



Adran y Prif Weithredwr
Chief Executive's Department
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Cyfarfod / Meeting

**CYFARFOD ARBENNIG O'R CYNGOR
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Dyddiad ac Amser / Date and Time

**1.00pm, DYDD IAU, 24 IONAWR 2013
1.00pm, THURSDAY, 24 JANUARY 2013**

Lleoliad / Location

**Siambr Arfon/Chamber,
Swyddfeydd y Cyngor/Council Offices,
Penrallt,
Caernarfon**

(*Nodwch y lleoliad ogydd/*Please note venue)

Pwynt Cyswllt / Contact Point

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**Harry Thomas
Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive**

www.gwynedd.gov.uk

16 Ionawr/January 2013

Annwyl Gyngorydd,

CYFARFOD ARBENNIG O GYNGOR GWYNEDD – 24 IONAWR 2013

FE'CH GWYSIR TRWY HYN i gyfarfod arbennig o **GYNGOR GWYNEDD** a gynhelir am **1.00PM, DYDD IAU** nesaf, **24 IONAWR 2013 YN SIAMBR ARFON, SWYDDFA'R CYNGOR, PENRALLT, CAERNARFON**, i ystyried y materion a grybwyllir yn y rhaglen a ganlyn.

Dear Councillor,

SPECIAL MEETING OF GWYNEDD COUNCIL – 24 JANUARY 2013

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to attend a special meeting of **GWYNEDD COUNCIL** which will be held at **1.00PM** on **THURSDAY** next, **24 JANUARY 2013** in the **ARFON CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, PENRALLT, CAERNARFON** to consider the matters mentioned in the following agenda.

Yr eiddoch yn gywir/Yours faithfully,



Prif Weithredwr/Chief Executive

Bydd yr ystafelloedd a ganlyn ar gael i'r grwpiau gwleidyddol yn ystod y bore:-

The following rooms will be available for the political groups during the morning:-

Plaid Cymru - Siambr Arfon

Annibynnol/Independent – Ystafell Glyder Fawr

Llais Gwynedd – Ystafell Glyder Fach

Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol/Liberal Democrats - Ystafell Gwyrfai

Llafur/Labour – Cefn Siambr Dafydd Orwig/Rear of Siambr Dafydd

Orwig

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

3. THE CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive any Chairman's announcements.

4. CORRESPONDENCE, COMMUNICATIONS OR OTHER BUSINESS

To receive any correspondence, communications or other business brought forward at the request of the Chairman.

5. URGENT BUSINESS

To note any items which are urgent business in the opinion of the Chairman so they may be considered

6. QUESTIONS

To consider any questions the appropriate notice for which have been given under Procedural Rule 12.

7. NORTH WALES POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Mr Winston Roddick, the North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner will be present at the meeting to give a presentation.

8. WELFARE REFORM

Presentation by Councillor Brian Jones, Cabinet Member for Deprivation and Iwan Trefor Jones, Corporate Director

9. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

To submit the report of the Head of Finance (copy herewith – **gold** paper)

MEETING :	Full Council
DATE :	24th January 2013
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr. Brian Jones
TITLE :	Council Tax Reduction Scheme
OBJECTIVE :	Adoption of Local Scheme by 31st January 2013
AUTHOR :	Dafydd L Edwards

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Members the arrangements for the implementation of the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme, and to consider any discretionary elements which Members may wish to approve.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The full Council are required to determine whether to adopt the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2012 by the 31st January 2013.
- 2.2 The Regulations contain certain discretionary elements which authorities may include within the Scheme.
- 2.3 Failure to adopt a 'local' scheme by the 31st January 2013 will result in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Default Scheme) (Wales) Regulations 2012 being imposed upon the Authority.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 From April 2013 the UK Government is reducing the funding of Council Tax Benefit (CTB) by 10% and the existing CTB Scheme is to be abolished.
- 3.2 There are only limited differences between the existing CTB Scheme and the new Regulations. The three main differences are as follows:
- Under the current CTB Scheme where the claimants' own income is too high to receive CTB, and if they have another adult living in the property whose income is low, they can make a claim for Second Adult Rebate and receive a discount of up to 25%. This scheme has now been removed from the new

MEETING :	Full Council
DATE :	24 January 2013
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Brian Jones
TITLE :	Council Tax Reduction Scheme – UPDATE
OBJECTIVE :	Adoption of Local Scheme by 31 January 2013
AUTHOR :	Dafydd L Edwards, Head of Finance

1. Background

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 contains provisions to abolish Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 31 March 2013. From this date the responsibility for providing support for council tax and the funding associated with it, will be transferred to local authorities in England and to the Scottish Government and to the Welsh Government. As noted in the original report, the 2012 regulations which were approved on 19 December will govern the operation of council tax reduction schemes in Wales and these are designed to ensure that all local authorities introduce a consistent form of council tax support.

2. New 2013 Regulations

On 17 January 2013, the Welsh Government tabled new 2013 regulations that will amend the Council Tax Reduction Schemes Regulations which were approved on 19 December 2012. In contrast to the 2012 regulations, **under the amending 2013 regulations not all claimants receiving support under the council tax reduction scheme will have to pay a proportion of their council tax bill.** A copy of the Minister for Local Government and Communities' statement is enclosed with this report.

3. Timing

The new 2013 regulations were laid before the Assembly at 5pm on 17 January and I'm advised that the vote will be on Tuesday 22 January. Despite this late change to regulations, **the Council must still adopt the Council Tax Reduction Scheme** (reflecting the changes) **by 31 January 2013.** I understand this date is unmoveable as it is set in primary legislation, hence this matter is still being considered by the full Council on Thursday 24 January.

Notwithstanding the very late timing, this change to new regulations is welcome good news insofar as it will continue to provide claimants with current levels of support in 2013/14 (paying 100% of their Council Tax where eligible). As before, these regulations only operate for the 2013/14 financial year, and will be reviewed to consider any further amendments prior to 2014/15.

4. Financial Implications

The amendments will increase the maximum level of support that eligible claimants can receive from 90% to 100%. The additional cost of this change will be supported with an additional £22 million (total to be shared between all 22 Welsh Councils). The Welsh Government is providing this £22m in additional funding, which covers the original 10 per cent cut in the funding as calculated by the UK Government. The Welsh Government is also reducing the related Transitional Grant by £2 million. This grant will be reduced from £4.6m, with the remaining £2.6m (presumably circa £118,000 per local authority) principally to cover changes to IT, as the support for advisory services will no longer be required under a full entitlement regime.

5. Minor Technical Changes

The amending 2013 regulations will also reflect some minor technical changes, up-rating certain figures used within the 2012 regulations to calculate entitlement to a reduction, and also correcting a minor error in the 2012 regulations.

6. Project to Mitigate the Effects of Welfare Reform

This change to new 2013 regulations will also have an impact on the Council's project to mitigate the effects of original proposals. Ongoing measures to raise claimants' awareness, etc, will be reconsidered and modified at this late juncture, with the project now focusing on managing the residual problems, such as reduced housing benefit for 'under-occupied' homes (the "bedroom tax") from April 2013, the introduction of 'Universal Credit' (gradually replacing housing benefit from October 2013), and preparing for whatever Council Tax Reduction Scheme will operate in 2014/15.

7. Impact on Recommendations

The change has only a minimal impact on the recommendations to the full Council. As presented under 9.1 in the original report, the Council is now RECOMMENDED to adopt the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 (rather than 2012). The recommendations pertaining to discretionary elements, as presented under 9.2 in the original report, remain unchanged, in order to best reflect the current levels of support under the Council Tax Benefit scheme.

**CONSULTATION RESULTS
COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

1. Introduction

From April 2013 the UK Government is reducing the funding of Council Tax Benefit (CTB) by 10% and the existing CTB Scheme is to be abolished.

The new scheme contains certain discretionary elements which Authorities may include within the scheme and all Local Authorities were required to consult with key stakeholders with regard to these discretionary areas.

This report summarises the responses as promised in paragraph 4.3 of the report distributed with the agenda for the 24/01/2013 meeting of the full Council.

Please note that this consultation was based on the original scheme / regulations, and had closed on 14/01/2013, prior to the statement by the Minister on 17/01/2013. Therefore, this analysis is presented for information, with a view to preparing for 2014/15.

2. Methodology

The information for this report was collected by conducting a public consultation between 17 December 2012 and 14 January 2013. The public were able to take part in the consultation by completing an online survey on the Council's website. They were able to do this using LimeSurvey software, or they could contact us and request a paper copy of the questionnaire.

The respondents were asked a series of questions relating to:

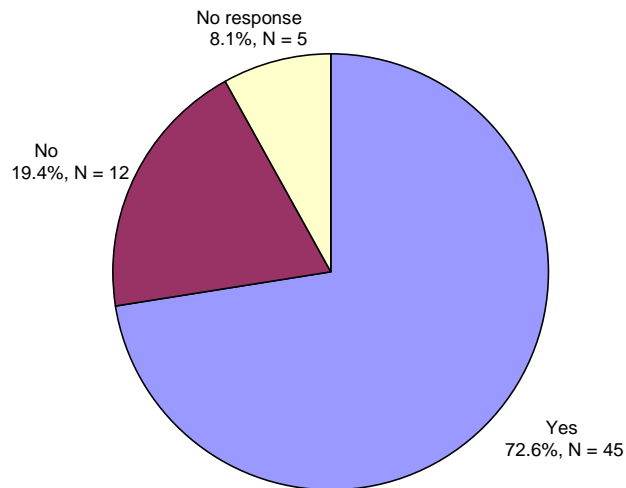
- Their understanding of the proposed changes
- Their opinion of these changes, i.e. whether they agreed or disagreed with the changes.
- Their opinion of those areas where the Council has local discretion.

3. Main Findings

An accumulated total of 62 responses were received to the questionnaire that had been designed to conduct the consultation. Of the 62 responses, 58 were submitted electronically and 4 on paper.

Figure 3.1 shows that almost three quarter (72.6%, N = 45) of the respondents have noted that they understood how the changes to the Council Tax Scheme were introduced. On the other hand, nearly 1 in 5 (19.4%, N = 12) noted that they did not understand how the changes to the Council Tax Scheme were introduced. No responses were received from 8.1% (N = 5).

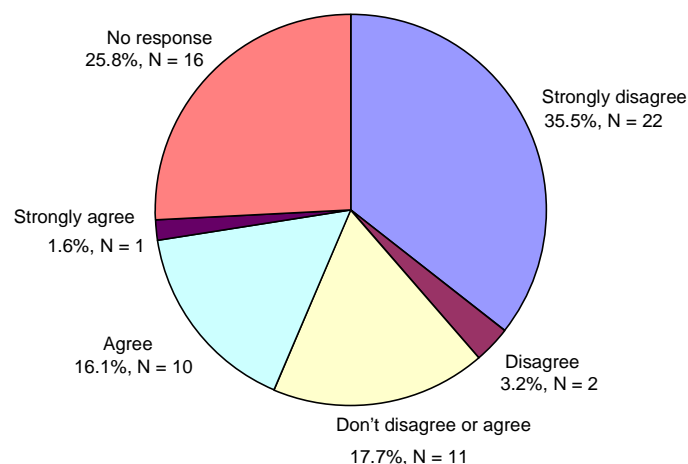
Figure 3.1 Do you understand how the changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme have been introduced by the devolution of responsibility to Welsh Government and the reduced funding available?



N = 62

The majority of respondents strongly disagree (35.5%, N = 22) with the draft regulations introduced by the Welsh Government to create a national scheme, see Figure 3.2.

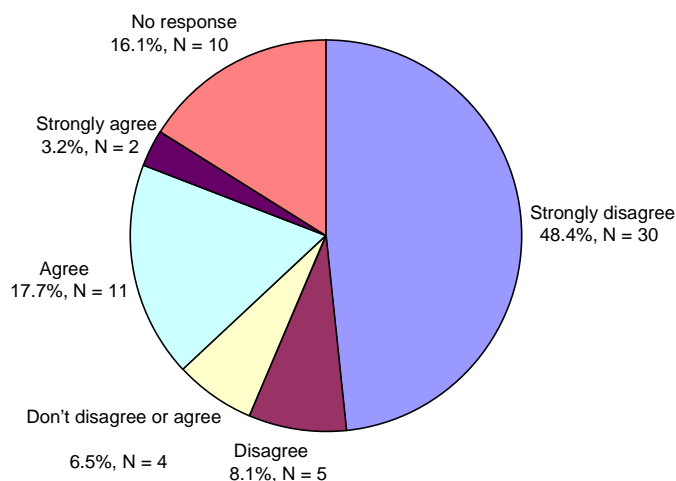
Figure 3.2: Welsh Government have laid out proposals in the draft regulations for a national scheme. The rules for entitlement are broadly similar to Council Tax Benefit, apart from the issues mentioned in points 3 & 4 below. What are your views on this? Give a score from 1 to 5.



N = 62

Figure 3.3 shows that half the respondents (48.4%, N = 30) disagree strongly with the Welsh Government draft regulations which would result in everybody paying at least 10% of their Council Tax bills.

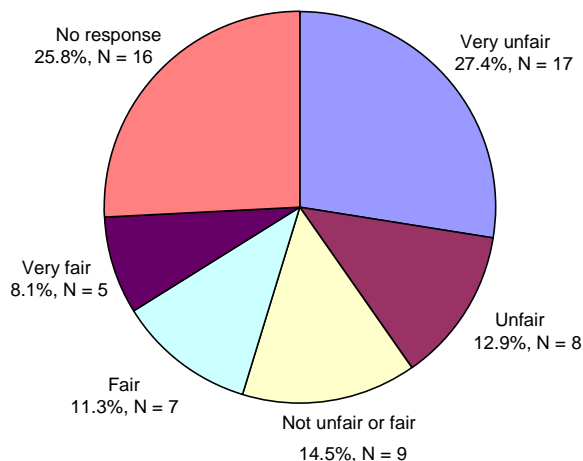
Figure 3.3: The Welsh Government’s draft regulations state that the maximum Council Tax Reduction that can be granted is 90% of the gross Council Tax on a dwelling, so everybody, after deducting the Reduction, will be paying at least 10% of their Council Tax bills. What are your views on this? Give a score from 1 to 5.



N = 62

Figure 3.4 conveys the respondents feelings in respect of removing second adult rebate, which would affect 89 households in Gwynedd. Over a quarter of the respondents (27.4%, N = 17) noted that this would be very unfair, and 12.9% (N = 8) noted that it would be unfair. On the other hand, 11.3% (N = 7) noted that this would be fair, and 8.1% (N = 5) that this would be very fair. It should be noted that a large percentage 25.8% (N = 16) answered 'no response' to this question.

Figure 3.4: The draft regulations indicate that second adult rebate will be removed from the new scheme. The removal of this reduction would mean that approximately 89 customers would no longer be entitled to support from April 2013. What are your views on this? Give a score from 1 to 5.



N = 62

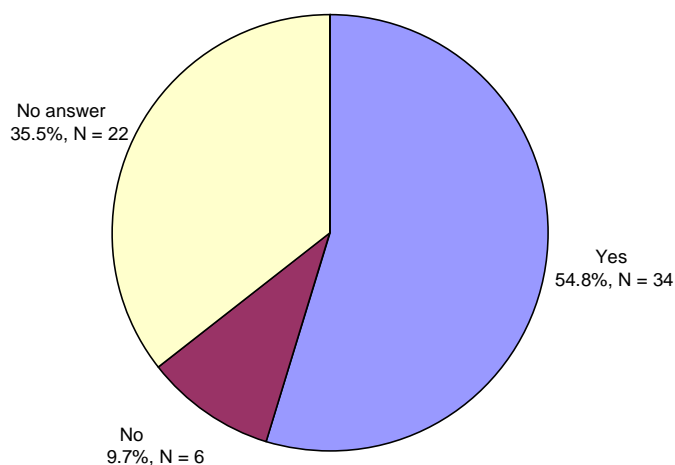
The respondents were asked why they had answered that this was fair or unfair. 26 written comments were received, which are available on request.

The respondents were given the opportunity to submit their comments about any aspect of the Welsh Government's proposed Council Tax Reduction scheme. 27 written comments were received, which are available on request.

The consultation went on to ask a series of questions about those areas where the Council has local discretion.

As can be seen in Figure 3.5, over half the respondents (54.8%, N = 34) indicated that they agreed with the Council's proposals to retain the standard four week extended payment period. Of the respondents, 9.7% (N = 6) noted that they disagreed with this proposal. It should also be noted that a high percentage (35.5%, N = 22) of 'no answer' responses were received to this question.

Figure 3.5: The ability to increase the standard extended payment period of 4 weeks given to people after they return to work, when they have been in receipt of a relevant qualifying benefit for at least 26 weeks. The Council proposes that the existing 4 week standard extended payment should remain unaltered. Do you think this is reasonable?



N = 62

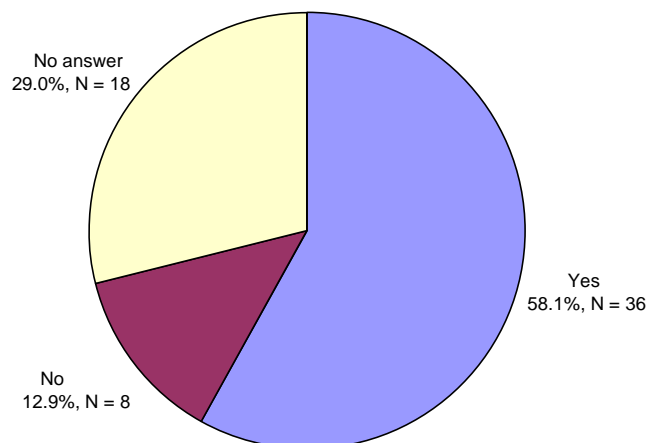
The six respondents who'd replied 'no' were also asked what period would be reasonable in their opinion. The table below summarises the responses received.

Table 1.1: What period of extended payments would be reasonable to grant people after they return to work?

Proposal	Number respondents
No extended payment	1
2 weeks	0
6 weeks	2
Other	1 – proposed 4 weeks
No answer	2
Total	6

Figure 3.6 shows that 58.1% (N = 36) of the respondents consider it reasonable to continue disregarding income from War Disablement pensions and War Widows Pensions, whilst 12.9% (N = 8) indicated that they disagreed with the proposal. It should be noted that a high percentage of 'no answer' responses 29.0% (N = 18) were received to this question.

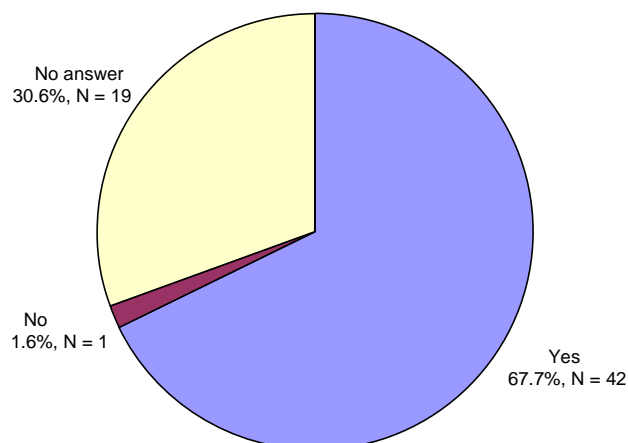
Figure 3.6: Discretion to disregard part or the whole amount of War Disablement pensions and War Widows Pensions when calculating income. The Council proposes to continue to disregard all of this income, as it currently is disregarded for Council Tax Benefit. Do you think this is reasonable?



N = 62

It can be seen that the majority of respondents (67.7%, N = 42) agree with the Council's proposal to keep the maximum Council Tax Reduction backdated award period to the 3 month statutory period. On the other hand 1.6% (N = 1) noted their objection. It should be noted that a high percentage of 30.6% (N = 19) of 'no answer' responses were received to this question.

Figure 3.7: The ability to backdate the application of Council Tax Reduction awards for working age customers more than the standard period of 3 months prior to the claim. The Council proposes to keep the maximum backdate available to the 3 month statutory period. Do you think this is reasonable?



N = 62

The person who responded 'no' (see Figure 3.7) was asked "What period do you think is reasonable?" No response was received.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE Council Tax Support Arrangements

DATE 17 January 2013

BY Carl Sargeant, Minister for Local Government and Communities

The UK Government is implementing a wide ranging and significant programme of reform of the welfare system. As part of this, the Council Tax Benefit system is being brought to an end on 1 April 2013 and funding transferred to Wales so that a new arrangement could be put in place to provide support with council tax bills. The funding transfer included a cut of 10 per cent based on the UK Government's estimate of expenditure 2013-14 budget.

On 19 December 2012, the Assembly passed regulations that would implement new arrangements to support those who will pay council tax in 2013-14. The Regulations (*Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2012* and *Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (Wales) Regulations 2012*) set out that the maximum level of support that eligible claimants could receive would be 90 per cent. This reflected the shortfall in the transfer of funding from the UK Government.

The Welsh Government has become increasingly concerned about the practical impact of the reduction in support for claimants. This is particularly the case as the impact of other UK Government welfare reforms is becoming clearer, for example, as people are notified of the direct impact of the 'bedroom tax'. The difficulties for some of our most vulnerable have been sharpened further by the decision of the UK Government last week to set a 1 per cent cap on benefit increases. Aside from other reductions as a consequence of the welfare reform programme, this will implement a further real terms cut in income for those groups of people.

Against this background, the Welsh Government has decided to increase the maximum level of support from the current 90 per cent to 100 per cent. That means claimants will receive the full amount of support for their council tax bills to which they are eligible. Unlike the 2012 Regulations, not all claimants receiving support will have to pay a proportion of their bill. The Government will provide an additional £22 million to local authorities to implement the change. It has been possible to identify

these funds as a consequence of the Government's careful financial management and prudent use of reserves and departmental budgets.

In order to implement this change, the existing regulations must be amended. The Government will also use the opportunity to uprate some financial thresholds in the current regulations and to make a small number of other minor adjustments, partly in response to the helpful scrutiny by the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee before Christmas.

Local authorities are subject to a range of deadlines in the run up to issuing council tax bills, including the need to adopt a Council Tax Reduction scheme by 31 January so it is vital that the amendments are made as soon as possible. If it is not possible to make the amended regulations in time, authorities may incur very substantial costs for council tax rebilling.

The Government has laid amending regulations today and will seek with the support of the Presiding Officer and Business Committee to debate them in the Assembly early next week. In view of the timing, this will involve the suspension of Standing Orders. The proposed changes will not affect the Sunset Clause added to the Regulations in December and the amended Regulations will operate for 2013-14 only.

The changes to the Regulations that the Welsh Government is making will significantly improve the financial position for those vulnerable households who would have faced increases in their council tax bills, as well as those who would have had to contribute to their council tax bills for the first time.

Regulations and will not apply from the 1st April 2013. At present in Gwynedd Council there are 88 households who qualify for this rebate.

- The current CTB Scheme calculates the benefit entitlement on the 100% Council Tax liability of the claimants but from 1st April 2013 the Council Tax Support entitlement will be calculated on 90% of the Council Tax liability. At present in Gwynedd there are 11,250 households who receive support towards their Council Tax of which 8,350 of those households receive 100% support. These 8,350 households that presently receive this 100% support from 1st April 2013 will have to make arrangements to pay to the Authority the 10% that will become due. In relation to partial Council Tax Benefit claimants the reduction could be greater than 10%, due to the impact of the tapers that are used in the calculation of the benefit entitlement.
- Currently, working age claimants with pension age partners are assessed under the pension age rules. From 1st April 2013 they will be assessed under the working age rules.

3.3 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 provided the enabling powers to give the Welsh Government (WG) responsibility to make regulations in connection with the new Council Tax Reduction Schemes. WG have already agreed on a nationally defined framework scheme that will provide support at a consistent level for all claimants across Wales. Therefore, there will be no protected groups in Wales and all existing and future benefit claimants will see a reduction in their Council Tax support entitlement.

3.4 There are two sets of Regulations that have been prepared by WG, the first being the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2012 that is required to be adopted by Authorities before the 31st January 2013. The second set of Regulations are the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Default Scheme)(Wales) Regulations 2012 which have to be implemented by Welsh Authorities if they fail to adopt the Prescribed Scheme referred to above. Both sets of regulations have to be fully operational by the 1st April 2013.

3.5 The differences between the two sets of Regulations are that the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirement (Wales) Regulations 2012 contain the following four discretionary elements:

- (i) To increase the disregard for war disablement pensions, war widows' pensions and war widowers' pensions, for both pensioners and working age.

Presently, under CTB regulations the first £10 of a weekly war disablement pension, war widows' pension and war widowers' pension are disregarded. However, local authorities have discretion to disregard up to 100% of the actual amount above the first £10. Since the 1st April 1996 Gwynedd Council, as have the majority of other Welsh Authorities, resolved to disregard 100% of the war pensions above the £10. It is estimated in

2012/13 that this disregard of war pensions will cost the Authority £30,000 in relation to Council Tax Benefit claims. This sum has already been included within the draft budget.

This report recommends continuing to allow this local discretion within Gwynedd [recommendation 9.2.(i)]

- (ii) To increase the standard extended payment period of 4 weeks given to people after they return to work, when they have been in receipt of a relevant qualifying benefit for at least 26 weeks.
There is no limit on the maximum they may be extended to, but to extend this period would have financial implications. The estimated expenditure in respect of the standard 4 week extended payments for 2012/13 is £20,000.

This report recommends that the standard four week extended payment period contained within the Prescribed Scheme [(recommendation 9.2.(ii)] remains unaltered.

- (iii) To increase backdates for pensioners and working age claimants from the standard three months. There is no limit on the maximum they may be extended to.

The combined cost of granting backdated Council Tax Benefit to working age claimants and pensioners for 2012/13 is estimated to be £28,000.

The current CTB Scheme only allows backdating for pensioners up to a period of 3 months, and 6 months for working age. The new Prescribed Scheme from April 2013 only allows backdating of both working age and pensioners to a maximum of 3 months. The reason being is to have a consistent approach between the two types of claimants and to reduce the costs of the Scheme.

This report recommends that no increase in the backdate period for pensioners and working age be applied from the standard 3 months contained within the Prescribed Scheme [Recommendation 9.2.(iii)]

- (iv) To provide more than the minimum information prescribed as part of the notification decision procedure to claimants, if appropriate. This may be a developing issue based on the experience of the new Scheme. **[Recommendation 9.2.(iv)].**

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Welsh Government has consulted on the main scheme and issued a consultation document, *Providing Support for Council Tax in Wales*, on 6th February 2012.
- 4.2 A further technical consultation document was issued on the 21st September 2012, on the draft Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Default Scheme) Regulations. The consultation period for this closed on the 17th October 2012.
- 4.3 Gwynedd Council wrote to all persons affected by the changes on the 18th of December to raise awareness and invite comments on the proposed scheme. The consultation period closes on the 14th of January and a summary of the responses will be provided prior to adoption of the scheme by full Council.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Due to the reduction in Council Tax Benefit funding by UK Government and the maximum 90% liability contained within the Regulations for determination of entitlement to Council Tax Reduction for individual claimants, it is currently estimated that in 2013/14 there may be a shortfall in actual Council Tax Support expenditure which is required to be funded by the Authority (see 6.2 below).
- 5.2 The current Council Tax ICT system has to be upgraded and this has cost £59k.

6. RISKS

- 6.1 The timetable for adoption and implementation of a Council Tax Reduction Scheme means that a scheme based on the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme design was the only realistic option open to local authorities in Wales.
- 6.2 The changes to the Council Tax Benefit system could result in a significant shortfall. The Council paid out £8.9m in 2011/12. If there will be a continuing increase in caseload, the forecast expenditure for 2013/14 could be around £9.2m. The final settlement included a sum of £8.1m towards the cost of the new scheme. This gives a shortfall of around £1.1m and the Council can only bill residents the equivalent of around £900k, due to the 10% maximum that has been included in the legislation. The Council could therefore effectively lose around £200k in income (depending on economic factors).

- 6.3 The Council has a statutory duty to make reasonable efforts to collect the tax from anyone deemed eligible to pay and will do so. However it is likely some of this £900k will be uncollectable and will therefore cause further pressure on the Council's bad debts provision. There will be an increase in recovery action, which will require a review of current Local Taxation staff resources. There will also be a requirement to review Benefit staff resources.
- 6.4 We are also likely to see increased demands on enquiries to the Revenues Department, debt / financial management and welfare advice centres. The Council has set up a Welfare Reform Group to co-ordinate activities and ensure that residents can obtain the relevant support. As well as all relevant Council departments, the CAB , Age Cymru, Shelter Cymru, Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd, Tai Eryri, Tai Clwyd, North Wales Housing, and other key stakeholders are represented.
- 6.5 The WG has made £4.6m available nationally to aid with transitional costs but no details of how to access these funds have yet been released.
- 6.6 Additional pressures will be placed upon staff within the Revenue and Benefit Service to explain the changes to taxpayers and recover those additional sums which become payable from April 2013.
- 6.7 The need to collect council tax from all benefit claimants will result in higher collection costs, but the Council's Debt Recovery Policy will be reviewed in order to maximise payments without recourse to bailiffs when payments are not paid on time.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Welsh Government has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment at a national level on its proposed changes to the Council Tax Benefit system.
- 7.2 Gwynedd has also conducted a local Equalities Impact Assessment study but it must be recognised that this is a prescribed scheme with the burden being borne by all groups, i.e. notwithstanding the findings of the local Equality Impact assessment there is no discretion within the prescribed scheme to protect identified vulnerable groups within Gwynedd.

8. PUBLICATION

- 8.1 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be published on the Council's internet and it is the intention to notify all current benefit claimants directly of the new Scheme.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Council is RECOMMENDED to adopt the Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2012.

9.2 If it is determined that the Council adopt the prescribed scheme, the following RECOMMENDATIONS are made in relation to the four discretionary elements:

- (i) Apply a 100% disregard for war disablement pensions, war widows' pensions and war widowers' pensions, for both pensioners and working age claimants.
- (ii) That no increase in the extended reduction periods for pensioners and working age claimants be applied from the standard 4 weeks currently contained within the Prescribed Scheme.
- (iii) That no increase in the backdate period for pensioners and working age claimants be applied from the standard 3 months contained within the Prescribed Scheme.
- (iv) To enhance the process for notifying claimants of decisions, above the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations, if appropriate.