

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME CHALLENGE PANEL**

**October 2014**

1	<b>SUBJECT</b>	Review of the current Council Tax Support Scheme
2	<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
3	<b>REVIEW GROUP</b>	<p><b>Councillors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Barry Macleod-Cullinane (Chair)</li> <li>• Cllr Paul Osborn</li> <li>• Cllr Jerry Miles</li> <li>• Cllr Barry Kendler</li> <li>• Cllr Pamela Fitzpatrick</li> </ul> <p><b>Co-optees:</b></p>
4	<b>AIMS/ OBJECTIVES/ OUTCOMES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explore the impact on Harrow's residents of the introduction of the local council tax support scheme and the contribution it may be making to household debt problems</li> <li>• To understand how residents affected by the scheme are managing to make their Council Tax payments</li> <li>• To consider the findings of the CTS consultation to inform the development of the new scheme</li> <li>• To consider other schemes both London wide and nationally in relation to lessons learnt and how the findings can influence the development of the new scheme</li> </ul>
5	<b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS OF REVIEW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the impact of the current scheme on Harrow's residents which are then considered to inform the development of the new scheme.</li> <li>• To support the development of an informed Council Tax Support Scheme taking into consideration the findings of the review.</li> <li>• Recommendations are made which if accepted would help prevent residents falling into severe debt problems.</li> </ul>
6	<b>SCOPE</b>	<p>The challenge panel will address how the current Council Tax support Scheme affects the residents of Harrow, especially those who are the most vulnerable and families. It will seek to understand how they are managing to make the payments and what the impact of having to make these payments is.</p> <p>Through the challenge panel, it is hoped that the future Council Tax support Scheme is developed taking into consideration the findings of the review to minimise the impact on those affected.</p>

7	<b>SERVICE PRIORITIES (Corporate/Dept)</b>	This review relates to all four of the Corporate Priorities 2014/15, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making a difference for the most vulnerable</li> <li>• Making a difference for communities</li> <li>• Making a difference for families</li> <li>• Making a difference for local businesses</li> </ul>
8	<b>REVIEW SPONSOR</b>	Fern Silverio
9	<b>ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER</b>	Rachel Gapp, Head of Policy
10	<b>SUPPORT OFFICER</b>	Mohammed Ilyas, Policy Officer
11	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT</b>	Policy Team
12	<b>EXTERNAL INPUT</b>	The input of the following may be useful for the challenge panel: <p><b>Stakeholders:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff involved in the development and delivery of the scheme</li> <li>• Relevant corporate director(s)</li> <li>• Relevant portfolio holder(s)</li> <li>• Benefit recipients affected by the scheme</li> </ul> <p><b>Partner agencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charities and voluntary groups assisting and supporting those affected by the scheme</li> </ul> <p><b>Experts/advisers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative interest groups, housing associations, tenants and Landlords association</li> </ul>
13	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	The challenge panel will involve three phases. A desk-based research phase gathering evidence from various local and national studies, the results of the current CTS consultation exercise, data, and written evidence from partners. The Challenge Panel would also like to receive evidence or case studies from ward Councillors if at all possible. <p>This will then inform the structure and lines of questioning for the Challenge panel itself which will take evidence from key officers, managers, and the Portfolio Holder from the Council and key voluntary sector organisations and housing associations.</p> <p>The report and recommendations will then be written up and submitted to cabinet</p>
14	<b>EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS</b>	The introduction of the local council tax support scheme has implications on some of the most vulnerable members of the community including those from minority ethnic groups, the elderly

		<p>and those who are disabled. The local economy, health and social care facilities in the borough are also affected as a result of the council tax scheme as residents have less to spend.</p> <p>The challenge panel will consider during the course of its work, how equality implications have been taken into account in current policy and practice and consider the possible implications of any changes it recommends.</p> <p>In carrying out the challenge panel, Members will also need to consider its own practices and how it can facilitate all relevant stakeholders in the borough to have their voices heard.</p>
15	<b>ASSUMPTIONS/ CONSTRAINTS</b>	<p>The success of the challenge panel may be dependant on the ability and willingness of officers, partners and stakeholders (as relevant) to participate and contribute fully in this work.</p> <p>Recognising financial reality is another consideration that should be considered as part of the challenge panel.</p>
16	<b>SECTION 17 IMPLICATIONS</b>	<p>The challenge panel will have regard to the possible community safety implications of any recommended changes to policy or practice.</p>
17	<b>TIMESCALE</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Agree panel members and scope virtually – Sept</li> <li>2) O&amp;S 7th Oct agree scope</li> <li>3) Challenge panel 20-24 Oct</li> <li>4) Panel agree report by 10th Nov</li> <li>5) O&amp;S agree report and fwd to Cabinet 18th Nov</li> <li>6) Cabinet receive report 20th Nov or 11<sup>th</sup> Dec</li> <li>7) Response to report at Dec/Jan Cabinet</li> </ol>
18	<b>RESOURCE COMMITMENTS</b>	<p>To be met from existing scrutiny budget. No significant additional expenditure is anticipated.</p>
19	<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	<p>Mohammed Ilyas, as advised by the review group.</p>
20	<b>REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<p>Outline of formal reporting process:</p> <p>To Divisional Director [✓] throughout the course of the challenge panel and when developing recommendations and as a witness at the challenge panel</p> <p>To Portfolio Holder [✓] as a witness at the challenge panel and when developing recommendations</p> <p>To CSB [✓] TBC</p> <p>To O&amp;S [✓] TBC</p> <p>To Cabinet [✓] TBC</p>