

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

October 2, 2020

Residents urged to have their say in Council Tax Support consultation

Fenland District Council is proposing to change its Council Tax Support scheme to ensure it can support rising numbers of claimants due to COVID-19 – and is seeking residents' views.

Every year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme, which helps residents on low incomes to pay some of their council tax.

The current scheme gives working age CTS claimants up to an 86% discount off their council tax – requiring them to pay a contribution of at least 14% towards their bill – depending on their individual circumstances.

However, the Council is proposing to increase the amount claimants must pay towards their bill to ensure the scheme has enough resource to help and support everyone who needs it.

The proposal is to increase the current minimum contribution rate of 14% to a proposed rate of either 20%, 25% or 30%, from April 2021.

Cllr Chris Boden, Leader of Fenland District Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, said: "The impact of COVID-19 on working age Council Tax Support claims has been significant and is expected to continue to increase throughout 2020. Given the extent of this impact, and the uncertainty of whether the Council will receive any additional Government support to assist working age claimants, there is a growing need to ensure that our scheme has enough capacity for residents who find themselves unemployed and without savings.

"It is critical that residents come forward and give their views so we can shape a scheme which accounts for the most vulnerable first and tries to help others out if and where we can. I urge residents to take part in the consultation, whether they are eligible for CTS or not."

A 12-week consultation is now underway to gauge residents' views on the proposal. To take part in the consultation, which runs until Sunday, December 20, visit:
www.fenland.gov.uk/consultations

Pensioners are not affected by the proposals and will continue to receive a 100% discount.

At the start of lockdown in March, the Council received £907,222 from the Government's £500m Hardship Fund to provide further council tax relief to working age CTS recipients.

It is currently estimated that all the Council's fund allocation will be used to provide support to current and expected future CTS claimants during the 2020/21 financial year.

It is not yet known whether the Council will receive any additional support for 2021/22, although the proposal to increase the 14% contribution rate will be re-assessed once further information is known.

ENDS

For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226