

Subject: Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22 – Extract from the proceedings of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on the 21 January 2021

Date of Meeting: 28 January 2021

Report of: Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law

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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**Action Required of Council:**

To consider the report and the recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee.

Recommendations:

That Policy & Resources Committee recommended to Council that:

- (i) The maximum rate of Council Tax Reduction discount be increased from 80% of Band D to 82% of Band D.
- (ii) The minimum award of Council Tax Reduction be reset to 1p per week.
- (iii) Funding of £0.200m be allocated for the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction fund.
- (iv) The requirement for completing a Council Tax Reduction claim form be removed for Universal Credit recipients, in the circumstances described in paragraph 4.9 of the report.
- (v) It is noted that the council's appointed S151 Chief Financial Officer will, prior to 1 April 2021, exercise delegated powers to increase the appropriate calculative elements of the scheme to give effect to national changes.
- (vi) It is noted that a more fundamental review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be undertaken and consulted on for 2022/23, including the alignment of the scheme with a wider review of the council's Welfare Support Framework.

MINUTE EXTRACT

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

4.00pm 21 JANUARY 2021

VIRTUAL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Mac Cafferty (Chair) Druitt (Joint Deputy Chair), Gibson (Joint Deputy Chair), Platts (Opposition Spokesperson), Bell (Group Spokesperson), Allcock, Clare, Miller, Yates and Appich

Also present: Dr Sasidharan (Standing Invitee)

128 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021/22

- 128.1 The Committee considered the report of the Acting Chief Finance Officer regarding the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme for 2021/2022.
- 128.2 Dr Sasidharan asked what other approaches the Council had to support low income families. The Acting Chief Finance Officer said that the Council provided funding of around £1m per year for a variety of advice agencies. The Revenues and Benefits department had suspended debt collection during the pandemic and, where appropriate, were signposting people to welfare rights advice groups as well as offering support through hardship funds. All services in the Council were aware of the difficulties some families faced both currently and in 'normal' times and the Council tried to ensure that there was a joined-up approach to supporting them.
- 128.3 Councillor Druitt said that he was pleased with the proposals put forward in the report, and that the new scheme was more financially generous and easier to apply for than it had been before.
- 128.4 Councillor Gibson said he agreed with the proposals in the report which would support the poorest people, and noted that the consultation carried out was representative of residents in the city and the recommendations reflected the views of those people.
- 128.5 Councillor Miller said he supported the report and noted that it was good that the Council were in a position to be able to spend additional money on those who needed it most.
- 128.6 The Chair noted that there was an amendment from the Labour Group.

128.7 Councillors Gibson and Bell said that the Green and Conservative Groups would fully support the amendment and asked Councillor Yates if he would be agreeable to the amendment being a joint cross-party amendment. Councillor Yates said he was pleased that all parties would support the amendment but declined the offer and said he would prefer to continue as a Labour Group amendment.

128.8 Councillor Yates said that it was important to support the most vulnerable residents in the city and agreed with the recommendations in the report, but felt that it didn't make financial sense to have a minimum award of 50p or 20p per week and that 1p per week would be the most appropriate. He therefore proposed the following amendment to Recommendation 2.2:

2.2 The minimum award of Council Tax Reduction be reset to ~~one of three options to be recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee:~~

- 1) Option 1: reset the minimum award to 50p per week;*
- 2) Option 2: reset the minimum award to 20p per week;*
- 3) Option 3: reset the minimum award to 1p per week.*

128.9 Councillor Appich seconded the proposed amendment.

128.10 The Committee voted on the proposed amendment and it was agreed.

128.11 RESOLVED: That the Committee recommends to Council that:

- (i) The maximum rate of Council Tax Reduction discount be increased from 80% of Band D to 82% of Band D.
- (ii) The minimum award of Council Tax Reduction be reset to 1p per week.
- (iii) Funding of £0.200m be allocated for the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction fund.
- (iv) The requirement for completing a Council Tax Reduction claim form be removed for Universal Credit recipients, in the circumstances described in paragraph 4.9 of the report.
- (v) It is noted that the council's appointed S151 Chief Financial Officer will, prior to 1 April 2021, exercise delegated powers to increase the appropriate calculative elements of the scheme to give effect to national changes.
- (vi) It is noted that a more fundamental review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be undertaken and consulted on for 2022/23, including the alignment of the scheme with a wider review of the council's Welfare Support Framework.

