

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting:	18th November 2014
Subject:	Report from the Council Tax Support Scheme Challenge Panel
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap Divisional Director, Partnership Development and Performance
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Councillor Steve Wright: Policy Lead – Resources Councillor Adam Swersky: Performance Lead - Resources
Exempt:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Report from the Council Tax Support Scheme Challenge Panel

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report accompanies the report from the Council Tax Support Scheme Challenge Panel. The report outlines the review's observations and findings with regard the council's Council Tax Support Scheme.

Recommendations:

Councillors are recommended to:

- I. Consider the findings and recommendations of the Council Tax Support Scheme Challenge Panel
- II. Refer the review's recommendations to cabinet for consideration

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

As part of the Spending Review 2010, the Government announced that it would localise support for Council Tax from 2013/14, reducing the grant by ten per cent. Local authorities were required to set up localised Council Tax Support (CTS) Schemes to provide support to low income households with council tax for implementation from 1 April 2013.

The Scrutiny Leadership Group decided to undertake a review of Harrow's current CTS Scheme. The CTS Scheme Challenge Panel took place on the 27th October 2014 and the main aims were 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
- understand how residents affected by the scheme are managing to make their Council Tax payments
- consider the findings of the CTS consultation to inform the development of the new scheme
- 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

The panel invited and heard evidence from Council officers, the Portfolio Holder, local voluntary organisations and charities. Ward councillors were also requested to submit anecdotal evidence based on cases regarding CTS from their constituents.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report. However, if the report's recommendations are accepted, the services considered will provide detail of any costs likely to be incurred.

Performance Issues

There are no specific performance issues associated with this report.

Environmental Impact

There are no specific environmental impact associated with this report.

Risk Management Implications

There are none specific to this report.

Equalities Implications

A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was undertaken in the development of our Council Tax Support Scheme which was considered by the challenge panel as evidence. However, an EqIA was not carried out specifically for this report. as the report includes no proposals for service

change. Where changes result from the acceptance of this reports recommendations, these will be accompanied by an EqIA.

Council Priorities

This review relates to all four of the Corporate Priorities 2014/15, including:

- Making a difference for the most vulnerable
- Making a difference for communities
- Making a difference for families
- Making a difference for local businesses

Ward Councillors notified:

N/A

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Mohammed Ilyas, Policy officer. 0208 424 1322

Background Papers: Council Tax Support Scheme Challenge Panel Scope.