

Appendix A5

Comments from Service Users Consultative Forum Voluntary Organisations

- This is another 'cut' in a long line of others from central government and could be seen as the final straw for families under ever increasing strain from the economic and welfare changes.
- There is anger at the statutory requirement to consult on the proposals when there was no choice about the fundamental change; namely that the existing council tax benefit system will no longer be as before
- There is a question about the point of discussing the alternative system as it will be too little to address the extreme need of vulnerable people
- There is a need to go out to families through road shows and similar and outline the range of impacts of this change locally combined with other welfare reforms in a clear picture format. No paper documents, online web accessed questionnaires etc, but human response to need. There is a need to show what help is available for these people and an expectation of further advice around debt, housing, employment etc.

Council Commentary

A consultation was conducted by the Government regarding their proposals for localising Council Tax Support between August and October 2011.

The Council has through the various activities mentioned in the methodology section of this document, sought to obtain as many comments and options regarding its proposed CTS scheme from residents and stakeholders in the Borough and has endeavoured to engage and obtain views from as many organisations and residents as possible. The needs of vulnerable people have been considered with due regard to Policy Statements of Intent issued by the DCLG and with reference to the Council's obligations under statute and these are set out within this report and associated documentation. To this extent, the Council has proposed protection from the proposal to make a minimum 20% contribution towards Council Tax in its scheme for disabled persons, carers and persons in receipt of war pensions. Other proposals include disregarding certain forms of income and providing premiums for specified circumstances.

Publicity and communication are being given high priority and a communication and publicity campaign is being developed in relation to both the CTS scheme and wider welfare reforms to ensure that residents and other stakeholders are aware of the changes and how these may affect them significantly in advance of annual Council Tax bills being issued next year.