly consider their potential for wealth creation when developing business plans.
- 23.** Government must continue to look at opportunities for devolving or transferring the functions of public bodies to the local level or to the private sector.
- 24.** A Whitehall management information system must be introduced and should encompass management and financial data as set out in Annex F.

- 25.** The Cabinet Office should work with departments to remove restrictions on departments recruiting externally for key skills and professionals – including disapplying general pay ceilings, recruitment freezes and redeployment pool policies. In making recruitment decisions, departments should focus on controlling their total salary costs. Where a recruitment breaks a pay ceiling, departmental Non-Executives should give their approval to the process and the appointment.
- 26.** Departmental Non-Executives should be able to make recommendations on the appointment of permanent secretaries.
- 27.** Barriers to secondments between the public and private sectors should be removed and secondment programmes in government departments should be reinvigorated.
- 28.** Civil Service Learning should develop courses aimed at encouraging public and private sector people at all levels to train together.
- 29.** Civil Service Learning should be recreated as a commercial body to train civil servants to perform more strategic roles and develop expert policy knowledge, and to market its services overseas.
- 30.** Government departments should offer all major sectors of the economy the opportunity to form a relationship with government.
- 31.** The Department and the sector should agree an appropriate level of interaction which is endorsed by the Growth Council. Each relationship should be set out in departmental growth commitments.
- 32.** Lead departments should coordinate the Government's interaction with each sector, ensuring there is a constructive dialogue with mutual understanding and shared ownership of outcomes.
- 33.** An Industry Council should be established for each formal partnership between government and a sector.
- 34.** Government departments and industry sectors should jointly nominate lead trade associations to represent sectors in their dialogue with government and encourage the private sector to bring about a major rationalisation of trade associations to enhance the quality of the debate.
- 35.** Government should increase the number of companies managed through the Strategic Relationship Management model and this should be used by all government departments. Government and growth – catalyst, enabler, partner
- 36.** Every government department should recruit a Chief Procurement Officer at competitive market rates, reporting direct to the permanent secretary, to lead the procurement and delivery of major projects and improve the capabilities of their procurement cadre. The department's Non-Executives should approve the selection process and appointments.
- 37.** The Cabinet Office should place a general duty on all public bodies, setting out the procurement standards to which they should adhere, by providing a pan-government procurement strategy, legislating if necessary.

- 38.** The Government should go further in its plans to build strategic relationships with industry, ensuring that the long term impact on technological advantage and the UK industrial base are taken into account in the procurement of specialist technologies.
- 39.** The Government should continue to commit to the long term stability of the core funding of science and research, at a level which keeps pace with our international competitors.
- 40.** UKTI should work with the Technology Strategy Board and the Research Councils to strengthen the marketing of the UK as an inward investment destination on the back on our world-renowned research excellence.
- 41.** The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Technology Strategy Board must set out a clear statement explaining how they and other government agencies will work with LEPs and the devolved administrations to better connect national strategy with local initiative.
- 42.** All government departments, working through the Chief Scientific Advisers Committee, should consult with the Technology Strategy Board and Research Councils UK on the development of their growth commitments.
- 43.** Rather than setting up duplicate teams across government, a single source of expertise for innovative procurement should be established that builds on existing work and successful mechanisms. This resource should help to aggregate demand and coordinate activity around shared innovation challenges, provide expertise, coordination and guidance, and scale up and develop innovative procurement initiatives.
- 44.** The British Standards Institution, Technology Strategy Board and Research Councils UK should work together to ensure that new standards are set earlier in the development of new technologies in the UK.
- 45.** The Government should survey the practices and procedures of all regulators involved in conjunction with the sectors affected with a view to simplifying procedures and avoiding unnecessary duplication between agencies.
- 46.** Government should involve the private sector in drafting regulations so it is a collaborative process. It should invite trade associations, through the lead associations for their sectors, to submit precise redrafting of existing regulations prior to wider consultation on any changes.
- 47.** Through its review of both the Principles of Economic Regulation and the Compliance Code for non-economic regulators, the Government should impose an obligation on regulators to take proper account of the economic consequences of their actions.
- 48.** In preparing for any review process, regulators should invite the lead sectoral trade association (or a national body in the case of horizontal regulators) to analyse and publish evidence on the impact of the regulator's activities – both what it does and how it does it – on the businesses affected. This published evidence would then be available for analysis and comment by other interested parties.

- 49.** Regulators should set out their service standards and cost recovery policies clearly, showing how much they will charge under what circumstances.
- 50.** Regulators should publish policy statements showing how they will ensure that their decisions are both internally consistent across their geographic area, and consistent with those of any other bodies which regulate the same businesses.
- 51.** All regulators should adopt systems of earned recognition and meet the cost of inspections carried out at the discretion of the regulator within any recognition period.
- 52.** All non-economic regulators should publish policies showing how their customers can ask, without prejudice, for an independent second opinion on a regulatory decision or requirement.
- 53.** The Government must continue to promote the British interest in Europe and all secretaries of state with EU business affecting their department should make bi-annual trips to Brussels to influence decision making throughout the EU policy making process. All departmental ministers with EU business should consider every proactive step possible to put Britain on the front foot at the negotiating table.
- 54.** Government departments should develop greater capacity to identify forthcoming EU regulations well in advance.
- 55.** The Planning Inspectorate should be given powers to investigate planning decisions proactively. The Government should also consider on a rolling basis all the possible options to inject urgency and purpose into the planning system.
- 56.** The Government should consider the effectiveness of Local Development Orders and extend their use after consultation with affected parties to establish best practice.
- 57.** The Government should consider using Special Development Orders to speed up specific planning decisions of strategic significance.
- 58.** The Government Property Unit should work with local authorities to identify and publish details of all surplus and derelict public land on the ePIMS database so that LEPs and local authorities can collaborate to bring this land back into reuse in support of the local economic strategy.
- 59.** The Government should set up a new Development Corporation under an independent chairman from the private sector, comprised of representatives of central government, the Mayor of London, London boroughs, Kent and Essex councils and with a majority of members from the private sector and related disciplines. It should not exceed 20 members. Once created the Corporation should be given the powers it needs to drive its vision for future growth. It should be able to bid for its funds from the single pot.
- 60.** The Government should accept the need to clarify urgently its preferred solution to the problem of airport capacity in the South East and indicate that preference whilst making its implementation conditional on the outcome of the next election.
- 61.** The Government needs to set out a definitive and unambiguous energy policy, including the supporting financial regime, to give the sector the certainty to invest.

62. The Government should initiate discussions through the Bank of England and, in cooperation with the appropriate regulators, seek one or more solutions to enable UK pension funds to invest in UK infrastructure assets. The Government should ensure that best practice applies to both public and private sector pension fund investments.

Private sector – broadening the capacity for excellence

63. The chambers of commerce could benefit from an enhanced legal status to support their role as coordinating hubs for business support and engagement at local level. The Government should consider legislating to give chambers basic statutory functions, whilst guaranteeing their continuing independence from government. It should provide for compensation if government opts out of these arrangements.

64. Government and the private sector should collaborate to create a strong and stable, locally-based, private sector business support infrastructure. This should be centred on an enhanced role for chambers of commerce. At the minimum, government should pursue option 2 and take all appropriate steps to secure its implementation.

65. Local authorities should publish the list of all businesses paying non-domestic rates so that chambers and other business representative bodies can identify businesses in their area more reliably, and seek to draw them into the local businesses support initiatives. There should be exceptions for businesses where the identification of business premises could give rise to security concerns.

66. An updated Code of Practice for Trade Associations should be developed. It should be given teeth by making compliance with the Code a condition for membership of the Trade Association Forum.

67. The Trade Association Forum should press ahead with the development of a competency framework for individuals to drive up professionalism within trade associations.

68. The Trade Association Forum should develop an enhanced directory of associations which is easily navigated through keyword searches.

69. In developing their economic plans, LEPs and chambers should consider ways in which leadership and management capabilities in local businesses can be raised making full use of local networks, local training providers and businesses themselves. Plans could, for example, incorporate commitments from large corporates and leading mid-size businesses to help raise leadership and management capacities in their supply chains.

70. The development of leadership and management skills should be integrated, where appropriate, into the education and skills system at every level, from schools through to higher education and vocational skills training. We need to see individuals having opportunities to develop their leadership and management capabilities earlier on in their working lives, alongside the development of technical or academic competencies.

71. As part of their growth commitments, departments should set out plans for sector-based supply chain programmes, learning from the experiences of the Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative.

72. Government should ensure the availability of long term patient loan capital to growing businesses which do not want to dilute their equity. It should give serious consideration to tasking the new Business Bank to provide this either by itself or in partnership with the Business Growth Fund.

73. The Government should take a greater interest in foreign acquisitions from the perspective of the UK's industrial strategy priorities, using an enhanced sector knowledge and expertise. Government should do far more to engage with potential foreign investors in our core sectors to secure commitments to developing the UK research, skills and supply base, and in exceptional cases to discourage unwanted investments. We should underpin this by signalling a greater readiness to use existing powers in the Enterprise Act 2002 to allow ministers to consider takeovers and mergers to ensure our long term industrial capabilities are given proper consideration.

Education and skills – the foundation for growth and prosperity

74. All failing schools should be subject to the intervention process forthwith. There should be a clear timetable within which an improvement strategy for each school is agreed, with the education authorities using their powers to intervene if the head teacher and governors fail to act. If local authorities delay, central government should intervene.

75. The regional directors being appointed to lead Ofsted's new regional structure should be given formal powers to act swiftly where they identify problems in local schools.

76. Business engagement should be incorporated far deeper into the school curriculum in order to develop young people's understanding of business, increase their employability, and further their understanding of career and future training options and where they might lead. LEPs should consider how they engage with local schools and work with chambers to facilitate this.

77. The bureaucracy and paper work around work experience and work placements must be streamlined. DfE must be clear about what is absolutely necessary. Government must then ensure the removal of all regulations and requirements that place unnecessary burdens on employers, schools and colleges.

78. All boards of governors in secondary schools should include two influential local employers, at least one of whom should have good connections with the wider business community. This could be coordinated by the local chambers of commerce.

79. Local authorities should publish the Destination Measures for all secondary schools in their areas alongside academic attainment so that parents can make better informed choices, and to incentivise schools to give a higher priority to developing the employability of their leavers.

80. The existing budget lines for adult careers advice should be included in the single funding pot. Each LEP, as part of its local economic plan, should consider how careers advice is best provided in its area to meet the needs of both the adult population and the requirement under the Education Act 2011 for careers advice in schools.

81. The budget for vocational training for learners aged 19 and over, and all funding currently set aside for apprenticeships for those aged 16 and over, should be devolved to local areas through the single funding pot described in Chapter 2. This therefore calls into

question the continuation of the Skills Funding Agency. Each LEP should incorporate skills needs within their local economic plans driven by the needs of local employers and the practical experience of FE colleges.

82. All FE learning providers must consult and agree their provision with LEPs to ensure that the courses they offer to 16-18 year olds reflect local labour requirements. In addition, any vocational courses delivered by FE providers to learners of any age must conform to the defined national standards set by employers and industry.

83. Action to address NEETs is best taken at the local level. Resources to tackle the problem should therefore be available from the single pot. Youth unemployment will not be a problem or priority for action in every area, but where it is, LEPs working with local authorities, employers and other local partners should develop proposals for reducing NEET numbers as part of their local economic plans.

84. Industry Councils should work with the higher education sector to ensure that courses are relevant, incorporate placements in industry, and match the skills for which there is demand. Government needs to consider incentives to encourage and develop this further.

85. Higher Education courses should, where appropriate, be a collaboration between employers and universities. For shortage subjects for which there is strong employer demand, universities and employers should develop models where a commitment from firms of between a third and a half of a student's course fees will commit the student to working for that employer for a fixed number of years after graduation. This should be taken forward by the relevant Industry Councils.

86. The Home Office should undertake a targeted communication programme to improve business understanding of the skilled worker immigration rules to align perception and reality.

87. Government should review the regulations relating to immigration policy as part of the Red Tape Challenge process.

88. Government should accelerate the pace at which it is tackling illegal immigration, overstayers and the backlog of residency applications. It should do this through a significant but temporary redeployment of public sector people and resource. The backlog should be tackled on a task and finish basis, with clear targets and milestones, so that the redeployment does not become permanent.

Making it happen

89. An experienced implementation team should be set up in the centre of government, including secondees from the private sector, LEPs and local authorities.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	19 December 2012
3.	Title:	Focused Changes to Rotherham's Core Strategy
4.	Directorate:	Environment & Development Services

5. Summary

The report seeks Cabinet endorsement to undertake consultation on focused changes to the Core Strategy.

6. Recommendations

- 1. That Cabinet approve consultation on the Core Strategy Focused Changes document.**

7. Proposals and Details

Purpose

As a statutory requirement the Council is preparing a Local Plan for Rotherham (previously called the Local Development Framework). The two key documents contained within the Local Plan are the Core Strategy, and the supporting Sites and Policies document.

The Publication Core Strategy was subject to consultation between June and August 2012. Having taken account of representations received and following a re-assessment of the document, a schedule of further changes to the Core Strategy has been drawn up, the majority of which are minor and are intended to improve its clarity. Members may recall the report to Cabinet on 5 December which set out a revised approach to submission of the Core Strategy following our most recent legal advice. This approach will see submission of the Core Strategy following revocation of the Regional Strategy by Government. Government has not yet indicated when this will be, however consultation on these Focused Changes in line with legal advice will not add further to delay to the Core Strategy's progress towards adoption.

Core Strategy Focused Changes

The draft Focused Changes document will be made available to view by Cabinet Members prior to the meeting, via committee services.

The proposed changes range from correcting typographical errors and improving clarity of wording, to more substantial changes (but none of which alter the overall thrust of the Core Strategy or particular policies). A key proposed change is to amend the housing figures in Policy CS1 and other relevant maps and diagrams. Policy CS6 clearly sets out that housing provision will consist of the requirement derived from the local target of 850 homes per year and also the shortfall in delivery against this target from 2008; however figures provided in Policy CS1 currently don't include this shortfall. Amending the figures to show the implications of the housing requirement plus shortfall will ensure consistency between Core Strategy policies to provide a clearer, more transparent document. The shortfall will be distributed across settlements broadly in line with the growth strategy set out in the Core Strategy.

The Council's intention to adopt a lower local housing target as opposed to the higher regional target is unchanged.

Other Focused Changes include:

- Revised wording of policies and supporting text in relation to infrastructure delivery and developer contributions
- Words of clarification in relation to Green Belt and Safeguarded Land Policies
- Amendment to Policy CS10 to improve flexibility by indicating that where appropriate and viable the Council will seek to enter into local labour agreements to promote access to training, education and local employment opportunities.
- Amendments to Policy CS12 (managing change in Rotherham's retail and service centres) to ensure closer alignment with national planning policy
- Revised wording of Policy CS26 (Minerals) to require the criteria in part 1 of the policy to apply to all proposals for non-mineral development in Mineral

Safeguarding Areas (except for householder development / changes of use not involving excavation or building work)

- Words of clarification in light of the recent announcement that Maltby Colliery may be mothballed, and an indication that consideration will be given to its potential to contribute towards meeting some of the borough's growth requirements
- Clarification of the flexibility / contingency in place to deal with changing circumstances and key risks likely to be associated with delivering the Core Strategy
- Retention of a number of saved UDP policies originally proposed to be superseded by the Core Strategy but which are more appropriately retained until superseded by more detailed policies through the Sites and Policies DPD.

Consultation

It is proposed to consult on the Core Strategy Focused Changes. This may be subject to minor amendment prior to consultation depending on the outcome of ongoing evidence base work (primarily the Whole Plan Viability Assessment, and Integrated Impact Assessment studies). It will need to be viewed in conjunction with the Publication Core Strategy which is available on our website and copies of which have previously been distributed to all libraries and customer service centres.

The consultation will invite representations in relation to the 'legal compliance' and 'soundness' of the Focused Changes but not the Publication Core Strategy itself.¹ This is NOT an opportunity to repeat or raise further points about the original plan, or to seek further changes.

Subject to endorsement by Members the Focused Changes will be published for consultation in January / February 2013 for a 6 week period. The document will be made available to view via the Council's website, and at Council customer service centres and libraries throughout the borough. Given the nature of the consultation, community engagement events are not considered appropriate, however planning officers will be available to answer questions during normal office hours. An indicative list of consultation activity is set out below:

- Briefing note to be circulated to Members, MPs and Parish Councils
- Press notices
- Notification of consultation to be sent to consultees on Local Plan database
- Documents available on Council website, and at all libraries and customer service centres
- Planning officers available throughout consultation period to answer queries and assist people in making their comments.

The consultation period is expected to run between 14 January – 25 February, however precise dates may vary depending on the logistics of document preparation and distribution.

¹ The legal compliance and soundness tests are concerned with whether the plan is justified, whether it is effective, whether it is consistent with national policy, whether it has been positively prepared, and whether it has been produced in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations).

All representations received, along with the Council's response will be submitted to the Inspector appointed to undertake examination of the Core Strategy. The results of the consultation will also be included in the consultation statement which must accompany the submission of the Core Strategy.

8. Finance

The costs associated with this consultation will be met from existing Planning Policy team budget.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Endorsement by Members of this consultation prior to submission of the Core Strategy is sought to enable progress towards adoption.

- The Localism Act and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) express a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development. It is important that Rotherham's Core Strategy is in place as soon as possible to provide an up-to-date planning policy framework for the Borough's future growth and development.
- A failure to achieve timely progress on the Local Plan could delay the spatial strategy required to guide future decision-making on planning applications.
- Having a Local Plan in place will provide a steer for any neighbourhood plans that may emerge under the provisions of the Localism Act.
- Failure to make progress with the Local Plan risks delayed provision of the new homes and employment opportunities that the Borough needs.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The implementation of the Local Plan will make a positive contribution to all of Rotherham's Regeneration priorities. When adopted, the Core Strategy and supporting documents will further the objectives of the Corporate Plan and support the delivery of the Rotherham Sustainable Community Strategy by:

- providing sufficient good quality homes
- ensuring well designed, decent affordable housing
- providing employment land to meet the needs of the modern economy and support sustainable communities through access to employment opportunities
- promoting the "town centre first" policy approach to help the regeneration and renaissance of Rotherham Town Centre and other retail and service centres within the borough.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Core Strategy Focused Changes (January 2013)

Publication Core Strategy (July 2012)

http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/6665/publication_core_strategy_june_2012

Contact name:

Ryan Shepherd, Senior Planning Officer

01709 823888, ryan.shepherd@rotherham.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	19th December 2012
3.	Title:	Amendment to Standing Orders
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

It has come to the attention of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services that the Council's Contract Standing Orders are currently drafted in such a way as to restrict potential opportunities for internal trading organisations.

Where a contract is valued at less than £50,000, Standing Orders permit an internal trading organisation of the Council to carry out the work without going to the market, provided certain conditions are met. However, where a contract is valued at £50,000 or more, the Council is obliged to invite tenders. An amendment to Standing Orders is therefore proposed, to enable the Council to place its work with internal trading organisations without seeking external quotations in respect of contracts valued at £50,000 or more.

Standing Order 56 provides that the Council's Standing Orders shall not be altered without the prior recommendation of Cabinet or the Council's Standards Committee.

6. Recommendation

That, pursuant to Standing Order 56, Cabinet recommends the amendment of Standing Order 47 (Contracts valued at less than £50,000) to Council so that the internal trading organisation be required to demonstrate value for money

That, pursuant to Standing Order 56, Cabinet recommends the amendment of Standing Order 48 (Contracts valued at £50,000 or more) to Council so that such contracts may be offered to internal trading organisations, subject to value for money being demonstrated

7. Proposals and Details

Standing Order 47 (Contracts valued at less than £50,000) permits an order for work to be placed with the appropriate director of services, on the presumption that the provision of works, services or supplies of goods or materials by the relevant internal trading organisation is more economically efficient than inviting tenders for every contract.

The internal trading organisation may be awarded the contract if it can demonstrate it is able to perform the work, carry out the service or supply the goods or materials for the most economically advantageous price. Standing Order 47.4 sets out the factors which may be taken into consideration:

- Cost effectiveness
- Quality, aesthetics and functional characteristics
- Technical assistance and technical merit
- The period for completion or delivery
- Running costs
- After sales service
- Profitability

Under Standing Order 48 (Contracts valued at £50,000 or more) the situation is slightly different. The appropriate internal trading organisation is able to tender for the work along with other suitable contractors on a select list of tenderers or contractors on an approved list. There is no provision for awarding contracts to an internal trading organisation without seeking external expressions of interest.

There is no general legal obligation upon the Council to expose its work to external competition. Indeed the procurement arrangements of neighbouring authorities allow work to be placed directly with the internal trading organisation, without the need for external competition.

It is also submitted that the requirement in Standing Order 47.4 to demonstrate the most economically advantageous price does not reflect current procurement objectives and should be amended to a requirement to achieve value for money.

The following is therefore proposed:

Standing Order 47 (Contracts valued at less than £50,000) should remain as drafted, except that the words “for the most economically advantageous price” in Standing Order 47.4 should be deleted and replaced with the words “and achieve value for money”.

Standing Order 48 (Contracts valued at £50,000 or more) should be amended to permit contracts to be offered to internal trading organisations subject to the following conditions:

1. That value for money can be demonstrated, taking into account the factors set out at Standing Order 47.4 (see above)

2. In order to provide additional safeguards in view of the higher value of such contracts, the relevant Strategic Director, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and the Strategic Director of Resources must all be consulted and must state that they support the proposed arrangement.

It should be noted that no amendment will be made to Standing Order 48.3.1 so that tenders for a contract will still have to be invited following public advertisement where required by European or domestic law.

8. Finance

There are no adverse financial implications.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Failure to amend Standing Orders in this way could lead to challenge if Council departments award contracts valued at £50,000 or more to internal trading organisations without seeking external quotations, when this is not currently permitted by Standing Orders.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The proposal will enable internal trading organisations to work more effectively for the Council.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Strategic Directors have been consulted and support this report.

Contact Name: Ian Gledhill, Principal Officer, Legal and Democratic Services
Tel: 254501
ian.gledhill@rotherham.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	19 th December 2012
3.	Title:	Delegation of Powers - Revenues
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

To authorise postholders to appear in the Magistrates' Court on behalf of the Council on cases relating to recovery and enforcement of Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates and related issues.

6. Recommendations

That the persons named in recommendation (3), being the holders of the posts of Service & Development Manager, Operational Managers – Account Management and Local Taxation, Team Leaders – Account Management and Local Taxation, Senior Technical Officers – Account Management and Local Taxation, Technical Officers – Account Management and Local Taxation, be authorised:-

- (1) Under the provisions of Section 101 and 223 of the Local Government Act 1972, to institute, carry on, prosecute and defend proceedings in relation to the recovery of Council Tax, Community Charge, National Non-Domestic Rates and General Rates which the Council, as Billing, Charging, Collecting and formerly Rating Authority, is itself authorised to institute, carry on, prosecute and defend.
- (2) To act on behalf of the Billing, Charging and Collecting Authority in proceedings undertaken at the Valuation Tribunal in respect of Council Tax, Community Charge and National Non-Domestic Rate Appeals.
- (3) The authorised persons for the purposes of recommendations (1) and (2) are:
 - Mr Robert Cutts
 - Mr Steven Ward
 - Mrs Rachel Humphries
 - Mrs Melanie Kennedy
 - Mrs Sharon Coombes
 - Mrs Gill Leivers
 - Mrs Julie Chapman
 - Mrs Sally Olivia
 - Miss Suzanne Styring
 - Mrs Diane Woolley
 - Mrs Nicola Green
 - Mrs Christy Ward
 - Mrs Sarah Bennett

7. Proposals and Details

At present certain named officers have delegated authority from the Council to undertake proceedings in relation to the recovery of Council Tax, Community Charge, National and Non-Domestic Rates and General Rates which the Council, as bill, charging, collecting and formerly rating authority is itself authorised to institute, carry on, prosecute and defend.

The officers are further authorised to act on behalf of the Council in proceedings undertaken at the Valuation Tribunal in respect of Council Tax, Community Charge and National Non-Domestic Rate Appeals.

From time to time fresh resolutions need to be passed as staff leave and new staff are appointed. Accordingly, the Cabinet Member is requested to reaffirm existing appointees and authorise new appointee(s), i.e. the officers named in recommendation (3) to this report, to represent and act on behalf of the Council in relation to the functions mentioned in recommendations (1) and (2).

8. Finance

The delegation of powers to officers enables the Council to respond quickly when Court proceedings are necessary and thus assists with the prompt collection of Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

The lack of sufficient officers with delegated powers to represent the Council in proceedings for recovery and enforcement of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates would have an adverse effect on the Council's cash flow and performance.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Council is empowered by resolution to authorise officers to appear in legal proceedings before a Magistrates' Court and to conduct any such proceedings, although not a solicitor hold a current Practising Certificate.

Contact Name : Jacqueline Collins,
Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Tel 55768. **e-mail:** jacqueline.collins@rotherham.gov.uk

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting	Cabinet
2.	Date	19 December 2012
3.	Title	Rotherham's Strategic Tenancy Policy
4.	Directorate	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

Through the creation of the Localism Act, 2011, and other legislation around social housing reform, the Coalition Government has introduced a number of options for social housing landlords to allocate and manage their housing stock.

It is a requirement of the Localism Act, 2011, that local authority landlords publish a Strategic Tenancy Policy, which sets out the authority's approach to the use of fixed term tenancies (sometimes referred to as flexible tenancies), by January 2013.

The consultation feedback on this issue clearly demonstrated a strong opposition to the widespread use of fixed term tenancies across the borough. It was felt that shorter-term, fixed term tenancies would make it difficult for people to settle and invest in an area and would undermine neighbourhood sustainability.

Feedback around the use of long term, fixed term tenancies for the 1.3% of Rotherham's housing stock of 4+ bedroom homes is less clear and it is on this issue that further guidance is sought.

6. Recommendations

- **Cabinet is asked to consider the issues in this report, the consultation feedback and observations by Improving Places Select Commission, and provide advice around the issuing of fixed term tenancies for Rotherham's larger, (4+ bed roomed) family homes**

7. Proposals and details

7.1 Background

As part of its package of Localism, Welfare Reform and austerity measures, the Coalition Government has introduced a raft of changes to the way in which affordable housing is provided in England. In the Localism Act, Government has set out measures which allow registered providers (including local authorities and registered social landlords), increased flexibility in the way they allocate and provide tenancies. At the heart of this are two key changes;

- I. The issuing of fixed term (flexible) tenancies for tenants of social housing landlords (as opposed to secure 'lifetime' tenancies for all)
- II. Local authorities will have increased flexibility on how they allocate social housing (this will be dealt with in a separate report)

7.2 Strategic Tenancy Policy

Legislation enacted through the Localism Act places a duty on all local authority landlords to produce a Strategic Tenancy Policy. The purpose of this policy is to set out the broad objectives to be taken into consideration by registered providers operating within their local authority area. Registered providers will 'have regard to' Rotherham's Strategic Tenancy Policy when formulating their own policies on how they will exercise the options which Government has afforded them through reforms to social housing policy and legislation. This Strategic Tenancy Policy should cover;

- How fixed term tenancies will be used
- The circumstances in which permanent secure tenancies will be granted
- Criteria for re-issuing tenancies at the end of a fixed term
- How a tenant may appeal or complain against the length of tenancy awarded

Strategic tenancy policies are to be published in January 2013 and reviewed every five years.

Once Rotherham's approach to long term fixed term tenancies for larger family homes is understood, its Strategic Tenancy Policy will be drafted and presented to Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, Cabinet and Registered Provider Partners, prior to publication.

- The Strategic Tenancy Policy will be published in January 2013 and implemented from April 2013 onwards
- The Strategic Tenancy Policy will be reviewed before 2018

7.3 Fixed term tenancies

The vast majority of social housing tenancies issued by social landlords are either assured tenancies issued by registered social landlords or secure tenancies issued by local authorities. As long as the tenancy conditions are met these two types of tenancy provide the security of a home for life to social housing tenants.

New social housing tenants are often issued with 'introductory' or 'probationary' tenancies. These tenancies are usually for a period of no more than 12 months and

become assured or secure tenancies on expiry (assuming there have been no difficulties during the period of the introductory or probationary tenancy).

Recent legislation enables social housing landlords to issue fixed term (also known as flexible) tenancies to new tenants. This type of tenancy offers a property for a specified period of time, from a minimum two year to a maximum 18 year period. At the end of the fixed term period landlords are able to review the tenancy and either;

- Issue a further fixed term tenancy
- Offer a secure/assured tenancy, or
- Manage the expiration of the fixed term tenancy

Government believes the introduction of fixed term tenancies will give local authority landlords another tool with which to manage their properties.

7.4 Would fixed term tenancies be appropriate in Rotherham?

The results from the consultation exercises regarding the whole scale use of fixed term tenancies was very clear in that fixed term tenancies, particularly the minimum 5 year fixed term tenancies, would be unwelcome in Rotherham, both for council properties and for stock in the borough owned by Rotherham's registered provider partners.

Supporting sustainable neighbourhoods is a key priority for Rotherham and there is a real concern that issuing council tenancies for a shorter fixed term period would potentially prevent tenants from committing to an area and therefore undermine sustainability. The council accepts that a level of transience within neighbourhoods is healthy but should not discourage households from settling into areas.

The results of the consultation on considering fixed term tenancies for larger family properties (Rotherham's 261 properties with 4+ bedrooms) was less clear, polarised opinions and the relatively low number of responses may not accurately reflect interested parties' views; this is clearly a contentious issue with both positive and negative implications for Rotherham.

Advantages of issuing fixed term tenancies for larger family homes	Disadvantages of issuing fixed term tenancies for larger family homes
Would assist large families to get the home they need and prevent overcrowding	Tenants may feel unable to settle
Reduce the opportunity for tenants to rent out spare rooms	A minimal increase in turn-over of larger family homes and associated voids costs
Reduce fuel poverty linked with under-occupancy	Increased transience due to time limited nature of fixed term tenancies
Make better use of Rotherham's comparatively low number of larger, family homes	Tenants having to move out of a home where they've raised their families and are emotionally attached to
Overcrowding and poor housing has been linked to poor educational attainment, poor physical and mental health, stress and even family breakdown	A small additional administrative burden to manage fixed term tenancies and re-house tenants when fixed term tenancy expires
Minimise tenants' benefits reduction due to bed room tax	

Tenants' situations change over time and households may not continue to need a Council house but choose to remain for a variety of reasons (low rent, satisfaction with the Council as a landlord, security, and other related benefits such as RTB). Fixed term tenancies can help to ensure people move to a suitably sized property when they no longer require a larger council house, freeing up housing to enable the Council to meet the needs of overcrowded families in priority need.

7.5 How might fixed term tenancies for larger family homes work?

It may be beneficial for Rotherham to consider issuing long term, fixed tenancies for 4+ bed room homes as a way of helping large families to get a tenancy for a large property, as;

- At October 2012 there were 342 families on the housing register with between 4 and 9 children in houses too small for their needs
- RMBC owns just 261 properties with 4, 5 and 6 bedrooms (1.3% of council stock)
- Of these 261 properties, 45% (117) of them house just one occupant.
- 3 couples have each moved from a 4 bedroom house to a smaller property with the support of Rotherham's Right-Size (downsizing) scheme

Consideration is sought as to whether very long term fixed tenancies for larger family homes, followed by the offer of a permanent secure tenancy in a smaller property, is a means of sympathetically managing occupation/overcrowding.

- 1) A tenancy offer for a 4 bed plus property would be for the maximum fixed term of 18 years (18 years is the maximum term for a fixed term tenancy, according to government guidance), but we would seek to support families with children up the age of 21.
- 2) 6-12 months before the fixed term tenancy is due to expire a review would take place, and;
 - a. if children have secured alternative accommodation, the fixed term tenancy would cease and tenants would be offered a smaller property suitable to their needs on secure basis
 - b. if there are still any children under the age of 21 living in the property the tenants could be given the choice of either signing a further, shorter fixed term tenancy (3 years) or be granted a permanent, secure tenancy on a property which meets the needs of their household size

The fixed term tenancy offer would be made explicit in the advertisement for the property so tenants would be aware of long, fixed term nature of the tenancy prior to bidding. It is envisaged that potential applicants will perceive this as a reasonable and fair approach as it is likely that they themselves will have waited for a considerable period to be offered a larger home.

Fixed term tenancies would not affect existing tenants. In reality, fixed term tenancies issued in 2013 are unlikely to expire until 2031 but at that time would offer better opportunities to manage council housing stock for the benefit of overcrowded families.

8. Finance

Should RMBC continue to issue permanent secure tenancies across all its housing stock there will be no direct financial implications for Rotherham. If RMBC opts to make use of fixed term tenancies for larger family homes there may be a slight

increase in void-related costs but this will be relatively minor as larger family homes make up only 1.3% of Rotherham's council housing.

9. Risks and uncertainties

Many registered providers own stock which spans multiple local authority areas. The practicalities of aligning their use of fixed term tenancies with the Strategic Tenancy Policies of several local authority landlords would lead to a lack of consistency for their tenants living in different local authority areas.

Legislation states that registered providers should '*have regard to*' the local authority's Strategic Tenancy Policy but this term is open to interpretation and it may be that registered providers do not mirror the local authority landlord's approach to fixed term tenancies.

The Localism Act seeks to devolve some elements of decision making from central government to local government. A consequence of such devolution is the perception that consequences of implementing/not implementing the options available at a local level would sit with the local authority.

The risk of an increase in Right to Buy following the implementation of fixed term tenancies is considered and thought to have a very minimal impact.

10. Policy and performance agenda implications

- Corporate Plan – Making sure no community is left behind
- NAS Service Plan, 2012
- Housing Excellence Plan
- Housing Strategy
 - Commitment 1, we will deliver Council housing that meets people's needs
 - Commitment 2, we will increase the supply of affordable rented housing in Rotherham
 - Commitment 7, we will help people in Rotherham's most disadvantaged communities

11. Background papers and consultation

Background papers

- Strategic Tenancy Policy, November 2012, Improving Places Select Commission
- Update position on allocations review and strategic tenancy policy, October 2012, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
- [*Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*](#). CLG, November 2011
- [*Localism Act, 2011*](#). CLG, November 2011

Appendices

- Appendix A, consultation programme and results of on-line and member questionnaires

Consultation

The consultation for both allocations and the issuing of fixed term tenancies was included with in the Housing Strategy consultation programme. This ran from June to September 2012 and specific workshops and questions around applying locally determined criteria to Rotherham's open housing register and the use of fixed term tenancies were held throughout that consultation. As well as face to face consultation events two questionnaires were issued;

- A questionnaire was available online throughout the consultation period and was completed by 51 residents
- A questionnaire was emailed to all elected members in October with a one week turn-around time; 7 completed questionnaires were received

A full consultation programme, with results of the on-line survey and member questionnaire, is contained in appendix A.

Once guidance is received Rotherham's draft Strategic Tenancy Strategy will be drafted and shared with registered provider partners prior to publication in January 2013.

This report was taken to Improving Places Select Commission on Wednesday, 28 November 2012. The meeting supported the proposals to implement the use of fixed term tenancies for Rotherham's larger family homes (4+ bedrooms) on the understanding that;

- this change would not affect existing tenants
- applicants would be made aware of the fixed term nature of the tenancy at the point of advert so they would know about the nature of the tenancy prior to bidding
- tenants would be offered a permanent secure tenancy when they downsize
- should the number of household members align with a larger family home at the end of the fixed term, another fixed term tenancy would be issued, and
- the rehousing of tenants when the fixed term tenancy expired would be handled sensitively and support offered

12. Contact details

Dave Richmond, Director of Housing, 01709 823402
dave.richmond@rotherham.gov.uk

Wendy Foster, Social Housing Officer, 01709 255047
wendy-regen.foster@rotherham.gov.uk

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REGARDING THE USE OF FIXED TERM TENANCIES IN ROTHERHAM

Commitments one and two of the draft Housing Strategy prompted responses around Rotherham's council housing;

- Commitment one; we will deliver council housing which meets people's needs
- Commitment two; we will increase and improve the supply of affordable rented housing in Rotherham

The following feedback was received, on commitments one and two, during the face-to-face consultation events;

- People want to see housing that better meets the need
- They want to see better understanding of what people want and where
- Need to consider specific need i.e. disability, single people, age – esp elderly (bungalows, retirement village, one bed properties)
- Urgent work needed to address under occupation – review allocations / tenancy agreements to prepare for this longer term – incentivising and support packages available
- Scope to have some flexible accommodation which can be used to help relieve bed blocking/temporary accommodation/interim to reduce under occupation
- Help people understand how and why council housing is allocated
- Reviewing existing tenants to tackle under occupation
- Be consistent

The 14 question on-line questionnaire was available on-line from June to September and was completed by 51 people and elected members were sent a questionnaire on 25 October 2012 with a deadline of 1 November 2012. Results and comments include:

Do you agree or disagree that RMBC should consider the use of flexible tenancies as well as lifetime ones?	Strongly agree = 18% Agree = 39% Disagree = 24% Strongly disagree = 20%
Do you think flexible tenancies will:	Create good estates = 25% Make estates less friendly = 25% Make no difference = 40% Other = 6%
In which of the following do you think it would be ok to ask the tenant of a flexible tenancy to leave their home?	A household whose circumstances have improved (such as finding work) = 15% A household whose children have left home and are living in a property which is bigger than they need = 61% Other = 12%

SUMMARY OF HOUSING STRATGY CONSULTATION PROGRAMME

Group/ event	Date	Information captured
RotherFed	11/06/12	Word doc – general questions and comments captured
Members seminar	10/07/12	Spreadsheet
Area Assembly Chairs meeting	18/06/12	Minutes
Wentworth North AA	09/07/12	Spreadsheet
Rother Valley South AA	30/07/12	Spreadsheet
Rother Valley West AA	09/07/12	Spreadsheet
Wentworth South AA	N/A	None returned
Rotherham North and Rotherham South AA combined focus group	16/07/12	Word doc
Wentworth Valley AA	24/07/12	Word doc
Private sector landlords forum	25/06/12	Word doc and email
Deaf Futures Group	16/08/12	Word doc
Learning from customers group	09/08/12	Word doc
Quality and Standards challenge group	10/07/12	Spreadsheet
Strategic housing partnership	18/07/12	Typed notes/minutes
RP and developer combined forum	26/07/12	Zahara
Housing forum	24/07/12	Word doc with comments/ minutes
Housing strategy questionnaire – online	N/A	Report
Housing strategy questionnaire – hard copies received	N/A	Spreadsheet
Emails to strategic housing inbox	N/A	Spreadsheet and captured on 'misc notes and issues to include'
Other feedback received internally	N/A	Captured on 'misc notes and issues to include'
11 th July public event	11/07/12	Word doc
16 th August public event	16/08/12	Word doc
Supporting People providers forum	22/08/12	Notes typed and saved
Miscellaneous notes and issues	N/A	Word doc saved in feedback folder
Fixed term tenancies: On-line questionnaire	N/A	Word doc
Member questionnaire	25/10/12 – 01/11/12	Word doc

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
--

1.	Meeting:-	Cabinet
2.	Date:-	19th December 2012
3.	Title:-	Rotherham Festive Food Fund – offering safe, affordable borrowing to vulnerable people in Rotherham over the Christmas period
4.	Directorate:-	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

This scheme was agreed in principle at the Partner Strategic Welfare Steering group on Wednesday 12th December 2012. This is a partnership approach to supporting vulnerable people over the festive period to enable them to get access either a loan for food at no interest, get a referral to a food bank or be referred to the Department for Work and Pensions current crisis loans.

The proposal is to offer short term, affordable credit to people in crisis to prevent, where possible, people from accessing high cost credit/finance.

The scheme will also offer a chance to test the Partnership with a pilot scheme with the Credit Unions on how to manage the crisis loans under the new social fund (Fund for Change), which will be in place from April 2013.

6. Recommendations

Cabinet note the report and endorse the proposal.

7. Proposals and Details

The 'Festive Food Fund' will run from Wednesday, December 19, to Friday, January 11, and the vouchers will be redeemable up until the end of January.

The fund will comprise an £80, 000 loan to the Laser Credit Union based in the Old Town Hall, Rotherham. The credit union will then administer interest – free crisis loans of up to £100 per family who meet the necessary criteria.

Other support for people in crisis during this period will be the ten local food banks across the borough. NHS Rotherham is donating £20,000 to support the 'food in crisis' work supported by Voluntary Action Rotherham to assist the food banks with stock during the December and January period.

The loans themselves will be issued by the credit union in the form of £25 food vouchers, which can then be redeemed at the PAK supermarket, Wellgate. The supermarket does not sell alcohol, and one of the requirements of the fund is that vouchers cannot be redeemed against cigarettes or alcohol

The Festive Food Fund provides an opportunity to provide financial support to the residents of the Borough of Rotherham during the festive period. This can be achieved by offering small, short term interest free loans, to households who are at risk of having no food. Ultimately, the fund is designed to prevent residents taking out high interest loans, for food over the festive period.

Fund Criteria:

Applicants will need to be able to demonstrate exceptional circumstances, and have exhausted all other options, and have an ability to repay any loans issued.

The loan application will be referred by staff from a number of support organisations including: RMBC, CAB, VAR, JC Plus, NHSR. Alternatively, a request can be made direct from a resident of Rotherham. Due to the quick turnaround for these loans. Laser will make the final decision on accepting or declining the loan.

The Festive Food Fund should only be administered to those households who meet the following criteria:

- Rotherham households who genuinely cannot afford to feed themselves or their family over the festive period. For example assistance could be provided to a resident of the Borough of Rotherham who has accumulated debts with high interest lenders, has suffered a loss of earnings or reduced hours, or a change in their lives or circumstances resulting in financial difficulty during the festive period. Supporting information would be required as evidence that households were experiencing genuine

difficulties in paying their food bill (this could include payslips, proof of benefit, confirmation from employers, bank statements etc)

- A loan payment should only be made to those households who are willing to act on money and debt advice in order to resolve the problems that have lead to their financial difficulties
- A loan payment should only be made in circumstances where households can demonstrate that their loan repayments will be affordable following the receipt of a payment from the fund – i.e. that their situation will be sustainable in the longer term
- A loan payment is to be a one off payment made to residents for food over the festive period, where all other options have failed
- A loan payment should not be made where there is another way to resolve the problem.
- Where a loan payment is agreed customers will be provided with a voucher for food at PAK Supermarket. The voucher cannot be used for anything other than food. No cash payments will be made
- Only one loan can be made per household
- The maximum payment permitted to any household through the fund is £100
- Where people don't want a food voucher through the crisis loan then they will be offered the option of going to one of the **local food banks**
- **All loans will be offered interest free** in exchange for the customer opening a bank account with the Credit Union
- Depending upon financial circumstances, loans will be paid back interest free at £5 per week.
- An additional requirement of the loan will be that the Credit Union can share the data with the Local Authority and the DWP under a data sharing protocol in order that a profile can be built of the families/people and how they fit in with the wider corporate priorities (Social Fund/Troubled Families/Disadvantaged area work)

8. Finance

The fund will be made available through £80,000 of the Council's funding, and £20,000 from NHSR.

The Council will second 2 members of staff to LASER for the festive period. No costs will be paid by or to LASER for these staff.

The Council will pay LASER the following amounts to cover LASER's costs in administering this scheme:

- Set up costs at the start of the Scheme - £1,235
- Staff costs for staff seconded from other credit unions - £750 per person per 30 hour week
- Staff time in training and supporting extra staff seconded to assist in delivering this scheme - £450
- Stationery - £150
- Membership fee - £2 per new member
- Arrears and debt collection - £5 per arrears letter, £40 to use the DWP Eligible Loan Deduction Scheme, £50 to use a debt collection agency, per loan
- Budget Management Meeting - £25

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There are a number of risks associated with such a scheme;

- Demand may outstrip supply.
- Referrals should ideally be through existing referrals routes to avoid misuse and to meet the need of the most vulnerable.
- There is a risk of (bad debt) non-recovery of some the money, given the criteria and quick turn around of the funding
- Staffing at Laser - risk of not being able to meet demand

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The proposal supports the Council's agenda of supporting the most vulnerable.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

None.

Contact:- Mr. Karl Battersby Ext. 23815
Karl.battersby@rotherham.gov.uk

Document is Restricted