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**Revenues and Benefits** Resources

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**To: Scrutiny Board 1**

**Date:** 30 October 2015

**From**

Tim Savill

Telephone 02476 832607

Tim.savill@coventry.gov.uk

**Subject:** Council tax support consultation –  
Summary of responses

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**Background**

At the Scrutiny Board 1 meeting on 2 September 2015, members requested officers to:

- provide a further report at the next meeting before a decision is made to respond to the consultation, to include more details on the Equality Impact Assessment and likely implications for those affected.

A separate paper has been prepared on the wider impact of other welfare reforms (existing and future changes). This paper deals with the initial feedback from the council tax support consultation exercise.

The consultation explained the need to raise additional funds through a change to the council tax support scheme. This is a result of the many financial challenges facing the Council. The consultation explained some of the options considered, and the reasons for the preferred option of a 15% minimum contribution (to council tax) from all people across the City.

**Council tax support consultation**

The Council conducted a wide reaching public consultation on the proposed changes to the Councils' Council Tax Support Scheme. The consultation ran for 10 weeks, from 17th August 2015 to 26th October 2015. Members of the public could complete an on-line survey, request a hard copy of the survey, be assisted to complete the survey by telephone, or attend 'pop up shops' around the city where their views could be recorded.

Extensive efforts were made to promote the consultation. The Council sent individual letters to 20,331 working age people who are currently receiving help through the Council Tax Support Scheme. The letters informed them of the proposed changes and how they could take part in the consultation process. The consultation was also advertised on the Council's website, on social media, (twitter and facebook), in the local press, the INSITE publication and through posters and leaflets distributed in the City.

Two stakeholder events were held, where advice and support agencies, social landlords and other interested groups were invited to share their thoughts and feedback on the proposals.

## Summary of Findings

A total of 421 surveys were submitted. The majority of respondents who completed the survey (400 individuals, 96.15 %) said they were responding as residents of Coventry. 14 responses, 3.37% selected 'other', including:

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- LA Employee / Welfare Benefits Advisor
- An individual who works in the city of Coventry, for an organisation which received part-funding from the City Council
- Relative of disabled resident
- Coventry Jesus Centre
- WM Housing
- Coventry Independent Advice Service

Nearly all the respondents were of working age with a gender balance of around 50/50. Just under a half of those that responded (45%) live in the lowest Council Tax Band, Band A. 8% live in Band E or above. Over half of the respondents (53%) currently receive full Council Tax Support, about 20% receiving a partial award. 24.5% do not receive any support. Of those who responded to the relevant questions, people identified themselves as:

- 28% disabled;
- 48% unemployed (although many people did not answer this question);
- 16% lone parents; and
- 21% with children.

The consultation only finished on 26<sup>th</sup> October, so there has been limited time for analysis. In terms of the feedback to our survey, the main responses are around:

- Affordability – over 150 people were concerned about their ability to pay the 15% contribution (around £2.50 to £3 per week).
- Impact on different groups of people – there was no clear view that the change would impact on one group more than another. However, the greatest concerns came from the potential impact on disabled people.
- There was a range of views about how to lessen the impact for people. Views included; a phased approach to reducing support, financial advice, charging additional council tax (to landlords of student properties) and wanting those with an ability to pay more – to pay more.
- Alternative suggestions (to the cut in support) included: reducing other council spending, a general objection to the cut in support, asking some people to pay more – as well as some people in agreement with the proposal.

## Next steps

Full analysis of all the consultation responses (including the survey, stakeholder workshops and pop-up shops) will now take place and be included in the report to Cabinet and Council in January 2016.

Tim Savill, Head of Revenues and Benefits  
30 October 2015