



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **COUNCIL** will be held in Council Chamber
- Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on
FRIDAY 19 JANUARY 2018 AT 7.00 PM

Manjeet Gill
Interim Chief Executive
Published on 11 January 2018

This meeting will be filmed for inclusion on the Council's website.

Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council's control.



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

Our Priorities

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

The Underpinning Principles

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

To: The Members of Wokingham Borough Council

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
----------	------	---------	----------

61.

APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence

62.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest

63.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

To answer any public questions

A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice.

The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the items included within this agenda.

Subject to meeting certain timescales questions can only relate to items which are on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions

64.

PETITION

To debate a petition.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 3.5.4.2 a maximum period of 30 minutes will be allowed for petitions to be debated.

The process below will be followed at the meeting:

- a) the petition organiser(s) will be given five minutes to present the petition (if there is more than one petition organiser then they will share this time);
- b) the petition will then be debated by Councillors for a period not exceeding 30 minutes;
- c) the petition organiser(s) will have the right of reply of up to a maximum of three minutes;
- d) the Mayor will then ask for motions on how the Council wishes to respond to the Petition which may include;

- i) taking the action or some of the action the petition requests;
 - ii) not taking the action the petition requests;
 - iii) referring the petition to another body for them to consider the matter and take the appropriate action;
- e) once a motion has been put forward it will be voted on without discussion or amendment;
 - f) if the motion falls then the Mayor will ask for a further motion to be put forward;
 - g) if the Mayor is of the opinion that a decision on how to respond to the petition cannot be reached then he/she can decide, on behalf of the Council, not to take the action that the petition requests.

64.1 Emmbrook;
Evendons;
Norreys;
Wescott

Petition submitted by Clive Chafer

At the Council meeting held on 23 November 2017 the following petition was submitted:

“Wokingham is being strangled by traffic. Two main roads (A329 and A321) meet in the centre. But so far the only effort that has been made to relieve this and make the centre an attractive place to meet, walk and shop is to put all the through traffic onto existing small streets and roads (Wellington, Rectory, Langborough, Murdoch ...) near the centre. These roads were never built to take through traffic, and the narrow streets in the centre (Peach, Denmark...) are certainly not up to the job. We need a plan to take this traffic out of the centre, give us back our market town, and make living, shopping and socialising here a pleasure again. Less noise, less pollution, less danger, less frustration. We have the power to make the change.”

65. None Specific

COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018/19

To set the Council Tax Base for 2018/19 in respect of the whole Borough and all constituent parts so that each precepting parish can subsequently set their Council Tax budgets for the year.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Council is asked to:

- 1) agree the proposed Council Tax Base, for the whole area and by Parish, as set out in the report;

7 - 10

- 2) approve the proposed allocation of £40,000 grant to the parishes in respect of council tax reduction as set out in the council tax base table.

66. None Specific

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

11 - 14

To adopt a Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme which will ensure that all working age Borough residents who may experience financial difficulties in paying their council tax liabilities have access to a scheme of assistance, designed locally, offering financial help to them.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Council approve the following:

- 1) a local CTR scheme for 2018/19 is adopted on the same basis as the 2017/18 scheme;
- 2) that all applicable amounts, premiums, allowances, disregards and deductions used in the calculation of entitlements are uprated in line with the same increases applied to the Government set Prescribed and Default CTR schemes, along with any other legislative changes;
- 3) that the full disregard currently allowed for War Widows and War Disability Pensions is continued from 1 April 2018 in respect of the Prescribed and Local Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit schemes;
- 4) that funds be made available to the hardship fund, known as Section 13A, for those who cannot pay their council tax liabilities. This sum will be funded from the general fund and spend for 18/19 is estimated at £18,000.

CONTACT OFFICER

Anne Hunter
Tel
Email
Postal Address

Democratic & Electoral Services Lead Specialist
0118 974 6051
anne.hunter@wokingham.gov.uk
Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN

This page is intentionally left blank

TITLE	Council Tax Base 2018/19
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Extraordinary Council on 19 January 2018
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Graham Ebers, Director of Corporate Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Set the Council Tax Base for 2018/19 in respect of the whole Borough and all constituent parts so that each precepting body can subsequently set their Council Tax budgets for the year. The higher the tax base the lower the tax burden.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council is asked to:

- 1) agree the proposed Council Tax Base, for the whole area and by Parish, as set out in the report;
- 2) approve the proposed allocation of £40,000 grant to the parishes in respect of council tax reduction as set out in the council tax base table.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Council Tax Base

Local authorities must ensure their council tax base for the forthcoming financial year is approved by Council, or a delegated body, by 31st January each year.

This year's tax base calculations show that with a total of 66,161 properties on the Council Tax register as at 2nd October 2017, after making all relevant adjustments for discounts, exemptions, new builds, bad debts, etc. the proposed tax base of band D equivalents is 68,669.10 for 2018/19.

The proposed tax base for 2018/19 reflects an increase of 1.83% on the equivalent figure for the 2017/18 financial year.

The Council is also proposing to allocate £40,000 to parishes to offset some of the reduction in the council tax base for them arising from the council tax reduction scheme which replaced council tax benefit in April 2013.

A summary of the impact of the movements on the council tax base is as follows:

(i) The Borough had 68,345.0 properties at 2 October 2017 net of the loss due to any Council Tax Reduction

(ii) The increase arising from the estimated new properties in 2018/19 and other changes is estimated at 1017.6 band D equivalent properties.

(iii) The total of (i) to (ii) above is 69,362.6 properties. The bad debt provision for

2018/19 is 1% of this amount, i.e. 693.5 properties.

The net total of (i) to (iii) above is 68,669.10 properties as set out in the analysis of issues.

Background

The Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations require the billing authority (Wokingham Borough Council) to notify its major precepting bodies (The Police and Fire Authorities) and its Parishes of the tax base for the following financial year. The precepting bodies may request this information between the 1st December 2017 and 31st January 2018.

Analysis of Issues

The prescribed calculation is made as follows;

- (i) A return is made to the Dept. for Communities and Local Government (form CTB1). This analyses the valuation list as at a prescribed date into the various property bands and then provides details of discounts and exemptions;
- (ii) The Band D equivalent property numbers for tax purposes for the whole of the area are broken down into each constituent Parish area;
- (iii) An adjustment is made to allow for the impact of council tax reduction grant (which reduces the Band D equivalent property numbers in each area and overall);
- (iv) An estimate of unbanded and new properties expected to be banded during 2018/19 are added;
- (v) An adjustment is then made to take account of bad debts. This has been maintained at 1.0% as in previous years.

The resultant outcome reflects the tax base for the coming financial year in accordance with the table below:

<i>Parish</i>	<i>Share of £40k CTR grant</i>	<i>2018/19 Tax Base</i>	<i>2017/18 Tax Base</i>	<i>% Change</i>
<i>Arborfield & Newland</i>	1,008.45	1,272.4	1,263.4	0.71%
<i>Barkham</i>	135.11	1,594.4	1,526.9	4.42%
<i>Charvil</i>	344.78	1,409.7	1,409.3	0.03%
<i>Earley</i>	5,603.11	11,842.5	11,755.9	0.74%
<i>Finchampstead</i>	816.37	5,769.5	5,725.0	0.78%
<i>Remenham</i>	0	320.0	321.9	-0.59%
<i>Ruscombe</i>	207.31	496.8	501.5	-0.94%
<i>St. Nicholas Hurst</i>	111.87	1,058.1	1,053.1	0.47%
<i>Shinfield</i>	3,407.12	5,371.7	5144.0	4.43%
<i>Sonning</i>	323.79	815.3	808.3	0.87%
<i>Swallowfield</i>	121.32	1,041.4	1,006.0	3.52%
<i>Twyford</i>	519.64	3,004.9	2,994.5	0.35%
<i>Wargrave</i>	989.61	2,110.3	2,098.3	0.57%

<i>Winnersh</i>	1,230.05	4011.3	3,897.1	2.93%
<i>Wokingham Town</i>	6,828.96	15,052.5	14,685.2	2.50%
<i>Wokingham Without</i>	1,064.44	3,179.5	3,109.9	2.24%
<i>Woodley</i>	17,288.07	10,318.8	10,133.1	1.83%
Whole Area	£40,000.00	68,669.1	67,433.4	1.83%

The grant allocations are distributed using the same formula as in the previous three years, and are based upon council tax base levels.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The revised tax base and total grant allocation will be factored in to the 2018/19 budget setting process.

Cross-Council Implications

Council tax income contributes to the funding of all services.

List of Background Papers

None

Contact Sharon Pearce	Service Finance
Telephone No 0118 908 8423	Email Sharon.Pearce@wokingham.gov.uk
Date 2 January 2018	Version No. 1

TITLE	Council Tax Reduction Scheme
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Extraordinary Council on 19 January 2018.
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Graham Ebers, Director of Corporate Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The adoption of a Localised Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme will ensure that all working age Borough residents who may experience financial difficulties in paying their council tax liabilities have access to a scheme of assistance, designed locally, offering financial help to them. This scheme does not apply to Pensioners who are assessed under the Governments Prescribed Scheme.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council approve the following:

- 1) a local CTR scheme for 2018/19 is adopted on the same basis as the 2017/18 scheme;
- 2) that all applicable amounts, premiums, allowances, disregards and deductions used in the calculation of entitlements are uprated in line with the same increases applied to the Government set Prescribed and Default CTR schemes, along with any other legislative changes;
- 3) that the full disregard currently allowed for War Widows and War Disability Pensions is continued from 1 April 2018 in respect of the Prescribed and Local Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit schemes;
- 4) that funds be made available to the hardship fund, known as Section 13A, for those who cannot pay their council tax liabilities. This sum will be funded from the general fund and spend for 18/19 is estimated at £18,000.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

From 1 April 2013, local authorities have had the responsibility for designing and administering their own local Council Tax Reduction schemes (CTR). These local schemes apply to all working age claimants. Pensioners have their entitlement to CTR worked out in accordance with a Prescribed CTR scheme set by Government, therefore none of the changes made to local schemes impact on this group. There is also a requirement to operate a "Hardship Scheme", known as Section 13A, for those who cannot pay their tax liabilities.

Background

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 contained provisions for the abolition of Council Tax Benefit and the Local Government Finance Act 2012 made further provision for the localisation of council tax support, known as 'council tax reduction' (CTR), in England by imposing a duty on all billing authorities to introduce a localised CTR Scheme by 31st January each year. If a localised scheme is not agreed by then, the Council will be obliged to use the Government's own default national scheme in the following financial year.

The Government have determined that certain groups may be fully protected from this change. At the current time, this protection applies to claims received from pensioners and continues in to 18/19. All other claims received are calculated in accordance with the adopted local CTR scheme.

Analysis of Issues

As a result of reviewing the current scheme and the circumstances of the authority, it is proposed that a revised local scheme is approved by Special Council Executive on 19th January 2018 on the same basis as the 17/18 scheme, which includes the original changes made in 2013 and since.

With so much uncertainty around the introduction of Universal Credit (UC), significant changes to our scheme in the last 2 years (including the introduction of a minimum contribution) and the full impact of these changes on council tax collection, it is recommended that no changes to the scheme are undertaken for 18/19. This would allow for a full understanding the impact of previous year's changes to CTRS has had on CTR recipients, any council tax arrears accumulated as a result and the impact of UC full service.

Making no changes would still allow us to make government changes as our agreed scheme states year on year that "that all applicable amounts, premiums, allowances, disregards and deductions used in the calculation of entitlements are uprated in line with the same increases applied to the Government set Prescribed and Default CTR schemes, along with any other legislative changes" which is included for 18/19 scheme. Protection to pensioners would still apply and they would not be required to make a minimum contribution, unless the Government makes any changes to the prescribed scheme.

Our current scheme is on comparison with the other Berkshire authorities.

Hardship Fund

The Council remains aware that a complex relief scheme such as localised council tax reduction may exclude some claimants who, in the short term at least, are unable to improve their financial circumstances. This may present them with difficulties in paying council tax liabilities. In this respect, Government changes for council tax support include the provision for further discretionary reductions to be made under Section 13A(l)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as substituted by the Local Government Finance Bill 2012.

A formal scheme was developed and approved in line with previous decisions taken. There has been a further refinement to this in 16/17. This scheme is published on the Council's website and its existence is drawn to the attention of council tax payers in need. Expenditure for the year 17/18 to date (19.12.17) is £7,976.75, over 15 claims, which includes other cases of hardship in addition to those due to CTR restrictions. Each claim approved so far has received an average award of around £531.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0k	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0k	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0k	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
None

List of Background Papers
None

Contact Nicky Thomas	Service Business Services
Telephone No 0118 974 6590	Email nicky.thomas@wokingham.gov.uk
Date 3 January 2018	Version No. 1

This page is intentionally left blank