



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	12 th May 2015
Report Author	Mike Parry
Service Area	Revenue
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	17 th June 2015

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

HELP FOR PENSIONERS SCHEME 2015

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

To consider whether Welsh Governments' Help for Pensioners Scheme should be extended into 2015/16.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Welsh Government has in previous years provided a specific grant for a national scheme to assist pensioners with payment of the Council Tax. As part of the 2014/15 & 2015/16 settlements, these resources were subsumed into the Council's Revenue Support Grant allowing Councils to choose whether or not to provide such support in future.
- 1.2 For 2013/14, pensioners who were in receipt of partial Council Tax Reduction Support received up to a maximum of £100. The total spend in Merthyr Tydfil was £88,414 with an additional £5,000 as administration funding. The grant was means tested and during 2013/14, 986 pensioners received support to reduce their Council Tax under this scheme
- 1.3 For 2014/15, the support was reduced to a maximum of £50 per claim as per the Council report dated 8th October 2014. As a result of this reduction, the total spend in Merthyr Tydfil was £41,072. The grant was means tested and during 2014/15, 963 pensioners received support to reduce their Council Tax under the scheme.

1.4 The Council report dated 8th October 2014 required that a further report be prepared to consider whether the grant would continue into 2015/16.

2.0 RELEVANT ISSUES AND OPTIONS

2.1 Two options are proposed for consideration:

- To continue the scheme as operated in 2014/15 by providing financial support up to a maximum of £50.
- To discontinue the scheme from 2015/16.

2.2 If the scheme were to continue, the qualifying criteria are set out in Appendix 1

2.3 Continuing the scheme as operated in 2014/15 would result in unbudgeted expenditure of £42,000 which given the current climate of financial restraint is difficult to justify. Also, although the overall spend is significant the financial detriment to each pensioner is low as the maximum allowance is only £50.00 per claimant.

2.4 Claimants will continue to receive support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

2.5 It is understood that most Local Authorities in Wales are discontinuing the scheme with effect from 2015/16.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

3.1 Based on 2014/15 figures the total additional non-budgeted costs to the Authority for 2015/16 is estimated at £42,000 if payment continued up to a maximum of £50.

4.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

4.1 The Single Integrated Plan & Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed and the proposals do not significantly impact on any aspects of the Corporate Plan and Single Integrated Plan.

5.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full assessment is not required at this time. The form can be accessed on the Council's website/intranet via the 'Equality Impact Assessment' link.

However, as part of the screening process it was noted that if the scheme were discontinued there would be a low negative impact on the Age protected characteristic. This was due to the fact that the allowance is restricted to a maximum of £50.00 and only a small proportion of pensioners were affected.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

6.1 Councils instructions are requested.

ELLIS COOPER
CORPORATE DIRECTOR PLACE AND TRANSFORMATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Equalities Impact Screening form	12 th May 2015	Electronic Library
Single Integrated Plan & Sustainability Impact Assessment	12 th May 2015	Electronic Library

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.

APPENDIX 1

Eligible candidates must:

- Be liable to pay Council Tax in respect of a chargeable dwelling, which is their sole or main residence on July 1st 2015
- Be 60 years or older on July 1st 2015
- Be in receipt of CTR on July 1st 2015
- Not be in receipt of maximum CTR on July 1st 2015
- Be liable to pay Council Tax for that chargeable dwelling on July 1st 2015

NB – the maximum remittal will be restricted to the total net Council Tax liability for the 2015/16 financial year