

REPORT OF CABINET

29 JANUARY 2020

LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

Supplementary Report of the Executive Director of Corporate Services

Included within the Report of the Cabinet (item number 3) is a report recommending approval of the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme ("LCTSS") for 2020/2021.

The report recommends that the LCTSS be amended from 1st April 2020 to incorporate any legislative changes to the prescribed requirements for the Scheme but that it be not otherwise revised or replaced.

Whilst there is no change to Cabinet's substantive recommendation, this supplementary report provides an update in relation to the information contained within the original report.

Section 5 of the original report confirmed that on 15 May 2019, new rules came into force that affected how mixed age couples (where one partner of the couple is over Pension Credit qualifying age and the other one under that age) access benefits. MHCLG indicated that their intention was to introduce amendments to the prescribed requirements for council tax reduction schemes to ensure regulatory alignment and to enable local council tax support schemes to be amended for the year 2020/2021.

The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 have now been made – issued after the date of the Cabinet report – but do not include the amendment relating to mixed aged couples previously referred to by MHCLG. It is, in fact, the case that the LCTSS already defines a "pensioner" for the purpose of Council Tax reduction as a person who has attained the qualifying age for state pension credit and is not – and his/her partner is not – a person with an award of Universal Credit. The rule changes brought into effect in May 2019 simply change the circumstances in which mixed age couples will receive Universal Credit and the Government has now confirmed its view that no further legislative changes are required to align council tax reduction schemes to the changes in respect of other benefits. On this basis, Members should note that the previously anticipated change will not be incorporated into the Council's Scheme for 2020/2021.