

Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/24/04/10

Decision Date – [18 Dec 2024]

Key Decision – yes/æ

Confidential Information – no/main
report/appendix



Consultation on changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2025/26

Executive Member(s): Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Resources and Performance

Local Member(s) and Division: N/A

Lead Officer: Richard Sealy, Interim Revenues & Benefits Manager

Author: Richard Sealy

Contact Details: E-mail: richard.sealy@somerset.gov.uk

Summary

1. This report details the consultation exercise and questions currently being undertaken in respect of proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme for 2025/26 in respect of working age claimants. Scrutiny for Corporate and Resources are asked to consider and respond to the consultation questions.
2. The Executive agreed at their meeting on 15 July 2024 to proceed to consult on four specific proposals for change, as detailed in Appendix 1. (NB. Originally six changes options were proposed, but the Executive decided not to proceed with two of them).
3. Full details of the background to the development of the proposed changes are included within agenda item six of the [Executive Agenda 15 July 2024](#).
4. The Council is required by law to agree to a CTR scheme for the coming financial year for both working age and pension age people, although the rules for the pension age scheme are prescribed by Government. In practice the scheme needs to be agreed by the December of the preceding financial year to allow us time to implement any uprating and other changes required prior to the annual billing exercise.
5. There is no requirement to change the scheme from year to year. However, in view of the current financial emergency, Council agreed on 20 December 2023, when setting this year's scheme, to a full review of the scheme during 2024/25 with a view to delivering cost reductions for 2025/26.
6. By law we are required to undertake a full public consultation exercise on any changes proposed to scheme. The consultation sets out proposed changes which could deliver significant savings of up to £6.4m to the Council if all the proposed changes were implemented. (NB. The potential gross savings figure

including the amounts that could be saved by the other major precepting authorities is £8.3m).

7. The regulations also require that we consult on specific proposed changes as opposed to a range of options. The proposals outlined in the consultation are framed accordingly. However, the fact that we are consulting does not then commit us to make these changes and the Council retains the option, when finalising the scheme, to either not implement the proposed changes or to implement them to a lesser extent.
8. The proposed changes, if implemented in full, could see a significant reduction in the amount of support we provide to working age people on low incomes. This is highly likely to cause hardship and in consequence it is reasonable to anticipate an increase in the number of claims for Exceptional Hardship and a detrimental impact on the Council Tax collection rate.
9. The proposed changes and consultation questions are set out in Appendix 1.
10. To assist members in responding to the consultation questions the report also contains an up to date analysis of the potential impact of implementing these changes together with other relevant data.
11. The report also includes a high-level equalities impact assessment (see Appendix 2). This assessment examines the potential impact of implementing these changes on people or groups with protected characteristics. The assessment has been updated to reflect the impact of the decision taken on 15 July 2024 by the Executive to remove two of the proposed changes.

Recommendations

12. Scrutiny for Corporate & Resources are asked to consider and respond to the CTR Scheme consultation questions regarding the proposed changes to the scheme.

Reasons for recommendations

13. The Council is required by law to undertake a full public consultation exercise in respect of any changes proposed to the CTR scheme and is seeking to obtain the views of elected members as part of this process.

Other options considered

14. Direct communications with all elected members regarding the consultation exercise have also taken place via the regular members newsletter and we will also be undertaking an informal briefing for all elected Members in mid-September 2024.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

15. The CTR scheme represents a significant amount of the Council's spend per annum and currently costs a total of £38.1m for both the working age and pension age schemes. An element of this cost is borne by the other major preceptors and the cost to the Council is £29.0m. Reducing this spend could help to close the significant budget gap, but obviously will have an effect on some of the poorest in our communities. Consequently, reducing spend in this area will impact on our ability to deliver some of our key priorities.

Financial and Risk Implications

Financial implications

16. Our current total spend on CTR is £38.1m spread across both the pension and working age schemes. The other major preceptors bear a proportion of this cost, but the net total cost to Somerset Council is £29.0m. £15.9m of this relates to the working age element of the scheme, which is the only area over which we have any control.

	Caseload	Total cost	Cost to Somerset (76.23%)
Main CTR scheme (Pension Age)	13,488	£17.3m	£13.1m
Main CTR scheme (Working Age)	18,753	£20.8m	£15.9m
TOTAL	32,241	£38.1m	£29.0m

17. It is estimated that the proposed changes, if implemented in full, could deliver a reduction in the cost of the Somerset element CTR scheme of circa £6.4m per annum.
18. However, allowance will need to be made for the likely detrimental impact on collection rates and increase in Exceptional Hardship applications resulting from a reduction in spend of this level. Both are likely to significantly reduce the actual saving that could be achieved.

Risk implications

Risk	Mitigating actions / comments	Score L = Likelihood I = Impact
Not consulting on changes means that we are unable to reduce spend on the	Undertake a full consultation exercise on a wide range of potential changes	L = 5 I = 3 Total = 15

scheme for 2025/26, if required	to maximise our ability to reduce costs if required.	
Legal challenge to any changes introduced to the scheme for 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specialist external advice being taken to ensure compliance with Council Tax legislation ▪ Full equalities impact assessment ▪ Detailed planning & extensive communication to publicise the consultation exercise ▪ Consultation to be run over a 10 week period 	L = 3 I = 4 Total = 12
Fully implementing the proposed changes results in significant hardship, reduced collection rates & increased applications for Exceptional Hardship payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Our ability to mitigate the impact would in practice be very limited ▪ Significantly increased budget provision (within the Collection Fund) for Exceptional Hardship (EH) ▪ Increased resourcing both to deal with EH applications & debt recovery 	L = 5 I = 4 Total = 20

Legal Implications

19. Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states:

Before making a scheme, the authority must:

- consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
- publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

NB. The other 'major precepting' authorities in Somerset are the Avon & Somerset Police and the Devon & Somerset Fire Service

20. The Council is obliged to make a resolution by 11th March of the financial year prior to the scheme coming into place. Where we fail to do so, then the existing scheme rules would continue to operate by default.

HR Implications

21. There are no HR implications resulting from this proposal.

Other Implications:

Equalities Implications

22. The CTR scheme is funded by Council Tax payers, which will include people with protected characteristics. This consultation focuses on potential changes to the working age element of the scheme under which many people with protected characteristics will be eligible to receive support.
23. A high-level equalities impact assessment (EIA) of the proposed change options was included with the report that went to the Executive on 15 July 2024. This assessed and identified the potential impacts of these changes, if implemented, on people within the protected groups. This assessment has been updated to reflect the impact of the decision taken on 15 July 2024 by the Executive to remove two of the proposed changes.
24. The revised high-level EIA is attached to the report at Appendix 2. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken following the completion of the consultation exercise and supporting the development of the final scheme proposals. This will be included with the final recommendation to Members in November and December of 2024.

Community Safety Implications

25. There are no direct implications for community safety. However, CTR provides support for people on low incomes. Any significant reductions in the amount of support provided could indirectly result in increased rates of crime.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

26. There are no significant climate change and sustainability implications resulting from this proposal. The main avenue for consultation responses will be via the website in order to minimise the necessity of having to produce and issue paper forms.

Health and Safety Implications

27. The proposed changes, if implemented in full, are likely to see significant cuts in the amount of support provided to people on low incomes. This in turn is likely to increase the amount of debt enforcement action we will need to undertake and could lead to increased contact from customers who are struggling to pay. Debt enforcement contact and conversations are inherently not easy because we are seeking to obtain payment from people who in many instances are not able to make payment. A proportion of these conversations can result in staff being verbally abused and in extreme cases being threatened or assaulted. Any significant rise in the volume of contact in this area will increase the pressure on our staff.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

28. The changes proposed to the CTR scheme, if implemented in full, could result in a significant reduction in the amount of support provided to people on low

incomes. This could have significant implications for the health and wellbeing of those detrimentally affected by these changes.

29. The impact analysis we have undertaken, which is detailed at Appendix 6, provides information about how these changes will potentially impact on the different claimant groupings.

Social Value

30. See above comments under Health & Wellbeing.

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

31. The purpose of this report is to obtain the views of Scrutiny in relation to the proposed changes as part of the consultation process.

Background

32. The background to the CTR scheme and to the development of the proposed changes for consultation is detailed at length in the report the went to the Executive on 15 July 2024 and has not been repeated here. This report can be viewed at agenda item 6 in the [Executive Agenda 15 July 2024](#).

33. Set out below are:

- A summary of the key points of our existing CTR scheme
- Details of the updated scheme data comparison exercise with other councils
- The proposed changes to the scheme
- An impact analysis of the proposed changes
- An update on the Exceptional Hardship Scheme
- The timetable for the consultation and decision process

Key elements of our current Somerset scheme

34. Detailed below is a summary of the key elements of the current Somerset scheme. The full scheme rules can be viewed on our website at [Somerset Council Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024-2025](#)

- Income Banded Scheme –
 - This allows for small fluctuations in a claimant's income without requiring us to reassess their entitlement each time their income varies. This reduces administration, re-billing costs, the volume of new bills being issued to claimants and helps to improve collection rates
 - The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and / or dependents
- Income disregards – the scheme disregards certain types of income e.g.

- To encourage work, a standard £25 a week disregard is provided against all earnings
 - Income from disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance are disregarded
 - Where any applicant, their partner or dependant child(ren) are disabled, we disregard a further £30 a week from their household income
 - Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance is disregarded.
 - Child Benefit and Child Maintenance is disregarded as income;
 - An amount in respect of the housing element, within Universal credit is disregarded
 - All war pensions and war disablement pensions are disregarded
 - A capital limit of £6,000 with no tariff (or assumed income) is applied, which aligns with the approach taken by DWP
- Easier to understand and administer - the income band grid allows claimants to easily see how much they can get or how a change to their income will affect their discount. No changes are made where an applicant has a non-dependant living with them. This makes the scheme more straightforward and protects low-income families where adult sons and daughters, for example, remain at home
 - Simplified claims process – approximately 50% of our claimants receive Universal Credit (UC). We are automatically notified by the DWP of new UC awards. In most cases, the notifications include enough information for us to make an award without the need for a Council Taxpayer to make a separate claim
 - Maximum award of 100% -
 - The most vulnerable taxpayers and those on the lowest incomes receive a 100% discount
 - No restriction is applied to higher banded properties
 - The Council no longer has to recover small outstanding balances from those unlikely to afford their bills, which should help to reduce administration costs and improve collection rates
 - Exceptional Hardship Scheme – this gives us the ability to provide discretionary help to Council Taxpayers, whether they receive CTR or not, to assist them in meeting their Council Tax bills. It provides us with a flexible mechanism to provide support in abnormal circumstances where people are suffering hardship as a result.
35. A light touch review of the scheme was undertaken during 2023/24 in order to identify any changes required to the scheme for this year, 2024/25. This review identified that the scheme was generally working well and had been well received. The only change made to the scheme and agreed by Council on 20 December 2023 was to increase the income band thresholds in line with the rate of inflation applied to state benefits.

Comparison data

36. The proposed changes to the scheme were largely identified by comparing our scheme against the schemes of a range of other councils within our nearest neighbour group (as defined by LG Futures), councils who have issued Section 114 notices and our geographical neighbours. The changes reflect the areas of our scheme where we are currently being, on average, more generous than other councils.
37. This comparison data has recently been updated and details are provided in Appendix 3 together with details of the other authorities we compared our scheme against.
38. The key points from this updated data comparison exercise are:
 - Whilst our existing scheme is generous at the headline level (i.e. the award of 100% for those on the lowest incomes), we are actually less generous in many other areas of the scheme
 - Our proportion of total spend on the scheme (4.1%) is lower than most of the other Councils we compared against and particularly those that have issued S114 notices. However, it is higher on average than the other authorities we compared against in our local area.
 - We make a higher maximum award than the average. However, on average, the authorities paying out a maximum of 100% had a higher in-year Council Tax collection rate (by 1.2%) from those who pay a lower amount. (NB. For Somerset in the current financial year 1.2% equates to £5.8m)
 - The majority of the other councils we looked at already apply non-dependent deductions
 - We backdate for a far longer period (12 months) than the averages for all of the other authority groups

The proposed changes to the existing scheme

39. The consultation questions regarding to the proposed changes to the CTR scheme are set out in Appendix 1. In summary the changes proposed are:
 - Part 1 – Reducing the level of discount available within the scheme
 - Part 2 – Introducing standard non-dependant deductions
 - Part 3 – Restricting support to a Band D Council Tax levels
 - Part 4 - Reducing the time we can backdate an award of Council Tax Reduction

Impact analysis of the proposed changes

40. To assist members in responding to the consultation questions we have also provided the following information regarding the potential impact of the proposed changes:

- A high-level equalities impact assessment which analyses the potential impact on people or groups with protected characteristics – see Appendix 2
 - A detailed impact analysis in respect of each proposed change – see Appendix 6
41. Information has also been provided in Appendix 7 about the impact on debt for CTR claimants following the introduction of the new Somerset scheme for 2023/24. Appendix 4 provides data in relation to Exceptional Hardship applications for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years.
42. Much of this data has been produced using current year live claims data from one of the four legacy district IT systems, which has then been extrapolated proportionately across the other legacy district areas. The service is still running on the four separate IT systems inherited from the legacy district councils. Whilst a project is underway to consolidate to a new single database, the resourcing demands of this project and other technical constraints prevent us from being able to run the modelling in each of the current systems. Consequently, the results are estimates and are not precise. However, we have identified that the breakdown of the caseload across the four legacy areas is very similar (see Appendix 5), which will increase the accuracy of the estimates.
43. Summarised below are the key points from the data that will need to be considered when determining whether to implement each proposed change:

Part 1 – reducing the level of discount available to a maximum of 75%

- This option potentially delivers the largest saving of all of the individual options (up to £4.8m p.a. for Somerset Council)
- However, it will impact detrimentally on ALL (circa 18,000) working age claimants and on average they will be required to pay an additional £333 per year in Council Tax
- Data from the comparison authorities indicates that the Council Tax collection rates for those who have a maximum CTR payment of less than 100% is 1.2% lower. For Somerset Council in the current financial year 1.2% equates to £5.8m
- It is also reasonable to anticipate that a reduction of this scale would lead to a significant increase in Exceptional Hardship applications

Part 2 – introducing standard non-dependent deductions

- We estimate that this change impacts on circa 15% of the existing caseload, although it should be noted that this estimate is based on legacy district data, as our current scheme rules do not require us to collect information about non-dependents
- This option could deliver savings estimated at £1.5m p.a.
- Modelling data indicates that the impact of the change would be proportionately greater on couples with either no or a single child and on Passported and Disabled households

- The comparison data with the other authorities indicates that the vast majority apply non-dependent deductions

Part 3 – Restricting support to a Band D Council Tax levels

- Modelling suggests that this will only impact on a very small proportion of the existing caseload (263 out of circa 18,000 cases), with the biggest impact being on lone parents with two or more children
- This option only delivers minimal savings of £86k
- The comparison data indicates that the majority of the other authorities do not apply a threshold. However, in our local area the majority of the authorities we looked at do (see Appendix 3 for details)

Part 4 – Reducing the time we can backdate an award of Council Tax Reduction

- We do not hold detailed data in relation to the backdating of claims. However, we believe the numbers to be a very small proportion of the total new claims we receive and consequently do not believe that this will produce a significant saving
- The comparison data with other councils indicates that on average they limit backdating to a far shorter period than we currently allow

Implementing ALL of the proposed changes

- Implementing all of the changes could deliver a saving to Somerset Council of £6.4m p.a.
- However, ALL 18,000 working age claimants will be detrimentally impacted if we implement all of the proposed changes
- On average each claimant would be asked to pay an additional £424 per year in Council Tax
- As stated above, the comparison data with other authorities indicates that this would potentially have a significant impact on Council Tax collection rates and it is reasonable to assume will drive up applications for Exceptional Hardship

Update on the Exceptional Hardship Scheme

44. Appendix 4 includes information relating to the total amounts awarded under our Exceptional Hardship scheme(s) by both the legacy districts for 2022/23 and by Somerset Council for 2023/24.
45. Whilst the figures indicate a significant increase in spend during 2023/24, they need to be treated with caution. Government provided additional one-off funding for 2023/24 of £872k, which was paid out through our Exceptional Hardship scheme and which entirely covered the cost of the scheme for last year. This included automatic one-off grants of £25 to each existing CTR claimant.

46. The impact of the Government funding in 2023/24 makes it very difficult to draw any accurate conclusions about the impact of the new scheme on Exceptional Hardship applications, although, in practice we only saw a slight increase in the numbers of applications from 849 to 923.

The consultation and decision timetable

47. The responses to the consultation exercise will be reviewed throughout the consultation period so that we can quickly identify any potential changes to the proposed scheme. Following the completion of the consultation exercise, we will complete this review, finalise the proposed scheme for 2025/26 and bring recommendations forward to Members for scrutiny and a decision. The indicative timetable for this is set out below.

24 Jul 2024	Commence consultation
28 Aug 2024	Scrutiny for Corporate & Resources to consider & respond to the consultation questions
16 Sep 2024	All Member Briefing & Q&A
1 Oct 2024	Consultation closes
Oct 2024	Final review of consultation responses & adjustments, if required, to the proposed scheme
Oct 2024	Finalised the proposed scheme
25 Nov 2024	Scrutiny for Corporate & Resources
2 Dec 2024	Executive
18 Dec 2024	Full Council

Background Papers

48. Agenda item 6, Paper B in the [Full Council Agenda 20 December 2023](#)
49. Agenda item 6 in the [Executive Agenda 15 July 2024](#)
50. The consultation questionnaire [Have your say on possible changes to Council Tax Reduction support \(somerset.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Consultation Questions
- Appendix 2 – High-level Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 3 – Council Tax Reduction Scheme Comparison Data
- Appendix 4 – Somerset Scheme Headline Data 2022/23 to 2024/25
- Appendix 5 – Somerset Working-Age Caseload Breakdown
- Appendix 6 – Impact Data Analysis on the Proposed Changes
- Appendix 7 – Debt Impact Analysis of the 2023/24 Scheme

Assurance checklist (if appropriate)

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	Jill Byron	14 Aug 2024
Communications	Peter Elliott	12 Aug 2024
Finance & Procurement	Jason Vaughan	12 Aug 2024
Workforce	Alyn Jones	N/A
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	N/A
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Jason Vaughan	12 Aug 2024
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	N/A
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Liz Leyson	4 Aug 2024
Consulted:	Councillor Name	
Local Division Members		N/A
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Mandy Chilcott	16 Aug 2024
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Bob Filmer	16 Aug 2024

Consultation Questions

Part 1 - Reducing the level of discount available within the working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme

One option to save money would be to reduce the level of discount currently offered to working age Council Tax payers on low incomes.

For working age people, we work out your reduction using our local income band scheme. The amount of discount you get depends on your income and family make-up.

The table below shows the discount for each band as it is currently in 2024-25 and a proposed change from 1 April 2025.

Under these proposals all levels of support will reduce.

For example, if the proposals are approved, a single person with a weekly income of £100 could receive a 75% discount rather than a 100% discount as currently. A couple with two children and a weekly income of £500 could see their discount reduced from 25% to 10%.

This proposal could save the Council £4.8m every year and will help meet the financial deficit. However, it means all working age applicants will have to pay more Council Tax.

Band	Current discount (%)	Proposed discount from 1 April 2025 (%)	Single person	Single person with one child	Single person with two children	Couple with no children	Couple with one child	Couple with two children
1*	100	75	£0-102	£0-£171	£0-£235	£0-150	£0-£214	£0-£278
2	75	50	£102.01-£166	£171.01-£235	£235.01-£310	£150.01-£225	£214.01-£278	£278.01-£353
3	40	25	£166.01-£203	£235.01-£273	£310.01-£395	£225.01-£278	£278.01-£315	£353.01-£438
4	25	10	£203.01-£251	£273.01-£310	£395.01-£513	£278.01-£331	£315.01-£353	£438.01-£555
	0	0	Over £251	Over £310	Over £513	Over £331	Over £353	Over £555

*you will automatically receive a band 1 discount if you or your partner receive Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance.

Part 2 - Introducing standard non-dependant deductions

This proposal relates to reducing the support you can claim if you live with non-dependants. A non-dependant is an adult (over 18) who lives with you and does not have to pay Council Tax. For example, a grown-up son or daughter.

Currently, no deduction is made from a household's Council Tax Reduction where a non-dependant lives in the household.

Under this proposal we would introduce a flat rate £10 a week deduction for each non-dependant living with the applicant.

So if you currently get CTR of £30 a week and live with two grown-up children (non-dependants), this could be reduced by £20 (£10 for each non-dependant) and instead you could get CTR of £10 a week.

This could save the Council £1.5m every year and will help meet the financial deficit. However, it will increase the amount of Council Tax for those households with non-dependants.

Part 3 - Restricting support to a Band D Council Tax levels

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on your property's 'valuation band'. These range from lower value homes at Band A to higher value homes at Band H.

The amount of Council Tax Reduction you can claim varies depending on the band of your home.

This proposal would not impact on applicants who live in lower value homes with a Council Tax band of A, B, C or D.

However, anyone living in a higher value home with a Council Tax band of E, F, G or H would have their support limited to a Band D level. This could mean a reduction in the level of support you receive.

This could save the Council £86,000 every year and will help meet the financial deficit. However it will increase the amount of Council Tax for those households with a Council Tax band E, F, G or H.

Part 4 - Reducing the time we can backdate an award of Council Tax Reduction

This proposal relates to the length of time we can backdate an award of Council Tax Reduction.

Currently, if you make a claim for Council Tax Reduction and you qualify, we can, at our discretion, backdate the award of support for a period up to 12 months before the date the claim was made.

Under this proposal, we will only backdate Council Tax Reduction to one month before the date we receive the claim.

It is not possible to work out how much this change could save the Council. While it will reduce the cost of the scheme and help meet the financial deficit, it will mean anyone who claims late will only have their claim backdated one month.

High level equalities assessment of the options

This document aims to provide decision makers with an initial understanding of potential impact on those characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. This should not be viewed as a final consideration of Due Regard but a high-level consideration to support decision makers identify the options they would like to take further for further work and consultation.

This document evidences the councils iterative process of equality Due Regard.

	No change i.e. current scheme	Combined impact of parts 1 to 4	Part 1 Reducing the level of discount available to 75%, 50%, 25% and 10% (from 100%, 75%, 40% and 25% respectively)	Part 2 Introducing standard non-dependant deductions of £10 a week	Part 3 Restricting support to a Band D Council Tax levels	Part 4 Reducing the time we can backdate an award of Council Tax Reduction to 1 month
Age	Neutral	Claimants who have reached state pension age have their CTR assessed under the national 'prescribed' scheme and are not affected by these proposals. All working age claimants will be disproportionately disadvantaged by these proposals. To protect any claimants affected, an exceptional hardship scheme is available, subject to qualifying conditions.				
Disability	Neutral	Will disproportionately disadvantage claimants with this characteristic. 18% of claimants who are either disabled or live with someone with a disability have a non-dependant living with them, who may be living there to provide support and help with the general needs of that person.	Neutral	Will disproportionately disadvantage claimants with this characteristic. 18% of claimants who are either disabled or live with someone with a disability have a non-dependant living with them, who may be living there to provide support and help with the general needs of that person.	Neutral	Neutral
Gender reassignment	CTR is based on income and family make-up. No data held on the numbers in this protected group claiming CTR. Change does not specifically target this group. No evidence currently suggesting these options will disproportionately disadvantage claimants with this characteristic.					
Marriage and civil partnership	CTR is based on income and family make-up. The marital status of a couple in the household is not relevant in the assessment of CTR. Options do not disproportionately affect claimants based on their marriage or civil partnership. No evidence currently suggesting these options will disproportionately disadvantage claimants with this characteristic.					
Pregnancy and maternity	Neutral	Not easy to identify unless a state benefit (SMP, SPP*) is in payment. No data currently available on the numbers of claimants with this characteristic. Pregnancy alone is not a factor in the assessment of CTR. Once a child is born, the claimant's income allowance will increase if it is their first or second child.		Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Race and ethnicity	Neutral	Asian or Asian British are more likely to live in multi-generational households (ONS, 2021) and therefore more likely to have a non-dependant living in the household. This option could disproportionately disadvantage claimants with this characteristic.	The race and ethnicity of a claimant is not taken into account in the assessment of CTR. No data currently held on the numbers in this protected group. There is no current data to suggest this group could be disproportionately impacted by these proposals.	Asian or Asian British are more likely to live in multi-generational households (ONS, 2021) and therefore more likely to have a non-dependant living in the household. This option could disproportionately disadvantage claimants with this characteristic.	The race and ethnicity of a claimant is not taken into account in the assessment of CTR. No data currently held on the numbers in this protected group. There is no current data to suggest this group could be disproportionately impacted by these proposals.	
Religion or belief	The religion or belief of a claimant is not taken into account in the assessment of CTR. No data currently held on the numbers of claimants in this protected group. None of the options specifically target this group.					
Sex	Neutral	CTR is based on income and family make-up. The sex of a claimant is not relevant in the assessment of CTR. However, the majority of CTR claimants are female (either: single, a lone parent of part of a couple) Consequently, more females will be impacted by changes made to CTR than males. This is not				

		deliberate but is simply a product of the makeup of our caseload. Sex is not considered a characteristic that requires greater assistance. None of the options specifically target this group.			
Sexual orientation	The sexual orientation of a claimant or couple is not taken into account in the assessment of CTR. Same sex couples are treated the same as heterosexual couples. No data currently held on the number of claimants in this protected group. No evidence currently suggesting these options will disproportionately disadvantage claimants with this characteristic.				
Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)	No data currently held on the number of claimants in this protected group on CTR. The current scheme provides for specific disregards of certain incomes for veterans and will continue to do so under these proposed options. No evidence currently suggesting these options will disproportionately disadvantage claimants with this characteristic				
Other, e.g. carers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.	Neutral	As CTR is based on a claimant's income, these options will, by definition, impact people on low incomes.	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral

SMP = Statutory Maternity Pay

SPP = Statutory Paternity Pay

Mitigation in all circumstances: the availability of an Exceptional Hardship scheme to award additional discretionary relief from Council Tax (reducing the Council Tax bill) subject to qualifying conditions

Council Tax Reduction Scheme Comparison Data

Category	SC Scheme	Nearest neighbour average	S114 average	Local banded average	Comments
Working age scheme spend as a proportion of gross debit	4.1%	4.3%	8.5%	3.7%	
Council Tax collection rates	96.6%	The average for authorities awarding 100% CTR = 97.5% The average for authorities awarding less than 100% CTR = 96.3%			
Maximum award percentages	100%	89%	81%	93%	
Non-dependent deductions	None	Of the 27 authorities we collected data from all bar 4 apply non-dependent deductions.			
Capital limits	£6,000	£11,600	£10,333	£6,571	The minimum amount any authority applies is £6,000
Discount bands	4	No authority currently operates with fewer than 4 discount bands and a number have more. (NB. Only relates to authorities with banded schemes).			
Max weekly income to still qualify for the top discount band award' (single person)	£95	£116	£131	£99	NB. Only relates to authorities with banded schemes.
Highest weekly qualifying income (single person)	£235	£256	£454	£294	NB. Only relates to authorities with banded schemes.
Maximum Ctax band threshold	None	Apply threshold = 2 No threshold = 13	Apply threshold = 2 No threshold = 4	Apply threshold = 4 No threshold = 1	
No. of exclusions from UC income	1	The majority of authorities with banded schemes apply more Universal Credit exclusions, which will result in claimants having more of their income disregarded.			
Disabled disregards	£30	Only 2 authorities give no disregard and all of the others provide for a higher disregard than we do.			
No. of months for backdating	12	3.6	3.5	6.0	

More generous	The same	Less generous
---------------	----------	---------------

Detailed below are the authorities we have looked at for CTR scheme comparison purposes

Authorities in our nearest neighbour group as defined by LG Futures	Authorities who have issued S114 notices	Other geographically local authorities running banded schemes
Buckinghamshire Cheshire East Cheshire West & Chester Cornwall Cumberland Dorset East Riding of Yorkshire Herefordshire North Somerset North Yorkshire Northumberland Shropshire West Northamptonshire Westmorland & Furness Wiltshire	Birmingham Croydon Nottingham Slough Thurrock Woking	Bath & North East Somerset Cheltenham East Devon Mid Devon South Gloucestershire West Devon

Somerset Scheme Headline Data 2022/23 to 2024/25

Area	2022/23 ¹		2023/24		2024/25 ²	
	£ / %	Caseload	£ / %	Caseload	£ / %	Caseload
Pension age scheme	£16,176,012	13,928	£16,039,685	13,444	£17,290,373	13,488
Working age scheme	£16,654,673	19,627	£18,790,962	18,286	£20,802,676	18,753
Combined pension & working age	£32,830,685	33,555	£34,830,647	31,730	£38,093,049	32,241
Overall CTR (i.e. pension & working age) as a percentage of gross debit	7.25%		7.34%		7.7%	
Working age only CTR as a percentage of gross debit	3.68%		3.96%		4.21%	
In-year collection rate	96.85%		96.68%		Not available yet	
Exceptional Hardship applications ³	£190,125.94	849	£804,413.16	923	£60,154.99	185

¹ The scheme for the 2022/23 financial year preceded the unitary council, so we have used data from the former district councils where available.

² The 2024/25 is obviously ongoing so not all of the data is available yet. In addition, it should be noted that caseload volumes fluctuate during the year and we anticipate that they will reduce over the course of the full year.

³ We received additional one-off Council Tax Support funding from Govt. for 2023/24 of £872k. £363k was used, as required by Govt. to make one-off payments of £25 to each CTR claimant. The balance was used to fund Exceptional Hardship applications.

Somerset Working-Age Caseload Breakdown

The table below provides a breakdown of how the current working age caseload within the Somerset area is made up and is based on actual data from the four legacy district systems.

For detailed modelling purposes, we have only been able to use data from one of the legacy district Revenues and Benefits systems (the legacy SWT area) to calculate the potential impact of the proposed changes to the scheme and have had to extrapolate the results across the caseload for the other areas. However, as the below figures indicate, the way in which the legacy SWT area caseload is split between the different groups very closely aligns with the split for the other areas.

NB. the total working age caseload detailed below is lower than stated elsewhere in the report, as the below data was produced more recently and caseload has reduced since the start of the financial year.

Family make up	Former SWT	Former MDC	Former SSDC	Former SDC	Total	All	SWT	Diff
Single Person	2,516	1,871	1,839	1,919	8,145	47.11%	46.85%	-0.25%
Lone Parent with 1 child	754	458	633	535	2,380	13.76%	14.04%	0.28%
Lone Parent with 2 or more children	1,239	562	1,287	852	3,940	22.79%	23.07%	0.29%
Couple with no children	334	233	303	322	1,192	6.89%	6.22%	-0.67%
Couple with 1 child	121	58	115	100	394	2.28%	2.25%	-0.03%
Couple with 2 or more children	406	174	365	295	1,240	7.17%	7.56%	0.39%
Total working age	5,370	3,356	4,542	4,023	17,291			

Impact Data Analysis on the Proposed Changes

Detailed below are estimates in respect of the potential impact upon our existing caseload of implementing the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction scheme outlined in the consultation document.

We have looked at and analysed data in respect of implementing all of the options and of implementing individual options. The options are not mutually exclusive and in practice implementing multiple options means that each option will impact on the other options. Consequently, given the number of options we are consulting on and the consequent number of variables it has not been possible to analyse every specific scenario.

The Revenues and Benefits service is currently still running on the four separate legacy district IT systems, although a project is currently underway to consolidate these systems. Our ability to produce modelling data varies in the different systems and the resource available to do so is extremely limited at the moment due to the demands of the system consolidation project. The below data has been produced from one of the legacy systems and the results extrapolated across the other areas. Consequently, the results are estimates and are not precise. However, we have identified that the breakdown of the caseload between the different family group types (see Appendix 5) is very similar across the four legacy areas, which will increase the accuracy of the estimates.

Part 1 – Reducing the level of discount available within the working age Council Tax Reduction Scheme

One option to save money would be to reduce the level of discount currently offered to working age Council Tax payers on low incomes.

For working age people, we work out your reduction using our local income band scheme. The amount of discount you get depends on your income and family make-up.

The table below shows the discount for each band as it is currently in 2024-25 and a proposed change from 1 April 2025.

Under these proposals all levels of support will reduce.

For example, if the proposals are approved, a single person with a weekly income of £100 could receive a 75% discount rather than a 100% discount as currently. A couple with two children and a weekly income of £500 could see their discount reduced from 25% to 10%.

This proposal could save the Council £4.8m every year and will help meet the financial deficit. However, it means all working age applicants will have to pay more Council Tax.

Band	Current discount (%)	Proposed discount from 1 April 2025 (%)	Single person	Single person with one child	Single person with two children	Couple with no children	Couple with one child	Couple with two children
1*	100	75	£0-102	£0-£171	£0-£235	£0-150	£0-£214	£0-£278
2	75	50	£102.01-£166	£171.01-£235	£235.01-£310	£150.01-£225	£214.01-£278	£278.01-£353
3	40	25	£166.01-£203	£235.01-£273	£310.01-£395	£225.01-£278	£278.01-£315	£353.01-£438
4	25	10	£203.01-£251	£273.01-£310	£395.01-£513	£278.01-£331	£315.01-£353	£438.01-£555
	0	0	Over £251	Over £310	Over £513	Over £331	Over £353	Over £555

*you will automatically receive a band 1 discount if you or your partner receive Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance.

Estimated impact of this option on the overall caseload

Household type	Average loss £ a week	Estimate numbers getting the same support	Estimate numbers getting less support	Percentage getting less support
Single person	-£6.14	0	8,624	100%
Lone parent with 1 child	-£6.44	0	2,578	100%
Lone parent with 2 children	-£5.79	0	4,237	100%
Couple with no children	-£8.07	0	1,146	100%
Couple with 1 child	-£8.53	0	417	100%
Couple with 2 or more children	-£7.77	0	1,388	100%
All households	-£6.40	0	18,390	100%
Passported households	-£6.87	0	3,539	100%
Disabled households	-£6.79	0	7,930	100%

Individual claim impact example(s)

Claimant A is a single person who receives Personal Independence Payments and Universal Credit. Their income means they currently receive a 75% discount on their Council Tax bill of £1,160.78 (reduced by £870.59). Under this proposal, they will only qualify for a 50% discount so would have to find an extra £290.19 a year (£5.57 a week) to pay their bill.

Claimant B lives with their partner and two children. Claimant B's income from Universal Credit and earnings means that they receive a 40% discount on their Council Tax bill of £1,871.62 (reduced by £748.65). Under this proposal, Claimant B will only qualify for a 25% discount and would have to find an extra £280.74 a year (£5.38 a week) to pay their bill.

Conclusions

- ALL working age applicants will see a reduction in the amount of support they receive. On average each claimant would be asked to pay an additional £333 per year in Council Tax (i.e. £6.40 x 52 weeks)
- Passported and Disabled households will lose higher amounts than the average and are less likely to be able increase their income
- Couples are seeing on average a far higher reduction than any of the other categories
- Implementing this change is likely to result in a significant increase in applications for Exceptional Hardship and is likely to detrimentally affect collection rates

Part 2 - Introducing standard non-dependant deductions

This proposal relates to reducing the support you can claim if you live with non-dependants. A non-dependant is an adult (over 18) who lives with you and does not have to pay Council Tax. For example, a grown-up son or daughter.

Currently, no deduction is made from a household's Council Tax Reduction where a non-dependant lives in the household.

Under this proposal we would introduce a flat rate £10 a week deduction for each non-dependant living with the applicant.

So if you currently get CTR of £30 a week and live with two grown-up children (non-dependants), this could be reduced by £20 (£10 for each non-dependant) and instead you could get CTR of £10 a week.

This could save the Council £1.5m every year and will help meet the financial deficit. However, it will increase the amount of Council Tax for those households with non-dependants.

Estimated impact of this option on the overall caseload

Household type	Total caseload	Estimated caseload numbers affected *	Percentage getting less support
Single person	8,624	1,371	16%
Lone parent with 1 child	2,578	400	16%
Lone parent with 2 children	4,237	465	11%
Couple with no children	1,146	335	29%
Couple with 1 child	417	99	24%
Couple with 2 or more children	1,388	171	12%
All households	18,390	2,842	15%
Passported households	3,539	749	21%
Disabled households	7,930	1,433	18%

* Our current scheme does not include a deduction for non-dependents. Consequently, we no longer need to collect this data as part of the application process. So, these estimates are based on historical information pre-dating 1 April 2023 when the new scheme was introduced. If this change is introduced a full review of the caseload will be required to identify the claims where we will have to apply non-dependent deductions

Individual claim impact example(s)

Claimant C is a single applicant aged 64 in receipt of Universal Credit standard element and the limited capability for work related activities element. Two non-dependents (son and daughter) are also resident in the property. Claimant C is currently in band 3 receiving £16.63 a week CTR. Introducing the flat rate of £10 a week for each non-dependant will result in this applicant no longer qualifying. They will go from having to pay £24.95 a week (£1,297.40 a year) council tax to £41.58 a week (£2,162.16)

Conclusions

- Overall, we estimate that this will impact on 15% of our existing working age caseload who will each lose at least £10 per week in CTR
- The impact will be significantly proportionately greater in caseload terms on couples with either no or one child who are more likely to have adult children still living at home
- There is also a higher than average caseload impact on Passported and Disabled Households
- This change could also affect households with non-dependent care leavers where they are not the liable person for Council Tax or the claimant, although we anticipate there would be very few cases in practice where these circumstances applied

Part 3 – Restricting support to a Band D Council Tax levels

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on your property's 'valuation band'. These range from lower value homes at Band A to higher value homes at Band H.

The amount of Council Tax Reduction you can claim varies depending on the band of your home.

This proposal would not impact on applicants who live in lower value homes with a Council Tax band of A, B, C or D.

However, anyone living in a higher value home with a Council Tax band of E, F, G or H would have their support limited to a Band D level. This could mean a reduction in the level of support you receive.

This could save the Council £86,000 every year and will help meet the financial deficit. However it will increase the amount of Council Tax for those households with a Council Tax band E, F, G or H.

Estimated impact of this option on the overall caseload

Household type	Total caseload	Estimated numbers getting less support	Average loss per affected case £ a week	Percentage getting less support
Single person	8,528	92	£8.09	1%
Lone parent with 1 child	2,548	24	£6.31	1%
Lone parent with 2 children	4,110	127	£4.72	3%
Couple with no children	1,139	7	£6.69	1%
Couple with 1 child	414	3	£18.43	1%
Couple with 2 or more children	1,378	10	£10.92	1%
All households	18,116	263	£6.57	1%
Passported households	3,519	21	£9.80	1%
Disabled households	7,851	75	£8.79	1%

Individual claim impact example(s)

Claimant D is a single parent on Universal Credit, living in a Band F property with their children, the eldest of which is getting Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Claimant D's income is such that they currently qualify for a 75% discount on their full Council Tax liability of £2,606.89 a year (reduced by £1,955.17 of CTR). Under these proposals, they would only qualify for £1,353.57 CTR and will have to find an extra £601.60 a year (£11.54 a week)

Claimant E is a single disabled person currently on PIP and Universal Credit. They live in a Band E property alone and currently receive a 75% discount on their Council Tax bill of £2,054.79 (reduced by £1,541.09 of CTR). Under these proposals, they will only qualify for £1,260.89 and will have to find an extra £280.20 a year (£5.37 a week).

Conclusions

- In total this impacts only on a very small proportion of the overall caseload – 263 cases out of 18,116 and will only save £86k per annum
- The biggest impact is on lone parents with two or more children

Part 4 - Reducing the time we can backdate an award of Council Tax Reduction

This proposal relates to the length of time we can backdate an award of Council Tax Reduction.

Currently, if you make a claim for Council Tax Reduction and you qualify, we can, at our discretion, backdate the award of support for a period up to 12 months before the date the claim was made.

Under this proposal, we will only backdate Council Tax Reduction to one month before the date we receive the claim.

It is not possible to work out how much this change could save the Council. While it will reduce the cost of the scheme and help meet the financial deficit, it will mean anyone who claims late will only have their claim backdated one month.

Estimated impact of this option on the overall caseload

Currently, we estimate that we only backdate beyond a month in a small number of cases, so the financial impact of implementing this change is likely to be small.

Individual claim impact example(s)

Claimant F is a single parent with one child in receipt of the standard and child element of Universal Credit and child benefit. Their total monthly income is £788. They are currently in band 1 receiving 100% CTR at £24.40 a week. A full 12 months backdated CTR was awarded. If backdated CTR was not granted, Claimant F would have an additional £1,268.85 to pay. In this case, Claimant F already had Council Tax arrears in excess of £5k relating to previous years council tax.

Claimant G is a single applicant aged 62 in receipt of Employment Support Allowance. Their monthly income is £689.26. They are currently in band 1 receiving 100% CTR at £31.53 a week. Their claim was backdated for a period of 5 ½ months back to the date upon which they moved into the property. Claimant G had suffered from a mental breakdown and was unable to cope making an application at the time of occupying the property. They suffer from ongoing physical and mental health issues including anxiety and depression. If backdated CTR was not awarded taxpayer would have had an additional £428.31 to pay.

Conclusions

- We do not hold detailed statistics relating to backdated claims. However, we believe the numbers to be a very small proportion of the total new claims we receive and consequently do not believe that this will produce a significant saving

The combined impact of implementing ALL of the proposed changes

If all of the changes were approved, we could potentially save £6.4m a year.

Estimated impact of this option on the overall caseload

Household type	Average loss £ a week	Estimated numbers getting the same support	Estimated numbers getting less support	Percentage getting less support
Single person	-£7.99	0	8,612	100%
Lone parent with 1 child	-£8.19	0	2,581	100%
Lone parent with 2 children	-£6.85	0	4,241	100%

Couple with no children	-£11.75	0	1,143	100%
Couple with 1 child	-£11.70	0	414	100%
Couple with 2 or more children	-£9.11	0	1,390	100%
All households	-£8.16	0	18,382	100%
Passported households	-£9.80	0	3,539	100%
Disabled households	-£9.01	0	7942	100%

Individual claim impact example(s)

Claimant H is a tenant in a Band E property. As a single person, they receive income-related Employment and Support Allowance. Claimant H's parents live in the property in order to support the claimant – they are each treated as a non-dependant couple. Claimant H currently gets a 100% discount on their Council Tax bill (£2,646.19 a year) – equivalent to £50.75 a week. Under this proposal, their weekly award of CTR would reduce to £21.14 a week (£1,102.37 a year). This means Claimant H will have to find £1,543.82 to pay their Council Tax bill.

Claimant I and partner live with their three grown up children, who are all aged over 18 years and are each treated as non-dependants. The claimant's partner gets income-related Employment and Support Allowance which entitles them to a band 1 discount, which is currently 100%. Their current Council Tax liability is £2,063.62 so they are receiving a CTR award of £39.58 per week. Under the proposed new scheme band 1 only pays out a maximum of 75%. So, based on this year's Council Tax, they would receive CTR of £1,547.72 or £29.68 per week. However, because their three children are 18 or over and regarded as being non dependents, a deduction of £30 per week (i.e. 3 x £10) will be applied and hence they will receive no CTR.

Claimant J is a lone parent with two children. The claimant's income from earnings and Universal Credit means they receive a 75% discount on their Council Tax liability of £1,501.13 (their CTR is £1,125.84 a year). Under these proposals, the CTR support provided will reduce to 50%, so they will have to find an extra £375.28 a year.

Conclusions

- ALL existing working age applicants will see a reduction in the amount of support they receive. On average each claimant would be asked to pay an additional £424 per year in Council Tax (i.e. £8.16 x 52 weeks)
- Passported and Disabled households will lose higher amounts than the average and are less likely to be able increase their income
- Couples are seeing on average a far higher reduction than any of the other categories
- Implementing this change is likely to result in a significant increase in applications for Exceptional Hardship and is likely to detrimentally affect collection rates

Debt Impact Analysis of the 2023/24 Scheme

The data provided below relates solely to CTR claims for the former Somerset West & Taunton area only. It provides a statistical overview of the debt position in relation to CTR claimants for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years together with a summary of the changes between the years. It does NOT cover the entire area.

2022/23

	No. of claims	Cases with arrears	% cases with arrears	Total debt	Average debt	Highest individual debt	Cases with enforcement agents	% cases with enforcement agents
Single Person	3,573	842	24%	£315,586	£375	£1,774	87	2%
Lone Parent with 1 child	1,380	377	27%	£140,156	£372	£1,501	22	2%
Lone Parent with 2 or more children	1,471	401	27%	£158,408	£395	£1,666	39	3%
Couple with no children	595	120	20%	£59,516	£496	£1,492	10	2%
Couple with 1 child	400	101	25%	£64,564	£639	£1,596	4	1%
Couple with 2 or more children	724	209	29%	£133,716	£640	£2,476	23	3%
Total	8,143	2,050	25%	£871,945	£425	£2,476	185	2%
Passported cases	1,265	189	15%	£8,564	£45	£696	8	1%
Those getting 80% as at 31 March 2023	1,917	368	19%	£88,181	£240	£1,287	22	1%
Disabled households	2,329	493	21%	£157,601	£320	£1,457	14	1%

2023/24

	No. of claims	Cases with arrears	% cases with arrears	Total debt	Average debt	Highest individual debt	Cases with enforcement agents	% cases with enforcement agents
Single Person	3,309	824	25%	£315,604	£383	£2,502	78	2%
Lone Parent with 1 child	1,213	309	25%	£191,741	£621	£1,916	35	3%
Lone Parent with 2 or more children	1,445	389	27%	£211,161	£543	£1,751	33	2%
Couple with no children	556	128	23%	£60,778	£475	£1,902	3	1%
Couple with 1 child	266	73	27%	£55,119	£755	£2,509	7	3%
Couple with 2 or more children	665	177	27%	£146,914	£830	£2,195	14	2%
Total	7,454	1,900	25%	£981,317	£516	£2,509	170	2%
Passported cases	1,139	9	1%	£1,417	£157	£1,757	2	0%
Those getting 100% as at 31 March 2024	2,428	180	7%	£72,347	£402	£2,179	16	1%
Disabled households	2,769	514	19%	£228,068	£444	£1,746	61	2%

Comparison

	No. of claims	Cases with arrears	% cases with arrears	Total debt	Average debt	% change in average debt	Highest individual debt	Cases with enforcement agents	% cases with enforcement agents
Single Person	-264	-18	1%	£19	£8	2.2%	£728	-9	0%
Lone Parent with 1 child	-167	-68	-2%	£51,585	£249	66.9%	£415	13	1%
Lone Parent with 2 or more children	-26	-12	0%	£52,753	£148	37.4%	£85	-6	0%
Couple with no children	-39	8	3%	£1,262	-£21	-4.3%	£410	-7	-1%
Couple with 1 child	-134	-28	2%	-£9,445	£116	18.1%	£913	3	2%
Couple with 2 or more children	-59	-32	-2%	£13,198	£190	29.7%	-£281	-9	-1%
Difference	-689	-150	0%	£109,372	£91	21.4%	£33	-15	0%
Passported cases	-126	-180	-14%	-£7,147	£112	247.4%	£1,061	-6	0%
Those getting 100% as at 31 March 2024	511	-188	-12%	-£15,835	£162	67.7%	£892	-6	0%
Disabled households	440	21	-3%	£70,467	£124	38.8%	£289	47	2%

Decrease

Increase

Commentary

1. The total caseload for the legacy SWT area reduced from 8,143 on 31 March 2023 to 7,454 on 31 March 2024. The overall percentage of the total cases with arrears has remained the same at 25%. However, 2,428 of the total caseload at 31 March 2024 received 100% CTR. Therefore, the 25% of cases with arrears come from the smaller proportion of the overall caseload (5,026 cases) who have a charge to pay and represent 38% of this smaller group. This is indicative of the new scheme being less generous in certain instances for claimants who do not receive 100%.
2. The increase in Council Tax between 2022/23 and 2023/24 needs to be considered when looking at the increases in the total and average debt and the highest individual debt for each household type. However, in most instances the average debt has increased by significantly more than the 5% increase in Council Tax. Again, this is indicative of the new scheme being less generous in certain instances for claimants who do not receive 100%.
3. For the cases where we are awarding maximum CTR (80% on 31 Mar 2023 and 100% on 31 Mar 2024) we are, unsurprisingly, seeing a significant reduction in the number of cases with arrears.
4. The data indicates an increase in the number of arrears cases in respect of households containing a person or persons with a disability. The new Somerset CTR scheme harmonised the four previous district schemes. In this particular instance, the new harmonised income disregard of £30 p/w was less than the disregard previously applied within the former Somerset West & Taunton scheme of £50 p/w.