

### **LOCALISED COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT**

Paragraph 3.5 of the main report mentions the requirement to consult about the proposed local scheme.

Subject to Cabinet approving the draft scheme at its meeting, the following actions are proposed:

- (1) It is recommended that consultation should take place over a period of eight weeks. Subject to approval of the draft scheme detailed in the main body of the report, it is proposed to launch the consultation process on 21 September 2012. Consultation will then close on 16 November 2012.
- (2) Views will be sought in the main by completion of an online questionnaire, although any comments received by other means during the consultation period will be considered wherever possible.
- (3) Participants will be able to select from a range of responses to confirm their agreement or otherwise with particular proposals and to also include their own comments or opinions about these. Draft copies of the questionnaire will be available at the meeting. In addition, there will be a range of other supporting details available on the internet, including worked case study examples to demonstrate the affects of various proposals, draft regulations and an 'easy read' guide to the regulations.
- (4) The questionnaire will be available via the Council's website. For those potential participants without their own internet access, they will be encouraged to use the free facilities at the Council's own Customer Services Centres or alternatively at the County Council's libraries and mobile libraries. A mediated service will be offered at the Customer Service Centres for those who require help with the internet.
- (5) In addition to the questionnaire, there will also be a telephone campaign, with participants being asked the same questions covered by the questionnaire.
- (6) The consultation campaign will be launched by a press release.
- (7) Shortly after the launch of the consultation process, a leaflet will be delivered to every household within the borough, encouraging participation and telling people how to take part.
- (8) It is a stated requirement that major precepting authorities are consulted about a localised scheme. For this Council, these authorities are Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority and Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority. These organisations are part of a countywide working group that has been looking at Localised Council Tax Support and this process is ongoing. They have therefore been actively involved with the working group and are happy that this ongoing involvement in the final scheme design will fulfil the consultation criteria for them.
- (9) Each parish council will be contacted and offered the opportunity for a senior member of the Revenues and Benefits Team to attend a parish council meeting to answer any queries they may have around the draft scheme.
- (10) All social and private landlords of current claimants will be contacted, together with any organisations known to have an interest in the welfare reform agenda. Where any of these groups have a forum where Localised Council Tax Support can be discussed, if required, a senior member of the Revenues and Benefits Team will be available to attend.

- (11) Posters will be displayed in public places such as libraries, community centres and other public buildings giving information about the consultation process. Wherever possible, Council controlled plasma screen displays will also provide this information.
- (12) Evoice will inform staff of the consultation process and provide links to enable them to take part in the exercise.
- (13) Analysis of the responses to the consultation will be carried out by the County Council and fed back to each district for consideration.
- (14) A report and analysis of the consultation responses will be fed back to Cabinet at its meeting on the 12 December 2012.
- (15) A final Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Council Tax Support Scheme will be considered and approved by full Council before 31 January 2013 deadline.