



SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24TH SEPTEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: HELP FOR PENSIONERS WITH THEIR COUNCIL TAX

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151
OFFICER**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out further options for Members to consider in relation to the 'Help for Pensioners with their Council Tax' Scheme.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The attached report was presented to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 17th June 2014.
- 2.2 Following consideration of the options presented in the report Members requested details of some additional options targeting the financial support at those aged 65 and above, those aged 70 and above and finally, those of pensionable age.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The budget strategy agreed by Council in February 2014 required estimated savings of £6.5m for the 2015/16 financial year and £6.9m for 2016/17. This has since been revised following advice from the Minister for Local Government in June 2014 that Local Authorities should now plan for cuts of up to 4.5% in Welsh Government funding, rather than the previously notified indicative cut of 1.5%. This has the potential to increase the savings requirement for 2015/16 to £15.1m and £15.0m for 2016/17.
- 3.2 The 'Help for Pensioners with their Council Tax' Scheme links to work around tackling poverty, supporting independent living and supports the 50+ positive action and Equalities agendas. It further links to both the Prosperous and Safer themes of "Caerphilly Delivers", the Local Service Board single integrated plan.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The options previously presented to Members are as follows:-
- a. Carry on funding the scheme at 2013/14 levels, i.e. £246k.
 - b. Withdraw the scheme completely with effect from 1st April 2015 onwards and achieve a saving of £246k per annum.
 - c. Award 50% of the current level of grant from 1st April 2015 onwards and achieve a saving of £123k per annum.

- d. Award 50% of the current level of grant for the 2015/16 financial year and then withdraw the scheme completely with effect from 1st April 2016. This would achieve a saving of £123k in 2015/16, with a further £123k per annum being realised from April 2016 onwards.

4.2 The table below summarises the additional options requested by Members:-

Option	No. of Qualifying Accounts	Cost £	Saving £
Target funding at those aged 65 plus	2584	228k	18k
Target funding at those aged 70 plus	1918	169k	77k
Target funding at those of Pensionable Age	2781	245k	1k

4.3 Members are reminded that the current scheme is targeted at those aged 60 plus and there are 2811 qualifying accounts.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Any decision to reduce or withdraw the scheme may have to be monitored in terms of impact and pensioners who fall into arrears may need to be signposted to other forms of support from sources within the Council and from external partners in the voluntary sector.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Following the announcement in June 2014 by the Minister for Local Government, the Authority's MTFP has been revised and savings of up to £30.1m may be required for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

6.2 The maximum potential saving from the proposals in this report is £246k.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 There are no consultation responses which have not been reflected in this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members are asked to consider and comment upon the full range of options set out in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 of this report.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To ensure that the views of the Scrutiny Committee are considered prior to the report being presented to Cabinet.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000.

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Consultees: Corporate Services SMT
Cllr B Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
J. Carpenter, Council Tax & NNDR Manager
A. Price, Barrister/Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer

Appendices:
Appendix 1: Special Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee 17/06/14 – Help for Pensioners with their Council Tax Report 3(3)