



Vale of White Horse

District Council

Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities
(Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England)
Regulations 2000

RECORD OF DECISION OF CABINET MEMBER OR KEY DECISION OF OFFICER

1	Name of Decision maker	Matthew Barber	
2	Type of Decision (Please <input type="checkbox"/> as appropriate)	Key	Other Yes
3	Date of Decision (This should be the same as the date form signed)	31. VII. MMXII	
4	The Decision	The Cabinet Member is being asked to approve consultation on the new council tax reduction scheme (CTRS) which is to replace the existing council tax benefit scheme from 1 April 2013.	
5	Reasons for Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, council tax benefit pays all or part of the council tax bills for people who are dependent on national benefits or who have a low income. National regulations control the amounts of council tax benefit that can be paid • The Government has announced that, with effect from April 2013, the current council tax benefit scheme, which is fully funded through subsidy, will be replaced by a local council tax reduction scheme (CTRS) • CTRS schemes will operate as local discounts under council tax legislation and funding will be via a fixed grant based on 90% of each billing authority's council tax benefit expenditure rather than being fully funded through the existing subsidy arrangements. Councils will have discretion to change almost any aspect of the current national scheme in relation to working age claimants but must protect certain claimants (e.g. pensioners and other 	

		<p>vulnerable groups must not lose out relative to the current council tax benefit scheme)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfordshire authorities have been working together with the purpose of designing and implementing a harmonised CTRS scheme for 2013/14 and have proposed that the existing council tax benefit scheme is adopted as the local CTRS on an interim basis for 2013/14 at least and, and that this is subjected to public consultation
6	Alternative Options Rejected	<p>The council could choose to design its own local scheme (either with or without South Oxfordshire district Council) instead of a harmonised Oxfordshire-wide scheme. Also the council could choose to make the scheme cost-neutral by reducing certain benefits in order that the total scheme cost did not exceed the government's reduced funding. These options have been rejected in respect of year 1 of the scheme for 2013/14 after discussions with councillors due to the adverse impact on benefit recipients, the lack of sufficient time to evaluate complex scheme changes, the uncertainty of software changes being ready in time and the ensuing reputational damage to the council and other associated bodies.</p> <p>The council could choose not to adopt its own scheme at all. This would result in the national 'default scheme' coming into effect. Whilst this would mirror the existing and proposed schemes, the council would cause taxbase errors for all precepting bodies if it failed to adopt the reforms, which would create collection fund problems and potential re-billing issues – so has been rejected.</p> <p>Finally, the council could choose not to consult on the new scheme. As there is a statutory requirement to consult, the council would be exposed to challenge, reputational damage and possible sanctions for failing its statutory duties. Therefore this option has been rejected.</p>
7	Resource Implications	None
8	Legal implications	There is a statutory duty to consult.
9	Financial implications	<p>The consultation will be funded by a government grant received for implementing the scheme.</p> <p>Adopting the same scheme for 2013/14 could cost the council up to approximately £70,000. Funding requirements will be dealt within the budget setting consultation and process.</p>

