CABINET MEMBERS DELEGATED DECISION

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Open</td><td colspan="4" rowspan="2">Mandatory</td></tr>
<tr><td>Any especially affected Wards</td><td>PE30, PE31, PE38</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Lead Member: Cllr Chris Morley
E-mail: Cllr Chris Morley, Cabinet Member for Finance</td><td colspan="4">Other Cabinet Members consulted:
Cllr Alistair Beales, Leader</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Other Members consulted:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Lead Officer: Jo Stanton, Revenues and Benefits Manager
E-mail: joanne.stanton@west-norfolk.gov.uk</td><td colspan="4">Other Officers consulted:
Michelle Drewery, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer
Carl Holland, Assistant Director, Finance and Deputy s151 Officer</td></tr>
<tr><td>Financial Implications
YES</td><td>Policy/Personnel Implications
NO</td><td>Statutory Implications
YES</td><td>Equality Impact Assessment YES/NO
If YES: Pre-screening</td><td>Risk Management Implications
NO</td><td>Environmental Considerations

NO</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="6">If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s) N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Date of publication of report: 10/07/2026</td><td colspan="3">Date decision to be taken: 17/07/2026</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Deadline for Call-In: 24/07/2026</td><td colspan="3"></td></tr>
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COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2027/2028 – DRAFT SCHEME FOR WORKING AGE PEOPLE FOR CONSULTATION

Summary

The council must implement a Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for its working age residents for each financial year. We must first decide on a draft CTS scheme which is open for public consultation, and then must agree a final CTS scheme, considering the consultation responses.

Since 2017, authority has been delegated to the Leader, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and s151 Officer, to agree the draft CTS scheme to go to consultation.

No major changes are planned for the CTS Scheme for the coming year. Minor amendments will be made to reflect welfare reform changes to the national CTS scheme for pension age people and to clarify some administrative matters.

Decision to be taken

The existing working age CTS scheme for 2026/2027, with minor amendments, is agreed as the draft CTS scheme for working age people for 2027/2028 to go to public consultation.

Reason for Decision

To ensure a CTS scheme for 2027/2028 is agreed by full Council by the deadline.

1. Background

1.1. The Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme helps our residents on low incomes with the cost of their council tax bill. We must review and agree our CTS scheme for our working age residents each financial year.

1.2. The CTS regulations set out the process we must follow when reviewing and agreeing our scheme[1]. We must first consult with our major Preceptors (Norfolk County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner), then decide a draft CTS scheme to go to public consultation. The consultation will run for six weeks. A report for the final CTS scheme will be brought to the Corporate Performance Panel and Cabinet later in the year and must then be agreed by full Council by March 2027, before the start of the new financial year, although for operational reasons a January 2027 deadline is imposed.

1.3. The local CTS Scheme was first introduced in 2013. The CTS scheme we implemented was based on the national pension age scheme, but everyone who was working age and not classed as vulnerable was expected to pay at least 25% of their weekly council tax bill. This contribution was reduced to 16% from April 2022 and removed entirely from April 2024.

1.4. Our scheme covers up to 100% of the council tax bill, although this will be less than 100% if someone has more income than the amount allowed in the scheme rules, for example if they have other income from earnings. The CTS scheme rules for working age and pension age customers are broadly the same.

1.5. We ignore a higher amount of earnings in our local scheme and allow working people to keep an extra £10 of their earnings in addition to the standard amount before it affects their CTS award.

1.6. Our working age CTS scheme principles are included at Appendix B and the full CTS rules are available on our website at Council Tax Support regulations | Council Tax Support regulations | Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk.

1.7. CTS for pension age people is paid under national regulations. We are responsible for the administration of the pension age CTS scheme, and we meet the cost of these claims, however central government is responsible for the rules of the scheme.

[1] Schedule 1A 3(1) Local Government Finance Act 1992

2. Delegated Power

2.1. **Draft Council Tax Support Scheme: Cabinet 28 November 2017 (Council 25 January 2018)**

2.2. **Minute CAB93:** Delegated authority is given to the Leader, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and s151 Officer, to agree the draft Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme to go out to public consultation.

3. Proposed Changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2027/2028

3.1. Minor updates are made to keep the scheme in line with the Housing Benefit scheme and to reflect updates to the national CTS scheme for pension age people.

3.2. In addition an administrative update to the wording of the scheme rules is proposed to confirm that we only base our calculation of Council Tax Support on the same rules as those used by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the calculation of the Universal Credit award. Our rules are not explicitly clear on how certain other income will be treated and this wording needs amending. We estimate this will affect fewer than five customers.

3.3. No other changes are proposed for 2027/2028.

4. Options Considered

4.1. Cost of living pressures are ongoing and households on lower incomes are still experiencing significant financial burdens, particularly with utility and fuel costs.

4.2. To provide ongoing stability and certainty for households on CTS, the existing 2026/2027 scheme (as detailed at 1.6), incorporating the amendments in section 3, is recommended as the draft working age CTS scheme for 2027/2028 to go to public consultation.

4.3. As with previous years there are also other options which can be considered for our working age CTS Scheme.

4.4. Make the CTS Scheme more generous:

4.4.1. We could investigate ways to make our CTS scheme more generous for working age people, for example by reducing the weekly CTS by a lesser amount if someone has more income than they are allowed. The disadvantage is we would give more help to working age people than pension age people as we are unable to amend the rules for the pension age CTS scheme so we would disadvantage older residents. We would also have two significantly different sets of rules for our CTS schemes.

4.5. Make the CTS Scheme less generous:

4.5.1. We could review the help we give people and pay less CTS. This would reduce the help we give people and would have a negative financial impact on households receiving CTS, but a positive impact on our Financial Plan. There is a risk that any savings are offset by the difficulty in collecting these amounts of council tax from people on low incomes.

4.6. Use a different model for our CTS Scheme

4.6.1. There are alternative CTS scheme models that can be considered for our working age scheme, such as a banded discount scheme, where a set percentage discount is awarded based on a person's income and household.

4.7. Changing our scheme to an alternative model will involve significant uncertainty and financial disruption for our customers, and planning and testing for the team. Inevitably there will be winners and losers. It would also mean the rules for working age customers were different to those for pension age customers, and different to the rules for Housing Benefit, adding administrative complexity. There would be a direct cost for upgraded software and professional support and with Local Government Reorganisation due in 2028 this is not recommended as a viable option.

4.8. **In light of the ongoing financial pressures for low-income households, and the impending Local Government Reorganisation, the recommendation is to continue with the 2026/2027 CTS Scheme as the Draft CTS scheme for working age people for 2027/2028, making minor updates to reflect national welfare reform changes and to tidy up administrative issues.**

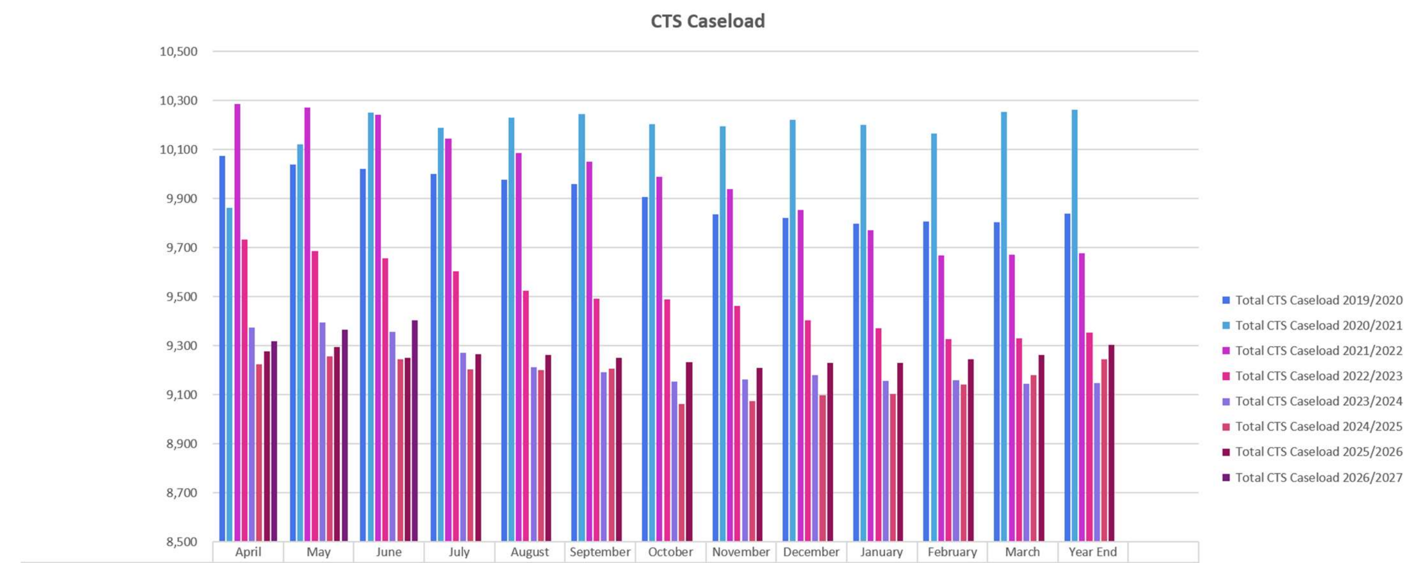
5. Policy Implications

5.1. This will be continuation of the existing 2026/2027 CTS Scheme for working age people with minor updates to reflect wider welfare reform changes.

6. Financial Implications and Analysis

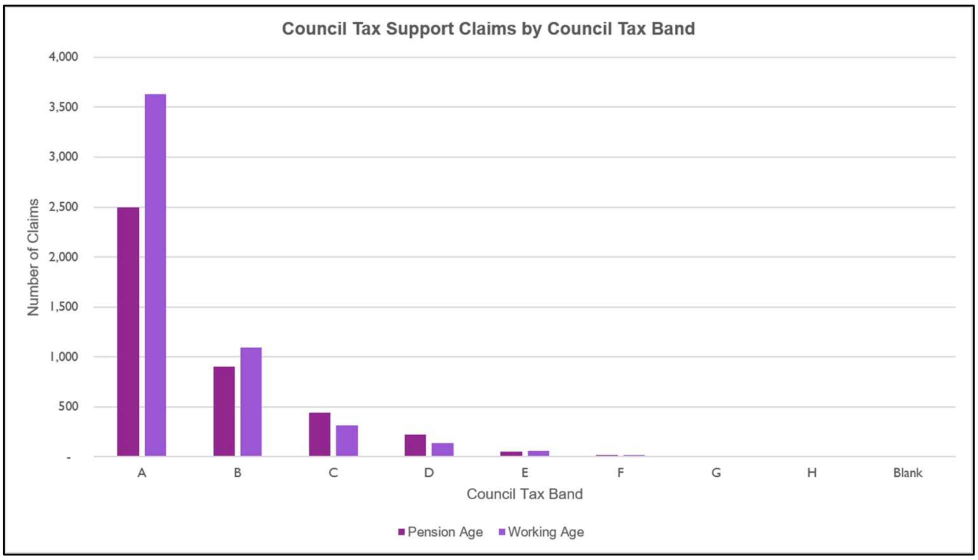
6.1. The cost of the CTS scheme is monitored monthly. The CTS caseload has increased slightly over the past two years but remains relatively static.

	1 April 2025	1 April 2026	1 June 2026
Pension age claims	4,149 (45%)	4,115 (44%)	4,144 (44%)
Working age claims	5,102 (55%)	5,204 (56%)	5,259 (56%)
Total CTS claims	**9,251**	**9,319**	**9,403**

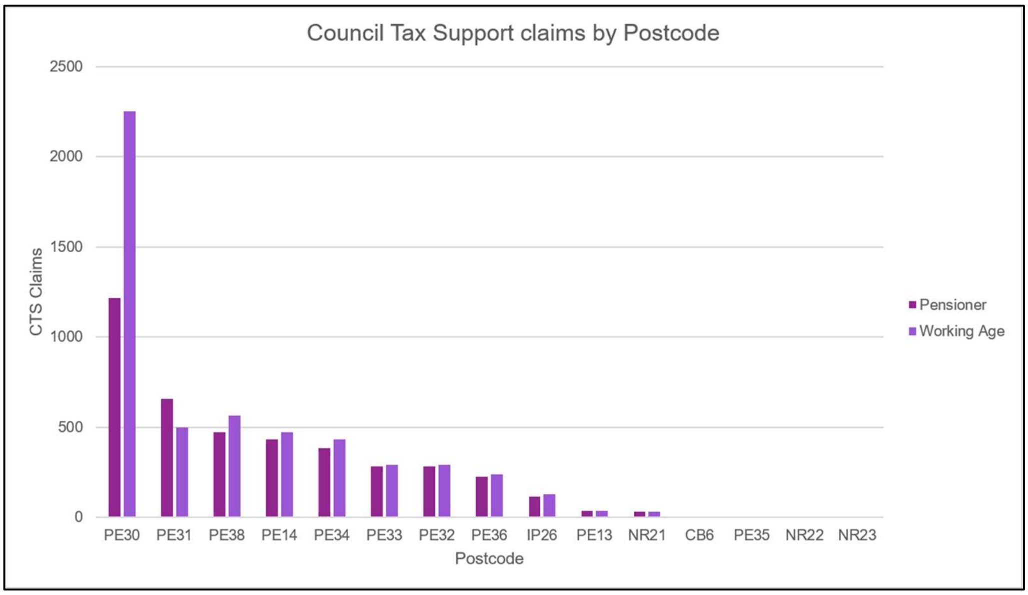


	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Year End
Total CTS Caseload 2019/2020	10,074	10,039	10,020	10,002	9,977	9,959	9,906	9,836	9,821	9,797	9,807	9,805	9,839
Total CTS Caseload 2020/2021	9,862	10,122	10,251	10,190	10,230	10,246	10,205	10,194	10,222	10,200	10,165	10,254	10,261
Total CTS Caseload 2021/2022	10,285	10,270	10,243	10,145	10,086	10,052	9,989	9,938	9,855	9,770	9,668	9,670	9,676
Total CTS Caseload 2022/2023	9,732	9,687	9,658	9,603	9,523	9,492	9,488	9,463	9,405	9,371	9,328	9,329	9,354
Total CTS Caseload 2023/2024	9,373	9,394	9,356	9,270	9,214	9,192	9,153	9,163	9,179	9,158	9,160	9,145	9,149
Total CTS Caseload 2024/2025	9,223	9,256	9,245	9,204	9,202	9,206	9,064	9,075	9,098	9,105	9,142	9,180	9,245
Total CTS Caseload 2025/2026	9,278	9,294	9,251	9,266	9,263	9,252	9,232	9,211	9,229	9,231	9,245	9,262	9,305
Total CTS Caseload 2026/2027	9,319	9,365	9,403										

6.2. CTS claims by Council Tax Band are shown in the chart below. Households in Bands A and B continue to account for the majority of CTS claims, with 86% of households in the two lowest council tax bands.



6.3. Claims by Postcode Area and the Working Age / Pension Age split are shown below. The majority of the claims are in the PE30 (King's Lynn) area followed by PE31 and PE38.



6.4. CTS is a council tax discount and the impact is included in the taxbase calculation as a reduction in our taxbase, shown in Band D equivalent properties.

6.5. On 1 June 2026 the impact of the CTS Scheme is a reduction of 5,002 band D equivalent properties against an estimate of 4,914 Band D properties in the Financial Plan. This is equivalent to a total CTS award of £12.1m or an average of £1,293 per eligible household. This cost is shared between the Preceptors and our share is 6.5% (£787,000).

6.6. The cost of the scheme is accounted for in the Council Tax Base figure in the Financial Strategy. The impact of the scheme is slightly higher than the estimate in the strategy, however this small additional cost is more than offset by an increase in the taxbase from new properties and higher than expected numbers of Second Homes paying the Second Homes Premium. There are no significant financial impacts caused by the proposed changes to the scheme.

7. Personnel Implications

7.1. None

8. Environmental Implications

8.1. None

9. Statutory Considerations

9.1. We are required to agree a working age CTS scheme for 2027/2028 by March 2027, although in practice it must be agreed before the taxbase can be set in January 2027 to allow the budget and council tax setting process to proceed to timetable. Consultation on the draft working age CTS scheme is the start of the statutory process for implementing the CTS scheme for 2027/2028.

10. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

10.1. The pre-screening report template is attached at Appendix A. A full EIA is not required as this is a continuation of an existing policy.

11. Risk Management Implications

11.1. Failure to agree a CTS Scheme by 31 January 2027 means that we are unable to set our council taxbase and budget for 2027/2028. The recommendation is due to be considered by Council on in November 2026 which will allow certainty in the budget setting process.

11.2. The budget impact of the CTS scheme is based upon the household numbers described above which form the basis of the Financial Plan. The impact will be affected by the changing circumstances and demographic of our taxpayers; for example, household welfare, age mix and additional households entering our tax base.

11.3. The CTS scheme is based on an assessment of a household's income against an allowed amount. The cost-of-living crisis is not causing an increase in the CTS caseload as household incomes are generally stable or rising with higher wage and benefit increases. However, household expenditure is also increasing causing pressure on household budgets. Other support with these rising costs is being given by us (for example through the Crisi and Resilience Fund), from government and from other organisations.

11.4. In the current economic climate, the risk assessment cannot be neutral, but it is considered that there is sufficient flexibility in our financial structure to withstand any adverse impact.

11.5. If the CTS caseload falls our taxbase and council tax income will increase, creating a surplus on the Collection Fund.

11.6. The impact of the CTS scheme is, and will continue to be, operationally reviewed monthly.

12. Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

12.1. Dispensation has been granted allowing Members in receipt of Council Tax Support to vote on the proposals.

13. Background Papers

13.1. None

Authorisation from Executive Leadership Team

Post Held **Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer**

Signature [redacted]

Date **10/07/2026**

Signed [redacted] Date 10/07/2026

(Cllr Alistair Beales, Leader of the Council)

Signed [redacted] Date 10/07/2026

(Cllr Chris Morley, Cabinet Member for Finance)

Appendix A: Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment (v6)

For equalities profile information please visit Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory

Name of policy/service/function	Council Tax Support Scheme 2027/2028
Is this a new or existing policy/ service/function? *(tick as appropriate)*	New: ☐ Existing: √
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	Council Tax Support (CTS) is a discount given to residents on a low income to help with the cost of their council tax bill. The council is free to agree its own CTS scheme for working age people in its area.
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only *(identify stakeholders consulted with)*	This is an existing policy but the regulations state we must consult annually with all taxpayers and with Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Police. A six-week public consultation will run during August and September and the responses included in a further report to Members.
Question	**Answer**
1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service? Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group. ***If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.***	See table below

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
Age			√	
Disability	√			
Sex			√	
Gender Re-assignment			√	
Marriage/civil partnership			√	
Pregnancy & maternity			√	
Race			√	
Religion or belief			√	
Sexual orientation			√	
Armed forces community			√	

For more information on health inequalities please visit [The King's Fund]	Care leavers			√	
	Health inequalities*			√	
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)	√			

Please provide a brief explanation of the answers above:

The CTS scheme is designed to help people on low incomes with the cost of their bill. Certain additional allowances and premiums are included for people who have a disability. The impact for age is now neutral as the CTS schemes for working age and pension age people are the same. Disregarding War Pensions supports the Armed Forces Covenant.

Question	Answer	Comments
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No	
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No	
4. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	Yes	**Actions:** The impacts are positive and will reduce the financial burden of the council tax bill for low income households in the borough. No further action is required. **Actions agreed by EWG member:** No action needed as stated – LG 30/06/2026

If 'yes' to questions 2 - 4 a full impact assessment will be required unless comments are provided to explain why this is not felt necessary:

The impacts are all positive or neutral and will benefit households on low-income including those with a resident who has a disability. Increasing the time a claim can be backdated will also assist these groups. War Pensions are disregarded in support of the Armed Forces Covenant.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="5">Decision agreed by EWG member: ………………………………………………..</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">5. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?</td><td>Yes</td><td colspan="2">Please provide brief summary:

It is designed to help people on low incomes with the cost of their council tax bill.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Assessment completed by:

Name</td><td colspan="4">Jo Stanton</td></tr>
<tr><td>Job title</td><td colspan="4">Revenues and Benefits Manager</td></tr>
<tr><td>Date completed</td><td colspan="4">16 June 2026</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reviewed by EWG member</td><td colspan="2">Louise Gayton</td><td>Date</td><td>30/06/2026</td></tr>
</table>

Appendix B – CTS Scheme Principles

Our working age CTS scheme is broadly the same as the national CTS scheme for pension age people. This scheme assesses a household's income against an allowed amount, called an 'applicable amount'. If their income is less than the applicable amount, they receive full CTS covering 100% of their council tax bill. If it is more than the applicable amount their CTS is reduced by 20p for every extra £1 of income.

The main CTS Scheme Principles:

- Working Age people have their CTS calculated based on 100% of their weekly CTS bill, so can receive up to 100% support
- A weekly deduction is made for each non-dependent in the household (for example grown up children) depending on their income
- The maximum amount of Capital (money, savings, shares, investments etc) allowed is £16,000
- A 'tariff' income is assumed for capital between £6,000 and £16,000 of £1 for every £250 above £6,000
- Excess income is deducted from the CTS award at a rate of 20p for each £1 over the allowed amount
- A new claim can be backdated for three months from its usual start date

The CTS scheme also includes incentives to find work. People are allowed to keep an extra £10 (above the national limit) before their CTS is affected. This is known as a disregard and the amounts are:

- Single £15
- Couple £20
- Disabled or a Carer £30
- Lone Parent £35

We also have a local income disregard as below:

- War Pensions will be fully disregarded in the income calculation

The full set of Council Tax Support Regulations can be found on our website at https://www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/info/20019/council_tax_support/610/council_tax_support_regulations