

# AGENDA

## Cabinet

Date: **Thursday 15 November 2012**

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Time: **2.00 pm**

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Place: **The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road,  
Hereford**

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Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

**Sally Cole, Governance Services**

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If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call Sally Cole, Governance Services on (01432) 260249 or e-mail [scole@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:scole@herefordshire.gov.uk) in advance of the meeting.

# **Agenda for the Meeting of the Cabinet**

## **Membership**

**Chairman**

**Councillor JG Jarvis**

**Councillor H Bramer  
Councillor RB Hamilton  
Councillor AW Johnson  
Councillor PM Morgan  
Councillor RJ Phillips  
Councillor GJ Powell  
Councillor PD Price**

**AGENDA**

	<b>Pages</b>
<b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> To receive any apologies for absence.	
<b>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on the Agenda.	
<b>3. MINUTES</b> To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2012. Please note that the minutes of the urgent meeting of Cabinet held on 31 October 2012 will be to follow.	1 - 4
<b>4. INTEGRATED CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT</b> To invite Cabinet Members to review performance for the period to end September 2012.	5 - 34
<b>5. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS</b> To seek agreement for a Council Tax Support Scheme in the light of the requirements set by the Government and the outcome of local consultation and determine the level of Council Tax Discount for vacant properties and second homes.	35 - 86



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**BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD.**

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HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

**MINUTES of the meeting of Cabinet held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday 18 October 2012 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillor JG Jarvis (Chairman)  
Councillor (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: H Bramer, RB Hamilton, PM Morgan, GJ Powell and PD Price

**In attendance:** Councillors AJM Blackshaw, JA Hyde, AW Johnson, NP Nenadich, P Rone, MAF Hubbard, TM James, RI Matthews, A Seldon, J Hardwick, MD Lloyd-Hayes and AJW Powers

**Officers:**

**33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor RJ Phillips, Cabinet Member Enterprise and Culture.

**34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**35. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**36. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2013/15**

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services presented the report of the Head of Corporate Finance and stated that the report forecast the financial position for both revenue and capital to end of September 2012 and gave a mid year assessment of treasury management activity.

The Cabinet Member made the following comments:

- As at end of September 2012 the overall revenue budget position for 2012/13 showed a £2.4m projected overspend. This is approximately 1.7% of the council's £143.4m revenue budget, excluding Dedicated Schools Grant funding.
- The report includes a mid year treasury management report, which follows best practice in the reporting of information on the handling of investments and borrowing.
- The 2012/13 budget included £10.8m of savings to meet the reduced funding from central government. This was in addition to the £10.3m of savings made in 2011/12 both of which are as a result of the government's national deficit reduction programme.
- Projections to date have shown an overall reduction in the overspend. This has been achieved through the control on discretionary spend, recovery plan actions and a review of budgets.
- The position on the capital programme for 2012/13 was a forecast spend at year end of £40.7m.

- The Leadership team continues to closely monitor the position.

The following comments were made in discussion:

- Cabinet noted the discretionary spend position for the People's Services directorate had improved overall since its peak in June 2012.
- In response to a question regarding risk outlined at paragraph 38 of the report, the Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing confirmed the forecast did not include the additional activities required resulting from potential safeguarding pressures or the need for development activity in this area. The director confirmed this would not cause an adverse effect to service delivery.
- The Cabinet Member Education and Infrastructure referred to changes to the governments' schools funding formula and stated that current proposals would put Herefordshire in a difficult position in clawing back funding.
- In response to a question on home care the director advised that all home care was provided by the private and voluntary sector and funding was paid directly to the individual concerned.
- In response to a question on provision of broadband by BT the Cabinet Member Education and Infrastructure referred Cabinet to their meeting of 11 October, where details of the contract were discussed.
- In raising concerns over the budget the IOC group leader requested that the original budget predictions were provided with the report in order that comparisons could be made.
- 2012/13 required £10.4m in savings to be made.
- It was important to maintain the Council's reserves.
- In response to concerns over capital project Cabinet was reminded that some schemes were carried over to the following year or pause a project to cover the revenue budget.
- In response to a question on legal services the Assistant Director reminded Cabinet the budget covered core legal requirements. The legal department was being restructured with appointments to key posts in the new year and the budget provided would be sufficient. Any work for outside organisations would be considered on a case by case basis. The Assistant Director added that he would be providing an options paper on the future of legal services.
- The Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing stated that savings were on target and that most of the savings were in processes and practices.
- The Leader emphasised it was important to be honest with the public on the provision of services. The administration would do its best to come in on budget at the end of the year.

## **RESOLVED**

### **THAT:**

- a) the report and the forecast position was noted;**
- b) it was noted the Leadership Team undertook to deliver a further level of savings for 2012/13;**



- c) **taking account of recommendation (b) Cabinet noted the requirement that Directors deliver recovery plans to ensure a balanced revenue budget; and**
- d) **the mid-year treasury management report at Appendix C to the report be noted.**

### **37. CORPORATE PLAN 2013/15**

The Leader of the Council, as the Cabinet Member responsible for Corporate Strategy and Finance presented the report of the Assistant Director People, Policy and Partnership.

The following comments were made in discussion:

- Cabinet was reminded that the current corporate plan was based around the partnership between Herefordshire Council and the Primary Care Trust.
- The plan for 2013/15 outlines the important priorities for Herefordshire.
- The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the plan and stated that the acronym PEOPLE should be utilised in both the foundation and the delivery of any project proposed as part of the plan.
- It was felt there should be more reference to public health within the document.
- It was believed the language used in the plan needed to be reviewed to be meaningful and reflect a more empowering organisation.
- Cabinet was reminded that measures were mapped to outcomes and Cabinet would be able to check the outcomes in the regular performance reports.
- Cabinet noted that the plan would be finalised in time to reflect upon when Cabinet would be making budget decisions.
- Cabinet noted the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which would be picked up under recommendation a) of the report.

### **RESOLVED**

#### **THAT**

- a) **authority be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Leader, to effect any amendments arising from the discussion at Cabinet, prior to consideration by Council; and**
- b) **subject to the above, the corporate plan as set out at Appendix B to the report be recommended to Council.**

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm

**CHAIRMAN**



<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>15 NOVEMBER 2012</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT PERIOD TO END SEPTEMBER 2012</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO AREA:</b>	<b>CORPORATE SERVICES</b>

**CLASSIFICATION:** Open

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide

### **Purpose**

To invite Cabinet Members to review performance for the period to end September 2012.

### **Key Decision**

This is not a Key Decision.

### **Recommendation**

**THAT: Cabinet considers performance for the period to end September 2012.**

### **Key Points Summary**

- The majority of projects in the corporate delivery plan are being delivered to schedule.
- For measures where data is available, there is a positive direction of travel.

### **Alternative Options**

1. The Joint Performance Improvement Framework provides that Cabinet will formally review performance against the Joint Corporate Plan quarterly. There are therefore no alternative options.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

2. To ensure that progress towards achievement of the agreed outcomes, service delivery targets and organisational health measures is understood. Further, to ensure that the reasons for important areas of actual or potential under-performance are understood and are being addressed to the Cabinet's satisfaction.

### **Introduction and Background**

3. The Corporate Performance Report is a regular report, focusing on progress towards achievement of the six priority themes in the Joint Corporate Plan 2011-14 (i.e. improvement measures), and on how well the business is being managed (i.e. operational service delivery

and organisational health measures). Progress is measured through the management and monitoring of selected performance indicators and projects.

4. Broadly based on a balanced scorecard approach, the report provides a summary of performance in the following areas:
  - a. Achievement of outcomes sought within each of the 6 priority themes (or in year proxy measures where outcome data is not available in year)
  - b. Achievement of Delivery Plan milestones
  - c. Service performance by directorate
  - d. Corporate customer service performance
  - e. Corporate HR performance
  - f. Corporate finance performance

## **Key Considerations**

5. A high level summary of performance in each of the 6 areas above is provided in a 'balanced scorecard' style at appendix A.

### **Achievement of outcomes**

6. An exception report is attached at Appendix B. An overview of performance against each of the six priorities are below.

#### ***Create a thriving economy***

The Hereford Enterprise Zone and the work of the Local Enterprise and Business Board remain on track, as are a number of transport related projects, including the Local Transport Plan. There has, however, been an increase in the number of vacant shops in Hereford City, though it is important to note that rates remain below the West Midlands average and are impacted by the national downturn effects on national chains which are closing / downsizing across the country.

#### ***Improve health care and social care***

The Public Health Transition Plan and the implementation of the Strategic Delivery Plan for Adult Services are each being delivered to schedule.

Latest information in respect of the number of older people still at home 91 days after discharge (2011-12) shows that 94% remain at home.

#### ***Raise standards for children and young people***

The Recruitment and Retention project in social care is on schedule.

The last quarter has seen an increase in the number of permanent social workers and a decrease in the number of looked after children (per 10,000 population).

#### ***Promote self reliant local communities***

More affordable homes are being delivered, and empty homes are being brought back in to use. However, there has been an increase in the use of temporary accommodation during the last quarter due to service demands from those at risk of homelessness. A review of allocations, policies and operational approaches is being undertaken to respond to the changing legislation and the demand environment. Processes are in place to minimise the

use of expensive bed and breakfast accommodation in the context of an overall national decrease as this is an expensive solution that should only be used in extreme cases.

There has been a reduction in the level of recorded crime compared to last year, and the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions remains at similar levels to last year.

### ***Create a resilient Herefordshire***

As reported in the directorate commentary for Corporate Services in paragraph 10 below, there has been a significant increase in the levels of satisfaction with the way the Council runs things.

There are also continued reductions in the levels of household waste produced, and in the amount being sent to landfill. This is complemented by an increase in levels of recycling.

### ***Commission the right services***

The Root and Branch Review programme is progressing to schedule, and is now moving in to Phase 2.

The Office Accommodation project is progressing, alongside the Better Ways of Working project, and office moves are due to take place in Plough Lane over the month.

The IM&T Programme, including Digital Channels, is running behind schedule, as is expanded on in Appendix C.

Satisfaction targets for local services other than the Council have been achieved; these include GP (family doctor); local hospital; local dentist; West Mercia Police; and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

## **Delivery Plan Milestones**

7. The key headline is that the majority of projects are being delivered to plan, although 5 are currently reported as being behind schedule (6 at the end of May); the majority of projects are rated Blue, as being delivered to schedule. More detailed information is provided at appendix C in relation to those projects that are green or red rated (ahead of or behind schedule).

## **Service Performance**

### **8. Places and Communities**

#### *What has gone well?*

There has been significant progress over the last period on a number of key projects, these include:

- progression of key enquiries on the enterprise zone;
- the development of a possible Marches Deal to mirror city deals agreed elsewhere in the country alongside work to bring forward a business plan for the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership;
- the continuing success of the new Hereford Livestock market with the prospect of further expansion led and funded by the tenants;
- reallocation of funding to support cycle ways in the Destination Hereford scheme;
- Cabinet approval for next steps on the broadband programme;
- securing planning for energy from waste plant Hartlebury;
- a significant review of the housing allocations policy;

- the commencement of demolition works on the old live stock market, as well as the progression of funding arrangements between Stanhope and British land PLC; and
- consultation on the Local Transport Plan (LTP) is underway and work is continuing to deliver the Core Strategy, the key element of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

*What has not gone so well?*

Areas that continue to cause concern relate to the increasing pressures on homelessness, and repeat domestic abuse incidents. Further details on the homelessness concern are contained in paragraph 6 above, under the priority of 'promote self-reliant local communities'.

Repeat incidents of domestic violence remain behind target; however the direction of travel is improving. In terms of overall prevalence of domestic abuse in the county, Police recorded Domestic Abuse figures for Herefordshire show a slight reduction, though it is important to note that this still represents 19.4% of total recorded crimes.

*What has been done to rectify these problems?*

A domestic abuse needs assessment has been discussed and has been considered by HPEG at a meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2012. Further detailed analysis is to be undertaken across all agencies in the coming months to agree how this issue can be approached and reduce the incidence of repeat domestic violence. (It is important to note that improved confidence in the reporting system may result in higher levels of reporting).

**9. People's Services**

*What has gone well?*

- Roll out of the Integrated Support Service. This is now up & running and providing intensive support to families. In September 10 young people started on the youth contract which meets our target.
- Roll out of the Looked After Children's Strategy to the wider children's services, and launch of campaign to recruit more foster carers. This has resulted in 16 new foster care households being approved since April 2012.
- The trend for the take-up of personal budgets continues and is now at 50%.
- Delayed discharges from hospital are very low and the target for increasing the number of older people being supported at home is better than target.
- Significant activity to address the adults services financial pressures – reablement services have expanded and good progress has been made on changing commissioning arrangements and contracts for services which support people to live independently.
- Adoption – on the adoption scorecard, which has been launched by the Government in order to speed up adoption timescales, Herefordshire is ahead of national on the following descriptors –
  - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family – England average 625 days, Herefordshire 589 days.
  - Average time between local authority receiving the court order to place and deciding on a match – England average 171 days, Herefordshire 132 days.
- The catch up plan for implementing NHS Health checks has been effective and results to date are encouraging. By the end of quarter two 12.6% of the year's target of 34% for eligible population invited for NHS Health checks had been achieved and 5.2% of the annual target of 8.6% have received an NHS Health check.

- Quarter 1 (2012-13) data on Child immunisation shows significant improvement across all childhood vaccines uptake under the age of 5 years. Uptake at 1<sup>st</sup> birthday has achieved the national target of 95% and MMR uptake at 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday is 91.2%, which is the highest in the last few years. This achievement has been the result of implementation of robust fail-safe protocol for childhood immunisation call-recall system, and reinforcing the role health visitors in childhood immunisation, and strengthening partnership working among the key stakeholders.
- Education Results.
  - The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile saw an improvement in the percentage of children achieving a good level of development from 56% last year to 61% this year.
  - Key Stage One, results have declined slightly from last year's good performance, but are still an improvement on 2010.
  - At Key Stage Two, the percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and Maths has increased from 72% last year to 76% this year.
  - At Key Stage Four, 56.1% of students achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\* - C including English and Maths. This is a slight decline on last year, but very slightly above 2010.
  - At Key Stage Five, 93.2% of students achieved 2 or more A-Levels, maintaining Herefordshire's steady performance in A-Levels over the past 3 years.

*What has not gone so well?*

- a) Ofsted Inspection of early help & child protection— although Ofsted identified areas of good practice, there are significant weaknesses in these services and the overall rating inadequate.
- b) Education Performance – although in some key stages there have been improvements on last year, in all key stages Herefordshire now lags slightly behind national averages. Provisional GCSE results show that 56.1% of students gained 5 A\* - C including English and Maths. This compares to 58.6% nationally.
- c) The NHS IC Website figures for 2011/12 show 83% of smoking quitters achieved against the target and the latest 2012/13 information shows 139 quitters during Quarter 1 against a target of 215 or 65%.
- d) The numbers of referrals for Adult Safeguarding continue to rise; this is leading to significant pressures on the teams and a corresponding decrease in timeliness.
- e) Demand for adult services continues and there has been slower progress than planned with brokerage services; some planned changes involving conversion of NHS properties; achievement of savings by the main providers; and impact of reviews.

*What has been done to rectify these problems?*

- a) The findings have been accepted. An improvement plan is being overseen by the Improvement Board to tackle issues raised by Ofsted. An independent chair will be appointed for this Board and the improvements will be overseen by the Department of Education and the Minister.
- b) Education Performance is being tackled both by individual schools, colleges and early years providers and by actions across institutions. One example is the Understanding Barriers to Achievement Project. This project looks at all children across the county who have failed to progress between key stages. Authority staff are currently working with schools to identify the issues that these children face and put plans in place to help tackle these issues. Through the Guiding Principles, the expectations have been raised.

- c) The main providers are being trained to use the new database to increase efficiency. This has affected throughput of clients. The current Stoptober Campaign and a planned back to back 'Cash for Christmas' Campaign is expected to put the service on track to achieve this year's target. It is expected that the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) programme will also generate quitters. Plans for contracting 2013/14 stop smoking services are being progressed alongside the wider work of transition contracting decisions.

The Council motion on the health and wellbeing of staff was passed unanimously, which will also play a part of this target.

- d) An audit has been undertaken and an improvement plan is being developed.
- e) Compensatory savings schemes have been identified; the NHS properties issues have been escalated and discussions are actively being progressed with the main provider to address the barriers to securing savings.

## 10. **Corporate Services**

An overview of performance for Customers, Employees and Finance appears in Sections D, E and F. For other areas of Corporate Services:

### *What has gone well?*

- The 'Quality of Life' survey overview report has been completed and published online. The results were fed directly into the qualitative Your Community Your Say events happening in localities. Of particular note is the increase in the overall level of satisfaction with the Council, up from 33% in 2008 to 51% now.
- Following a review of the Council's overall integrated accommodation strategy, work on the Civic Hub has commenced and remains ahead of schedule.
- Auditors have once again given an unqualified opinion on our accounts.
- The Annual Governance Statement and Annual Assurance Statement are both complete, ahead of last year's performance.
- A number of HR policies have been refreshed, including: Managing Attendance, to now include Disability Leave; Managing Change; Alternative Work Register; and Bribery and Gifts.
- Good progress is being made in formulating a draft People Strategy, the next step being to engage the Senior Management Team.

### *What has not gone so well?*

- a) Issues have been identified within a number of IT projects, most significantly the delay in the digital channels project.
- b) Condition surveys for 16 schools were delivered late and not to the required quality by an external provider, leading to poor customer satisfaction and reputational issues.
- c) A number of procurement projects are falling behind schedule as we have insufficient resources within Commercial Services to support the current list of projects.

### *What has been done to rectify these problems?*

- a) Additional resources are being identified and reallocated to remedy the problems with delivery of the digital channels project.
- b) The condition surveys are being redone at no cost.



- c) A number of options are in hand to resource current procurement projects, including a reprioritisation of the work plan and interim support from the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

### **Customer Services**

- 11. More detailed information is provided at Appendix D in relation to those performance measures that are included within the Customer Service Report, for which data is currently available.

Performance overall is slightly down on the same period last year. In respect of the measure around abandonment rates, there have been a significantly higher volume of calls; problems with staffing levels, including an increase in sickness (which is being managed through return to work interviews); and a determination to not bring in temporary additional capacity in order to keep down costs. To solve the problem newly recruited branch supervisors will each have a core objective to proactively support the management of customer contact. This will enable swift management decisions to be made to allocate resources across customer services to manage priorities. (A breakdown of the number of calls being received and abandoned is included in Appendix D).

### **Corporate Workforce Performance**

- 12. More detailed information is provided at appendix E in relation to those performance measures that are included within the Workforce Report.

We continue to improve the quality and range of our workforce data to enable performance discussions across the organisation and Directorates. Due to the nature of what the workforce data tells us, directions of travel are not necessarily good or bad so have only been included in respect of the sickness measures. It is important to consider workforce data in the round rather than just looking at the numbers, especially given our aim to retain good people during periods of austerity and financial challenges. We will be addressing this through the new people strategy, for example how we create a flexible environment for people to do their best, or use our reward strategy to enable us to retain the right people with the right skills to deliver great outcomes. The data also enables us to improve our understanding of the workforce structure which means we are better able to plan our workforce requirements.

#### *Headcount/Full Time Equivalent (FTE)*

Whilst there was a reduction of 50 heads (32 FTE) permanent employees over this period, there has been an uplift in agency workers. The net resourcing position when taking this into account is a reduction of 29 heads (no data for Agency FTE). Numbers of people on Fixed Term Contracts (FTC) and Term-time Contracts held over the summer and then dropped off in September. This may be due to the changes/movements that take place at the beginning of the academic year – an assumption that will need to be validated if required.

#### *Costs*

The cost of our people resources, be it permanent, temporary or consultancy, accumulate to a significant monthly/annual expenditure. It is critical that we optimise efficiencies when deploying our resources so that we receive the best “return for our investment” i.e. good/high performance aligned to clear objectives, linked to strategic outcomes. The reshaping of the corporate plan will enable us to prioritise and align our employees to ensure that we have the right people in the right place to deliver our goals. A review of our reward strategy will help to shape how we achieve best value from our pay budget.

#### *Turnover*

The turnover average over the last 6 months is 11.2% as May, June, July and August had a lower rate – 7%, 11%, 9%, 9% respectively. Most of the leavers in September were resignations from People's Services Directorate (CYP Provider Services). As noted above, there was also a noticeable drop in numbers of term-time and fixed term contracts.

#### *Sickness Absence*

The rate has fluctuated over the first five months of the year, although has remained at a lower rate than last year, with latest absence for the period to the end of August being at 2.98%. The main reasons for absence are: Stress & Anxiety (27% of absence days), Musculo-Skeletal (15%), Surgery (14%). Work is starting on an employee health & wellbeing plan to provide additional support and preventative services to employees. We will also work to record absence by short-term and long-term to enable better management of cases and more relevant reporting.

Employees returning to work occasionally do so in a different area / job as part of their rehabilitation back to their substantive post.

Occupational Health offer support to individuals signed-off for reasons of stress, and managers are trained to how to spot stress before an absence happens as part of the Managing Attendance training that they are given.

#### *Employee Profile*

Customer Services, CYP Provider Services & Place based commissioning services have the highest % of part-time employees - 58%; 43%; 47% respectively.

Interesting to note that 66% of our workforce is over 40. This potentially reflects a wealth of skills and experience that we have employed within the Council. An opportunity to support our aspiration to grow our economy, retain skills and balance our age profile in Herefordshire could be to explore creative ways to attract the under 30 years talent to Herefordshire that would bring a different dynamic to our organisation and others in Herefordshire.

We have 35 employees who are identified as disabled in Agresso. Agresso self-service has launched across the council which saw an uplift in data completion. We have updated the Attendance Management Policy to include Disability Leave, which may encourage those who have not yet provided this information to us, to do so. This will need to be taken into account over the next few months.

#### *Less than 1 year service*

The Council currently has 89 employees with less than 1 year's service. The majority (53% - 47 employees) of these are in the People's Directorate.

### **Corporate Finance Performance**

13. A budget report to the end of September was presented to Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> October. An overview of performance is provided at appendix F.

For reference, the overall revenue budget position for 2012/13 shows a £2.435m projected overspend. The 2012/13 budget includes savings targets of £10.8m, approved in the council's Financial Resource Model as part of the budget setting process. A further target of £5.6m was allocated to adult social care as part of the recovery plan to bring the budget into balance, resulting in a savings plan for adult social care of £7.9m. In addition, there was slippage on the procurement savings programme from 2011/12 of £1.5m plus a top-slice to cover consultancy costs. The £1.5m procurement target includes £483k of social care projects which are being monitored as part of the £7.9m recovery plan.

### **Community Impact**

14. Delivering the Joint Corporate Plan is central to achieving the positive impact the Council

wishes to make across Herefordshire and all its communities.

## **Equality and Human Rights**

15. The corporate delivery plan recognises our Public Sector Equality Duty, and includes a specific project that contributes towards its achievement. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as an integral part of decision making in respect of all new projects/policy changes.

## **Financial Implications**

16. None.

## **Legal Implications**

17. None.

## **Risk Management**

18. By highlighting progress against the Joint Corporate Plan, including the major risks to achievement and how they are being mitigated, this report is an essential component of the Council's management of risks.

The Leadership Team is undertaking a review of corporate risks and part of the refresh of the Corporate Plan. The current strategic risks that are red rated by the Leadership Team are as follows:

- Delivery of a balanced budget as part of the Council's medium term financial plan; mitigation: recovery plans are being developed to address the current projected overspend
- Adoption of a local development framework to ensure effective strategic planning and management of development in the County; mitigation: revised timeline and project plan have been agreed
- Maintaining and effective safeguarding function for both young people and adults; mitigation: improvement plan produced to address the recent Ofsted report recommendations; baseline audit and improvement plan produced to address weaknesses in Adults
- Establishing a sustainable budget for older people's services; mitigation: implementation of the Root and Branch Review proposals for transformational change and improved outcomes

## **Consultees**

19. None.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A Summary Balanced Scorecard  
Appendix B Delivery Plan Measure Exception report  
Appendix C Delivery Plan Project Exception Report  
Appendix D Customer Service Report

Appendix E Workforce Report

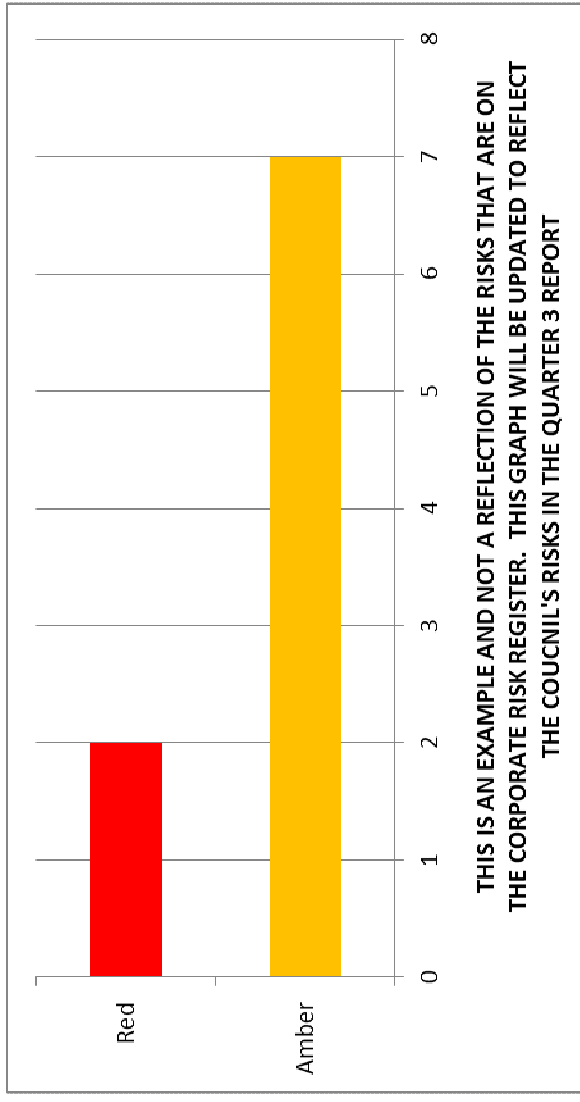
Appendix F Finance Report

## **Background Papers**

- None.

Summary Balanced Scorecard

KEY		
Measures	Symbols	Projects
More than 10% ahead of target	★	Ahead of Plan
Achieved or exceeded target by less than 10%	●	On schedule
Up to 5% behind target	●	N/A
More than 5% behind target	▲	Behind Plan
Getting better	➡	N/A
No change in performance	➡	N/A
Getting worse	➡	N/A
Data or target missing	❓	Project not updated
N/A	⏸	Not due to have started



Corporate Plan Priorities	In Year Performance Measures <sup>1</sup>					
	Direction of Travel compared to last year	Direction of Travel since last reported	Direction of Travel compared to last year	Direction of Travel since last reported	Direction of Travel compared to last year	Direction of Travel since last reported
Create a thriving economy	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡
Improve health care & social care	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡
Raise standards for children & young people	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡
Promote self reliant local communities	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡
Create a resilient Herefordshire	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡
Commission the right services	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡	➡
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

Projects <sup>2</sup>	
3	31
0	15
0	14
0	34
0	27
2	21
<b>5</b>	<b>142</b>

	Service		
	DCE & Corporate Services	People's Services	Places & Communities
0	0	2	
1	0	0	
0	2	0	
0	0	0	
0	8	3	
-	-	1	
-	-	-	
-	-	-	
-	1	2	
-	2	-	
-	2	3	

Customers <sup>3</sup>	
2	0
2	3
0	0
1	1
4	1
1	5
1	1

Employees <sup>4</sup>	
-	2
-	0
-	0
-	2
-	0
2	0
0	0

Finance <sup>5</sup>	
0	3
3	0
0	0
-	-
-	-
-	-
4	0
0	2

<sup>1</sup> Report at appendix B  
<sup>2</sup> Report at appendix C  
<sup>3</sup> Report at appendix D  
<sup>4</sup> Report at appendix E  
<sup>5</sup> Report at appendix F







### Delivery Plan Measure Exceptions

Key Performance Indicators – Exceptions (Green – 10% or more ahead of target)							
Theme & Measure	Frequency of reporting	Performance (Year to Date)	DoT since last year	Date of Judgement	Actual (Year to Date)	Target (Year To Date)	
<b>Improve health care and social care</b>							
LI.PSC.ACO.001 The average number of delayed transfers of care from hospital which are attributable to adult social care per 100,000 population	Monthly	★		30/09	0.83	3.49	
LI.PSC.ACO.004 Percentage of people using social care who receive self directed support	Quarterly	★		30/09	58	45	
LI.RADAR.015g Permanent admissions to residential and nursing care homes of older people per 100,000 population	Monthly	★		30/09	15	17.75	
<b>Promote self-reliant local communities</b>							
LI.TRAN.001a Proxy – No. of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions	Monthly	★	↑	30/09	57	76	
<b>Create a resilient Herefordshire</b>							
BV003 Satisfaction – council overall (%)	Every 3 years	★	↗	30/09	51	34	
NI193 Percentage of municipal waste landfilled	Monthly	★	↘	30/09	53.8	60	

Key Performance Indicators – Exceptions (Red and Amber - behind target)							
Theme & Measure		Frequency of reporting	Performance (Year to Date)	DoT since last year	Date of Judgement	Actual (Year to Date)	Target (Year To Date)
<b>Improve health care and social care</b>							
NI123n Number of self-reported 4-week smoking quitters	Bigger is Better	Monthly (3 month lag)	▲	↔	30/06	139	215
<i>Remedial Action: The main providers are being trained to use the new database to increase efficiency. This has affected throughput of clients. The current Stoptober Campaign and a planned back to back 'Cash for Christmas' Campaign is expected to put the service on track to achieve this year's target. It is expected that the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) programme will also generate quitters. Plans for contracting 2013/14 stop smoking services are being progressed alongside the wider work of transition contracting decisions.</i>							
<b>Raise standards for children and young people</b>							
NI075 Achievement of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths (%)	Bigger is Better	Annual – 30/09	▲		30/09	56.1	62
<i>Remedial Action:</i>							
LI.CYP.LOS.004 Percentage of Young People who receive a service who are not re-referred within 6 months	Bigger is Better	Quarterly	▲		30/09	65	75
<i>Remedial Action: With just a limited amount of data it is too early to establish reasons for this decline. Should the decline continue next quarter then each case will be analysed to establish the reasons behind this.</i>							
NI053i Percentage of infants being breastfed at 6-8 weeks (breastfeeding prevalence)	Bigger is Better	Quarterly	▲		30/09	46.93	60
<i>Remedial Action:</i>							
LI.CYP.FWK.003 Spend on agency staff	Smaller is Better	Quarterly	▲		30/09	£377,982	£360,000
<i>Remedial Action: Agency staff usage has increased for a combination of reasons. Workloads have increased due to an increase in demand on</i>							



Key Performance Indicators – Exceptions (Red and Amber - behind target)						
Theme & Measure	Frequency of reporting	Performance (Year to Date)	DoT since last year	Date of Judgement	Actual (Year to Date)	Target (Year To Date)
<p>children's social care services. Additional temporary capacity has been needed, following the outcome of the Ofsted inspection report and there have also been a number of vacancies, sickness and maternity absence which have resulted in the need for cover through agency staff.</p> <p><b>Promote self reliant local communities</b></p>						
LI.HNDE.002 Number of empty properties brought back into use in Herefordshire	Quarterly			30/09	65	67.5
<p><i>Remedial Action: Achieved bringing back 39 long-term properties against a target of 40.</i></p>						
LI.HOUS.001 Number of households living in temporary accommodation	Monthly			30/09	93	82
<p><i>Remedial Action: There is an increase in the number of single people presenting and requiring assistance due to the changes in benefits which is making it more difficult for them to secure accommodation. The team are working to minimise the use of temporary accommodation.</i></p>						



### Delivery Plan Project Exceptions

Projects – Exceptions (Green – ahead of schedule)		
Project	Latest Rating	Responsible Officer
<b>Create a thriving economy</b>		
CYP.PROJ.16 Implementation of new Integrated Support Service arrangements	★	McMillan, Debbie
<b>Raise standards for children and young people</b>		
CYP.PROJ.08 Development of Phase 2 of Looked After Children (LAC) Delivery Plan	★	Clay, Stephanie
CYP.PROJ.13 Community Budgets: Families that need extra help	★	McMillan, Debbie
<b>Promote self reliant local communities</b>		
CULT.PROJ.22 Integrated service design for Masters House	★	Ligema, Mick
NEPL.PROJ.04 Neighbourhood Planning web-pages	★	Willmont, Mike
PAC.PROJ.04 Conduct a review of cultural services commissioned or delivered by the local authority	★	Silver, Natalia
SCOM.PROJ.02 Review Herefordshire Council support for parish and town councils	★	Bush, Anthony

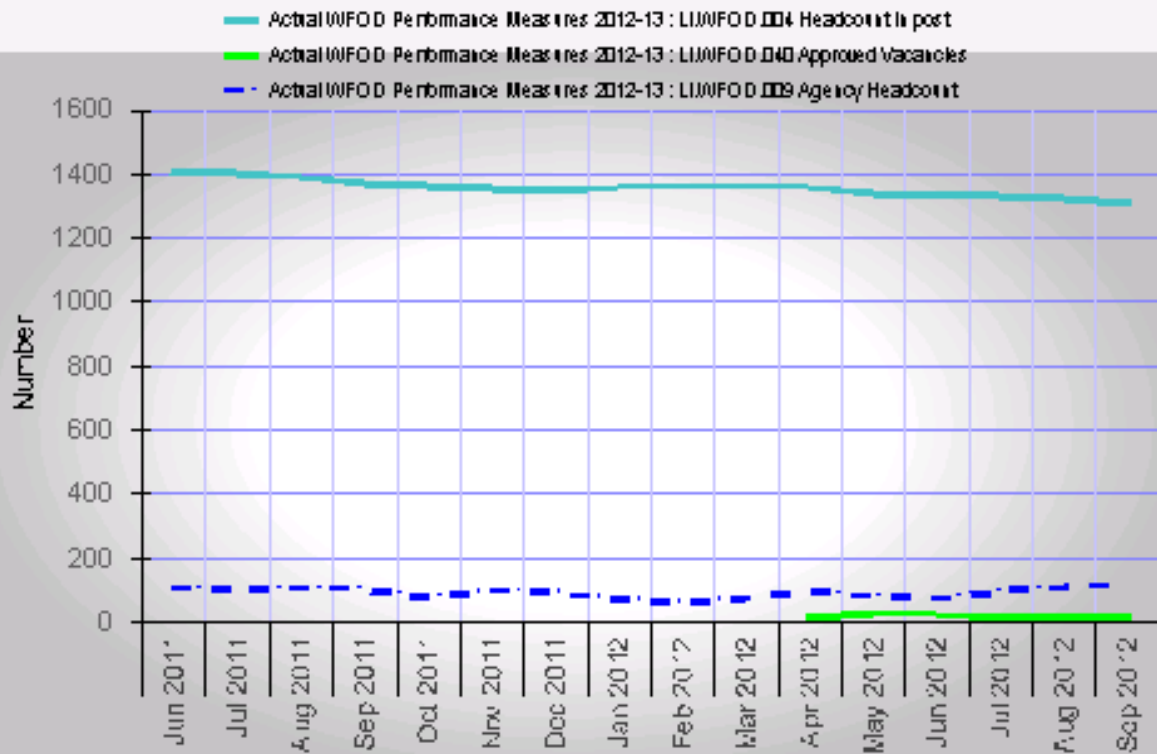
Projects – Exceptions (Red – behind schedule)			
Project	Latest Rating	Responsible Officer	Due Date
<b>Create a thriving economy</b>			
MJPR.PROJ.05 Delivery of the Link Road	▲	Lane, Mairead	01/07/2016
<i>Remedial Action: Detailed design progressing on programme. CPO / SRO - Cabinet report in June 2012 approved continued negotiations with businesses and gave approval in principle for CPO powers. More detailed report outlining extent of land and statement of case for CPO to be taken to Cabinet in Autumn 2012. Detailed programme for development is needed prior to this as highways case for scheme cannot be established. Delay in making orders will impact on programme for delivery of link road.</i>			
REG.PROJ.16 Realisation of Higher Education (HE) Gateway Project	▲	Jones, Penny	01/03/2013
<i>Remedial Action: During the period a report was taken to Cabinet Members who asked for further work to be done with the Art College and Royal National College for the Blind in respect of the proposition for Hereford College of Arts to relocate to Venns Lane.</i>			
SDCT.PROJ.28 Winter Service Strategy	▲	Hall, Clive	30/07/2012

<b>Projects – Exceptions (Red – behind schedule)</b>		
<i>Remedial Action: Slight slippage on this review will have no impact on service delivery.</i>		
<b>Commission the right services</b>		
PPP.PROJ.09 IM&T Programme	▲	Lewis, Jenny 31/03/2013
<p><i>Remedial Action: Significant issues with the IM&amp;T Programme have been identified. The programme has been reviewed and dependencies identified. The core areas of focus to underpin remaining portfolio delivery are Information Management, Interface Strategy and Sharepoint. Planning is currently underway to ensure these dependencies are prioritised.</i></p> <p><i>Active directory migrations continue at Wye Valley Trust. A weekend migration took place 29th/30th September. Mid week migrations now scheduled to continue until end of November.</i></p> <p><i>Issues with Digital Channels, Web and Intranet piece are being managed.</i></p> <p><i>GIS upgrade has not gone smoothly, which has an impact on Web and CRM.</i></p> <p><i>Telephony rollout is to plan; however, some areas are experiencing significant issues with new phone systems. There is a risk that up to 8 - 10% of calls are lost on the new systems. Further investigation required to clarify.</i></p>		
CSC.PROJ.07 Digital Channels Project	▲	Beavan-Pearson, Richard 31/07/2012
<i>Remedial Action: This project is part of the IM&amp;T Programme above, for which commentary is provided.</i>		

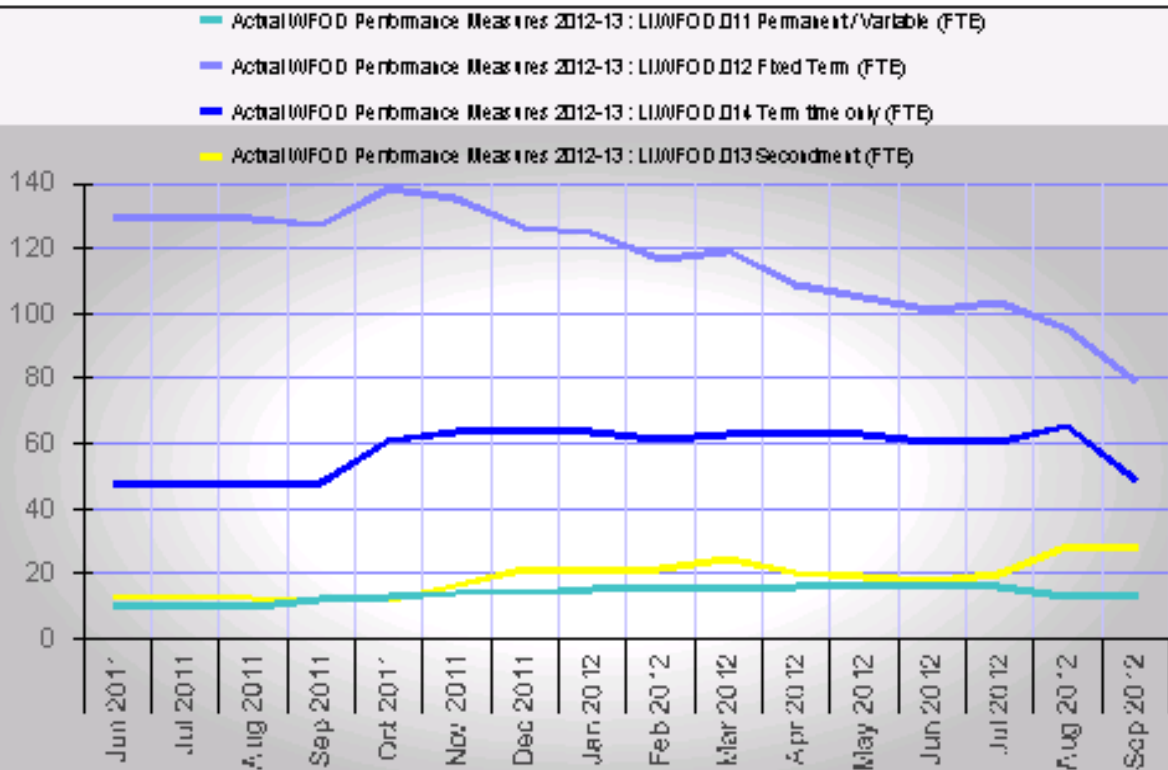
Customer Services – Key Performance Indicators							
	Frequency of reporting	Performance (Year to Date)	Do T since last year	Date of Judgement	Actual (Year to Date)	Target (Year To Date)	
LI.COP.002 Website take up service % failure rate	Monthly (3 month lag)			Jun-12	0	19	
LI.CUS.011a Call Centre Abandonment %	Monthly			Sep-12	11.4	4	
<p><b>Remedial Action:</b> Problems with staffing levels and a determination to not bring in temporary additional capacity in order to keep down costs have been the primary cause of lower performance.</p> <p>During the first six months a total of 84,203 calls were received and 9,564 calls were abandoned (2011-12: 64,308 received; 4,565 calls abandoned). This demonstrates that although the abandonment rate has fallen compared to target, the productivity of the team has improved. The newly recruited branch supervisors each have a core objective to proactively support the management of the business channels. This will enable real time management decisions to be made to allocate resources across customer services to manage the priority channels in real time. Branch supervisors will also be responsible for approximately 60% of service provision providing additional resources to manage the increased call volumes.</p>							
LI.CUS.012 Avoidable Contact (%)	Monthly			Sep-12	17	17	
LI.PCIU.001 % satisfaction with complaint handling	Monthly			Sep-12	100	95	
LI.PCIU.002 % of complaints received that are referred to the ombudsman (LA)	Monthly			Sep-12	0	3	
LI.PCIU.004 % of complaints that are referred to the ombudsman that are upheld (LA)	Monthly			Sep-12	0	3	
LI.CUS.009 % of issues resolved at first contact (ytd)	Monthly			Sep-12	54	68	
<p><b>Remedial Action:</b> Customer Services reporting tools are near completion. A significant area of reporting will measure rejected service tickets by</p>							

<b>Customer Services – Key Performance Indicators</b>						
	Frequency of reporting	Performance (Year to Date)	Do T since last year	Date of Judgement	Actual (Year to Date)	Target (Year To Date)
agent. This will provide a framework for coaching and training staff in area where errors are made, which should improve first time service resolution.						

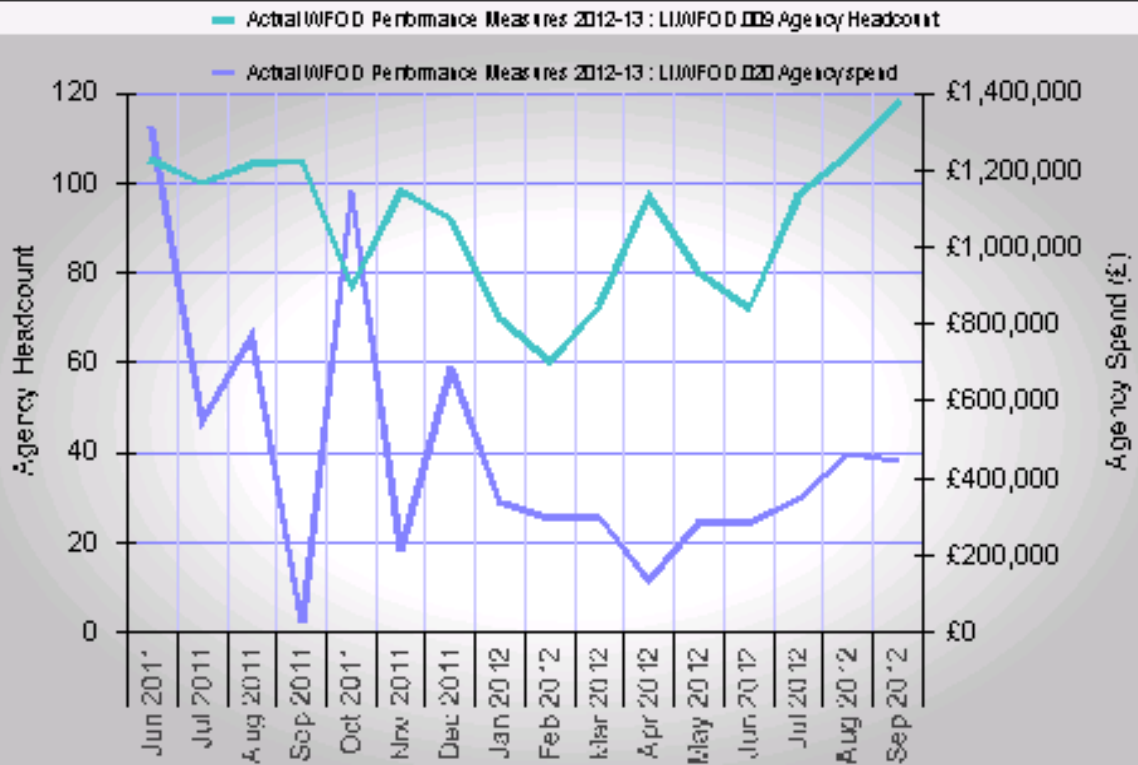
### LIWFOD.002 Establishment (FTE)



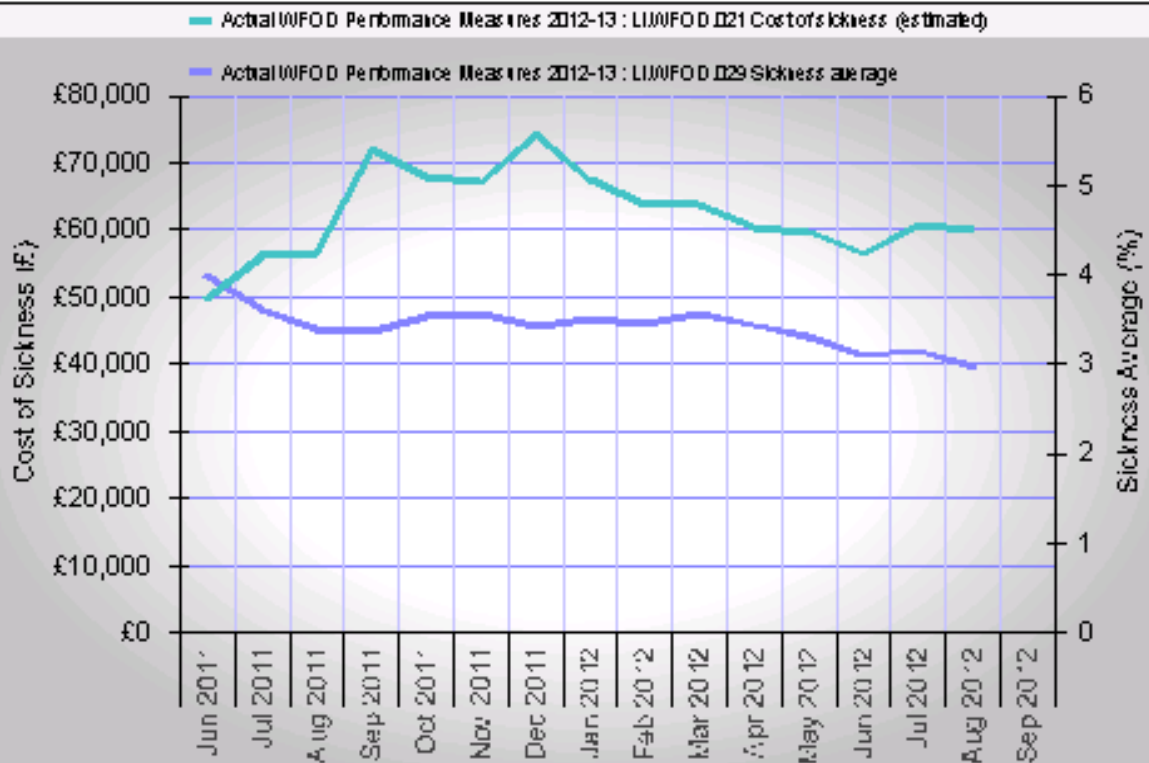
### Types of Contracts (other than permanent)



### Agency Headcount v Agency Spend

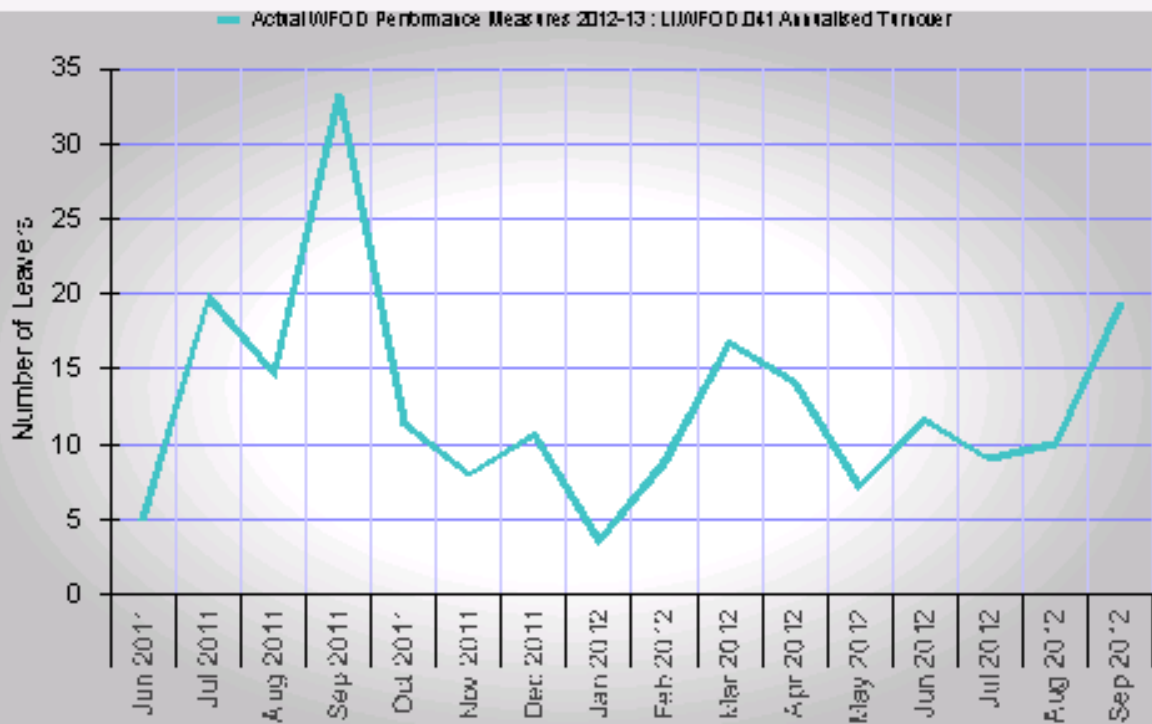


### Cost of Sickness v Sickness Average

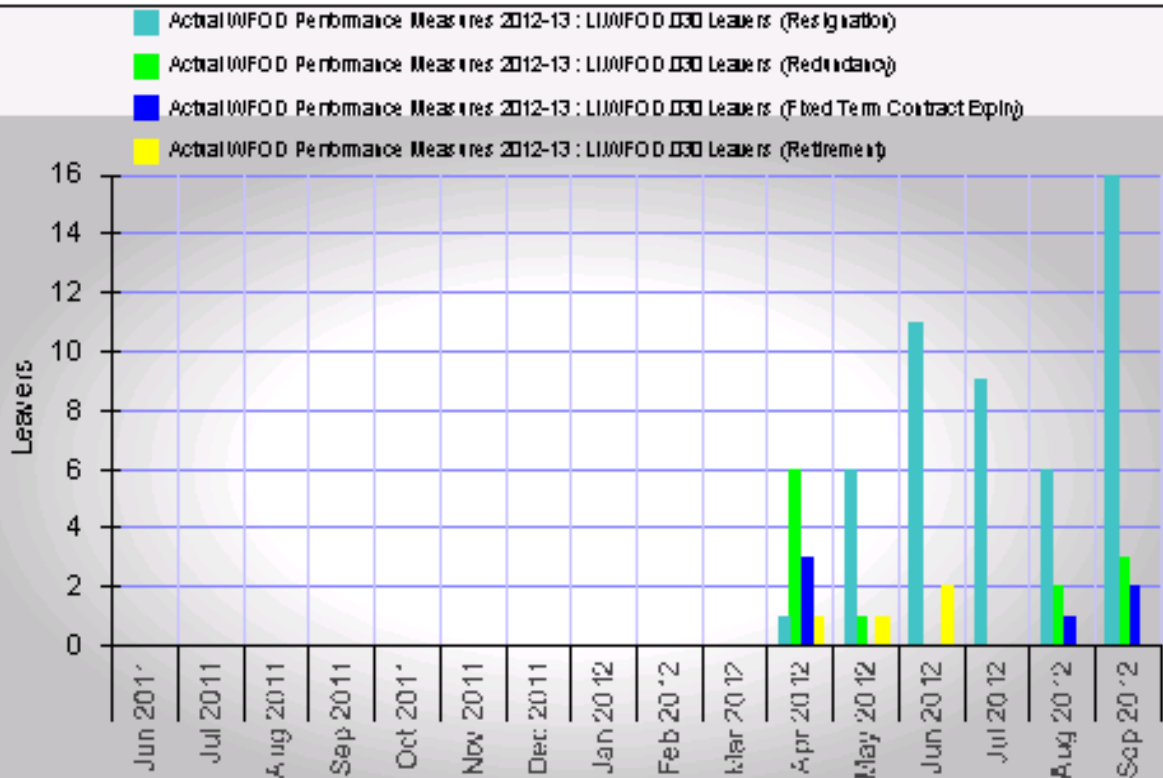




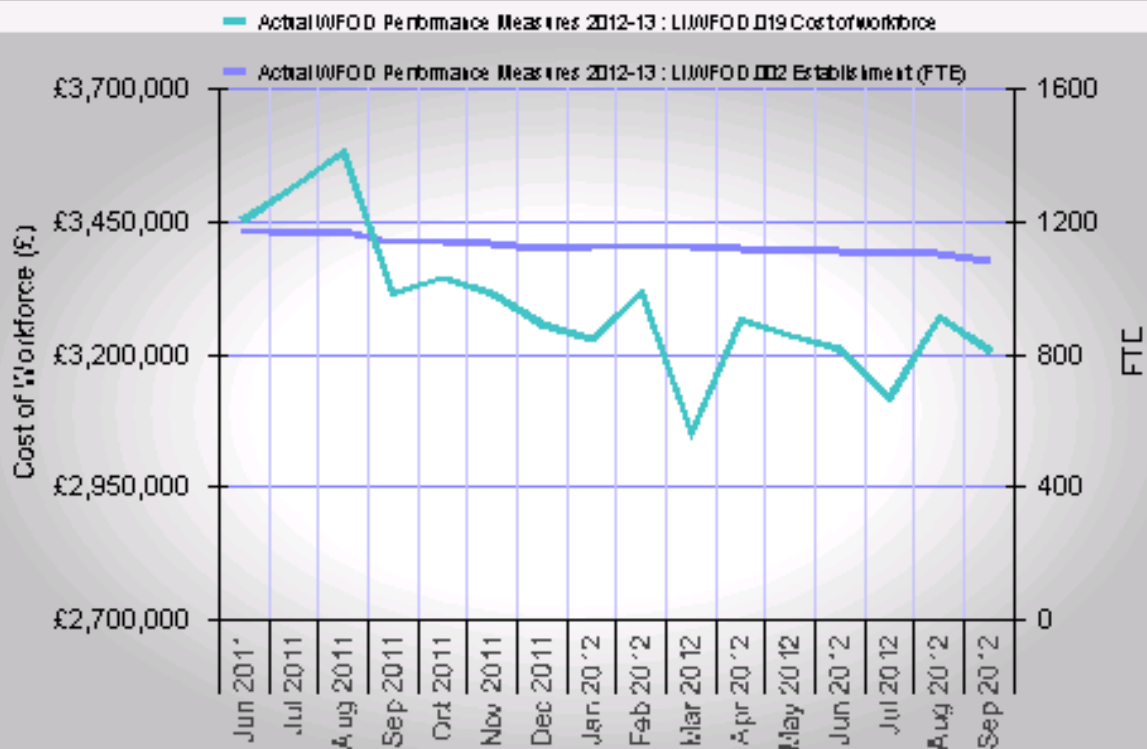
### Annualised Turnover



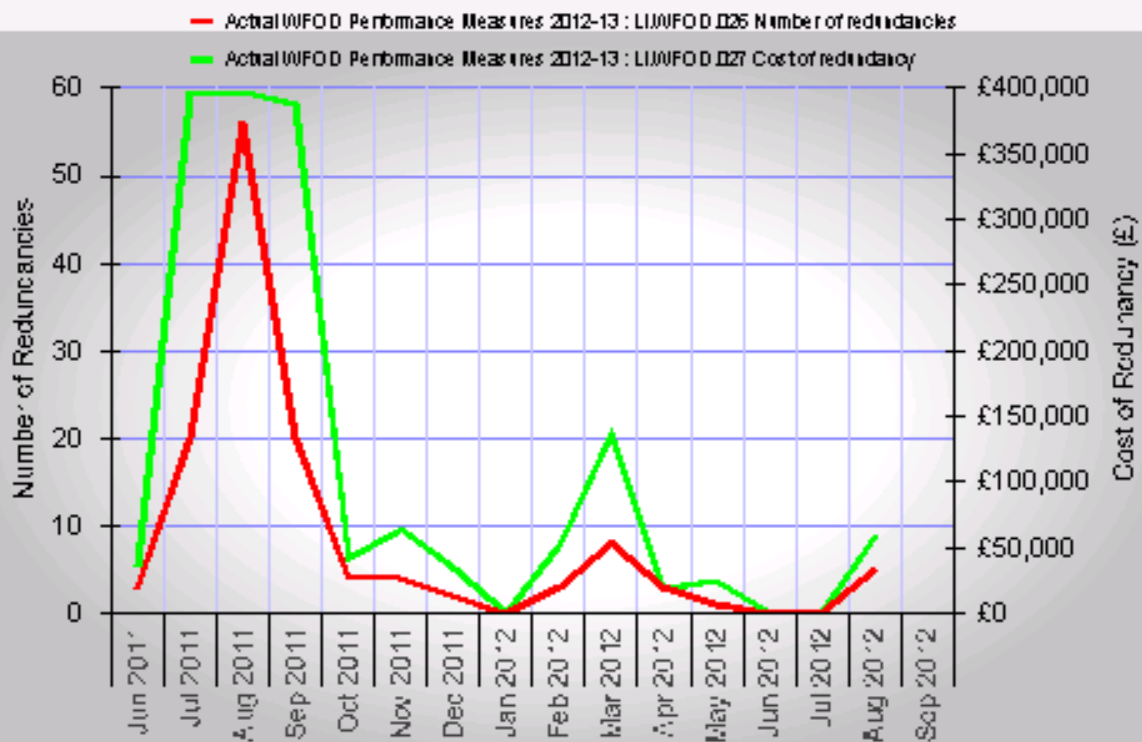
### Types of Leavers



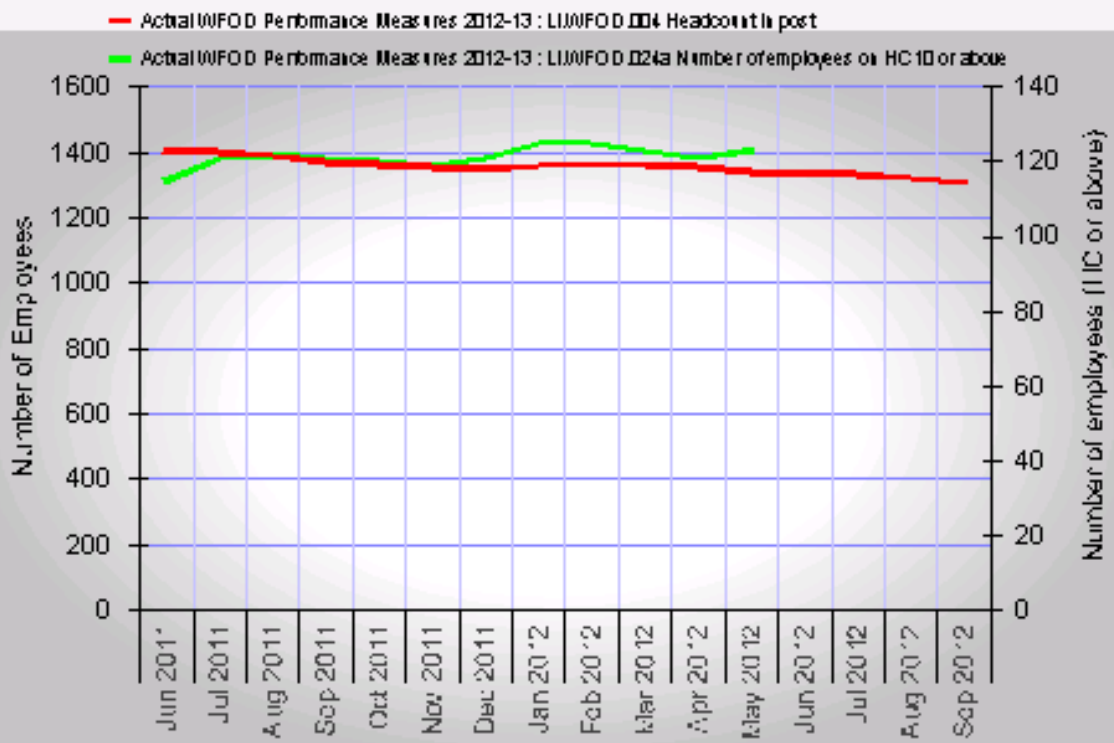
### Cost of Workforce v Establishment



### Number of Redundancies v Cost of Redundancy



### Headcount v Employees on HC10 or above









**Finance Report**

Finance Key Performance Indicators				
Measure	DoT since last period (end of May)	Performance (period)	Budget	Projected (over) or under spend Date
<b>Forecast outturn against budget:</b>			<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Services			22,116	741
People's Services			72,448	(3,805)
Places and Communities			36,514	(178)
Borrowing			16,072	310
Investments			(352)	(75)
Other central			(3,439)	572
Overall			143,359	(2,435)





<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>15 NOVEMBER 2012</b>
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO AREA:</b>	<b>CORPORATE SERVICES</b>

**CLASSIFICATION:** Open

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide

### **Purpose**

To seek agreement for a Council Tax Support Scheme in the light of the requirements set by the Government and the outcome of local consultation and determine the level of Council Tax Discount for vacant properties and second homes.

### **Key Decision**

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure, or making savings which are significant having regard for the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates;

### **AND**

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the County.

It was included in the forward plan.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **THAT**

- (a) **The Council Tax Transitional Grant be accepted;**
- (b) **Subject to the above, Council be recommended to adopt a new Council Tax Support Scheme for 2013/14 based on the adoption of two of the principles that were consulted upon as indicated in paragraph 31 of the report, so that we meet the requirements of the grant; and**
- (c) **The changes to council tax discounts outlined in the report be implemented from 1 April 2013.**

### **Key Points Summary**

- The Council must adopt a new Council Tax Support Scheme to come into effect on 1 April

2013. The scheme must be formally adopted by 31 January 2013 or a default scheme will be imposed which would have a significant financial impact on the council.

- Funding for the new scheme will be 10% less than the funding currently received for council tax benefit and there will be no additional government funding to cover any in year increases in caseload.
- The Government has prescribed a number of elements that must be included in support schemes and these include full protection for pensioners whose council tax support must remain at the same level as their current council tax benefit. They have also indicated that schemes should protect vulnerable claimants and provide incentives for work.
- Having carried out consultation on the proposed support scheme members must determine which principles from the consultation should be included in the new scheme to help meet the shortfall in funding. All residents and local organisations were invited to respond to the consultation and a summary of their responses is included in this report.
- The council will have discretion to set the level of council tax discount for some categories of empty property from 1 April 2013
- The primary legislation is the Local Government Finance Act 2012 which was approved on 31 October 2012 but the precise regulations for the new Council Tax Support Scheme and the changes to Council Tax Discounts have not to date been approved by Secretary of State.
- A recent government announcement is offering additional funding for the first year of the new Council Tax Support Scheme provided any council taxpayer who currently receives 100% council tax benefit does not have to pay more than 8.5% under the new support scheme.
- If the criteria for the transitional grant is met this will reduce the amount working age claimants have to pay in order to help meet the gap in funding resulting from the cut in subsidy.
- As this transitional grant will only be available for one year the support scheme would need to be reviewed for the 2014/15 financial year.

## **Alternative Options**

1. Up to now the design of benefit schemes in terms of rules has been a central government responsibility. Even so other options could be taken up including making up the shortfall in central government funding from elsewhere in the budget.
2. The recent announcement of transitional central government support for one year has meant that one off additional transitional financial support is now available to reduce the impact of the changes in 2013/14.
3. An alternative would be to refuse the grant on offer and see a wider impact on residents.

## **Reasons for Recommendation**

4. The Cabinet is required to recommend to Council a new Local Council Tax Support Scheme for implementation on 1 April 2013. The Government has recently made available transitional funding for new schemes that ensure people currently receiving 100% of council tax support pay no more than 8.5% of their council tax liability from 1 April 2013.

## Introduction and Background

5. The Government has decided that the current national Council Tax Benefit Scheme will be abolished at the end of March 2013. The current national scheme is fully funded by the government and must be replaced by a local scheme. This will be known as the “Council Tax Support Scheme” and must be in place from 1 April 2013.
6. The Government has also said that it will no longer fully fund the replacement scheme and the cut in funding is 10%, meaning a reduction of £1.4m for Herefordshire.

## Key Considerations

### Localising Support For Council Tax

7. The Council had to work within broad requirements set by the Government that indicated any local scheme should:
  - Not change the level of support for pensioners
  - Consider the needs of vulnerable people
  - Encourage people to work rather than discourage them to do so.
8. As a result of the broad framework set by the Government, the Council established its own overarching approach to guide its planning for the local scheme.
  - All council tax payers should pay something, unless they are covered by policy exemptions for example pensioners;
  - Support would have an upper limit of 90% of a council tax bill;
  - The Council Tax Scheme should incentivise work;
  - Support would be restricted to band D equivalent for those taxpayers living in properties higher than band D.
9. The Government’s decision to exclude pensioners from the impact of local schemes meant that claimants of working age would be affected by changes to the current system. This covers all local Council Tax Support Schemes.
10. The broad principles outlined above were developed into a consultation document that covered a more detailed set of nine questions (principles). The questions are included in the attached consultation document but in summary the nine questions asked in the consultation process from 30 August to 26 October are as follows:
  - All taxpayers to pay something;
  - Capping council tax support to the level of a Band D property;
  - Removing second adult rebate;
  - Eligibility limit on savings;
  - Increased contributions from other adult members of the household;

- Include child benefit as an income;
  - Removing extended payments;
  - Including maintenance payments when calculating benefit entitlement;
  - Reducing disregarded earnings for lone parents.
11. The scheme must have regard to the vulnerable, but there is no national agreed definition either in government, or elsewhere, that advises what characteristics make an individual “vulnerable”. No guidance has been issued for designing local schemes. Herefordshire has approached the requirement to protect the vulnerable by including in the draft scheme the premiums from the existing council tax benefit scheme applied to a wide range of claimants who are considered as vulnerable. These include claimants receiving Disability Living Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance, the disability element of Working Tax Credits and Carers Allowance. These premiums currently apply to 2000 claimants

### **Council Tax Transitional Support Grant**

12. By end of August Herefordshire Council had entered into consultation on proposed local Council Tax Support Schemes. The scheme met the broad guidance that the Government indicated should form the approach to determining a local scheme.
13. However, in mid-October the Government announced a new transitional grant for local authorities that conform to the Government’s view of an “appropriate” replacement for the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme. A national budget of £100 million has been earmarked for this purpose. The amount on offer to Herefordshire is £259,451. In addition Police, Fire and Rescue will receive £52,693 as major preceptors.
14. The grant will be good news for some claimants affected by the proposed changes. However, it does mean that the Government is now providing a template for the scheme.
15. In addition the announcement was made without prior warning after Herefordshire and other authorities had already designed and consulted on individual local schemes. The key requirement for receipt of the new grant is that a scheme must ensure that the maximum effect is a variation of 8.5% for those currently in receipt of 100% council tax benefit.
16. The assessment made following the announcement is that two of our nine principles can be used to deliver a scheme that complies with the Government’s requirements so that we meet their view of a “good” scheme and receive the grant on offer.
17. The two principles from our consultation proposed to be used in the scheme that meets the grant requirement are that all working age taxpayers pay something (limited to a maximum of 8.5% for those eligible for support) and that the second adult rebate is removed. Both principles received a majority of support when adding the responses of those who either strongly agreed or disagreed.
18. The grant is one-off and transitional in nature. Unless it continues in future years it does not stop the requirement to deliver a new overall scheme in 2014/15.

### **Changes to Council Tax Discounts**

19. As previously indicated the Government is cutting current funding for council tax benefit by 10% and we have consulted on principles to help deliver within the new funding envelope of

£11.6m (a reduction of £1.4m).

20. The approach taken has been to seek mitigation from reduction to benefit payments but given the scale of the cut in funding another source has been sought.
21. The Council has discretionary power to set the level of Council Tax Discount for some categories of empty properties. The two categories concerned are Class A and C and the following outlines the definitions:

<b>Council Tax Discount Changes</b>	<b>Percentage Discount</b>	<b>Additional Income (£000's)</b>
Class A discount for a maximum of twelve months	25%	105
Class C discount for a maximum of six months	25%	600
Remove 10% discount for second homes	0%	120

22. In addition councils have the power to include second homes in this category.
23. By reducing the levels of relief to 25% for Class A for a maximum of 12 months and Class C properties to 25% for a maximum of six months; the estimated yield is £105k and £600k respectively.
24. The removal of 10% discount for second homes yields £120k. In total the Council Tax Discount changes proposed will make an estimated £825k contribution to the gap caused by the cut in government funding.

## **Community Impact**

25. On 14 June Cabinet considered “Understanding Herefordshire”, the integrated evidence base and needs assessment. This was reflected in the draft corporate plan proposals reported to Cabinet on 18 October prior to consideration by Council.
26. Key elements in the draft corporate plan link to reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing outcomes. The approach taken in designing the scheme has been to continue support for the vulnerable and the wider community impact will be monitored as the scheme is implemented.

## **Equality and Human Rights**

27. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed changes arising from the local scheme was completed and placed on the council’s website along with the consultation documents.
28. The EIA looked at the potential for not only protecting pensioners (as required under the legislation) but also retaining a large amount of the protections already present for working age claimants within the existing council tax benefit scheme.

## Financial Implications

29. The current Council Tax Benefit subsidy is £13m. The Government announced in the 2010 Spending Review that their funding of council tax benefit would be reduced by 10%. The Government will replace the current council tax benefit with grant funding. The estimated grant is £11.6m leaving a potential gap of £1.4m if the scheme continues without change.
30. Until the Council receives confirmed regulations, estimates continue to be used for income levels.
31. The terms of the Council Tax Transitional Support Grant can be met if only two of the nine principles are implemented in 2013/14. These are limiting council tax reduction to 91.5% of liability (£530k) and removing the second adult rebate (£21k). The acceptance of the transitional grant and changes to council tax discounts will provide the balance of the sums required to close the estimated £1.4m funding gap as follows:

Proposed Changes or Funding Streams	£'000
Limit council tax reduction to 91.5% of liability (Principle 1)	530
Remove second adult rebate (Principle 3)	21
Empty Property Class A discount for maximum of 12 months at 25%	105
Empty Property Class C discount for maximum of 6 months at 25%	600
Remove 10% discount for second homes	120
Transitional Grant	312
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,688</b>

The above is an estimate and a cautious approach has been taken given that a number of changes are not yet known. The numbers in receipt of support under the scheme may increase and it is prudent to allow for this change. The council also has to meet any additional costs relating to pensioners' costs including an increase in numbers. . This is now a matter for the Council to fund including the impact of any potential council tax increase.

## Legal Implications

32. As the new support scheme will be a localised scheme, if the Council fail to take into account views from the consultation in deciding the shape of the final scheme, there is potential for a legal challenge if the Council choose to adopt the transitional grant scheme. As this will change the draft scheme used in the consultation a decision will need to be made on whether any further consultation is necessary

## Risk Management

33. The scale of the changes is likely to have a significant impact on workloads and ICT systems not least because of the short timescales for implementation. We are working with our software provider to maximise the time available for testing changes to include local elements of the scheme as any delays could have an impact on the annual billing cycle for 2013/14.

34. This situation could be further complicated by the potential for further changes to the draft regulations to reflect the outcomes from central government consultations which have not yet been completed.
35. With an increase in the number of claimants, who will either be paying council tax for the first time or paying more and in many cases small amounts, there is likely to be an increase in collection costs through greater debt recovery workloads plus the potential for a higher level of uncollectible debt. Plans are being developed to respond to this.
36. Because the new scheme is no longer a national scheme which is applicable to all billing authorities there is also potential for local challenges to schemes and it is not clear what impact this could have on both the scheme and on implementation timescales.
37. A copy of the draft support scheme has been passed for approval by Legal Services.
38. The potential for fraud may arise as the new scheme will not be covered by current Department for Work and Pensions rules. Further information and draft regulations have been promised to provide powers that will ensure Councils can pursue fraudulent claims for support. The Council has a very good track record dealing with benefit fraud.

## Consultees

39. The major preceptors (Police, Fire and Rescue) were consulted on the scheme. They were in favour of the proposed approach.
40. Consultation ran from 30 August to 26 October 2012. The consultation questionnaire was published on line using Herefordshire Council's website together with a consultation document. In addition around 1,000 paper copies were issued, of these 500 copies were sent to a sample of working age residents who are currently receiving council tax benefits. Questionnaires were provided to social landlords and voluntary organisations to distribute to their tenants and contacts, and at the "Your Community Your Say" events.
41. Workshops were held for local organisations, voluntary groups and social landlords. Social landlord newsletters made reference to the consultation.
42. All parish clerks were notified of the consultation.
43. In total 231 responses were received by the end of the consultation period. The following table summarises the response to the nine principles (questions):

Principle	Agree/ Strongly Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Neither agree or Disagree
1. All taxpayers should pay Something	138	76	15
2. Support should be capped at Band D level	114	72	42
3. To remove second adult rebate	135	70	25
4. To limit the level of savings	144	68	18
5. To increase contributions for	129	50	49

non-dependants			
6. To include child benefit as income	91	128	9
7. To remove extended payments	92	111	28
8. To include maintenance as income	126	76	29
9. To reduce the earnings disregard for lone parents	110	82	37

45. The outcome sees support for the majority of the nine principles (if those who neither disagree or agree are removed from the calculation). The two principles not supported in the consultation are the inclusion of child benefit as income and the removal of extended payments. Neither option is included in the scheme that meets the announced guidelines for the transitional grant.

## Appendices

- Appendix A: consultation documents
- Appendix B: council tax support scheme consultation report

## Background Papers

- Equality Impact Assessment



## **Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation**

### **What is this consultation about?**

The Government is ending the national council tax benefit scheme and has asked every council to come up with a local system instead. This means that Herefordshire has to plan its own council tax support scheme and decide who should be eligible for help to pay their council tax, and by how much. The new scheme will start on 1 April 2013.

We want to hear your views on how we should plan the local scheme in order to help us make a decision that is as fair as possible. This consultation will run from 30th August 2012 and will close on 26 October 2012. Responses will then be evaluated so that Herefordshire's scheme can be finalised and published to meet a Government deadline of 31 January 2013.

Pensioners will not be affected by the changes. The Government has prescribed eligibility rules that will be applicable to all councils for those people who fall under the Pensioner Regulations. This means they will continue to get the same level of support as they do now.

You can complete this questionnaire online or print it off and post it Freepost to Herefordshire Council Research Team, FREEPOST SWC4816, PO Box 4, Hereford, HR4 0BR. Any information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential. It will only be used for the purposes described here and will not be shared with any other parties. Any comments you provide may be included in anonymous form in the published results.

If you have any queries, need help to complete the questionnaire, or would like it in another format or language, please call 01432 260443 or 01432 383254, or email [benexsupport@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:benexsupport@herefordshire.gov.uk). The results of the consultation will be published on the council's website at the end of November 2012.

### **What is the background to the new system?**

These changes are part of the broader overhaul of the benefits system that the Government is carrying out. In future, the Government will give a fixed amount of money to Herefordshire Council for reducing council tax payments for people with a limited income. As the Government will give us at least 10 per cent less than the current cost of council tax benefits for Herefordshire, this would leave a gap of an estimated £1.3 million in 2013-14.

If there is an increase in the number of claims for support this will increase this gap even more. When we plan who should be eligible for help with council tax support, the Government says we must consider the impact on our most vulnerable residents and create a system that encourages people to work, and that does not act as a disincentive to working.

## **What would this mean for Herefordshire?**

The level of support for Pensioners will not be affected, as the Government has decided that the new scheme will not change the eligibility rules or the amount of support they will get.

For claimants of working age, Herefordshire Council has considered the possible options to meet the shortfall in funding from central Government. Although these options would cover some of the gap through changes to council tax discounts and exemptions, they would not be enough to meet the shortfall. This means that those of working age who currently qualify for council tax benefit will be affected by the changes, as they would all have to pay something towards it in future. At the moment, those below a certain income level pay nothing at all.

We are committed to ensuring that support continues for our most vulnerable residents. We want your views on how it will affect different groups of people if everyone currently on benefit has to pay something towards their council tax. The principles guiding our planning are:

- All council tax payers should pay something, unless they are covered by policy exemptions, for example pensioners.
- Support would have an upper limit of 90 per cent of a council tax bill.
- The council tax scheme should incentivise work.
- Support would be restricted to band D equivalent for those taxpayers living in properties higher than band D.

## **What are the proposed changes for Working Age taxpayers?**

### **All taxpayers to pay something**

At the moment, those with income below the threshold for council tax benefit can have 100 per cent support, which means that some do not pay anything. We propose that everyone should pay at least 10 per cent of the council tax.

### **Capping Council Tax Support to Band D**

Council tax benefit is currently based on the property band and does not necessarily take into account the size of the property. This restriction will mean that for taxpayers living in properties above band D their reduction will be based on the band D charge rather than the higher band.

### **Removing Second Adult Rebate**

Until now, some households with a single taxpayer and another adult family member resident can have a reduction of up to 25 per cent because a second person on a low income lives there too, even if the taxpayer's own income means they are not eligible.

### **Eligibility limit on savings**

Taxpayers with savings over £10,000 will not be eligible for council tax support (the savings limit for council tax benefit is currently £16,000).

### **Increased contributions from other adult members of the household**

A deduction is currently made from a taxpayer's council tax benefit entitlement where other residents aged 18 and over live in the household (unless they are a tenant) depending on their income. The proposal is to deduct more for these other adults when calculating entitlement to a council tax reduction.

### **Include Child Benefit as an income**

At present, child benefit is paid for each child but is not taken into account for calculating council tax benefit entitlement. In the new scheme, it is proposed that it would be taken into account as income.

### **Removing extended payments**

Extended payments of council tax benefit are currently available for four weeks where someone who has received a qualifying welfare benefit, for a continuous period of 26 weeks, moves into work.

### **Including maintenance payments when calculating benefit entitlement**

At present, payments are not included in the benefit calculation and we are proposing that they should be treated as income for calculating the level of council tax support. However, where the maintenance payments apply to children we propose to allow a weekly disregard of £30 a week for each child.

### **Reducing disregarded earnings for lone parents**

For lone parents, weekly earnings of £25 are currently disregarded (compared to £10 for a couple and £5 for a single claimant). A review of this higher level of disregarded earnings is being considered for the new scheme with a reduction in the disregard to £20 per week.

# Questionnaire

## Principle 1

### All working age taxpayers to pay something

At the moment, those below the threshold for council tax benefit can have 100 per cent support, which means that some do not pay anything. We propose that everyone should pay at least 10 per cent council tax.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*

## Principle 2

### Capping Council Tax Support to smaller properties (Band D)

Council tax benefit is based on the property band and does not necessarily take into account the size of the property. This would mean that support for taxpayers living in properties above band D will be based on the band D charge rather than the higher band.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*

## Principle 3

### Removing Second Adult Rebate

Until now, some households have had a reduction of up to 25 per cent on their council tax bill because a second adult family member on a low income lives there too, even if the tax payer's own income is above the threshold. The proposal would remove second adult rebate.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*

## Principle 4

### Reducing the amount of savings or capital a claimant can have before support is given

In the current benefit scheme people of working age are not entitled to benefit if their savings are more than £16,000. The proposal for the new scheme is to restrict the savings limit to £10,000.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*

## Principle 5

### Increased contributions from other adult members of the household

Other adults living in a household where the council tax payer (and their partner) claim council tax support should be asked to pay more toward the council tax bill than they do now.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*

## Principle 6

### Include Child Benefit as income

At present, child benefit is paid for each child but how much they receive is not taken into account for calculating council tax benefit. In the new scheme, it is proposed that it would be taken into account as income.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*

## Principle 7

### Removing extended payments

If someone who is out of work has been receiving council tax benefits continuously for 26 weeks and moves into work, they are currently allowed an extra 4 weeks benefits. We are proposing to remove extended payments.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*

## Principle 8

### Including maintenance payments when calculating benefit entitlement

At present, these payments are not included in the benefit calculation and we are proposing that they should be considered as income for calculating the level of support. However, we propose to disregard £30 a week for each child.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*



## Principle 9

### Reducing disregarded earnings for lone parents

When calculating the income for lone parents, the council currently disregards £25 per week from any earnings (compared to £10 for a couple and £5 for a single person) it is proposed that this disregard should be reduced to £20 per week.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

- Strongly Agree*       *Agree*       *Neither agree nor disagree*       *Disagree*       *Strongly Disagree*

Please use this space to provide any comments you wish to make about the principles or in support of your answers above (please make clear which of the principles you are referring to).

We want to ensure that any changes made are fair to everyone. To help us do this, please tell us if you think that any of the principles above will particularly affect any group of people due, for example, to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

- Yes*  
 *No*  
 *Don't know*

If yes, please explain which groups and the reasons they might be affected:

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or group, or as an individual?

- Organisation or group       Individual

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group, please tell us the name of the organisation/group:

If you are responding as an individual please answer the following questions about yourself. This will help us to better understand how views may differ between different people across the county.

### About You

Do you currently pay council tax to Herefordshire Council?

- Yes       No

If yes, please tell us which council tax band (A - H) the property you pay council tax on is in? (If unsure leave blank)

Are you currently receiving council tax benefit in Herefordshire?

- Yes       No

If you are not currently receiving council tax benefit have you ever received it?

- Yes       No

Are you currently receiving housing benefit in Herefordshire?

- Yes       No

Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present? (please tick all that apply)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Full-time education at school, college or university |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week) | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired whether receiving a pension or not           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed full or part-time                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Looking after the home or family                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On a government supported training programme        | <input type="checkbox"/> Long term sick / disabled                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed and available for work                   |   |

What is your age group?

- Under 18*       *25-44*       *65-74*  
 *18-24*       *45-64*       *75+*

What is your gender?

- Male*       *Female*

Do you have parenting responsibilities?

- Yes*       *No*

How would you describe your ethnic group?

- White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish*  
 *Other White (please specify below)*  
 *Any other ethnic group (please specify below)*

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire.**



# Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation report

Issue 1.0

Herefordshire Council Research Team  
October 2012

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If you need help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call Research Team on 01432 261944 or e-mail [researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:researchteam@herefordshire.gov.uk)

## Introduction

The Government is ending the national Council Tax Benefit scheme and has asked every council to come up with a local system instead. This means that Herefordshire has to plan its own Council Tax Support scheme and decide who should be eligible for help to pay their council tax, and by how much, for introduction in April 2013. The council tax support scheme consultation was launched to seek the views of residents and interested organisations on how the Herefordshire Council should plan the local scheme in order to help make a decision that is as fair as possible.

The consultation questionnaire was published online in Herefordshire Council's website together with a consultation document. In addition around 1000 paper copies were issued, of these 500 copies were sent to a sample of working age residents who are currently receiving council tax benefits. Questionnaires were also distributed to social landlords and voluntary organisations to distribute to their tenants and contacts. The survey period ran from 30<sup>th</sup> August 2012 until 26<sup>th</sup> October 2012, however all responses received up to and including 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012 were included in the results.

This report details the results of the consultation questionnaire. In the tables and charts in this report, all the percentages are calculated as a proportion of the total number of responses to each question unless otherwise stated. All the percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Note that if respondents could select more than one answer to a particular question, the percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Answers to questions requiring a free text answer are listed in the appendix A. Every effort has been made to anonymise references to named or identifiable persons without losing the gist of the comments.

## Results

There were a total of 231 responses received by the end of consultation period, of these 130 were submitted online and 101 were paper questionnaires.

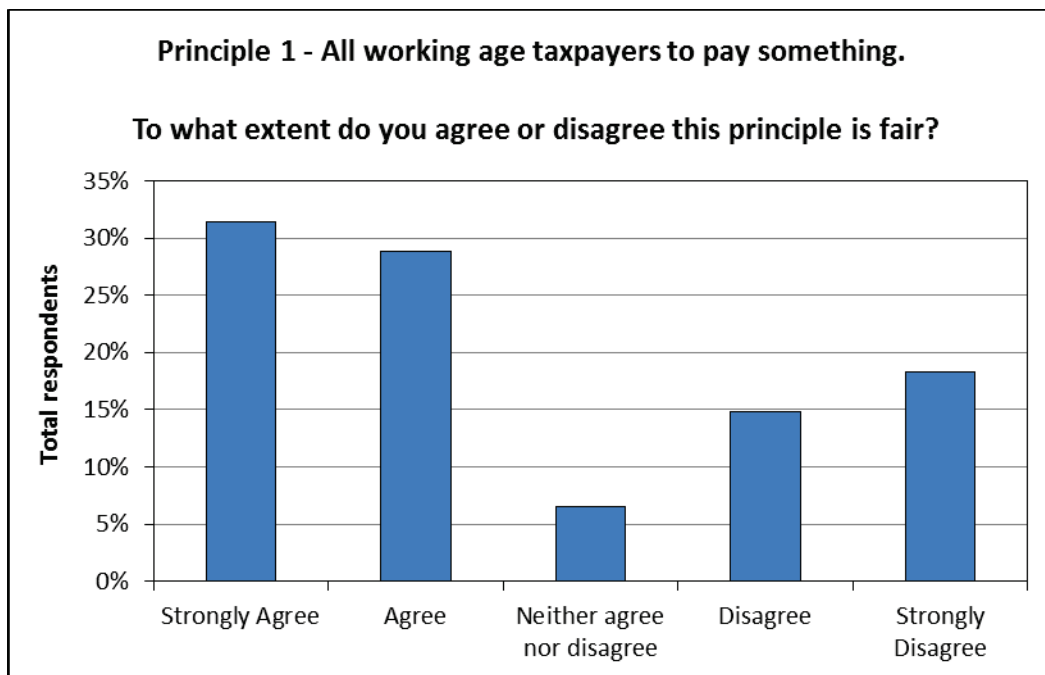
Note: There were three responses submitted by Kington Town Council; one submitted online and the other two were letters providing extended comments. One of these letters was attached to questionnaire. The online response only provided responses to the questionnaire, which were exactly the same as paper questionnaire attached to the letter; however it didn't contain any comments. Only the paper response sent with the letter was included in the analysis. The letter is attached as an Appendix to this report.

### Principle 1: All working age taxpayers to pay something

At the moment, those below the threshold for council tax benefit can have 100 per cent support, which means that some do not pay anything. We propose that everyone should pay at least 10 per cent council tax.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	72	31%
Agree	66	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	15	7%
Disagree	34	15%
Strongly Disagree	42	18%
Total respondents	229	
Not answered	2	

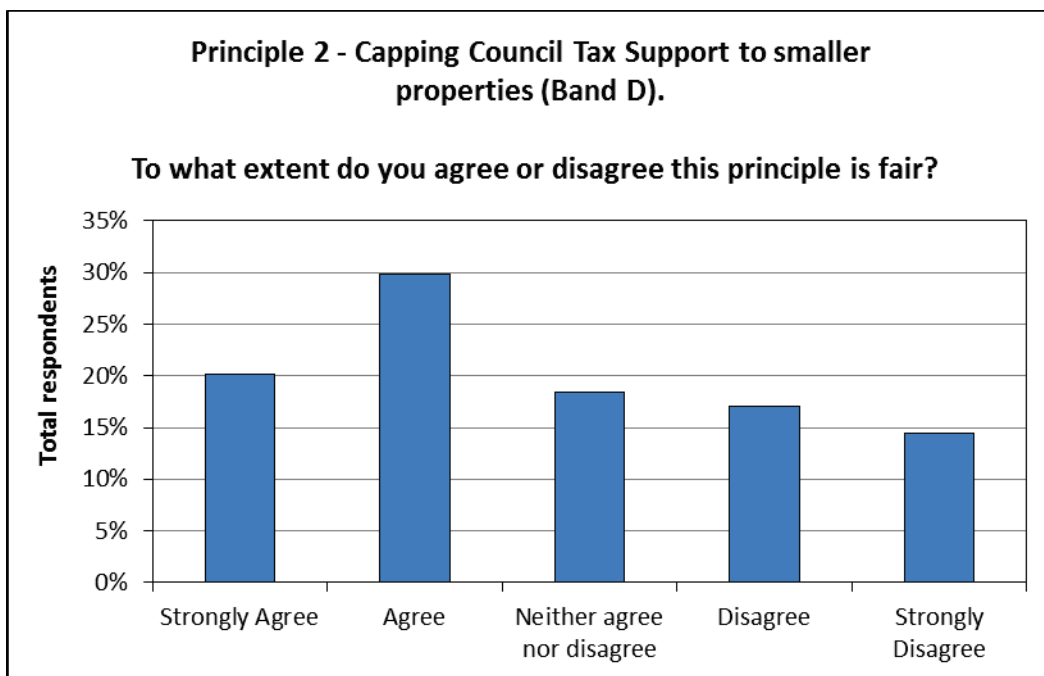


## Principle 2: Capping Council Tax Support to smaller properties (Band D)

Council tax benefit is based on the property band and does not necessarily take into account the size of the property. This would mean that support for taxpayers living in properties above band D will be based on the band D charge rather than the higher band.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	46	20%
Agree	68	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	42	18%
Disagree	39	17%
Strongly Disagree	33	14%
Total respondents	228	
Not answered	3	

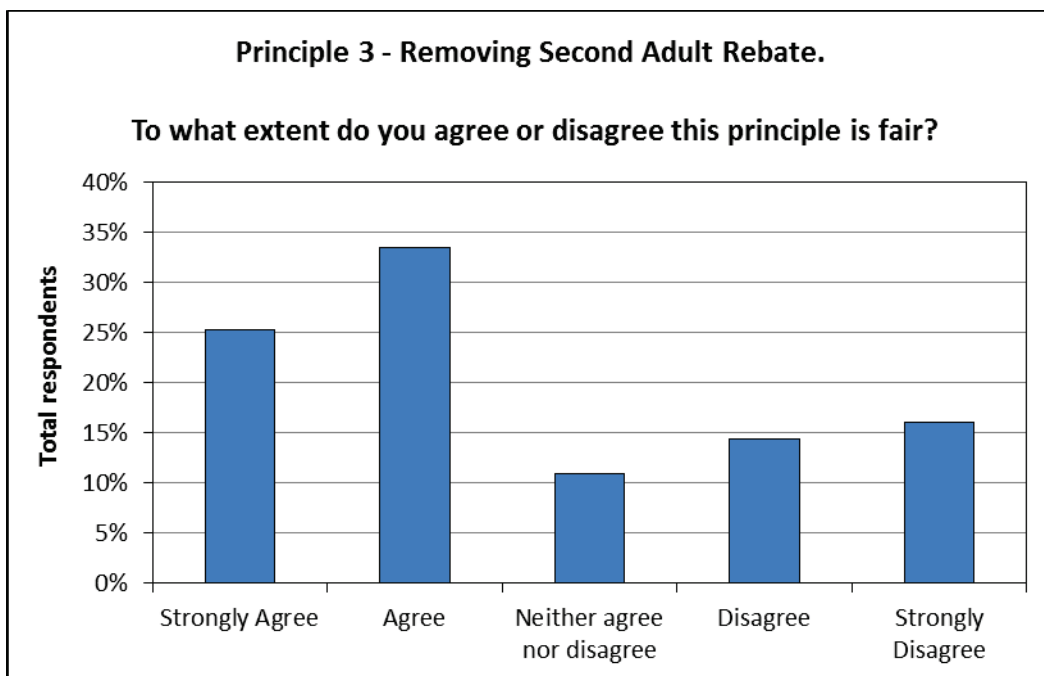


### Principle 3: Removing Second Adult Rebate

Until now, some households have had a reduction of up to 25 per cent on their council tax bill because a second adult family member on a low income lives there too, even if the tax payer's own income is above the threshold. The proposal would remove second adult rebate.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	58	25%
Agree	77	33%
Neither agree nor disagree	25	11%
Disagree	33	14%
Strongly Disagree	37	16%
Total respondents	230	
Not answered	1	

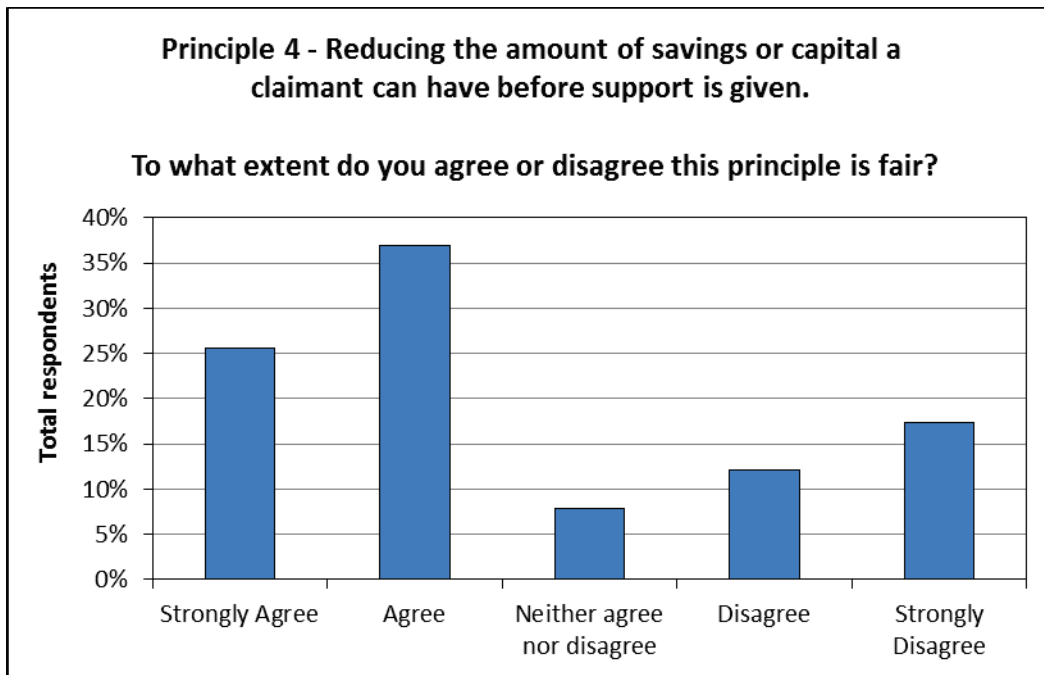


### Principle 4: Reducing the amount of savings or capital a claimant can have before support is given

In the current benefit scheme people of working age are not entitled to benefit if their savings are more than £16,000. The proposal for the new scheme is to restrict the savings limit to £10,000.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	59	26%
Agree	85	37%
Neither agree nor disagree	18	8%
Disagree	28	12%
Strongly Disagree	40	17%
Total respondents	230	
Not answered	1	

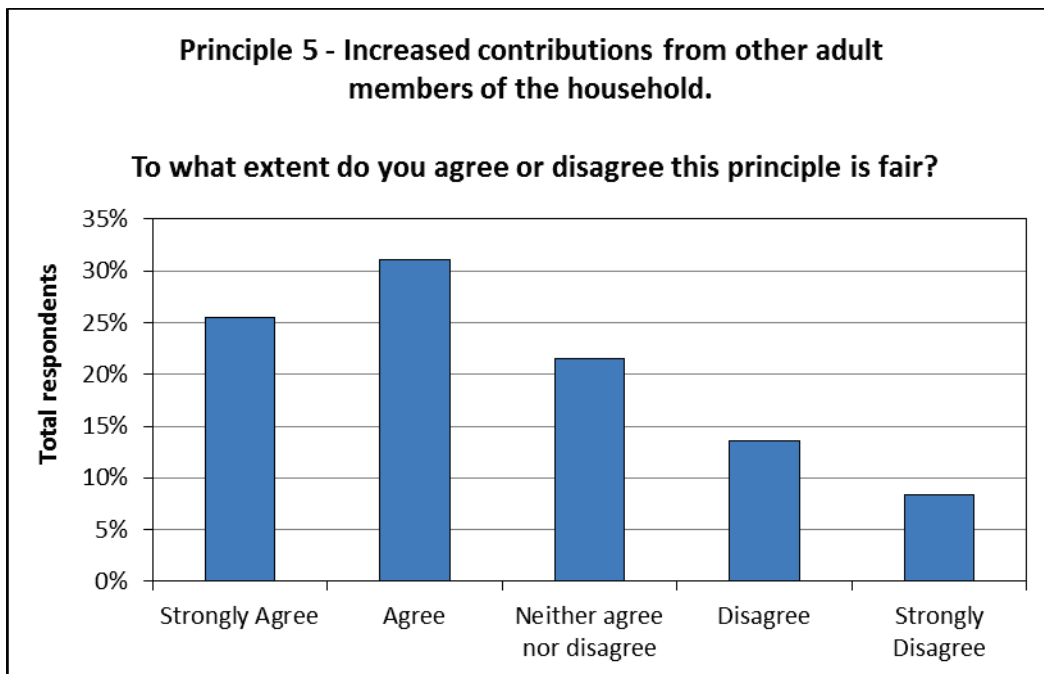


**Principle 5: Increased contributions from other adult members of the household**

Other adults living in a household where the council tax payer (and their partner) claim council tax support should be asked to pay more toward the council tax bill than they do now.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	58	25%
Agree	71	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	49	21%
Disagree	31	14%
Strongly Disagree	19	8%
Total respondents	228	
Not answered	3	



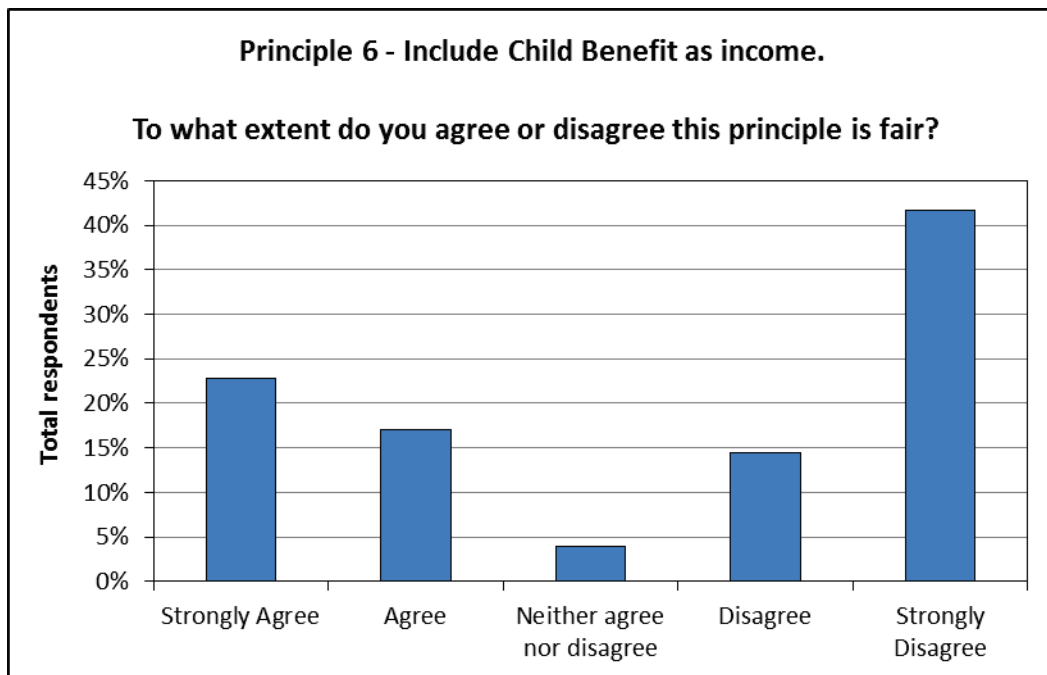


## Principle 6: Include Child Benefit as income

At present, child benefit is paid for each child but how much they receive is not taken into account for calculating council tax benefit. In the new scheme, it is proposed that it would be taken into account as income.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	52	23%
Agree	39	17%
Neither agree nor disagree	9	4%
Disagree	33	14%
Strongly Disagree	95	42%
Total respondents	228	
Not answered	3	

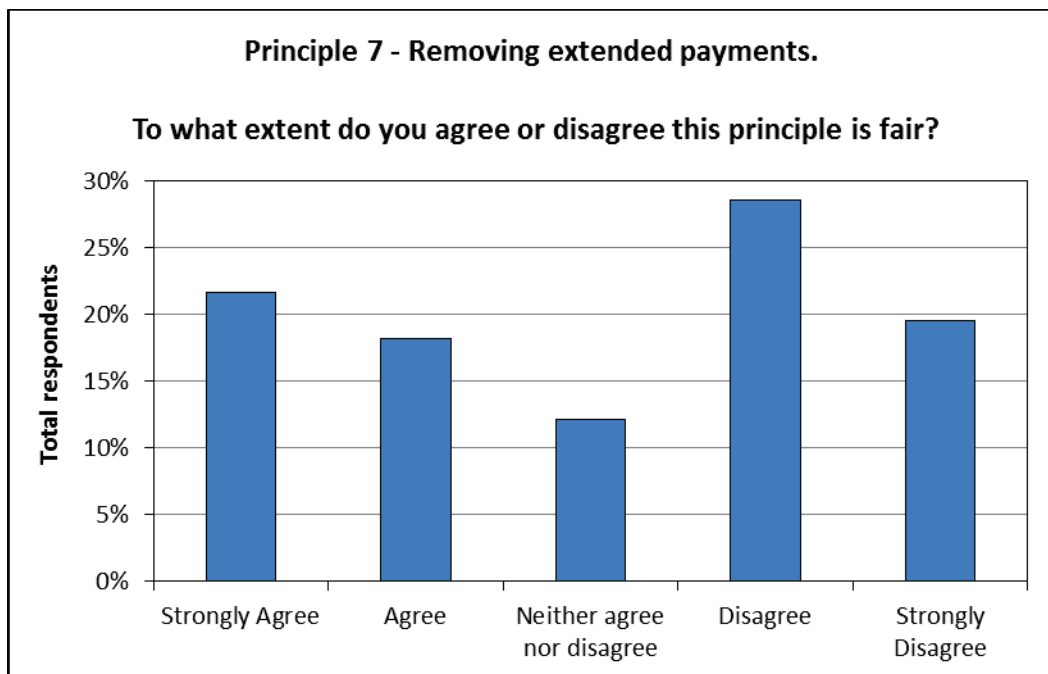


## Principle 7: Removing extended payments

If someone who is out of work has been receiving council tax benefits continuously for 26 weeks and moves into work, they are currently allowed an extra 4 weeks benefits. We are proposing to remove extended payments.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	50	22%
Agree	42	18%
Neither agree nor disagree	28	12%
Disagree	66	29%
Strongly Disagree	45	19%
Total respondents	231	

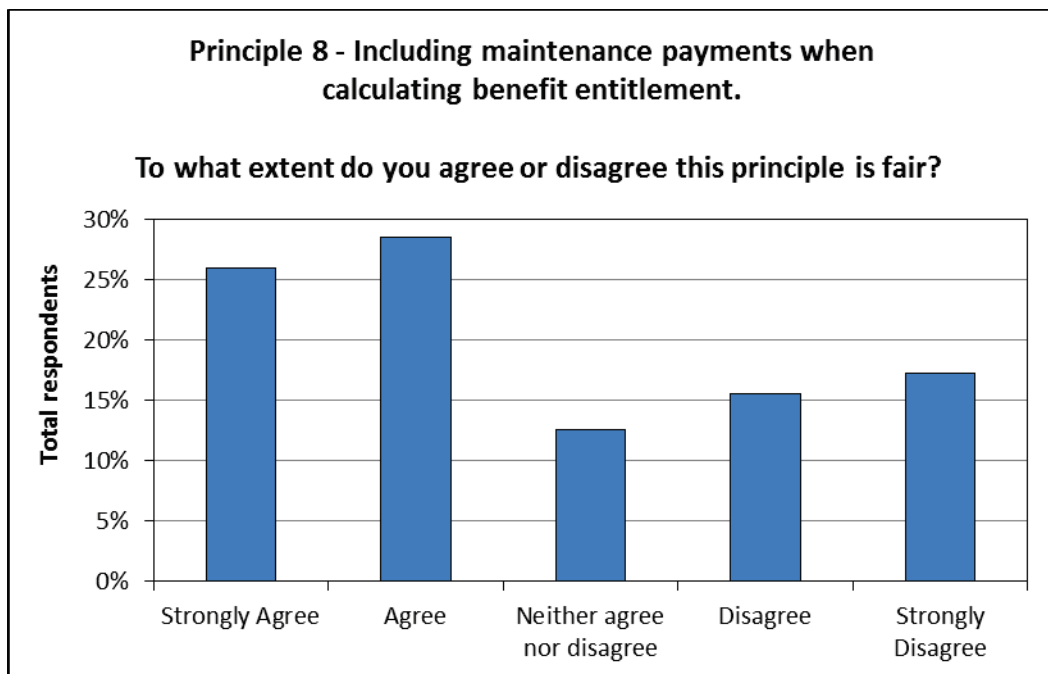


### Principle 8: Including maintenance payments when calculating benefit entitlement

At present, these payments are not included in the benefit calculation and we are proposing that they should be considered as income for calculating the level of support. However, we propose to disregard £30 a week for each child.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	60	26%
Agree	66	29%
Neither agree nor disagree	29	13%
Disagree	36	16%
Strongly Disagree	40	17%
Total respondents	231	

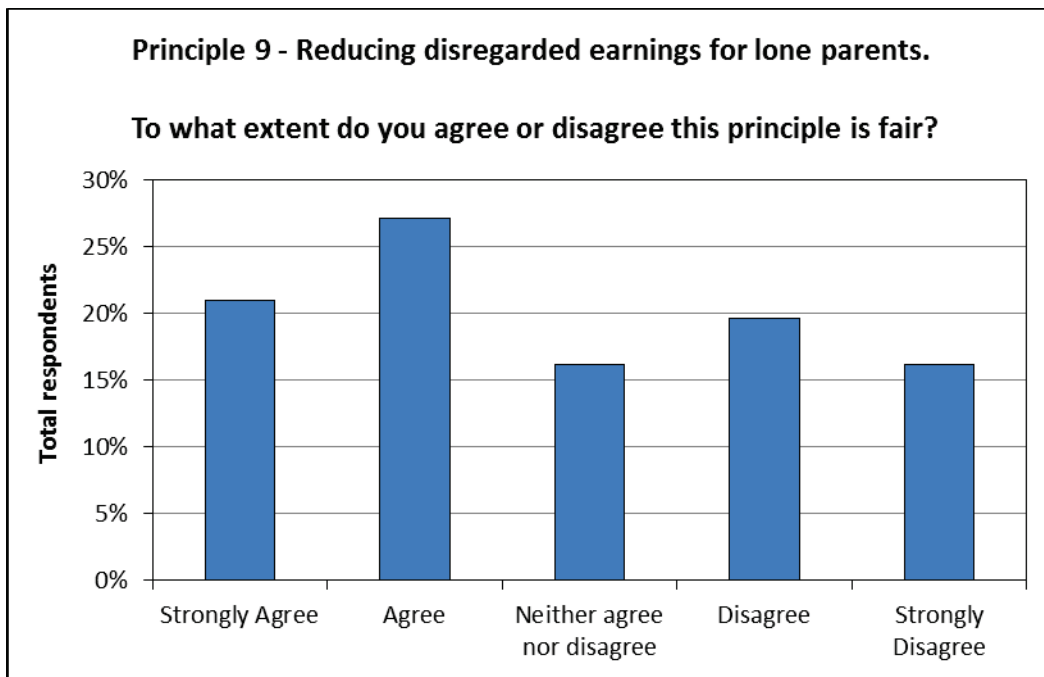


### Principle 9: Reducing disregarded earnings for lone parents

When calculating the income for lone parents, the council currently disregards £25 per week from any earnings (compared to £10 for a couple and £5 for a single person) it is proposed that this disregard should be reduced to £20 per week.

To what extent do you agree or disagree this principle is fair?

	No.	%
Strongly Agree	48	21%
Agree	62	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	37	16%
Disagree	45	20%
Strongly Disagree	37	16%
Total respondents	229	
Not answered	2	

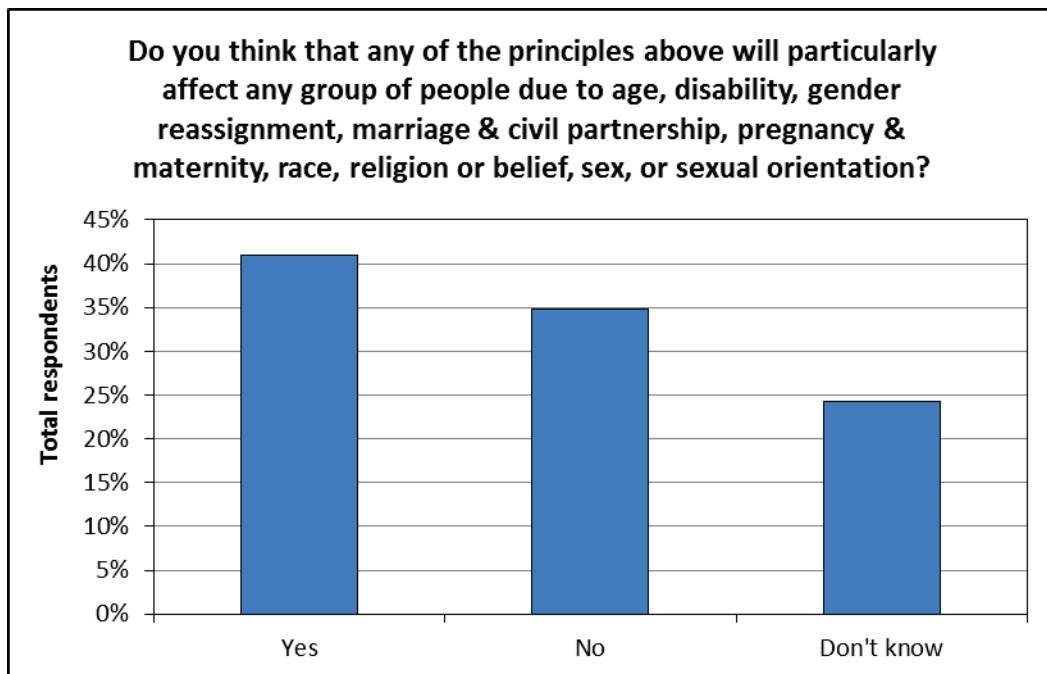


Please use this space to provide any comments you wish to make about the principles or in support of your answers above (please make clear which of the principles you are referring to).

There were 102 comments made, please see appendix A for the full list.

We want to ensure that any changes made are fair to everyone. To help us do this, please tell us if you think that any of the principles above will particularly affect any group of people due, for example, to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

	No.	%
Yes	86	41%
No	73	35%
Don't know	51	24%
Total respondents	210	
Not answered	21	

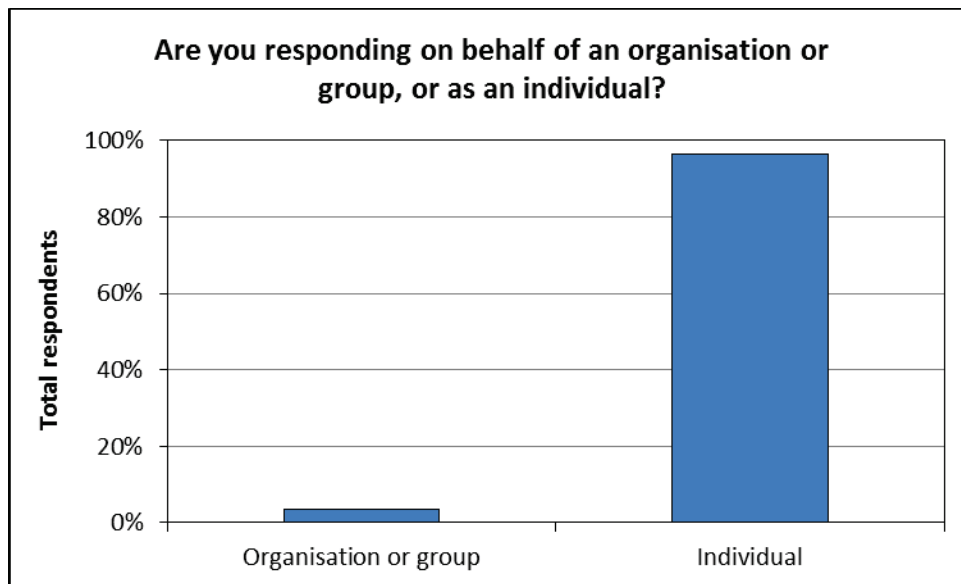


If yes, please explain which groups and the reasons they might be affected:

There were 86 comments made, please see appendix A for the full list.

**Are you responding on behalf of an organisation or group, or as an individual?**

	No.	%
Organisation or group	8	4%
Individual	211	96%
Total respondents	219	
Not answered	12	



**If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group, please tell us the name of the organisation/group:**

*There were 8 organisations responded to the consultation:*

*Adult placement care homes.*

*Aymestrey Parish Council*

*Kilpeck Group PC*

*Kingsland Parish Council*

*Kington Town Council: sent in x3 sides of A4 comment with questionnaire (See Appendix B)*

*Llangarron PV*

*Middleton and Leysters Parish Council*

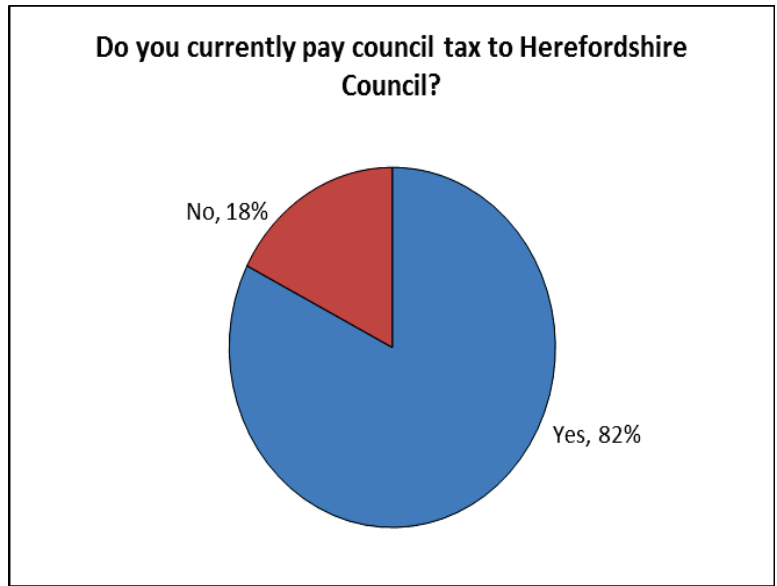
*Pencombe Group PC*

## About You

Note: This section only applied to respondents who replied in an individual capacity.

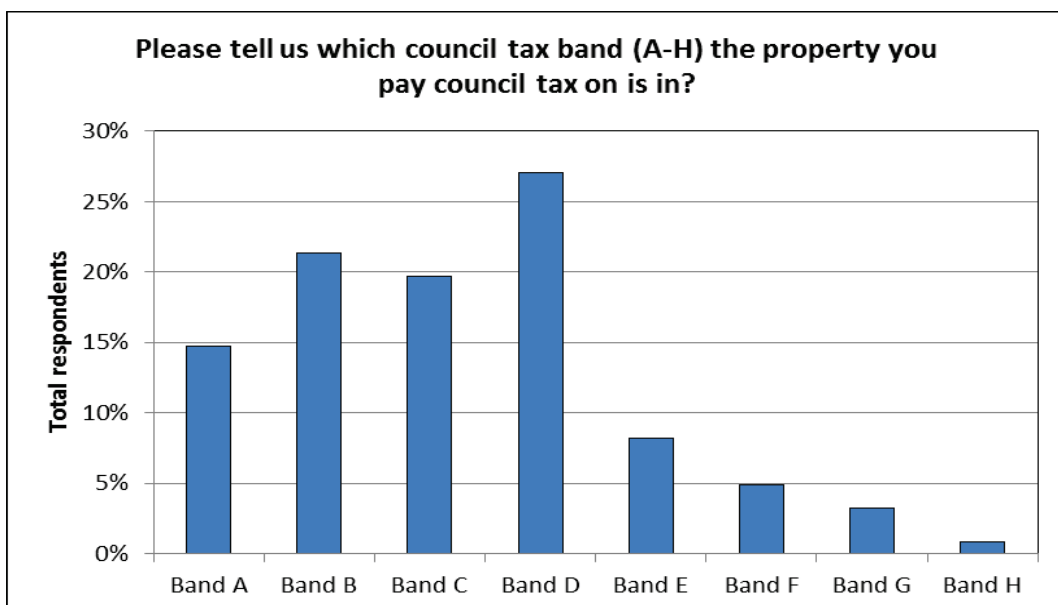
### Do you currently pay council tax to Herefordshire Council?

	No.	%
Yes	179	82%
No	38	18%
Total respondents	217	
Not answered	14	



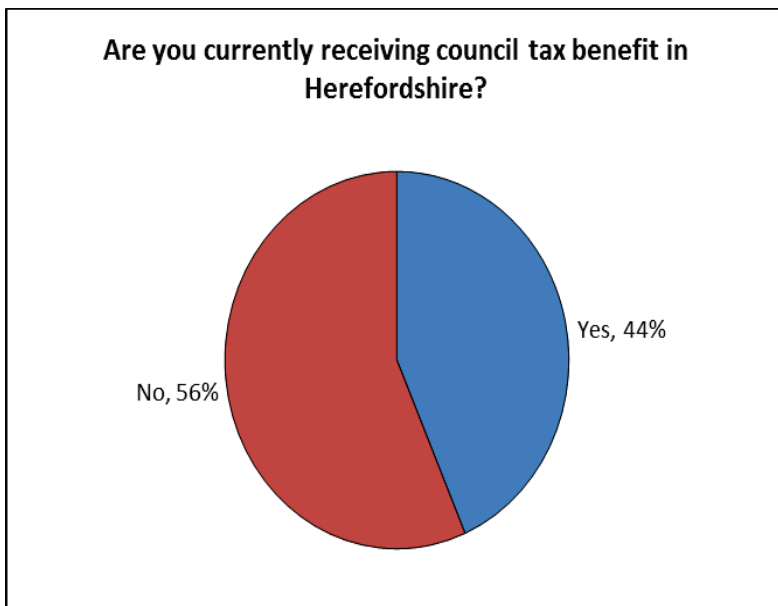
If yes, please tell us which council tax band (A - H) the property you pay council tax on is in? (If unsure leave blank)

	No.	%
Band A	18	15%
Band B	26	21%
Band C	24	20%
Band D	33	27%
Band E	10	8%
Band F	6	5%
Band G	4	3%
Band H	1	1%
Total respondents	122	
Not answered	109	



**Are you currently receiving council tax benefit in Herefordshire?**

	No.	%
Yes	94	44%
No	122	56%
Total respondents	216	
Not answered	15	

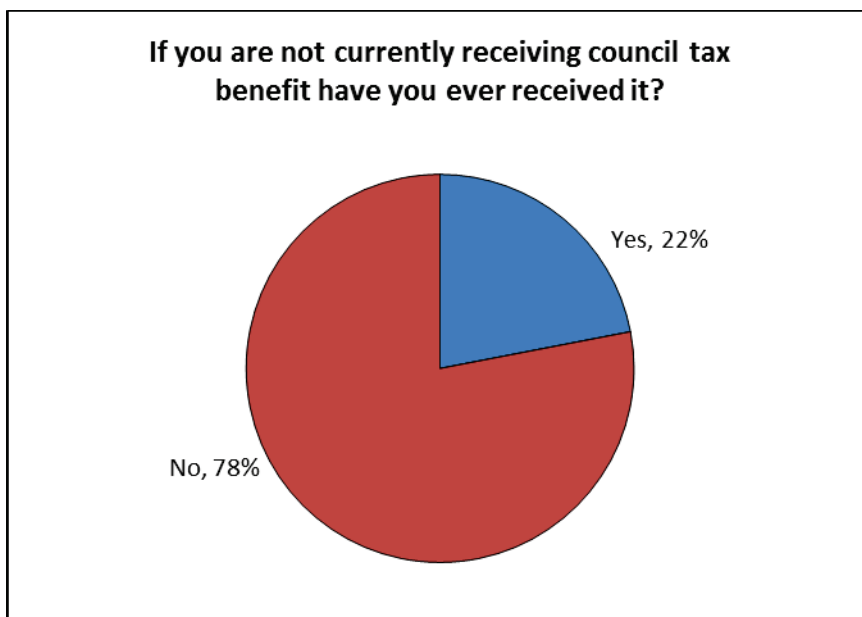


**If you are not currently receiving council tax benefit have you ever received it?**

Note: The number of respondents who answered this question is greater than those who indicated they were not currently receiving council tax benefits in the previous question.

	No.	%
Yes	29	22%
No	103	78%
Total respondents	132	
Not answered	99	

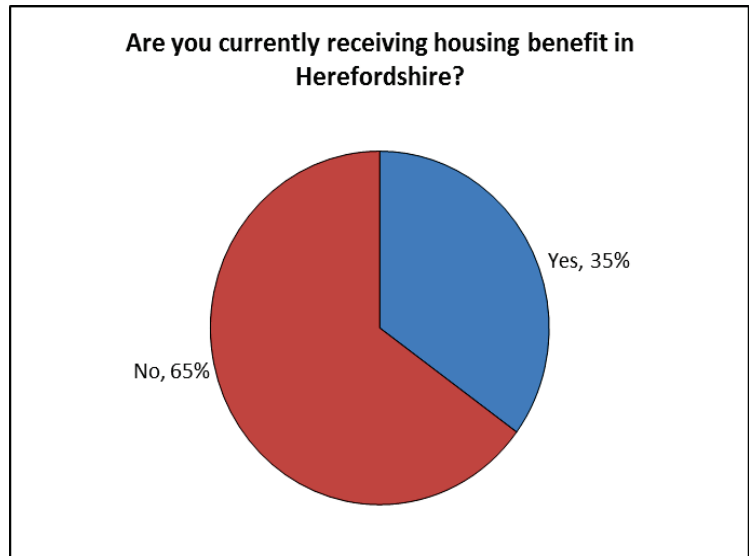
Please note that very high number of respondents didn't answer this question.





### Are you currently receiving housing benefit in Herefordshire?

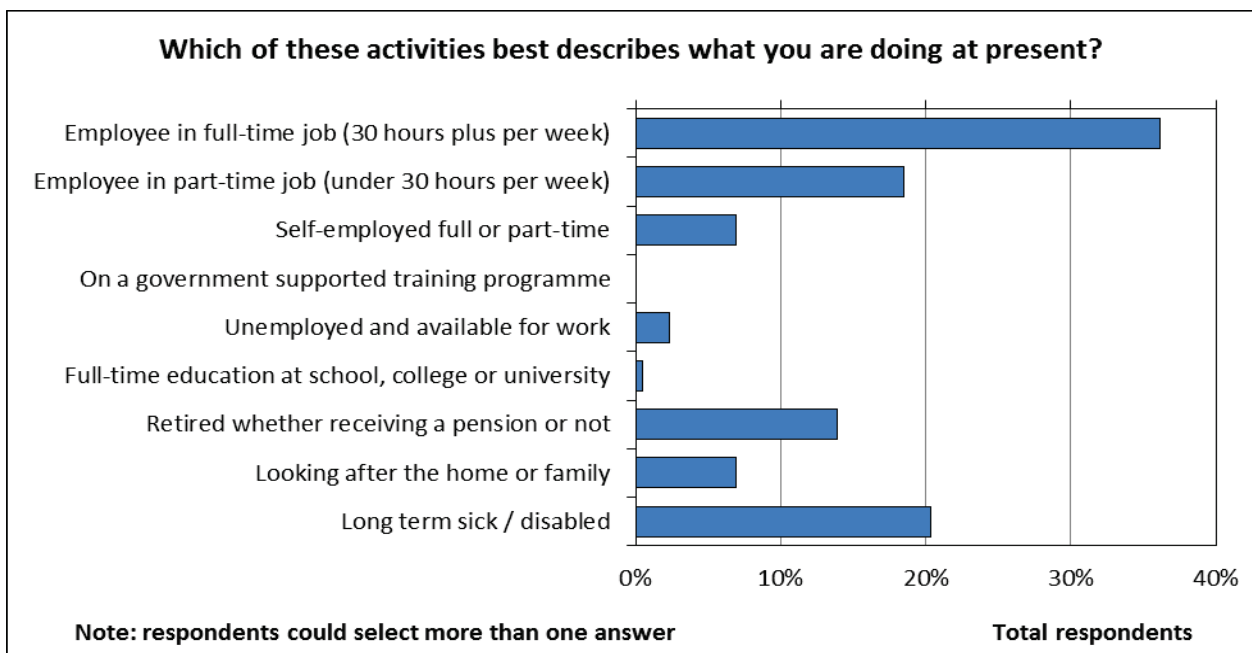
	No.	%
Yes	76	35%
No	141	65%
Total respondents	217	
Not answered	14	



### Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present? (please tick all that apply)

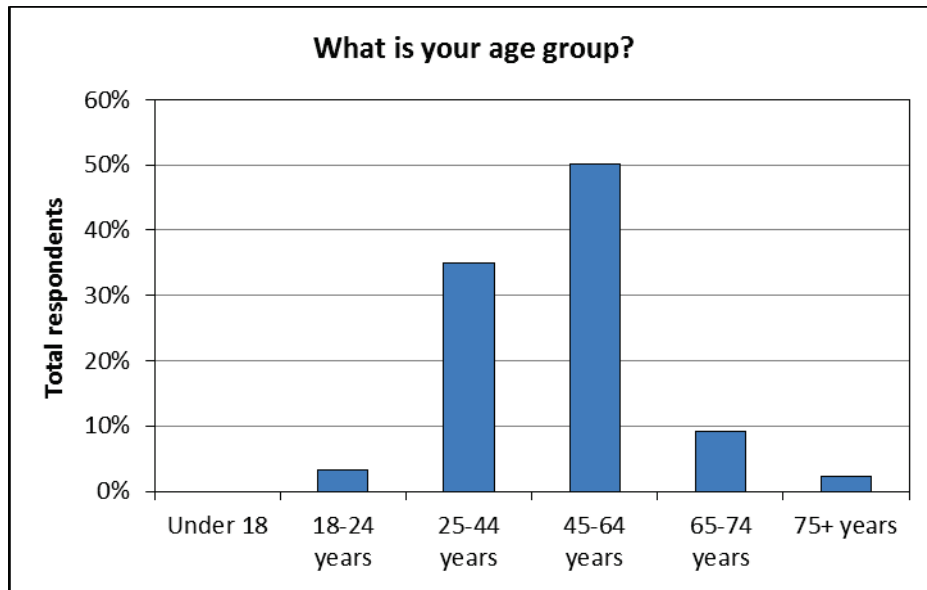
	No.	%
Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)	78	36%
Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)	40	19%
Self-employed full or part-time	15	7%
On a government supported training programme	0	0%
Unemployed and available for work	5	2%
Full-time education at school, college or university	1	0%
Retired whether receiving a pension or not	30	14%
Looking after the home or family	15	7%
Long term sick / disabled	44	20%
Total respondents	216	
Not answered	15	

Note: respondents could select more than one answer.



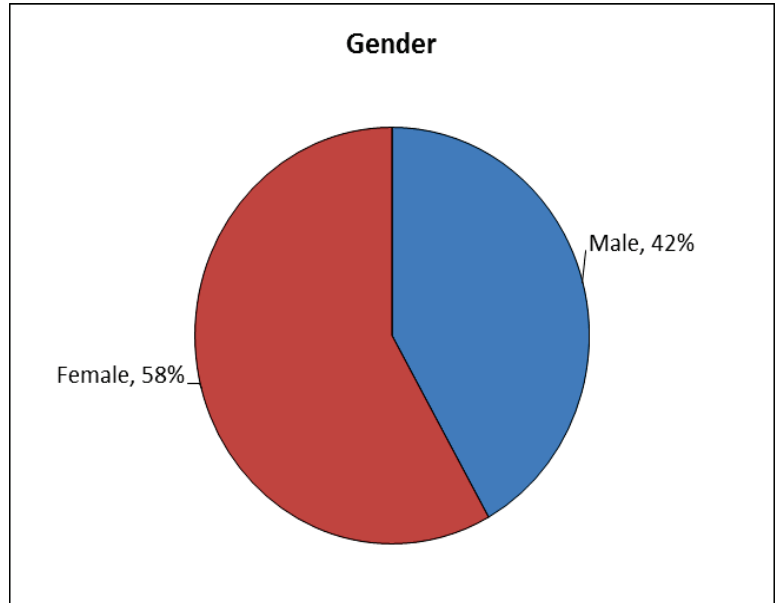
## What is your age group?

	No.	%
Under 18	0	0%
18-24 years	7	3%
25-44 years	76	35%
45-64 years	109	50%
65-74 years	20	9%
75+ years	5	2%
Total respondents	217	
Not answered	14	



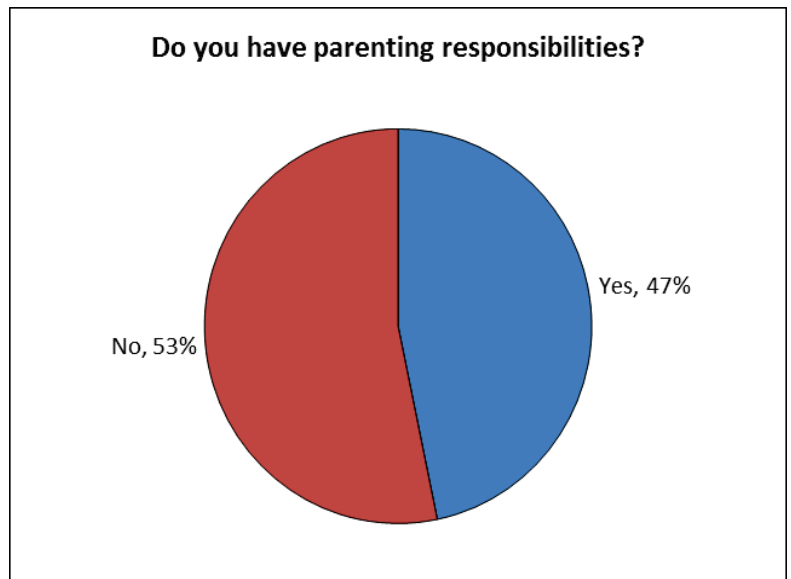
### What is your gender?

	No.	%
Male	90	42%
Female	125	58%
Total respondents	215	
Not answered	16	



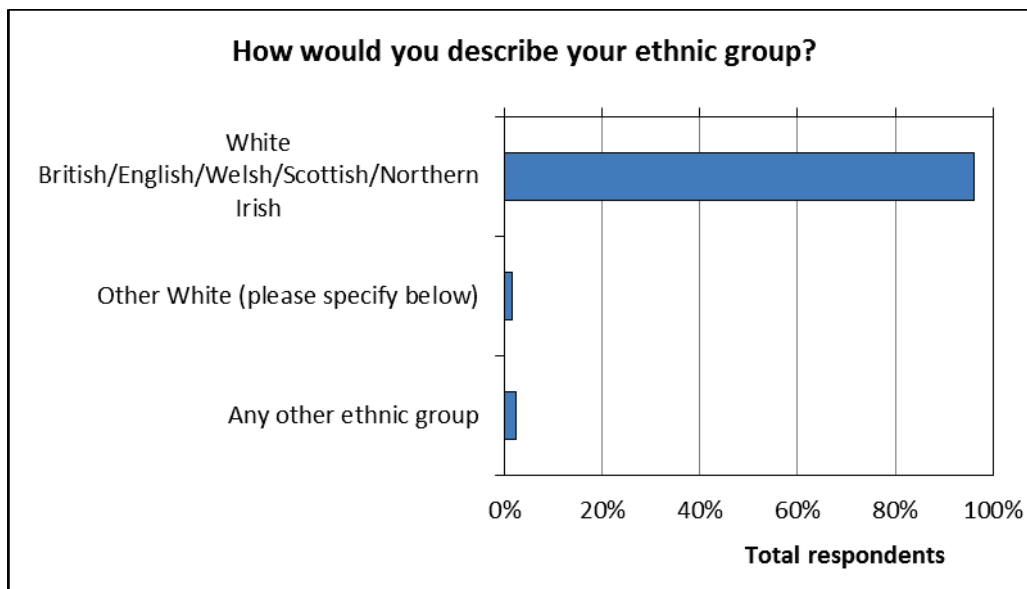
### Do you have parenting responsibilities?

	No.	%
Yes	101	47%
No	115	53%
Total respondents	216	
Not answered	15	



### How would you describe your ethnic group?

	No.	%
White British/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish	202	96%
Other White (please specify below)	3	1%
Any other ethnic group (please specify below)	5	2%
Total respondents	210	
Not answered	21	



Any other ethnic group (please specify below):  
 There were four comments made:

- “Mixed race - white Southern Irish / West Indian”
- “Mixed white/ black African”
- “White Polish”
- “White traveller”

## Appendix A: List of comments

Any remarks added by data entry personnel are shown in parenthesis for example [ A4 size letter attached].

Please use this space to provide any comments you wish to make about the principles or in support of your answers above (please make clear which of the principles you are referring to):

Comments:
<p>1 - Amount of benefit should be based on need. If anyone is too low to pay anything then none should be paid. 2 - Individual needs should be assessed. If a family claiming benefit are assessed as needing a band A property then band A benefit should be paid. However someone living in a band A property that is assessed as only needing a band D property then benefits should be based on that need. 5 - Benefit should be assessed against the combined income of all adults first. 7 - Agree providing a safety mechanism for delayed payments (whilst waiting for first salary) is in place.</p>
<p>1 &amp; 2. With the changes proposed by the government to Disability Benefits any changes would have to allow for the changes that are predicted by these changes. I am disabled and I am becoming very concerned about any changes in Benefits that target the disabled.</p>
<p>1: People on low income, should not have to pay 10% unless their income is exceptionally high meaning they can reasonably afford to LIVE and pay it. 2: People in larger houses than they need SHOULD be made to pay extra council tax, but I personally don't think it's right to charge people extra if they NEED to bedrooms i.e. for children, carers. 3: removing the 2nd adult rebate should be considered if together their income is over a certain threshold. 4: YES - If someone has savings of £10,000 then they should be able to afford to pay some council tax. 5: If someone lives in a house of someone on council tax benefit, then that person should contribute to the council tax, but I believe it should be under the name of the person who should pay and not the person who's renting/bought the house. 6: ABSOLUTELY NOT. This principle is completely absurd and I for one know there will be uproar if this principle goes ahead. Child Benefit is paid to look after children, NOT the parents. Children are expensive! Nappies, food, clothes etc... I have two children and ~£33.70 a week for BOTH of them doesn't even come close to what they cost to look after properly, let alone if this was taken off us too, by being included as income and taken off us for council tax payments. 8: YES DEFINATELY. Child Benefit and child tax credits are paid to look after children, so those benefits SHOULD NOT be classed as income, but for this reason exactly, I believe child maintenance payments SHOULD be included in income.</p>
<p>1: Though I wonder, should it be 10%? What about £1 or £2 per week instead? It would be good to promote a sense of ownership + responsibility. 2: I'm concerned this might affect families with children disproportionately. 3: I think the whole household income should be taken into account. 4: though maybe reducing it to £12,000 would be more palatable it's a big reduction in one go. 6: Difficult because it's a universal benefit, for some households it's a useful extra, for others it's a vital income. Better to look at total household income rather than singling this out. 7: The difficulty would be when their first pay day is - and how they're supposed to manage until then! 8: It would depend, surely, on levels of maintenance - I don't think disregarding £30 per child per week is really enough. There again, it depends what the total household income is, and what percentage of it the maintenance forms. 9: A flat rate, no matter how many children? Not fair! Individual cases probably need individual assessment. I'd be particularly concerned about the possible effects on households with children, and also on single householders. I hope you have ensured the Voluntary Sector have received this - e.g. Shelter, SHYPP, Homeless Forum, The Community Leaders, Open Door, the children's centres etc. These are the people who will really know the difference having to pay a few more pounds will mean to some households. I think the big issue that this highlights is really council tax should be levied on household incomes (or even individuals' incomes) rather than these incredibly out of date and unfair household bandings. I know it's not LA's fault - but the 25% reduction in council tax for single a householder always was ridiculous - and the concept that a Band A householder should pay 6/9ths of a Band D cost, while a Band H householder paid only twice that of band D almost always for a considerably more substantial property always felt unfair. It makes a difference too - is the property owned or rented? I think we're asking the wrong people to make the sacrifice and pay more - there are plenty of well-off, and even wealthy people in Herefordshire who could contribute more - some of them may even be pensioners - yet they have an automatic exemption. Why? ! Hereford City Council 2012 - 13 - totals A = £999.23 - H = £2,997.68.</p>

Comments:
2: But excluding 25% for sole occupants which must be based on actual charge up to and including band F at least we strongly agree with this cap but not capping 25% sole occupancy discount to bands B and D only. to clarify my comment on principle 2: strongly agree with the exception of 25% discount for sole occupancy which should extend to at least band F. There are many people in higher band properties who are bereaved & not yet ready to move on or (in current climate) cannot sell to trade down. Also - single people only make use of services provided for them i.e. one person and council tax should be reduced to reflect this. These people will not all be pensioners. 3: Yes - 2 people = twice use of services provided.
4 - People need to save to get into a better financial position so they can stop getting benefit - lowering the threshold just means people will save less so they can stay on benefits.
7: Because work is rarely paid weekly the 4 week benefits all for the gap before first salary arrives. 9: It is important that earning is not disadvantaged and that it is encouraged.
Absolutely disgusting in which you can take control the income of a lone parent bringing up a child and taking into account their child benefit and any maintenance that they may have. What will you do next, I wish I lived in another town as if this was to happen it is shameful for Herefordshire Council to even consider. Money grabbing and shameful!
All your proposals mean lower entitlement higher contribution less benefit. I'm not going to support that. Benefits are getting worth less and less as it is. Your proposals make life worse. I hate being on benefits I don't need even more pain on top of what I have now. I don't really understand 'bands'.
As a single parent with 2 children following the death of their father I have to strongly disagree with any plans to take benefit away from these groups particularly, unless the single parent earns enough to cover all child care related costs especially when there is no entitlement to child tax credits for a salary above 40,000 I think. I feel everybody should pay something but not if the money left pushes them onto the breadline.
As a single parent with 2 children, I work 28 hours a week, I continually work hard to provide for my children, the last thing I need in this tough economic climate is to pay more for council tax.
Because of my disability I can only work a certain amount of hours a week, I feel I will be penalised for trying to work and have some self-respect. If you take away my benefit I will be working for nothing and you will therefore force me out of work and into the benefit system. Unless I come from another country and this government will give me every benefit going and more.
Child Benefit is awarded for the child and should not be regarded as adult's income (Principle 6)
Claiming council tax benefit is very hard to do as the forms ask far too many personal questions. People who claim have usually had a kick in the teeth by losing their job and losing self-esteem, the last thing they need is a huge form to fill in. Instead the council should invite the claimant to a meeting to help them to claim, take advantages of other benefits (non-council included) and help to find work. It is after all in the council's interest to support that person to find a job and be able to pay and contribute to local society as a whole. The principle should be to help people and not to kick them when they are down by reducing benefits and making it hard to claim what they are entitled to. When councils have millions in the bank, a little consideration, practical help and discretionary financial help goes a long way and should be part of a caring council. The real principle is of course not to treat the weak, disabled and people who have fallen on hard times as if you do not want them. Benefits are not something to be cut because they cost too much, they are supposed to be caring help. There are some very costly staff working for Herefordshire council but no one thinks we should cut them instead. Why?
Council tax should take into account all forms of income without undue bias (e.g. item 9). However, every encouragement is needed for occupants to save for e.g. shared ownership on own house and to maintain employment. There needs to be sufficient incentive to get a job and keep some of the pay, before benefits are reduced.
Disability, please consider.
Do people who receive Working Tax & Child Tax Credit receive any reduction in council tax? Income into a house and number of dependents in that house should be taken into account when income is below the considered "bread line" amount. Unemployed. Persons not in work & receiving benefits should be made to work for the good of the community to receive a discount. i.e. the council should provide them with an unpaid position to deliver a service to receive their discount/benefit if unemployed. Hours of work equivalent to basic hr. pay rate. It could be tidying up park areas, removing graffiti etc.

Comments:
Downstairs living rooms that have to be converted into bedrooms due to disability should be excluded in calculation
Everyone should contribute to council tax - it is unfair on those paying the tax that those that don't have a vested interest in the benefit system remaining as it is with an ever increasing level of expenditure.
For each of the principles as follows; 1. This would only increase the chances of more people being pushed into poverty, benefits should be calculated on a means tested basis and should reflect the income of the household with no upper limit on entitlement. 2. I fail to understand how anyone who can afford a property of a higher band than D should even qualify for any entitlement. 3. This is punishing people who are willing to take low paid jobs, if they fall below the threshold they should be entitled to claim regardless of the first person's income. 4. Totally agree 5. I disagree unless the other adults are in a wage earning situation and that wage is above the limit currently imposed, many college & six form students undertake part time work at weekends, they should not be penalized (or their parents) for doing so. 6. Never, not ever should this be done? Child benefit should not become a tax burden on the people who have a need for it. 7. Should depend on the circumstances, most people have to work at least a month before receiving wages, to expect them to find extra outgoings in this time is unfair, placing those people into a debt situation. 8. Disagree. However I would agree if the amount being paid out in maintenance is also included in any benefit calculation. i.e. maintenance received ?150/month, maintenance paid ?100/month difference for calculation ?50/ month. I strongly believe that the majority of these principles will affect those people already living on the "bread line", by losing some benefits you would render them to become part of the poverty people, and as such these principles are in the main unfair and very misguided.
I am a married man in my 30s, with a wife who is studying <removed the specified course> and a <age removed> child. At present we have a reduction in our council tax as I am the only earner in the household (and its not a great income either!!). My wife is not earning and hasn't taken any loans out as we do not want to be in debt when she qualifies. I feel the way the Government are going is clearly targeting those who are married and who are trying to better themselves and have children. I feel that people with bigger houses and on higher incomes should be paying more, but also those who are 'free loading' off the Government should also be made to look harder for a job etc. It appears this whole proposal from the Government is targeting the 'average job' in society
I believe that to erase the extended payments could/would discourage a lot of people getting back into work. Perhaps if it was reduced to two weeks it would still save money, but also support people back in to work. The rest of the ideas are very fair.
I disagree with principle 2, as I think that capping at band D will give HC the excuse to penalise properties in the lower banding in the future "we are no longer able to charge above band D therefore will need to increase the amount of CT for lower band households! To 'even it out'? make it 'fair'?
I do not agree with the 1st principle as it will leave people on basic incomes such as income support with less available income than current DWP rules state they need to live on per week. There is also a high risk that people on benefits will not pay and the cost of recovering these small debts could outweigh any potential additional income for the council. This will also impact on people with disabilities who are likely to be affected by other reductions in their income due to changes in DLA - PIP. I think you should take account of other welfare reform changes when considering the impact of this principle. Principle 7 does not support the government agenda to support people back into work. If you are still required to provide this support in HB payments, I believe you should continue to provide it in tax benefit. Regarding principles 6,8, and 9. I agree that these income types should be counted providing the means-test provides an allowance for children. However I disagree with the proposed disregards. The lone parent disregard should not be higher than the couple rate.
I do not think the elderly who saved should have to pay for spendthrifts who have never saved anything. There are large families some with several working sons / daughters who have never had to pay council tax (non dependent deductions bear no relation to the REAL cost of council tax).
I don't think that people who receive lots and lots of benefits should be given even more council tax benefits as some people have loads of kids just to receive lots of free money and do nothing all day long. I also feel that people who work very hard, don't receive any benefits and scrap by should have their council tax increased to help with the government cuts.



Comments:
I don't want to comment on the principles above but shouldn't the council be making people with second homes in the county pay far more than they currently do? It should be a disincentive and encourage people to either live here or not so that local people might be able to purchase a house. I think that second homes should be taxed far more than a first home and that would help with the shortfall.
I feel it is about time that the people that have worked hard all of their working lives should not have to keep taking the brunt for people that do not pay. I have one occasion spoken to people that are better off than me and they claim benefits and I work full time and have to pay all of my own bills, how can this be a fair system? Let people on benefits start to take responsibility for the home they live in.
I feel strongly that the amount of savings you have should NOT be reduced to £10,000. Some people may have saved for a long time to have a little nest egg and they should not have to be penalised for that !!!
I find that even though my property is a 3bdrm detached bungalow with rent of £550pcm I am still penalised for having a 3rd bedroom "beyond my needs". I am registered disabled with Multiple sclerosis, work part time as the demands of full time would be detrimental to my health + mobility. I do require an occasional carer sleep over - who required a room not a sofa, I also have a child with special needs BUT I still find this ruling unfair in general. The rent I pay - private landlord - who has never put my rent up in 6yrs - is still classified too high ! Unfair and no compassion for the disabled !
I get housing and council tax benefit. I'm on low income I got to try to survive on just over 300 pound a week. I'm married got 1 child age 14. I don't get much council tax benefit 5 pound a week. At the moment time probably 10 pound better off than I would be then on the dole. I think there should be more help 4 people working. When u work out benefit you work out the benefit as a family on the dole a family should be on at least 60 pound better off then not working.
I have had no wage increase by next year in 4 years, so for a change let council tax and rent etc. reflect what happens in the wages.
I have made the above response on behalf of Aymestrey Parish Council. At its meeting last Wednesday, the council discussed the proposals and came to the conclusion that in general, expenditure had to be brought into line with tax and grant income and that this necessitated some reductions in benefits paid. The above proposals seem to be a reasonable approach to achieving this in this area of tax/benefit.
I strongly agree with the answers I have given. The current benefit system has created dependence. We need to instil independence that will lead to the more people working and putting something back into society.
I strongly disagree with most of these proposals which will hit the poor hard, particularly including child benefit and maintenance as income and removing extended benefits. Everyone should pay something is reminiscent of the Poll Tax. Jobs are hard enough to come by in Hereford without being penalised for taking one. Many people will have to wait a month for their first pay packet and need all the help they can get.
I strongly disagree to principle one because, its just myself who works 16 hours a week so I pay all the bills. My partner is a wheelchair user and desperately wants to work but with no luck but it does not stop him trying. strongly disagree with principle 2. Because I personally think that when I have house hunted in the past I always tried to rent a lower band property knowing that it will be cheaper. Principle 4 - I disagree because if you have children / partner who needs help or things you have a little money to do it. Principle 5 I think it is up to the house owners / renting to pay the main bills. Then it up to them what they take of others to contribute. Principle 6 - All my child benefit goes on my growing son also so does the child maintenance I received. It also pays some of my son's school trips / milk etc. Principle 7 I totally agree with then so people go back to work they are earning so should pay what they are meant to. I hope that this makes sense.
I strongly disagree with a number of principles because no account is taken of somebody who, through no fault of their own, has no other income than job seeker allowance, which I understand is £71 per week for an individual. It seems right to me that this is already the minimum and to take some from that is wrong. An exception should be made for those on the most basic benefit. As regards the principle 'extending payments' it seems to me that by doing this you are discouraging individuals from going back to work since it would effectively mean starting a new working life in debt. I am a pensioner, have no other income, very little savings and should add that I am not on benefits and never have been. We should ensure equity and to me that means those at the bottom of the pile have to receive at least a minimum to buy essentials and to me £71 per week is as low as it goes.



<b>Comments:</b>
I strongly disagree with discontinuing the 4 week run-on period for those returning to work. Most people who start a new job do not get their first wage for at least 4 weeks, and we should be making it as easy as possible for people to return to work and stay in their new jobs. Whilst I think that most working age tax payers should pay something, I do not think this should apply to the severely disabled, who will never be able to work.
I strongly think that these changes are going affect everyone, who are in receipt of benefits, and on disability, and with families in receipt of benefit.
I think in a time when circumstances mean many people cannot afford their own home and are having to remain with their parents in family homes far longer because of mortgages being harder to get and high rents that making people pay even more is just heaping on misery.
I think it is unfair to penalise parents with children, the child benefit does not cover the full costs of maintaining a child, even when child maintenance is awarded. Children do not bring income into the house, let's face it, apart from child benefit and the working tax credit system. I think you can remain fair to all whilst giving some allowances to encourage people to try to get work i.e. the 4 week feed in time to being asked to pay full council tax. Disabled people I take it will not have any assistance with council tax?? as it all hinges on whether someone is in work.
I think larger family's with at least 3-4 or more children under the age of 18 or 16 and both work should be able to get some help or even a percentage of their bill instead of just being for those who sit on their backside having kids and not working but get everything handed to them on a plate.
I very strongly believe that all sections of society should equally bear the burden. This includes pensioners who on the whole have a higher standard of living than the groups you have identified above, yet at the same time have much more generous council tax benefit allowances.
I would have my own system for which I would qualify.
I would not wish to see single mothers with young children targeted. I was once in that position myself and if the ex-partner suddenly stops paying anything towards the care of children (assuming that a partner is making a contribution) then that can have serious implications on the care of the children. At the same time however, when the children are old enough (which in my opinion is when they attend secondary school) then mothers should be encouraged back into the workplace so that they can start to contribute back into the 'melting pot' which helped them out when they needed it. The only exception I might make to this is where those children have additional needs which require above normal parental care and attention. I am not highly paid and also have a long-term health problem for which I'm not entitled to claim anything and if I can work and pay taxes then people who receive benefits (which after all are forms of 'income') then everyone who can, should pay something.
I'm a single male in my forties , I do believe if you take from the poorer family's that are working on a low pay, more next year , you will cause unimanagble suffering, single parent family's having pay the full amount on council tax even with children at further education, I believe you should aim to lower spending all areas over council to bring down the tax rate that all people pay. How can you expect low earning family's that live in council or rented property's afford the full amount to that of some on living in a mortgage free 4 bedroom house. This don't make sense, you will create such divide with in the community. I could tell dozens of stories whereby, a person has come from a different country , they have full rent paid, council tax, act.. and they have not paid in to any system , sort what you hand out first before taking from them that need it.
I'm not in a position to understand the consequences for a lone parent. The present system was presumably devised as being as fair as possible, spreading the burden of the council charge over the community. These proposed changes hit the poorer, more disadvantaged members of society, disproportionately.
Increase council tax on second homes - if someone can afford a second home, they should be able to support an increase in council tax which in turn can support the community. If they cannot afford the costs of a second home and do not choose to have one, this in turn will release a property that can become someone's primary home.
It is a very unfair system. Often there are several adults living under one roof who all have access to council facilities but their contribution is much less than a pensioner living alone. make it so that the burden is shared and not on the shoulders of a few.

**Comments:**

It is impossible to agree to any of these changes without an adequate impact assessment and particularly an equalities impact assessment. They would seem to disproportionately impact on lone parents, particularly women, with no reason given. Also the principle that all should pay is reminiscent of the ill-fated Poll Tax. The principle could be softened by setting a limit on the extra amount any household has to pay of £3 per week (see Brighton and Hove Council) . In the absence of an adequate impact assessment these proposals would seem reckless at the present time. The growth of food banks in Herefordshire is indicative of growing poverty. The combined effects of price inflation, particularly food, loss of income in real terms, welfare reform cuts, fuel costs ( a particular feature in a rural county, is hitting people hard yet HC seem to have taken no account of these issues. Instead they are presented in isolation. Also where is the assessment of the effect of the taper? If it is to incentivise work I suspect that it could have the opposite effect where a small increase in income could be discouraged by a harsh marginal rate of tax that these proposals may cause. Can we have the figures on that, please? I might add that the scenarios produced are also misleading and inadequate. So I could not agree to anything here without having the necessary information on which to form a balanced opinion.

It seem to me lone parent and children are getting a very bad deal.

It would seem like you are trying to penalize the people who are trying their hardest to bring up their children on their own due to an absent parent. In my experience I have been awarded a maintenance award in the past and it was not held up, thus he now owes over £10,000 which I will never get. My kids are now grown up and moved on. But if your new system was to be introduced I'd have been charged and then had to pay towards my council tax and still not had the money I was due. So I'd have lost out big time.

Little allowance is made of those whose available income may be lower because of their circumstances (such as disability, low pay, children or care for relatives). This is why I disagree with principles 1 (no allowance made for the expenses arising from disability for disabled people of working age), 5 (other adults in a household are likely to be low paid, otherwise they would be able to afford their own accommodation), 6 (child benefit should ensure that children are properly fed and clothed) and 7 (wages are paid in arrears). I support principles 8 and 9 provided that principle 6 does not apply. The principles do remove council tax support from some who can probably afford to lose it. This is why I support principles 2 and 4. The total household income should determine whether council tax support is provided, so I am undecided on principle 3, as it does not address this.

Lone parents that go to work, often work hard and every penny counts. Not all lone parents have got pregnant for benefits & a house. I feel anyone trying to work and get off benefits in anyway should be supported better to encourage working. Charging more council tax to people working in any way is also unfair. Many families struggle along with adult children who are unable to find work & move into their own homes. Charging more for these or not giving benefits to those unemployed is not a good idea as it just costs the parents more. This leads to parents having to evict adult children. Children's benefits or maintenance should not be taken into calculations as it means they will get less of what they need.

Low income families with children will be badly hit by principles 6 & 8 It is not fair that children will be effectively paying council tax.

Many of the proposals affect those on low income. Whilst central government seem intent on demolishing the welfare state, there is no mandate for Herefordshire Council to do so. I appreciate your hands are tied with regard to pensioners, but you must take proper note of the fact that low income families will be hardest hit once all the pensioner households are removed from the equation.

Maybe if someone is genuinely trying to sell there house they exception should be more than 6 months as the climate at the moment is very difficult and 6 months isn't long enough I think up to a year max would be more suitable,.

Not a benefit directly, but removing second home reduction would bring in more council tax overall.

**Comments:**

Overall I agree with the new scheme however I wish to add a point regarding the principle below At present, payments are not included in the benefit calculation and we are proposing that they should be treated as income for calculating the level of council tax support. However, where the maintenance payments apply to children we propose to allow a weekly disregard of £30 a week for each child. While I agree that child maintenance should be included as an income for cuts. I feel it is unfair to still allow a disregard for each child where maintenance is received as I believe this is going against the incentives of families staying together. For example if the principle that child benefit is treated as income is in the council tax scheme. Couples who live together who are married will have no extra disregard in relation to income for their child (except the extra in applicable amount of £64.99 per child as of 2012/2013) Whereas a single parent/ couple receiving child maintenance and child benefit would also be entitled to the same amount per child added to their applicable amount plus the maintenance disregard so in effect? £94.99 per child. I hope this makes sense and I would be happy to discuss this further <removed name & the organisation>

P2 This might help combat under-occupancy. P5 Unworkable. P7 Help to ease the unemployed back to work. P8 All income to be assessed. P9 £25 disregard is neither here nor there so leave it alone and encourage people to at least try to make things better for themselves. Fraudulent disregards have to be investigated though.

People who work a 40-hr week are expected to contribute more of their earnings and it follows that people living on benefits should also share in the contribution until the economy (and council income) recovers. Everyone has to contribute.

Please don't hit lone parents, there are some out there that study full time and work to provide for their child & household. The support that the Council give is very much appreciated but it only helps us survive - it does not cover all outgoings & bills and give you the life of Riley. Not all of us have flat screen TV's and sit on our bottoms all day! Some of us work really hard, maybe look at other areas and re list some of your principles! Why does a couple and single person have disregarded income? They either have 2 incomes or no dependents? Child Benefit is a payment for the child - this is not an income!!

Please see attached letter [Respondent included x2 A4 pages] – see Appendix B

Principle 1 - Strongly agree with this idea, however would argue that a 10% contribution is not sufficient to make this local system workable in the longer term, and feel that a minimum contribution should more reasonably be set at 25%. Principle 2 - Again, strong agreement for the capping, however would again argue that the cut off point should be band C rather than D. Principle 3 - Agree that 2nd adult rebate should be removed in the situation described, however would be keen to ensure that single adult occupancy households discount is protected. Principles 4-9. Agree that the measures of income should be much wider and certainly incorporate child benefit and any maintenance paid. Would prefer a more overarching approach where all forms of income and benefits are taken into account with a small disregarded figure (say £25) applied. Wider comment - would ask that the Council consider wider cost saving options on council tax and providing incentives to use. For example widening the use of direct debits, and offering an annual discount for using direct debit as an incentive. My understanding is that it is possible to offer such an incentive and also deliver a small service delivery saving, and would like to see ideas such as this considered carefully.

Comments:
<p>Principle 1 - the level of taxation in this country is already crippling hard pressed families on low incomes and benefits I am totally against any increase of taxation in general for these vulnerable groups. Principle 2 - many people have inherited property from a deceased family member etc. the deceased may have had a high level of disposable income compared to the person whom lives there now. Taxation should be based on the taxpayers ability to pay. Principle 3 - again I feel strongly that because one partner is on low income/benefit then the other person/partner should be penalised with a reduction in a family budget by increase in council tax. Principle 4 - I support a reduced saving limit to £10,000. Again taxpayers with the ability to pay SHOULD pay. Principle 5 - Any increase in any taxation should be based on the ability to pay not by the amount of people residing there. I always thought council tax was calculated by the property/location not the amount of people under the roof. Such an increase may force the couple to force out a 3rd party thus causing more homeless and pressure on councils to provide homes for individuals. Principle 6 - Child Benefit is exactly that - to provide support for a child. No way should it be calculated as income to prop up council expenditure, there is too much 'back door' taxation in this country. Principle 7 - when taking up employment nobody is paid in advance the 1st month without pay and benefit payment is the hardest time to live. On taking up employment the cost to the individual i.e. new work wear, lunch and more importantly fuel/travel costs are crippling, don't remove extended payments, but perhaps defer payment to the final month of the council tax year. Principle 8 - it takes 2 to bring a child into the world and both child dependent on ability to pay and amount of maintenance paid.</p>
<p>Principle 1. Being of working age and a tax payer does not mean that there is money to spare. Council Tax cannot be avoided but spare a thought for those of us on low wages. Principle 3. This does not take the second adult's circumstances into account. Principle 4. Unfair but we have to be realistic. Principle 6. This could be disastrous for parents on low wages. Child Benefit is one of the few statutory non-means tested benefits available and families on low incomes rely on this guaranteed income. It really should not be included as 'income' in means testing for those on a low income. Principle 7. The transition into paid work from benefits frequently results in a long gap between the final benefit payment and the first pay cheque and it can be very difficult, almost impossible to budget during this time. Removing extended payments would cause hardship to many, and, would be (rightly) seen as petty penny pinching on the part of the Council. Principle 8. Have you ever been on the receiving end of 'voluntary' maintenance payments? They are frequently irregular, late, or missing, nearly always paid with bad grace and are not a reliable income source! Principle 9. Seems unfair - why penalise lone parents? An awful lot of parents become 'lone' through the actions of another person and do not choose their single parenthood status. A lone parent's earning ability is severely curtailed as childcare is the prime objective and a lone parent cannot 'get a second job to make up the shortfall'</p>
<p>Principle 1: I strongly agree that everyone should pay something towards council tax and rent. Nothing should be free. My husband is disabled and yet we use any benefit he has to pay our rent and council tax, I also work Sunday's just to contribute to the rent/council tax. Principle 3: Removal of 2nd adult rebate. Although I have ticked agree for this question I do not believe it should be removed in circumstances where there is a disabled or mentally ill person living at the property.</p>
<p>Principle 1: as benefits are now linked to the lower CPI rather than RPI the poorest are already going to be worse off without having to find a contribution towards Council Tax from an ever decreasing income. Universal Credit is coming in soon to replace the various benefits that can currently be claimed. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of the poorest will be worse off following this change as, unsurprisingly, many will find their entitlements reduced. Principle 6: It is morally wrong to include Child Benefit as income that can be used to calculate entitlement to CT Benefit. The very poorest children will, again, be hit the hardest. THE COUNCIL MUST RETHINK THIS PROPOSAL.</p>
<p>Principle 2 - What happens to the very elderly living alone in large family property. If they are in a high council tax band with low income this should be taken into account. Principle 4 - £16,000 savings is very little if you are suddenly landed with large bills e.g. repairs to roof, plumbing problems etc. which easily eat up savings.</p>
<p>Principle 3 Income from any source should be treated equally. Rebate for low income second adult. If the second adult is disabled or frail this reduction should remain, since the householder is effectively subsidising the state.</p>
<p>Principle 5 - this would, of course, have to exclude over 18's who are still in full time education, even though they are 'working age', or if they have been unable to get a job, the term 'adult' is obscure, circumstances must be investigated, one size does not fit all.</p>

**Comments:**

Principle 5. Definition of adult? 16 or 18[?] Should only pay if working. Principle 6. Child Benefit should be stopped to middle & high earners. Principle 7. To truly help people back to work the extended payments [are] needed. Principle 2. Tax high earners & larger properties. Once again the poor take the wrap for the rich & why are you spending so much on recruiting & paying a C.E.O.? [Note added to end of questionnaire reads:] P.S. Sorry for mistakes, partner filled out some of this, corrected it as my name is on the questionnaire! (he feels very strongly about some issues raised here!!).

Principle 6 and 8 I think is an unfair look at parents who may be struggling. I receive child benefit and don't even count that as an income as I don't even see it. it goes straight into my child's nursery and maintenance payments are for the child not for the parent and I think that is important as that may be the only money they have to spare on their child.

Principle 6 seems most unfair. Child benefit should not be classed as income; as its very name suggests it is there to benefit the child. It isn't a great sum of money to begin with and to squeeze it further would have a dramatic affect on many households and children.

Principle 6:- Child benefit, whilst given to the parent(s) is predominately for the child, I do not think it fair to take this into account as income as you will be in effect taking money from children!!! Principle 8:- Maintenance payments should not be included as income. The payments received are for the child(ren)to buy them food, clothing, shoes etc. and NOT to be used to pay bills!! Principle 9:- Lone parents have it hard enough trying to run a household on 1 income and now you want to take even more money off them??!! Disgusting!! The principles I have mentioned above I feel quite strongly about. As a lone parent of 2 myself, I find it a struggle to get the bare essentials as it is. I do work, however, if it was not for the benefits I receive (which I am not proud of receiving) my family would be living on the breadline! If you bring in these unnecessary measures, I think there will be a lot more families and more importantly children living in poverty! Do you really want that on your conscience??!!

Principle 8: Child Benefit is for children, we must not increase child poverty. P.9: It is understandable to want working adults to contribute to the household bills. I am deeply concerned that in doing so, changing the rules, child poverty will be increased, so it is important to take account of the number of children a lone parent has in full time education, even after 18! However, taking a small % from most people who can work is fair but pushing some of those into poverty is not sensible - it will increase NHS bills etc. For rural areas it is important to take into account the cost of travel to/from work, especially for those on low incomes.

Principle 9 - Although I have ticked 'strongly agree' I disagree that the amount of £20 should be disregarded for lone parents. I see no reason why the amounts should differ between them, couples or a single person, especially when other allowances are also being disregarded. The amount disregarded should be £10 across all categories.

Principle 9. Why should Single parents still receive a 'higher' amount disregarded as other members of the population. It is often the parents wish to be a single parent, and they appear to receive more support proportionally than other income groups. I would regard this as grossly unfair. Principle 7. It is often difficult for people returning to work. Their benefits cease as of the first day they begin work yet they may have to wait several weeks (and at least 2 weeks because of the 'week in hand' practice) before receiving any remuneration. During this time they have to provide transport costs etc. in addition to meeting their regular commitments for food, fuel bills etc. This would result in people arriving at the end of the first month, in an arrears situation with their Council tax which could act as a deterrent in returning to work. Principle 1. Many people are unemployed through no fault of their own, or through sickness/disability. Their fixed income is extremely low and the increased burden of yet another 'bill to pay' would prove intolerable.

Principle nine should be reduced to ten pound I don't see why single parents should be given preferential treatment over couples it should just go on household income. I don't think that child benefit should be included as income as this is meant to be for children not to pay tax. Also I do not really think that maintenance payments should be counted as this is for children however I suppose it would depend on overall household income and circumstances.



<b>Comments:</b>
Principles 6, 8 and 9, targeting child benefit, maintenance and lone parent I feel is the wrong way to go. This will put more pressure on a single parent who wants to work. I am a single parent and have been for 14 years. Out of those 14yrs I have worked 10yrs. it has been a struggle but have managed. If you consider taking more money of me it will be even more difficult. The maintenance I get (£40 per week) and the child benefit is my daughters money. It pays for everything that she needs. I do not use this towards anything else other than the well being of her. And I am sure that I speak for many, some people in receipt of council tax discount probably earn more than some people working. 'I am not going to work I cannot afford to go' is what I hear.
Principles 7 & 9 I feel that every effort should be made to get - keep people in employment. By withdrawing the extra 4 weeks benefit (principle 7) will just encourage people to stay on benefits and the same applies to principle 4.
Proposals do not go far enough and the working person is penalised again Maintenance disregard should be £15 per child Attendance Allowance / DLA care & Mobility Allowance should have 50% disregard the remainder taken into account especially if the carer is a member of the family or a relative.
Question 8.....All maintenance payments should be used as Income with NO deduction for any children. I feel it's fair to disregard Child Benefit for all to make it fair for everyone.
Regarding principle 4, we believe if your claiming any help or benefits you shouldn't have any savings. Benefits are for people that really need them and have nothing left to fall back on.
Savings limit should be kept at £16000 after working and paying taxes all ones life £16000 is not a huge amount. Pensioners are being hit by a higher inflation rate than employed people An all time low savings rates is having a devastating affect How councils and government think £1 is earned weekly for every £500 in a building society account beggars belief! Many with small savings say up to £16000 are struggling with increasing heating and food costs the next thing could be "do I eat, keep warm or pay the council tax" Also reducing this would deter young people to save anything even if they could
Should not take child maintenance into account as sometimes the mother/father do not always receive payments.
Some parts of these proposals sound rather like the poll tax, some parts would be a small improvement to the way we pay council tax.
Some proposals will further impoverish those on low incomes, benefits and lone parents. Help should be targeted at the poorest. Those with larger properties have far more options than those in modest dwellings or rented accommodation. In particular, those older (and often single) people occupying large properties should not be subsidised any more than those in modest property. All taxpayers should pay something. 10% of a band D charge is fairly modest - around £2.55 per week in my case. Lone parents are already challenged with the latest changes to benefits legislation - for example, Tax Credits will in future be available to workers working 25 hours per week rather than the current 16, thus impoverishing a particular group of workers, and those probably more likely to be women in already low-paid occupations. The current disregard should apply, unless it takes the actual payable Council Tax below 10% of the full charge, in which case, I propose that the 10% minimum applies. However, in general, I support the concept of a local income tax, for money to be spent and accounted for generally, so welcome the proposals to devolve the Council Tax scheme to local authorities an a step in the right direction.
The Council is consulting on the assumption it will lose grant of £1.3million whilst the Local Government Minister has stated that Herefordshire will lose £1,033,778-the council is therefore looking to take from benefit claimants £266,000(26%)more than it is losing. Principle 1 will bring a fairness like the poll tax tried and failed to achieve. Principle 2 will disadvantage large families in large property and widows left in the family home. Principle 5 needs a limit placing on contribution Principle 6 this is a national benefit assed as needed by a family unit and should remain as a disregard Principle 7 should remain as support and encouragement back to work Principles 8+9 taken with other changes can reduce benefit to a lone parent by up to 96% surely an unfairness in anyone's eyes
The fundamental problem with all benefits, whether at national or local level, is how to distinguish between those who genuinely need them and those who play the system. Few people object to helping the former group; many bitterly resent subsidising the latter. This comment particularly applies to maintenance payments.
The parish council felt that some of the principles were ambiguous and some of the questions loaded.

<b>Comments:</b>
The poor should not be penalised for the mistakes of the rich. With all costs rising how do we expect those people on low incomes to cope. Council Tax has been a tax on property not on the individual. If the government wish to tax working people and their families more, let them at least have the courage to do this through income tax and not on another indirect stealth tax.
These principles you are proposing will hit the poorest people in the county. This is unfair, especially for people in low paid jobs or those with low incomes who are working hard without the benefit of fair remuneration. The wealthier in society should pay more. Corporations that are getting away with tax evasion should be paying more - companies like Starbucks, Google and Amazon. Also bankers who are getting large bonuses out of the public purse. This is so unfair. There is plenty of money around, but most of it is being trapped and hoarded by the elite. Legislate against the elite. Look at your own salary structures. Are there savings to be made in Council practises? Of the hiring of staff and the amount senior staff get paid at the Council.
Think council tax charges (or at least the police and fire brigade element) should be higher for higher band properties than present. This may mean lower band properties could charge less. Don't support council tax benefit.
This government do not care about anybody but the rich who can afford to do things like this they the Tories are bunch of arrogant Bastards who want to keep the poor in their place.
When people start receiving state pension after being on guaranteed pension credit there can be a large increase in outgoings such as council tax that the state pension does not replace
Where maintenance is concerned it could be that you would have to change the payment every month as not all ex partners keep to the agreements they have been given so you would have people contacting you every month to change your payments
Whilst understanding that the council has the responsibility to keep a balanced budget and council tax levels at reasonable limits, I am concerned that for Herefordshire this is very challenging, in the light of the fact that it has one of the lowest pay levels in the country, a rural county where travelling distance for work, accessing shopping areas and accessing services has a large impact on those who are less well off. Many people are already struggling to make ends meet with continued rises in food and utility prices as well as fuel for heating and for vehicles, many people are not on a bus route so public transport is not even an option in many parts of the county. This is even more difficult for those working in a low wage employment and the loss of benefit as well as cutbacks in the working tax credit levels would mean that maintaining that employment will become increasingly difficult and potentially add to the demands on the benefit resources through loss of employment or inability to take up employment opportunities due to financial viability. I feel that unless these sort of issues are taken into account in a wider context these cut backs instead of saving money could actually increase the problem and add to the hardship of many residents in the county.
Why ??? Any disregard? Questions poorly presented with little explanation for those not au fait with the system. A cap of amount of children being claimed for would be appropriate e.g. 2 per household the present system appears to favour those with children (unmarried families) in particular. Childless married couples and pensioners, also young single males who get very little help.
Why is the single occupancy set at 25% discount surely a fairer way would be 50% discount or somewhere near.
Why should the single mothers, who have children as a source of income from the state rather than working, get the choice of houses and areas to live in, they get enough benefits as it is.
Your questionnaire has completely ignored a very large and very important section of Herefordshire's society - CARERS !!!

**Q12. We want to ensure that any changes made are fair to everyone. To help us do this, please tell us if you think that any of the principles above will particularly affect any group of people due, for example, to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.**

**If yes, please explain which groups and the reasons they might be affected:**

Q11. Yes/ No/ Don't know	Q12. Comments:
Don't know	Council tax on vicarages is paid by the Hereford Diocese or Board of Finance.
Don't know	Principle 5: I may have misunderstood, but I am concerned that parents of 18 year olds still in full time education may need to pay extra council tax when their children reach 18, because the children obviously won't be able to pay. I think this may cause hardship to parents of 18 year olds in their last year of school/college.
Don't know	The less well off Disabled and the old.
No	All groups should be expected to pay 10% after all they use the same services as the working individual & are the first to complain if something goes wrong. Fairness across the board would give a working people a reward as well. Welfare Reform cannot come to soon.
No	I feel that all adults whatever their income should pay something towards the council tax to take ownership of local services, they might then be able to respect what they receive. If they pay nothing it is just too easy to remain on benefits and not make an effort to get off them
Yes	6: Child benefit must not be treated in such a way as to disadvantage mothers and children.
Yes	Age - disability and Marriage.
Yes	Age - harder for youngsters to get jobs due to less experience, qualifications often do not count for anything.
Yes	All ages will be affected especially the elderly who have worked hard and paid taxes for over 40 years and have small to modest savings of say £16000 This will discourage young people to save and would be better off spending as the state will take care of everyone who has no savings
Yes	All of these as they are more likely to be in the lower paid or benefit sector.
Yes	As explained above I feel it will be unfair re couples who live together/ married
Yes	As given above the proposed reforms would affect all working age benefits claimants in the same way, given similar household arrangements: I am concerned that this may, whilst motivating the idle, unintentionally impoverish the incapable.
Yes	As stated above, lone parents are going to be penalised for raising their children on their own, whilst the absent parent may pay maintenance, if this is going to be considered as income, that maintenance will be used for bill paying and not the children - HOW is that right??!!
Yes	British white people will be penalised, for living and working in their own country.
Yes	Capping at band B the bigger the property the more should be paid. Multiple adults in each property should all contribute again this government appears to be penalising the low or disadvantaged people
Yes	Capping council tax benefit at Band D might affect disabled people who have to live in larger properties because of their particular needs.
Yes	Child maintenance and child benefit. Child benefit is used to help parents buy food and clothes
Yes	Children - using their money as part of the calculation means they will get less. Lone parents - allow them to keep some of their wages to encourage them to work, they need every penny.
Yes	Disability due to extra bedroom.
Yes	Disabled - uncertainty about future payments with regards to DLA. Severe disability for those over 16 years of age who become as adult but cannot live independently lone carers of disabled individuals who cannot work due to their caring duties.



Yes	Disabled and full time carers.
Yes	Disabled people already have to use their benefit money to pay rent and council tax instead of using it for their care needs. Removal of 2nd adult rebate will leave vulnerable persons at risk.
Yes	Disabled people as explained above. As the proposals only affect people of working age then clearly this group will be most affected.
Yes	Elderly on fixed incomes and savings which have failed to attract interest (subsidising low interest mortgages) should not have to pay more council tax just because they do not claim CTB. If so-called low income families do not contribute more inevitably older people older people would have to pay more.
Yes	Every case is different every need also different depends on entitlement of individuals.
Yes	Everyone is different, reducing a benefit will always effect some group in society in a detrimental way. The challenge must be to provide real help to each claimant to mitigate from any benefit reductions.
Yes	Families, especially single parent families
Yes	Families with children will really suffer and it is hard enough already for low income families to ensure children get all they need.
Yes	Families with children. Reasons above.
Yes	Family on low income one wage earner in the family
Yes	Gender - women will be disproportionately affected by some of the proposals. Statistical, they are more likely to be lone parents, carers and in receipt of maintenance payments. In addition, maintenance payments may not be regularly received or even where agreed, not paid at all.
Yes	I am concerned about single mothers losing out with the result that their child/children will lose out accordingly
Yes	I have been thorough with my reasons on the previous page. Any changes must be based on the ability to pay. Taxation in this country is grossly unfair i.e. fuel duty and the VAT component and Road Fund Licence. I pay the same level with my £100 per week disability money as a multi millionaire in a Ferrari driving along the same roads. Totally wrong
Yes	I think it effects the family unit...especially families with working age children who cannot get on the property ladder. They pay a fair chunk of rent for living with parents (who don't work) and pay council tax too. To get rid of the rebate would be just unfair. It also aims to take money off those who are lucky to find employment if doing away with the 4 week grace they give at the moment it just means you will end up with more people in debt but you seem to have overlooked this. Remember it usually takes 4-6 weeks to get first wage therefor you would start off in debt to rent and council tax ....always playing catch up but never getting there and you will then send loads of letters saying how much we owe and how quick you want it.
Yes	I think it will affect everyone. I think it is very hard to afford to live at the moment and to charge people more would mean the most vulnerable would suffer (children + the disabled)
Yes	I think it would make things easier for people who pay maintenance because some people pay too much maintenance so to take it in to consideration is great.
Yes	I think single parent household and couple households should be treated the same. I don't think money meant specifically for children should be counted as income, i.e. child benefit, child tax credit, maintenance payments.
Yes	I think there is a danger some of them will discriminate against children
Yes	I would be concerned that some of these changes would impact those people who are least well off the most.
Yes	I would not want young families to be affected by changes, or any vulnerable person who is not in a position to lose money.
Yes	If having been on additional benefits for medical reasons, e.g. bipolar and having got their medication sorted find their benefits reduced. What you proposing is that they would receive even less. It seems to me that it should be a graduated reduction rate so that any reduction is less noticeable.

Yes	It appears that you are being targeted if you are married and have children
Yes	It appears that Herefordshire Council is deliberately targeting lone parents and wants to reduce their income. Very questionable intentions indeed. Secondly, councillors and MP's of a certain age and in positions of power continually seek to protect their pensions, benefit entitlements and standards of living in general at the expense of the young. A national disgrace that will come back to haunt society no doubt about it. Very short sighted and selfish in the extreme.
Yes	Lone parents and their child or children.
Yes	Lone parents, mostly women will particularly be adversely affected, as will the poor.
Yes	Lone parents, young people e.g. NEETS living at home, possibly student. But again without an adequate impact assessment this question is meaningless.
Yes	Lone parents-War Disabled-War Widows and families in larger properties War pensioners currently have disregards of payments-no reference to continuing this discretionary disregard
Yes	Long term disabled.
Yes	Low income families, increasing child poverty
Yes	Modifications to the lone parent disregard could adversely impact upon women, for the reasons described above.
Yes	No principal in particular. But disability should be taken into account when calculating council tax benefit. Those with disabilities may find it harder to gain employment so may need more help.
Yes	Old people, young people, single parents.
Yes	Older people, people with mental health problems, Learning difficulties, Physical health disabilities. Any disadvantaged person.
Yes	Parents or parent with "child" or young adult in college or university, or even apprenticeship, with very low incomes.
Yes	People with disabilities due to them often being on low income anyway.
Yes	People with Disability - those with learning disabilities are very vulnerable people and do not understand the value of money. The above changes (if they all went through) would mean a big reduction in their weekly income/allowances and expenditure would greatly increase. Also people on low wages (many with children) would have to stretch their already low income to beyond breaking point.
Yes	Pregnancy - not all able to get grants or maternity pay.
Yes	Principle 1 would disadvantage disabled people, where their disability gives rise to expenses relating to their disability.
Yes	Sex - most lone parents are women and they would be discriminated against as they are the ones left home looking after children!!
Yes	Single adult households
Yes	Single mums
Yes	Single parent families, or couples living on or near the bread line.
Yes	Single parents - have to pay more tax
Yes	Single parents and children would mostly be affected.
Yes	Single parents who are working but on a low income
Yes	Single parents, disabled, chronic low incomes.
Yes	The household has a person who is wheelchair bound and unable to do most things. The heating is on all day - most nights in the winter which with any extra Council Tax to pay something has to go ! ! !
Yes	The long term sick, and unemployed would be severely disadvantaged by these proposals
Yes	The proposals will affect lone parents. The majority of lone parents are female; Therefore one sex will be disproportionately affected.
Yes	The proposed changes would seem to affect largely those on low incomes. They are precisely the people who we are likely to suffer the most during an economic downturn.

Yes	The single parent. I live in a road and the past 6years, one household has had 8 working adults living there and pay 1 council, I live alone with a child and get a discount. More needs to be done to target every earning adult.
Yes	The unemployed unemployable people who think the state should support them when the fill their lives with drugs and drink and then expect tax payers to pay for their reckless pointless lives.
Yes	The worrying effect is on elderly living in their own homes on fixed incomes based on savings.
Yes	They will affect the poorest in society, especially the working poor regardless of age, gender, sex etc. By the way the notion of race is scientifically and socially outdated. There is only one race - the Human Race. We all originate from the same, very small group of humans in Africa many thousands of years ago. The word race, referring to a plurality of races should never be used.
Yes	Those who are disabled !
Yes	Women for at least 2 principles as most lone parents are women.
Yes	Women will be more affected by proposed changes then men. As most single parent households are headed up by a woman.
Yes	Yes single parents.
Yes	You are discriminating on age by omitting pensioners (only working ages people's benefits are being considered - see above).
Yes	You will affect everyone apart from the well off, FACT !
Yes	You would seem to be targeting low income families/parents by proposing that you include child benefit and maintenance payments in your calculations. Also - your statement does not make sense! It should read ..'and the reasons why they might be affected'
Yes	Your principles are targeting parents / lone parents..... Child Benefit? Maintenance? Lone parent income?
Not answered	Already stated.
Not answered	How on earth can you be fair as you will do what you like any way.
Not answered	People on reduced benefits, those in supported housing, vulnerable people who are now routinely being housed in the community
Not answered	Principle 8. - single parents and their child(ren) should not be penalised.

