

Charlton Kings Parish Council

26 Church Street, Church Piece, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, GL53 8AR

Clerk: Mrs J Noles Tel: 01242 250087 email: clerk@charltonkingsparishcouncil.gov.uk

23rd August 2018

Mr David Wyatt
Deputy Revenues and Benefits Manager
Cheltenham Borough Council



Dear Mr Wyatt,

Council Tax Support scheme 2019-20 - consultation survey

The consultation document on the Council Tax Support scheme 2019-20, which was sent to us on 25th July 2018, was considered at a meeting of the Charlton Kings Parish Council on 20th August 2018. I have been asked to write to you following the meeting to communicate the Parish Council's agreed comments on the Council Tax Support scheme proposals and these are set out below.

We welcome the opportunity to comment on possible changes to the current Cheltenham Borough Council scheme for council tax support, which would affect many parish residents.

We recognise the need to reduce extremely cost-ineffective administration associated with the current scheme but, hold that an important principle should be that administrative savings should be used to ensure that no-one currently in receipt of direct, personal, support should be disadvantaged by any change.

In response to the examples of possible options for change, we make the following comments:

Example 1 - Introduce a scheme where all working age applicants pay a percentage of the charge: We do not support this option which we believe would result in significant hardship and, also, that collecting increased payments could be cost-ineffective.

Example 2 – Introduce an income banded scheme: We consider that this concept is worth further exploration, but the way in which the support would be set within each band would be crucial if many were not to be disadvantaged. Essentially, this would require the support level to be set at the band minimum, i.e. at the highest current level.

It would have been helpful to have known, and should be made explicit:

- The number of income bands and their income values
- Whether the bands are set on a weekly/monthly/annual income, or some other period
- If the bands would be increased each year in line with an index of inflation.

Similarly, in justification of proposing such a significant change, it should be made clear how many in-year assessments are currently being carried out and, what reduction on this number is anticipated should this proposal be introduced.

Example 3 – Introduce a capital limit of £6,000: We do not consider that this is an acceptable option and is not linked to administrative savings.

Example 4 – Introduce changes to the income that is disregarded in the calculation: We do not support this option, which would have a direct impact on children's well-being.

Example 5 – Discontinue the payment of Second Adult Rebate: We would not, in principle, be opposed to this option which currently seems to introduce an unnecessarily complicated measure of indirect support to a very small number of people at high administrative cost. However, even though it applies to only a small number of families, there is, presumably a justification for currently offering this rebate, so is it considered that withdrawal would impact significantly on these families? Is this measure likely to produce a re-cyclable sum of sufficient size to warrant its consideration?

We hope that our comments will be a helpful contribution to your consultation and look forward to receiving feedback on future developments in relation to the Council Tax Support Scheme in due course.

With good wishes,

Joanna Noles

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