

**MINUTE EXTRACT
CABINET
4 NOVEMBER, 2019**

52 COUNCIL TAX - REDUCTION SCHEME

Councillor Pat Hackett introduced a report which outlined proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme operated by Wirral Council. The proposal had previously been considered by Members and approved in principle.

The report sought approval to allow a reduction in the minimum amount payable by non-protected groups from the current 22% minimum to a 12% minimum.

The report also sought the Cabinet's approval to simplify the claim process to enable notifications received from the Department of Work and Pensions for applicants applying for Universal Credit to be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction.

This matter affected all Wards within the Borough and was a key decision.

Councillor Hackett informed that this was an initiative put forward by Councillor Janette Williamson and reported that in 2013, the Conservative-led Coalition Government had abolished Council Tax Benefit for hundreds of thousands of low-income households across the county. It had replaced this support with the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, cutting the funding by 10% at the same time.

The Government's decision had disadvantaged thousands of vulnerable, low-income Wirral families. Since its implementation, the Council had tried its best, of course, to retain protection for these households, giving them the support that has been sadly lacking in national policy.

Councillor Hackett was delighted that the Council had now developed a proposal to help us go further. The report provided a proposal for a new scheme of Council Tax reduction, an investment of more than £800,000 which would see more than 9,000 low income households get a better deal on their Council Tax.

The proposals in this policy increased the level of support currently provided to thousands of the most financially vulnerable in Wirral by reducing their Council Tax liability and simplified the system for many residents including those on Universal Credit, zero hours contracts and irregular incomes.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham informed that this was another measure that he warmly welcomed and it was nice that the Council could play a part in alleviating some of the issues brought about by the Government's approach to welfare policy. He found it particularly appalling to see the increased use of food banks across the country. Councillor Whittingham also referred to a damning report from the United Nations about the Government's approach to poverty and the policies that had actually been promoted that had actually increased poverty, in-work poverty and child poverty. He considered this to be a disgrace and was, therefore, happy to support the report and any measures the Council could put in place to alleviate the situation.

Councillor Anita Leech referred to the cuts to the Council's budget and its continuing budget pressures and informed that when Councillor Janette Williamson had discussed this initiative with the Cabinet it had agreed that it could benefit 9000 households who were extremely vulnerable. She was pleased to support the report.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the Cabinet recommends to the Council an amendment to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Wirral to reduce the minimum amount payable for non-protected groups from the current 22% to 12%; and**
- (2) the Cabinet recommends to the Council an amendment to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Wirral to allow notifications in relation to Universal Credit to be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction.**