

**Leicester City Council  
Scrutiny Review**

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**Council Tax Support Scheme**

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A review of the Overview Select Committee

March 2025

## **Background to scrutiny reviews**

Determining the right topics for scrutiny reviews is the first step in making sure scrutiny provides benefits to the Council and the community.

This scoping template will assist in planning the review by defining the purpose, methodology and resources needed. It should be completed by the Member proposing the review, in liaison with the lead Director and the Governance Services Manager. Governance Support Officers can provide support and assistance with this.

In order to be effective, every scrutiny review must be properly project managed to ensure it achieves its aims and delivers measurable outcomes. To achieve this, it is essential that the scope of the review is well defined at the outset. This way the review is less likely to get side-tracked or become overambitious in what it hopes to tackle. The Commission's objectives should, therefore, be as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time-bound) as possible.

The scoping document is also a good tool for communicating what the review is about, who is involved and how it will be undertaken to all partners and interested stakeholders.

The form also includes a section on public and media interest in the review which should be completed in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team. This will allow the Commission to be properly prepared for any media interest and to plan the release of any press statements.

Scrutiny reviews will be supported by a Governance Support Officer.

### **Evaluation**

Reviewing changes that have been made as a result of a scrutiny review is the most common way of assessing the effectiveness. Any scrutiny review should consider whether an on-going monitoring role for the Commission is appropriate in relation to the topic under review.

<b>To be completed by the Member proposing the review. (Filled out by Senior Governance Officer on behalf of the Chair).</b>		
<b>1.</b>	<b>Title of the proposed scrutiny review</b>	Council Tax Support Scheme
<b>2.</b>	<b>Proposed by</b>	Cllr Ted Cassidy – Chair, Overview Select Committee
<b>3.</b>	<b>Rationale</b> Why do you want to undertake this review?	<p>In January the Council implemented a simplified “banded” council tax support scheme intended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make it easier to apply for and understand support;</li> <li>• reduce the number of times we make changes to amounts awarded;</li> <li>• increase support to the most vulnerable households;</li> <li>• make the scheme easier to administer;</li> <li>• make the system work better for those receiving universal credit (UC); and</li> <li>• reduce the overall costs of the scheme to help the Council address future budget deficits.</li> </ul> <p>Following the meeting OSC would like to monitor the progress of the implementation and understand what the implications of the changes are.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Purpose and aims of the review</b> What question(s) do you want to answer and what do you want to achieve? (Outcomes?)	<p>Following the presentation of the new proposal to OSC, it was requested that a group be formed to look into the working of the new support system and the impacts of the changes on the Council and on Council Tax payers.</p> <p>This will allow Councillors to monitor the new scheme as it is implemented, making assessments from the data gathered on how well it is working and who may benefit and who may lose out from the new system, and to consider if anything needs to be changed.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Links with corporate aims / priorities</b> How does the review link to corporate aims and priorities?	The changes to the scheme were to simplify the scheme for those receiving council tax support and to assist the Council with its financial strategy.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Scope</b> Set out what is included in the scope of the review and what is not. For example which services it does and does not cover.	<p>The review will consider the data collected regarding the roll-out of the new scheme.</p> <p>This data can be used to assess how successful the new scheme has been, and to ascertain which citizens of Leicester have benefitted, and which have lost out compared to the previous scheme.</p> <p>From this analysis, recommendations may be made in terms of how the scheme could be amended.</p>

7.	<p><b>Methodology</b> Describe the methods you will use to undertake the review.</p> <p>How will you undertake the review, what evidence will need to be gathered from members, officers and key stakeholders, including partners and external organisations and experts?</p>	<p>The review will take place in three parts:</p> <p>Part 1 – A meeting in June 2025 will provide members with an overview of the new system and how it compares to the previous system and alternative models.</p> <p>Part 2 – A meeting will take place in July 2025 to provide Councillors with updated statistics and to analyse the data to ascertain how the new scheme has affected citizens.</p> <p>Part 3 – A meeting in August 2025 will allow members to digest the data and make recommendations on how those who have lost out could be helped, and whether any alternatives could be explored.</p> <p>The review report will be shared at OSC around September 2025.</p>
	<p><b>Witnesses</b> Set out who you want to gather evidence from and how you will plan to do this.</p>	<p>The review will gather evidence from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local authority officers managing the scheme.</li> </ul>
8.	<p><b>Timescales</b> How long is the review expected to take to complete?</p>	<p>The Review will last from June 2025 to September 2025</p>
9.	<p><b>Resources / staffing requirements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance Support Officers will facilitate the review.</li> <li>Finance Officers will provide data and information.</li> </ul>
10.	<p><b>Review recommendations and findings</b></p> <p>To whom will the recommendations be addressed? E.g. Executive / External Partner?</p>	<p>Recommendations will be directed to the Executive for consideration and implementation.</p>
11.	<p><b>Likely publicity arising from the review</b> - Is this topic likely to be of high interest to the media? Please explain.</p>	<p>The new Council Tax Support scheme is likely to attract local media attention as it affects a large number of residents.</p>
12.	<p><b>Publicising the review and its findings and recommendations</b> How will these be published / advertised?</p>	<p>The final report will be published on the local authority's website as part of the OSC papers and shared with the Council's Executive.</p>

13.	<b>How will this review add value to policy development or service improvement?</b>	The review is aimed at scrutinising the implementation of the new Council Tax Support scheme with any recommendations hoping to add value to that process.
<b>Comments from the relevant Director</b>		
14.	<b>Observations and comments on the proposed review</b>	If changes to the scheme are proposed for 2026/27, they will need to consider the financial consequences and allow time for consultation prior to Council approval by the end of Jan 2026.
	<b>Name</b>	Amy Oliver
	<b>Role</b>	Director of Finance
	<b>Date</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
<b>To be completed by the Governance Services Manager</b>		
15.	<b>Will the proposed scrutiny review / timescales negatively impact on other work within the Scrutiny Team?</b>	I am comfortable that Governance Services can support this review and that we have enough resource to facilitate it. The timeframe is tight and enough attention to allow completion of the final report should be kept in mind, so that the impacts of the review can be factored in as per the Director of Finance's comments.
	<b>Name</b>	Kalvaran Sandhu, Governance Services Manager
	<b>Date</b>	06.03.25