

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:**           **CABINET**

**DATE:**               **TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**REPORT BY:**       **HEAD OF FINANCE**

**SUBJECT:**           **COUNCIL TAX - PENSIONER GRANT SCHEME FOR  
2013-14**

**1.00   PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01   To provide cabinet with information on the implementation of a revised national Pensioner Grant scheme to those residents in receipt of partial awards under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS).

**2.00   BACKGROUND**

2.01   For the past four years, the Welsh Government has provided local authorities with funding to operate locally designed grant schemes to help pensioners pay their Council Tax.

2.02   During 2012-13 the grant scheme locally adopted by Flintshire provided 8,700 grant awards to pensioner households using a combination of qualifying conditions. The awards were generally open to all pensioners, irrespective of their financial circumstances but were relatively small in value at £18.50 due to the high number of applications received, especially from those pensioners who had responded to the Councils 'apply on advert' campaign.

2.03   In 2013-14, the Welsh Government is now operating a new national grant scheme, more targeted to provide those pensioners who already receive partial awards under the CTRS scheme.

2.04   The Welsh Government has recognised that the previous schemes, designed by each local authority, led to inconsistencies between authorities in the level of support pensioners received and which pensioners received the support.

**3.00   CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01   With the introduction of the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme in Wales following the abolition of Council Tax Benefit by the UK Government, the additional support for targeted pensioners is now being provided as a national scheme for 2013-14 using funding of £4m across Wales.

3.02 The national scheme removes local variations, both in the value of awards and who receives the awards. The new scheme is designed to provide a fair and consistent approach to calculating the level of assistance for all pensioner households who meet the qualifying criteria.

3.03 To ensure the funding of £4m is evenly distributed across Wales so that each pensioner household receives the same level of award, irrespective of where they live in Wales, a coordinated data matching exercise has been undertaken by the Welsh Government to produce a combined list of all qualifying households. This has ensured that there is a consistent approach for those pensioners who meet the qualifying conditions on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (the qualifying date). The maximum award across Wales is £100. The qualifying criteria is :

- Either the claimant or the partner to the claimant has reached the age of 60 and is liable for Council Tax at a property which is deemed to be a 'sole and main' residence, and
- The claimant qualifies for partial Council Tax Support, but not the maximum level of support on the qualifying date and there is a net liability to Council Tax (after any other discounts or reductions, for example single person discount or disabled banding relief).
- Should the net liability be below the maximum level of award then the credit to the Council Tax account will only be up to the net liability.
- The minimum award will be £5.

3.04 Data analysis work has now been completed across Wales and 2,233 households in Flintshire will qualify for funding of up to £100, although some households will receive less if their net Council Tax liability is less than £100. Overall, the Council will receive funding of £201,700 in order to make the awards.

3.05 Grant awards will be automatically credited to the Council Tax accounts of qualifying households during the third week in September. The awards will have the effect of reducing monthly or weekly instalments for the remaining months of the year.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 That cabinet note the implementation of the revised Welsh Government Pensioner Grant Scheme for 2013-14 as detailed in the report.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 The Welsh Government continues to provide a small administrative grant of £5,000 to partly cover the additional costs associated with implementation of the new national scheme.

5.02 The overall grant awards will be cost neutral to match the funding the level of funding.

**6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 The Welsh Government grant scheme is specifically designed to help pensioner households, especially those who have been assessed as being in need of financial assistance and who already receive some help with paying their Council Tax.

**7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 None.

**8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 None.

**9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 None.

**10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 None.

**11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 The Welsh Government has held discussions with the Welsh Local Government Association and local authority Revenues practitioners in relation to the introduction and design of this scheme.

**12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985  
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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