

Template for Impact Assessment Level 1: Initial screening assessment

Subject of assessment:	Local Council Tax Support			
Coverage:	Service Specific			
This is a decision relating to:	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Service	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Function
	<input type="checkbox"/> Process/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Review
	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		
It is a:	New approach:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Revision of an existing approach:	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is driven by:	Legislation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local or corporate requirements:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Description:	<p>Insert short description, using the following as sub-headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key aims, objectives and activities <p>The purpose of the report is to specify how Middlesbrough Council will operate the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and sets out the factors which will be taken into account when deciding such applications. The new scheme has been operational from 1 April 2013 following the abolition of the national Council Tax Benefit scheme. The policy sets out how applications can be made, when applicants will receive a decision, how the Council will treat all types of income and savings together with providing details of how applicants can ask for a review of the decision if they are dissatisfied.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory drivers (set out exact reference) <p>The Local Government Finance Bill abolishes the national Council Tax Benefit scheme and empowers the Local Authority to introduce a new localised Council Tax Support scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differences from any previous approach <p>The purpose of this report is to present details of how the new scheme will be operated by Middlesbrough Council from 1 April 2013. There have been no such previous approaches as prior to Local Council Tax Support being introduced, the national Council Tax Benefit scheme applied</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key stakeholders and intended beneficiaries (internal and external as appropriate) <p>All residents who are liable for Council Tax (aged over 18) but under pensionable age and receive Local Council Tax Support could be affected by this policy. National legislation for pensioners will be prescribed by central government and will be adopted by Middlesbrough Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intended outcomes. <p>To present a policy for consideration by Council that has given full consideration to the impact of the proposals, has considered the risks associated with the new scheme and gives proper consideration to the Council's equality duties.</p>			

Live date:	1 April 2013
Lifespan:	April 2013 – March 2019
Date of next review:	December 2018

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
	No	Yes	Uncertain	
Human Rights Could the decision impact negatively on individual Human Rights as enshrined in UK legislation? *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The purpose of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme is to provide a policy document which allows the most appropriate support for the borough which minimises the negative impact upon residents. Specific criteria have been put in place within the policy document, which are broadly in line with the existing Council Tax Benefit regulations. Any changes have been clarified in the policy document and none of the proposed changes have a negative impact on individual human rights.
Equality Could the decision result in adverse differential impacts on groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equality law? Could the decision impact differently on other commonly disadvantaged groups? *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There will be no disproportionate adverse impact on any groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equity law. The government have considered the situation for low income pensioners who are currently eligible for support with their council tax through council tax benefit. Unlike most other groups, pensioners cannot be expected to find work. As a result of this, low income pensioners are protected from any reduction in support as with the introduction of Local Council Tax Support. The Council has considered the impact of the proposed changes to customers with a disability. There are likely to be a number of claimants who currently receive a disability premium within other state benefit awards and the exact number of people who are disabled and potentially affected by these changes are unknown. The income which is disregarded under Council Tax Benefit is to be maintained under Local Council Tax Support and as the proposals are to pass an equal reduction on to every benefit claimant, this protected characteristic is not adversely affected. Alternative arrangements for claiming Council Tax Support will be put in place for those who hold a protected characteristic such as being pregnant / on maternity leave or have language barriers. Extensive consultation has been undertaken on the principles of the proposed scheme. These include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five drop in sessions across the town for residents to provide comments on the proposals and ask any questions • Letters issued to all 22,000 claimants who receive Council Tax Benefit advising of the changes • Regular updates through Social media • Principles of the scheme relayed to a number of disabled groups • On line consultation document on the home page of the Council's website throughout the consultation period. No concerns were raised that this policy could have a disproportionate adverse impact on individuals or a group because they hold a protected characteristic. Given the evidence above, it is not anticipated that there will be any disproportionate adverse impact on any groups or individuals with characteristics protected in UK equity law.
Community cohesion Could the decision impact negatively on relationships between different groups, communities of interest or neighbourhoods within the town? *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pensioners will be protected from any changes in Local Council Tax Support due to national legislation introduced by central government. Apart from this group, there will be no negative impacts on any different groups as a result of this policy. The policy does not discriminate against any groups and the service will be sensitive at all times to the needs of all applicants.
Mayor's vision for Middlesbrough Could the decision impact negatively on the achievement of the vision for Middlesbrough? Does the decision impact on statutory duties associated with these key objectives? *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The adoption of this policy does not have any negative impacts on the vision for Middlesbrough. The policy intention is to assist the most vulnerable claimants whilst promoting the availability of work for those under pensionable age. Should the aims and objectives be achieved, this will have a positive impact on the town as more claimants will be in work

* Consult the Impact Assessment further guidance appendix for details on the issues covered by each of these broad questions prior to completion.

Screening questions	Response			Evidence
Organisational management / transformation Could the decision impact negatively on organisational management or the transformation of the Council's services as set out in its transformation programme? *	☒	☐	☐	This decision will not impact negatively on any organisational or transformation services the Council has in place
<p>Next steps:</p> <p>➡ If the answer to all of the above screening questions is No then the process is completed.</p> <p>➡ If the answer of any of the questions is Yes or Uncertain, then a Level 2 Full Impact Assessment must be completed.</p>				

Assessment completed by:	Martin Barker	Head of Service:	John Shiel
Date:	18.11.16	Date:	21.11.16