

Board/Committee:	Full Council
Date of Meeting:	3 February 2021
Title:	Local Council Tax Support scheme for Gosport
Author:	Head of Benefits, Procurement & Insurance
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the proposal not to change the Local Council Tax Support scheme (LCTS) for Gosport for the forthcoming 2021-22 financial year.

Recommendations

That Council approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) for Gosport at Appendix 1 of this report for working age customers and notes the statutory scheme for Pension Age customers. Statutory changes to the Pension Age scheme are administered by Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and this year only contain minor changes, these are yet to be released by MHCLG and will be forwarded to Members as part of the updated scheme when received.

1 Background

- 1.1 On the 23 January 2012 Council approved the Local Council Tax Support scheme for Gosport for the 2013/14 financial year following the abolition of the national scheme for Council Tax Benefit.
- 1.2 It remained largely unchanged until 30 January 2017 when Council approved changes to the scheme for the 2017/18 financial year. In addition Council approved the Exceptional Hardship Policy introduced from the 2017/18 financial year.
- 1.3 Legislation requires that the scheme is approved by full Council for each year.
- 1.4 The following table outlines the funding position of the current scheme

Local Council Tax Support Scheme			
		£	%
Estimated cost	2020/21	3,985,600	
Costs met by:			
Gosport Borough Council		501,140	12.84%
Hampshire County Council		2,744,742	71.56%
Police & Crime Commissioners		446,953	11.76%
Hampshire Fire & Rescue Authority		150,265	3.84%

2. Report

2.1 There are no proposed changes to the 2021/22 LCTS working age scheme with the current scheme at Appendix 1 maintaining the following protections for vulnerable customers:

- The continuation of income disregards for Disability benefits, Child benefit and maintenance payments.
- The continuation of the full income disregard for War Widows and War disablement pension.
- The continuation of “extended payments” or benefit “run-ons” when a Customer starts work or increases their hours in work.
- “fast track” claims to expedite re-claims after a short period of temporary work reducing the requirement for extended verification.

2.2 In addition the Exceptional Hardship Policy introduced from the 2017/18 financial year recognised that in a small amount of cases additional support may be needed when an LCTS customer is suffering “extreme hardship”. A separate Policy was approved by Council for this purpose.

2.3 In response to the Covid pandemic Central Government provided additional grant to be distributed to residents in receipt of Local Council Tax Support with a requirement that each household was to receive an additional £150.00 for a full year’s Council tax liability. Gosport was awarded £560,286.00 and to date £469,281.54 has been awarded to 3186 households, some at a lower amount than £150.00 to match the period of liability. The remainder of the grant will be used to support our most vulnerable households.

2.4 Staff from both the Benefit and Council Tax Sections are trained to deal with potential hardship cases and offer an application form at all points of the recovery process.

3 Financial implication

3.1 There are no financial implications arising if the scheme remains unchanged. The government has awarded the Council a LCTS

grant of £95,000 to fund any impact on the LCTS in 2021/22 arising from Covid 19 including an increase in unemployment.

4 Risk Assessment

4.1 To mitigate any challenges to the Council over the amended 2017/18 LCTS scheme, an initial Equality Impact risk assessment was undertaken followed by a full Equalities Impact Assessment, which considered all factors of the scheme and the responses to the Consultation undertaken at the time.

Financial Services comments:	As detailed in the report.
Legal Services comments:	Contained in the Report.
Crime and Disorder:	None
Equality and Diversity:	As detailed in the report.
Service Improvement Plan implications:	None
Corporate Plan:	None
Risk Assessment:	See Paragraph 4
Background papers:	Full Council report 23.1.2012 Full Council report 18.12.2013 Full Council report 28.1.2015 Full Council report 30.1.2017 Full Council report 13.12.2017 Full Council report 5.2.2020
	Local Tax Support Scheme 2013/14 and 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20
	(http://www.gosport.gov.uk/assets/lcts)
Appendices/Enclosures:	Appendix 1 Local Council Tax Support Scheme
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