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including some who are working receive part rebated bills based on the level of their income and their household circumstances.

The introduction of the Government's welfare reform measures include the abolition of Council Tax Benefit as a national scheme replacing it under the Local Government Finance Act 2012 with a requirement for local authorities to design and implement localised Council Tax Support schemes which must be operational from April 2013.

Although not prescriptive about the protections localised schemes should contain, the Government has given guidance that should be considered when designing a scheme, and has imposed some requirements. The largest of the requirements is the maintenance of the existing scheme for pensioners that will be delivered through a national framework of criteria and allowances.

The scheme for working age customers is to be designed by the local authority based on the government's suggestion that support be provided for the most vulnerable. This includes giving consideration (amongst other things) to responsibilities under the :

- Child Poverty Act 2010
- Disabled Persons Act 1986
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Housing Act 1996.

In addition the Government is reducing the current level of funding by 10%. This represents around £10.9 million for Birmingham, and the Council Tax Support scheme will need to take this into account.

This will inevitably mean that customers will receive less help; and by definition the City will have to collect approximately £10.9 million more in Council Tax with the obvious knock on effects of collection, cash flow and bad debt provision.

In looking to provide protection to pensioners and other vulnerable groups, it is clear therefore that working age customers without a disability income or dependant children will be those disadvantaged by the change.

6.

From an employee perspective the continuation of a support scheme administered by Birmingham City Council will continue to provide employment for some benefit staff, when other jobs are at risk as a result of housing benefit being absorbed within Universal Credit. The latter (HR implications will be subject to a separate EA if necessary).

3) All people of working age pay 20% towards their council tax liability but on a maximum Band C charge for customers in Band D-H.

4) All people who occupy Band A-C properties of working age would pay 20% towards their council tax liability and there would be no support for people in Band D-H properties.

Yes  A

No  B

If your answer to question 2 has identified potential adverse impact and you have answered 'y' to any of the following questions 3, 4, or 5, then you should carry out a Full Equality Assessment.

Does the Policy, Strategy, Function or Service require a Full Equality Assessment? ●

If a Full Equality Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the assessment with service managers in your service area as well as the Directorate Contact Officer.

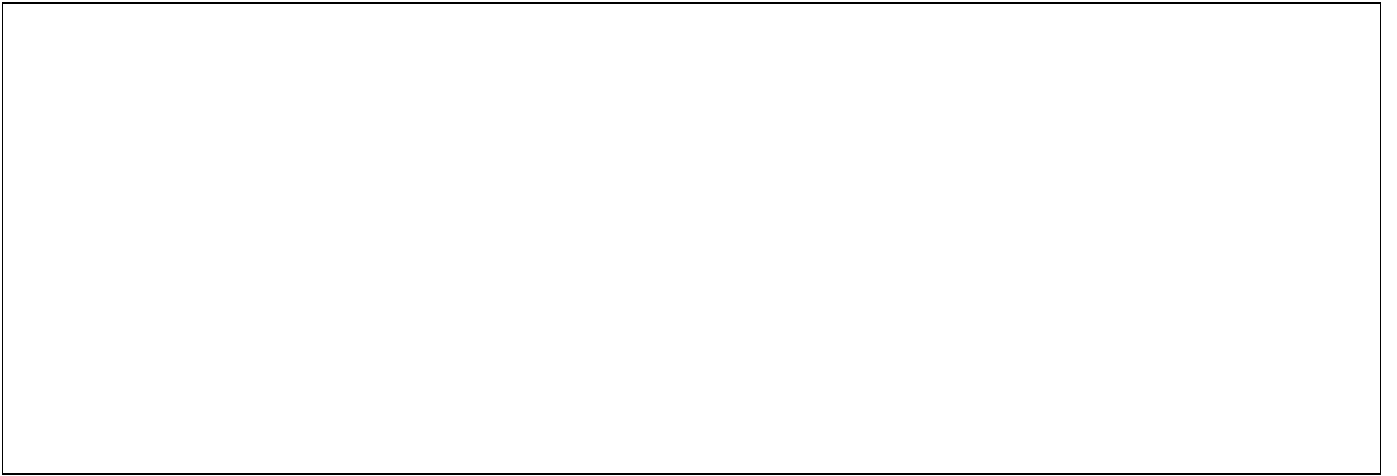
If a Full Equality Assessment is ● required, please sign the declaration and complete the Summary statement below, then forward a copy of the Initial Screening to your Directorate Contact Officer

If a Full Equality Assessment  required, you will need to sign the declaration and complete the Summary statement below, detailing why the Policy, Strategy, Function or Service is moving to a Full Equality Assessment. Then continue with your Assessment

Chairperson: Chris Gibbs

Sign-off Date:

Summary statement: A large proportion of the existing customers in receipt of Council Tax benefit will be detrimentally affected by the proposed new scheme. A full equality assessment is therefore required which will take account of data which is currently being processed, demographic information and findings from consultations.



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*whatever data you have.”*

We will take additional steps to improve the collection of equality data to inform this impact assessment by collecting monitoring information as part of the consultation questionnaire. This will allow us both to monitor both who has participated and also enable us to analyse further how different groups may be affected.

We also reviewed the DWP impact assessments for Universal Credit, to check that we were not misaligned to it.

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Please use the table below to outline any previous involvement or consultation with the target groups of people who are most likely to be affected or interested with this policy, strategy, function or service.



	Arab	0.60%
	Gypsy / Romany / Irish Traveller	0.20%
	Mixed Race - Asian and White	0.80%
	Mixed Race - Black African and White	0.20%
	Mixed Race - Black Caribbean and White	1.10%
	Other Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Background	0.80%

„ on n „	<p>We do not collect this information and it is not likely that this will be available in the near future. During the consultation we did not receive any feedback about any particular religious group being more affected than another on any aspect of the proposed scheme. The religious breakdown of those who answered the survey is:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Buddhist</td> <td>0.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Christian</td> <td>43.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hindu</td> <td>0.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jewish</td> <td>0.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Muslim</td> <td>12.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sikh</td> <td>1.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Religion</td> <td>26.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prefer Not To Say</td> <td>15.2%</td> </tr> </table>	Buddhist	0.8%	Christian	43.1%	Hindu	0.6%	Jewish	0.6%	Muslim	12.2%	Sikh	1.5%	No Religion	26.1%	Prefer Not To Say	15.2%
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Prefer Not To Say	15.2%																

	<p>Not applicable to this project. We do not collect this information and it is not likely that this will be available in the near future. However, we do not envisage an adverse impact on the grounds of gender 50% of respondents were male, 44% were female and the rest chose not to answer.</p>
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„ • n • n	<p>No consultation feedback was received about any particular sexual orientation being more affected than another, on any aspect of the proposed scheme. 79.9% of respondents identified themselves as heterosexual, 3.6% as gay or lesbian, 0.8% as bisexual and the rest preferred not to say or chose 'other'.</p>
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- The savings for this model are £10.4 million





war disablement pension or who have children under 6 years of age are protected in this model. The people who would be adversely affected by model 3 are equally affected by model 4 but the impact is now greater, as they would receive no Council Tax Support at all if living in a Band D-H property.

#### Advantages of Model 4

- Same as for Model 3.
- The savings for this model are £10.1 million.
- Offers protection to the disabled and those with young children.

#### Disadvantages of Model 4

- As for Model 3 plus:
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2. The Council believes that people with disabilities, who are entitled to a disability premium or disabled child premium, are likely to need more support than most people as their opportunities for increasing their income to meet any contributions are limited. Accordingly, such claimants have been protected from any changes made by the Scheme.
3. The Council recognises that childcare provision and costs can act as a deterrent to securing suitable employment and so we want to support families with preschool children. As such the Council decided to protect claimants with children under the age of 6 from the changes made by the Scheme. The Council has chosen to include protection for families with children under the age of 6 (rather than 5) so as to give claimants a transitional year after their children gone to school to enter into employment.
4. The Council recognises the sacrifices made by people in receipt of military compensation payments. As such it has protected claimants entitled to war widows, war widowers and war disablement pensions from any of the changes made by the Scheme.

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A public consultation on the Draft Scheme was held for 12 weeks commencing Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012. As part of this consultation, the following activities were delivered:

A webpage [www.birmingham.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport) was set up. The webpage contained a copy of the draft scheme, a copy of the consultatio

Please see embedded document for a summary of the contact made with our various stakeholders.



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The consultation process itself has also been considered for equality impacts:

#### Location and number of meetings:

There were 5 open-invite consultation meetings. These were held in north, south, east, west and central Birmingham so that everyone has an opportunity to attend a meeting which was relatively local to them. Accessibility and public transport routes were also checked when selecting venues.

Two invite-only meetings through community based organisations Birmingham Voluntary Service Council and People First. Meetings were also held with the BSHP group of Registered Social Landlords and the Private Rented Sector Forum.

#### Distance & Timings

Where possible, we tried to select venues which required only one direct bus and no need to change so that those on public transport were not prohibited from attending. We also considered which areas have a high concentration of council tax benefit claimants.

We considered that women, who are often the prime carers of children, may not have the ability to travel far out of their area or there may be cultural reasons why they cannot. Similarly, older people, those with mobility problems, shift workers and people with child-care commitments may find it difficult to get to a meeting. To mitigate for this we offered an email and telephone facility for people to contact us with questions or comments about the draft scheme. We also offered meetings at evenings and weekends.

#### Support arrangements:

There may be people who require the services of an interpreter, signer or other support. It would not be practical or cost effective to have these services readily available at meetings but we offered the provision through advance booking. There were no requests for support at any of the meetings. We did receive individual requests for our documents to be translated into Punjabi, Urdu and Arabic. In addition to this within the telephone facility that was provided an interpreting



## Impacted Groups

There was concern at all the public meetings that t

*What do you think is the correct length of time for backdating claims?*

- 41% or 434 respondents agreed with limiting backdates to 1 month. 48% or 512 respondents are opposed to limiting backdating to 1 month. 11% or 120 respondents did not know.
- Of the 48% that are opposed to limiting backdating 47% thought the correct length of time for backdating claims was over 3 months with 44% thinking that it should be limited to 3 months.
- Voluntary Sector Organisations stated that many of the people that they deal with tend to lead the sort of lives that leads to a late recognition that they can claim benefits.
- On the issue of Back-dating , opposition was strongest from Asian and Black African/ Caribbean groups

### Empty Properties

*Do you agree with our proposals to reduce these discounts?*

*Do you agree with our proposals to charge up to 150% of the normal Council Tax for properties empty for two years or more?*

- Two thirds (68%) agreed that empty property discounts should be reduced. A high









One of the purposes of the scheme is to deliver positive work incentives and reduce reliance on benefits. Providing 100% support to claimants who are able to work would defeat the aims of the scheme.

Accordingly, the best way to mitigate the changes for these people is to support these claimants to obtain employment and we are adopting measures to assist these people into work. The Council is working to address unemployment and improve skills in the City through the delivery of programmes such as the Employment Access Team, Birmingham Worklessness Co-design project and the Bridge Programme. These schemes provide customised employment support and training and work with employers to promote recruitment.

The Council is also working to influence employment support delivery and business enterprise within the City through DWP and SFA commissioned work programmes and through strategic

## Minor comment

Having considered the consultation responses, the i

£2.4 million of its own money. This would have contravened the principle that the scheme

## Monitoring and evaluation

Before finalising your action plan you must identify how you will go about monitoring the policy/function or the proposals, following the assessment, and include any changes or proposals you are making.

Throughout the first year that this scheme is in pl



