

## **FULL COUNCIL REPORT**

Date Written	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2015
Report Author	Mike Parry
Service Area	Revenues
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	2 <sup>nd</sup> December 2015

*To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen*

### **Help for Pensioners Scheme 2016**

#### **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Welsh Government made funding available to authorities for each of the four years from 2009/10 to 2012/13 for the purposes of determining their own local scheme to provide assistance to pensioners with the payment of their Council tax.
- 1.2 In 2013/14, Welsh Government decided to introduce a single pan Wales scheme to provide this support. The rationale being to avoid any inconsistencies arising from locally determined schemes.
- 1.3 In 2014/15, Welsh Government changed its approach once again and although authorities have been provided with a similar level of funding as in 2013/14, this was included in the Revenue Support Grant, leaving it up to individual authorities to determine their own scheme [or indeed to use the funding for any other purpose].
- 1.4 In June 2015, Council decided to continue with the scheme for financial year 2015/16. A further decision now has to be made as to whether the scheme will be extended into 2016/17.

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that**

- 2.1 Council's instructions are requested.

### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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
- 3.3 For 2014/15 and 2015/16, the support was reduced to a maximum of £50 per claim as per the Council reports dated 8th October 2014 and the 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015. As a result of this reduction, the total spend in Merthyr Tydfil in 2014/15 was £41,072 and for 2015/16, £44,901. The grant was means tested and during 2014/15 963 pensioners received support to reduce their Council Tax under the scheme. In 2015/16 the number of pensioners assisted reduced to 916.

### **4.0 RELEVANT ISSUES AND OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Two options are proposed for consideration:
- To continue the scheme as operated in 2015/16 by providing financial support up to a maximum of £50.
  - To discontinue the scheme from 2016/17.
- 4.2 If the scheme were to continue, the qualifying criteria are set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 Continuing the scheme as operated in 2015/16 would result in expenditure of approximately £46,000. Although the overall spend is significant, the financial detriment to each pensioner is low as the maximum allowance is only £50.00 per claimant.
- 4.4 Claimants will continue to receive support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- 4.5 A recent survey of all Welsh Authorities has identified that 18 will not be operating a scheme for 2016/17, these include Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent & RCT. The remaining 4 Authorities, including Merthyr Tydfil, have yet to make a decision.

### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Based on 2015/16 figures the total cost to the Authority for 2016/17 is estimated at £46,000 if payment continued up to a maximum of £50.

## 6.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

6.1 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.

## 7.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

**ELLIS COOPER**  
**CORPORATE DIRECTOR**  
**(PLACE & TRANSFORMATION)**

**CLLR PHIL WILLIAMS**  
**GOVERNANCE & CORPORATE**  
**SERVICES**

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>		
<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Equality Impact Assessment Screening Document	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	Electronic Library
Single Integrated Plan & Sustainability Impact Assessment	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2015	Electronic Library
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		<b>No</b>

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

Eligible candidates must:

- Be liable to pay Council Tax in respect of a chargeable dwelling, which is their sole or main residence on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.
- Be 60 years or older on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.
- Be in receipt of CTR on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.
- Not be in receipt of maximum CTR on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016
- Be liable to pay Council Tax for that chargeable dwelling on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.

**NB - The maximum remittal will be restricted to the total net Council Tax liability for the 2016/17 financial year.**