

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

Date of Meeting: 3 February 2026

REPORT TO COUNCIL

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Report of: Strategic Director for Corporate Resources

Title: Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report seeks Member's agreement on the Local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for working age residents for 2026-27.

Members are required to agree working age scheme rules annually

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That Executive RECOMMENDS to Council that the scheme in place for the current year continues for 2026-27.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 There are no immediate financial or practical reasons to recommend changes to the existing scheme for 2026-27.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources:

4.1 Council Tax Support caseload has remained virtually static over the past 12 months, with a small reduction in both pension age and working age cases. The scheme costs have risen in line with increases to the Council Tax charges each year.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

5.1 There are no significant financial implications from approving the scheme as it stands.

6. What are the legal aspects?

6.1 Paragraph 5 of Schedule 1B to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires billing authorities to adopt a Council Tax Support scheme each year, no later than 11 March of the preceding financial year.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

8.1 In recommending this proposal, no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act as no change to the current support scheme is being proposed.

9. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

9.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

10. Report details:

10.1 The Local Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS) was introduced from 1 April 2013 and reduces the Council Tax bill for low-income residents of working age, currently awarding £4.6m to 4300 households (2025/26 projection). It replaced the previous national Council Tax Benefit Scheme. For working age applicants, the scheme is determined by local policy and for pension age applicants it is a national scheme subject to prescribed legislation. The pensioner scheme supports a further 2650 households.

10.2 Exeter City Council's CTS scheme is a means tested scheme, largely based on the rules from Council Tax Benefit which it replaced. The means test used to determine entitlement is still closely tied to the Housing Benefit scheme.

10.3 From April 2024 the working age scheme has included a class of full support for relevant care leavers without a means test. Since April 2024, a total of 79 individuals has received support, with awards totalling £115,000 over the last 2 years.

10.4 In December 2025, 62% of households and 57% of expenditure on Council Tax Support was for working age customers.

10.5 The migration of working age claims to Universal Credit is due to complete before April 2026. 97% of our working age Council Tax Support households are now receiving Universal Credit, up from 65% one year ago.

11. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

11.1 The Council Tax Support scheme assists Exeter's people in their communities and neighbourhoods by helping low income residents meet their Council Tax liability. The Exceptional Hardship policy strengthens this support by ensuring that the scheme rules do not cause inadvertent hardship in individual cases.

12. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

12.1 The current scheme of Local Council Tax Support is well known and understood. Retaining it in the current form presents little risk.

13. Are there any other options?

13.1 Changes can be made to the local scheme of support annually from 1 April, agreed by Council by 11 March. Proposed changes must be subject to a public consultation before adoption. Failure to agree a new scheme results in the retention of the current scheme by default.

Strategic Director for Corporate Resources, Dave Hodgson

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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None