



FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES
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Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Date:

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Address

Dear

Council Tax Support

You may be aware that the government proposes to abolish the existing national Council Tax Benefit scheme from 31st March 2013. In its place, each Local Authority has to establish a local Council Tax Support Scheme that has to be agreed by the Council by 31st January 2013.

As well as establishing a scheme that is suitable for Brent, we are working within a budget that will be reduced by at least ten per cent. Early estimates suggest this represents a reduction of at least £5.2 million in funding available to Brent Council to fund such a scheme in 2013/14. It is likely that this gap will increase further if the number of people claiming benefit goes up more than we expect or if the Council chooses to increase Council Tax in future years.

This change in funding arrangements means we have to make some difficult decisions about who gets financial support and how much.

If the council wanted to keep the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme in its entirety, it would need to fund the extra cost itself, which would mean significant cost reductions in other services.

Given the level of other savings required across the Council, Brent is proposing to design its own CTS scheme in a way that is as fair and equitable as possible and in line with the needs of the community while retaining many of the features of the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme.



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The new scheme will start from 1 April 2013 and the council is consulting with residents and stakeholders from **11 June to 10 August 2012** to find out their views.

Apart from pensioners who are to be protected by a set of national rules and eligibility criteria, everyone currently entitled to council tax benefit will potentially be affected.

Our draft scheme is based on a set of key principles which represent a number of variations to the current CTB scheme for working age claimants and details of these are contained within our consultation documentation. You can access the Council's draft scheme and consultation documentation at the following web address:

www.brent.gov.uk/consultation

Additionally, we will be including information on the following webpage as clarification questions are received.

www.brent.gov.uk/localcounciltaxsupport

We would welcome your comments and views on the draft scheme proposals and are more than willing to meet and discuss these further with you if that would assist. Please contact me if you would like to meet and discuss the proposals in more detail.

Yours sincerely



David Oates
Head of Benefits