

Audit & Governance Committee

Dorset County Council



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| Date of Meeting | 20 September 2016 |
| <u>Lead Officer</u> Richard Bates – Chief Financial Officer | |
| Subject of Report | Review of Council Tax Single Person's Discount |
| Executive Summary | This report provides a brief update on the planning work being carried out to review of the Council Tax Single Person's Discount (SPD). |
| Impact Assessment: | Equalities Impact Assessment: This report does not involve a change in strategy, it is an update on what has happened under current policy. |
| | Use of Evidence: None in this report; previous reports to Audit & Scrutiny Committee drew on evidence of the impact of the review of SPD by the appointed contractor, Capita, in the previous review. |
| | Budget: Successful challenges to SPD claims result in windfall income during the year of correction and increase the council tax base for future years. |
| | Risk Assessment: Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council's approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as: Current Risk: LOW Residual Risk LOW |

Review of Council Tax Single Person's Discount

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| | Other Implications: None |
| Recommendation | The Committee is asked to: (i) note the progress so far and the key dates outlined in the report (ii) put forward any other issues that it wishes to be considered in the development of the plan. |
| Reason for Recommendation | To enable Officers of the nine Dorset authorities to finalise the plan and timetable for the review work. |
| Appendices | None |
| Background Papers | 21 January 2016 paper on SPD to Audit & Scrutiny Committee |
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Review of Council Tax Single Person's Discount

1. Background

- 1.1 Audit & Scrutiny Committee received several reports in the past, concerning the exercise to ensure CTSPD is only being claimed by eligible claimants. This report provides a further, very brief update on the planning for the next SPD review. The history of the exercise and the results from the previous review have been provided in previous reports and are not repeated here.

2. Timing

- 2.1 One of the lessons learned from the previous exercise was that the timing of the conclusion of the work was critical - so although, theoretically the work could be carried out any time, it was important to ensure the results were fed into the system, sufficiently in advance of the end of the financial year to ensure no adverse skewing of the collection rates for Council Tax.
- 2.2 Working backwards from the targeted end date of September 2017, means the work needs to start in April 2017 - to allow for the work programme to begin shortly after the 2017/18 council tax bills are issued.

3 Contractor selection

- 3.1 The previous exercise was carried out by Capita. The experience from that work was that although there were some minor areas for improvement (and these are being built into the schedules of requirements) the performance was good. This was no doubt aided by Capita's familiarity with the systems in use.
- 3.2 It is therefore proposed to carry out a direct call-off of Capita again under the existing Kent County Council framework contract. The participating Authorities plus the Police and Fire Services all support this approach and have agreed to share the costs on the same basis as last time (based on their demand on the collection fund).
- 3.3 Timing is also critical for contractor selection as the framework agreement ends on 16th September 2016. It is therefore essential that we have awarded by that date if we are to avoid uncertainty and potentially delay the review work. Capita have confirmed that they would be comfortable with an award in September 2016 with a pause before commencing work in April 2017.
- 3.4 While we await absolute confirmation of the rates for the work, essentially these will be on the basis of a rate per successful case (£20.84 or £18.98). The lower unit rate is possible if Bournemouth Borough Council participate in the exercise but their involvement is not yet certain.

4 Proposals for further updates

- 4.1 If Committee Members are content with the plan so far, it is suggested that unless there is any reason why the April start date is not met, that Officers return with an update after April 2017 to confirm work has started and is progressing to plan.

Richard Bates
Chief Financial Officer
September 2016