

**NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW AUTHORITY****SHADOW OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****10 December 2020**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Council Tax Support Scheme – Consultation Analysis</b>
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**List of Appendices****Appendix 1 – Consultation Analysis****1. Purpose**

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- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee (O&SC) with analysis of the outcome of the Council Tax Support Scheme public consultation.

**2. Recommendations**

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- 2.1 It is recommended that the O&SC notes the outcome of the public consultation.

**3. Issues and Choices**

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**3.1 Report Background**

- 3.1.1 On the 8 October 2020 the O&SC were presented with a report detailing the proposed North Northamptonshire Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22 for consultation.
- 3.1.2 The O&SC requested that the outcome of the consultation was presented to the committee prior to the Shadow Executive making a decision on the scheme at their meeting on the 7 January 2021.

**3.2 Consultation**

- 3.2.1 An 8 week consultation ran for the period 5 October 2020 to 30 November 2020. This was more than the required statutory 6 weeks as members of the task and finish group recognised that the proposed changes could have a significant impact on vulnerable people and therefore wanted to do more consultation than the minimum required. Members of the O&SC also fully supported the longer consultation period.



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3.2.2 The consultation was an online survey and open to all residents, stakeholders and people representing organisations. The consultation was also available in other formats and languages upon request.

3.2.3 The consultation was communicated and promoted as follows:

- Banners on all District and Borough's websites
- Advertising on email signatures
- Internal staff communications
- Social Media platforms
- Press Releases
- Liaison with the voluntary sector
- Liaison with money and debt advice services
- Liaison with homeless Prevention Forums & officers
- Liaison with the Department for Work & Pensions (Job Centre Plus)
- Emails to preceptors (Police, Fire, Town & Parish Councils)
- Emails to the three local MPs
- Member Briefing circulated to all North Northants members
- Letters sent to all current working age Council Tax Support recipients (approximately 10,500) advising them of the consultation, an information sheet was also enclosed advising how the proposed changes would specifically impact them depending on the scheme their council currently operated.
- Members also received a copy of the letter sent to CTS recipients and the supporting information sheet.

3.2.4 Analysis of the consultation responses can be found at Appendix 1.

### **4. Implications (including financial implications)**

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#### **4.1 Resources and Risk**

4.1.1 The O&SC were previously advised that the estimated cost in the 2021/21 financial year of the existing LCTSS across the four sovereign councils is £15.7m.

4.1.2 The committee were also advised that although the scheme proposed for consultation was cost neutral, this position could change between the consultation period starting and the final scheme being agreed. This is due to a number of factors including the number of claimants receiving LCTSS, their changing circumstances and the impact of Covid-19. The cost neutral position is currently being reviewed based on December's LCTS caseloads and expenditure and an update will be included in the report presented to the Shadow Executive.

4.1.3 As mentioned at 4.3 there is a legal requirement to consult on any proposed LCTSS therefore the consultation that has been undertaken has mitigated the risk of a legal challenge on the scheme that is implemented.

## **4.2 Legal**

- 4.2.1 The requirements for a local authority to produce a LCTSS are set out in Local Government Finance Act 1992 (92 Act), section 13A (2), amended by Local Government Finance Act 2012 (2012 Act).

The statutory provisions, Reg 3, Schedule 1A of the 92 Act, require that that a local authority

- (1) Before making a scheme, the authority must (in the following order)—
- (a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
  - (b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
  - (c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

## **4.3 Equality and Health**

- 4.3.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed when the proposed scheme was being developed, this is in the process of being reviewed now that the consultation has closed and will accompany the report presented to the Shadow Executive.

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