

# Council Tax Support Scheme Task Group – Session 3

## Summary

This was the final session of the Council Tax Support Task Group, and its purpose was:

- a. For officers to answer questions on the proposals that the task group requested were modelled.
- b. To enable Task Group members to make recommendations and observations for the final report, scheduled for OSC on 26 September.

Key points from the discussion included:

- Minor changes to the scheme would not require further consultation. Legal implications would, however, be sought on the specific proposals, such as disregarding 50% of PIP, which would significantly affect some households.
- It was confirmed PIP was a non-means-tested benefit. Discretionary awards were used to mitigate the position of individuals who required extra support because of disability-related expenses.
- In response to the concerns around public awareness of discretionary funding, it was explained that discretionary schemes were advertised through various channels, including the bills that go out. Support could also be provided without formal applications where the council became aware of the situation through other means.
- PIP had two components, i.e., mobility and daily living. Individuals were generally assessed under these two elements as either enhanced, standard, or ineligible.
- The consequence of completely disregarding PIP had been previously assessed to cost over £3m, because those eligible would go under the protected scheme, with their allowance going up to 100%.
- Concerns were raised about the discretionary scheme ending after two years, and it was noted that extending support beyond the initial term was a decision that could be recommended.
- Regarding the proposal to introduce a new band for households that have a child with disability, it was explained that they were already considered as vulnerable households, and the disability allowance received for the child was disregarded for council tax support scheme.

The following proposals were received prior to the final meeting of the task group:

- Proposal 1 - Look at excluding 50% of PIP payment for the following households:

- a) Households where both couples receive PIP, or
- b) Households with the enhanced rate of PIP for daily living or mobility.
- Proposal 2 - Adding a new band where a household has:
  - a) a child with disability or
  - b) 3+ children.

Proposal 1 part a) is already implemented using a manual process of CTDR awards, and impacts less than 100 households currently.

- It was noted in Equalities implications that Proposal 1 part b) raised concerns with regards to our PSED responsibilities and the protected characteristic of disability. It would result in differential treatment for those households on the enhanced PIP component compared to those households on the standard PIP component. This approach could lead to the council being challenged as we are proposing to apply a 50% discretion to only one component of the PIP and this in turn being unfair to those on the standard PIP component.
- It was noted that Proposal 2 Part a) would require a manual process as Council software does not currently identify these households. Due to these limitations, it had not been possible to model the proposal. It is the case however that these households do currently automatically qualify for the Protected Scheme, receiving support up to 100% in CTSS, and without the child's Disability Living Allowance being considered as income.