LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM
TUESDAY, 17TH JULY, 2012
7.00 pm at the
Civic Offices, St Nicholas Way, Sutton SM1 1EA

To all members of the Equality and Diversity Forum:-
Councillors Adrian Davey (Chair) Roger Roberts, Simon Wales, Lester Holloway and Pamela Pickett (Substitutes: Councillors Moira Butt and Roger Thistle)
Ian Kershaw
Lizzy Degraeve
Joan Parker (Substitute: Clare Shearer)
Pam Davies (Substitute: Julie Amaral)
(vacancy)
Jeanette Locke-Thompson
Sharon Jordan-Passmore
Peter Rollins
Marion Harper

Advisers:
Aaron Watson
Kate Evans
Thikra Ali
Inspector Andrew Stally
Nicole Richardson
Janet Sherborne (Substitute: Sonia Freeman)
Jackie Macklin
Julie Duffy
Sallyanne Yeats
Debbie O'Neill
Seren Razak
Aisha Arif Ahamadiyyah

London Borough of Sutton
Safer Sutton Partnership
Sutton Centre for Independent Living and Learning
Sutton Carers’ Forum
Sutton Seniors’ Forum
Sutton Corporate Parents Forum
Sutton Women’s Forum
Sutton Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Group
Minority Ethnic Employees Association
Sutton Age UK
Borough Fire Commander
School Inspector: Inclusion
Sutton Racial Equality Council
Safer Sutton Partnership
HM Highdown Prison
Carshalton College
NHS Sutton and Merton Team
Sutton Centre for the Voluntary Sector
Sutton Housing Partnership
Sutton Citizens Advice Bureau
Sutton LInk
Muslim Community Group

Enquiries to: Shama Sarwar, Policy and Customer Services, Tel:020 8770 5784
Email: Shama.Sarwar@sutton.gov.uk
Copies of reports are available in large print on request
CIVIC OFFICES, SUTTON
GROUND FLOOR MEETING ROOMS

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First Aid can be obtained from Civic Security in reception.
Reminder – Declaration of Interests

Members should consider the following interests and whether they have any they should declare.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any business of the Authority at this meeting and you have either declared it beforehand in the Register of Members’ Interests or to the Monitoring Officer for entry in the Register you must state at this meeting that you have such an interest and then withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

Where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any business of the Authority at this meeting and have not previously declared it you must declare the nature of that interest at this meeting and then withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

Other Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Where you have any other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any business at this meeting you must declare that interest, but may continue to speak and vote on the matter. However, if the interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest then you should declare the interest and withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

Further information on these matters can be found in the Council’s Code of Conduct and Constitution. If you are in any doubt as to whether you have an interest you should seek advice before the committee meeting from either Sanjay Prashar or Richard Shortman.

If, during the course of the committee meeting, you consider you may have an interest you should always declare it.

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTES

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)

   Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2012 to be agreed, and signed by the Chair.
3. **NOMINATION OF VICE CHAIR (5 MINS)**

Two nominations have been received: Debbie O’Neill (Sutton CAB) and Judy Okeke (Age UK).

4. **LOCALISING COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT (60 MINS) (Pages 7 - 26)**

Julie Turner will be presenting the options that Sutton Council has developed to localise Council Tax support. Included in this paper is the presentation, the Equality Impact Assessment and the call for consultation.

5. **SUTTON ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND (15 MINS)**

Presentation by Stephen Hawkins, new Chief Officer

6. **POLICE/HATE CRIME UPDATE (15 MINS)**

Oral report by Insp. Stally and Ian Kershaw (Safer Sutton Partnership).

7. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PLAN 2012/13 (10 MINS) (Pages 27 - 40)**

Members are invited to comment on the attached plan and outline areas of particular interest to them to discuss at future meetings.

8. **OPEN SPACE (10 MINS)**

Opportunity for Forum to have a conversation on pertinent issues relating to Equality and Diversity.

9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS/URGENT BUSINESS 910 MINS)**

Other business and matters brought forward at the direction of the Chair, who has approved the reason for urgency.
Equality and Diversity Forum
Tuesday 22\textsuperscript{nd} May 2012
7pm

\textbf{Members}
Councillor Davey (Chair)
Councillor Holloway
Councillor Pickett
Julie Duffy \hspace{1cm} SCVS
Lizzy Degraeve \hspace{1cm} SCILL
Joan Parker \hspace{1cm} Sutton Carers Forum
David Parker \hspace{1cm} Sutton Carers Forum
Sharon Jordan-Passmore \hspace{1cm} LGBT representative
Judy ? \hspace{1cm} Age UK
Derek Andrews \hspace{1cm} Age UK
Debbie O’Neil \hspace{1cm} CAB
Thikra Ali \hspace{1cm} SREC
Inspector Stalley \hspace{1cm} Police
Ian Kershaw \hspace{1cm} Safer Sutton Partnership
Jackie Macklin \hspace{1cm} NHS SW London
? \hspace{1cm} LINK
Victoria Lawson (minutes) \hspace{1cm} London Borough of Sutton

\textbf{In attendance}
Annie Ford \hspace{1cm} SMPCT
Agnieszka \hspace{1cm} SMPCT
Safet Vukalic \hspace{1cm} Victim Support
Steve Winser \hspace{1cm} London Borough of Sutton

\textbf{Absent}
Councillor Wales
Shaﬁ Chowdhury \hspace{1cm} Sutton Faith and Belief Forum
Sally Anne Yates \hspace{1cm} Sutton Housing Partnership

1. Introductions, Apologies and Previous Minutes

Cllr Davey introduced himself as the newly appointed chair of the Equality and Diversity Forum and welcomed the group together and took introductions.

Cllr Davey and the Forum wanted to formally record their thanks to Cllr Wales as the previous chair and all his work and dedication.

Before going through the agenda, Cllr Davey inquired about the role of Vice Chair and it was agreed that the position should be reconsidered given Brother Shaﬁ Chowdhury health. The Forum thanked him for his work and support to the Forum during his time. Cllr Davey asked for nominations for the Vice Chair to be emailed to Victoria Lawson (Action: All).

Cllr Davey informed the Forum that there had been two deferred items and therefore he asked to include an Open Space session to discuss the direction of the Forum. This was agreed.
2. GFEST

This item was deferred.

Principally, GFEST is the premier annual lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) arts festival in London. The theme for this year is ‘Queer Art queries..’ and it will take place in November in venues across London. The deadline for submissions is Friday 29 June 2012 and submissions are accepted on: www.gaywisefestival.org.uk

3. Health Diversity Initiative

Cllr Davey welcomed Annie Ford and her colleague to the Forum.

AF presented on the Health Diversity Initiative that was being expanded into Sutton from Merton and the key messages from the presentation were:

1. The key goals for the community through the Health Diversity initiative are:
   - Expand to Sutton and Merton health communities
   - Strengthen disadvantaged communities through targeted health interventions
   - Break the cycle of inequalities
   - Tackle major killers smoking, obesity, diabetes and heart disease
   - Improve access to good quality health services
   - Learn new skills and ways of working in new era

2. Additional responsibilities included knowing the community and understanding the hard to reach and migrant communities wellbeing needs in Merton and Sutton, promoting wellbeing in community centred way at grass roots, registering new patients in new ways gathering ethnicity data and to empower and educate patients to use pharmacy, GP and A&E better

3. Examples of the team’s work included: Bi-lingual Health Advocacy service, promoting 6 week Help Yourself to Health program in schools, community centre’s, temples, mosques etc, STOP THE CLOCK DAYS- wellbeing community centred days, work with homeless, work with GP workforces and smoking and weight management clinics in GP practices and community centres

The Forum thanked AF for her presentation and asked a number of questions which focused on:

- AF welcomed the opportunity to speak to a wide range of groups and asked if the Forum had any ideas to ensure they emailed her directly at: annie.ford@smcs.nhs.uk

- The diversity of Sutton communities; in particular those from Afghanistan, Iraq and the Traveller community and how these groups could be targeted by this initiative. It was agreed further discussions between AF and SREC would be important to ensure appropriate prioritisation of their work (Action: AF and SREC to meet).

- Mental health and how this was being considered through this initiative. AF confirmed this was a role for the CCGs and that advocates do try to work with patients to encourage their compliance with their treatment.

- AF confirmed that their work would help to inform the Sutton Joint Strategic Needs
Assessment.

Cllr Davey invited AF back to the Forum later in the year to report on progress (Action: Victoria Lawson to timetable onto the Forum’s Forward Plan).

4. Blue Badge Consultation

Steve Winser attended the Forum to discuss the current consultation on charging £10 for a Blue Badge, which would be issued for three years. The consultation will run from 9th May 2012 until 8th June 2012.

The Blue Badge scheme is a national parking concession scheme, enabling people with severe mobility problems to park close to where they need to go. A Blue Badge is issued for 3 years, to people who meet the eligibility criteria, and can be used across the UK.

Over the last year, the Government has introduced a number of changes to the national Blue Badge scheme including:

- Online application process making it easier for people to access a Blue Badge
- A new mobility assessment requirement, making the application of eligibility criteria fairer and more consistent, and
- A new badge format to prevent and reduce fraudulent application, use and abuse of the system, so that the scarce resource is available to those who need it most.

The government has raised the maximum fee that can be charged for a badge to £10. Over the three years that a badge is valid for, this is equivalent to a cost of 0.9p per day. A survey of 15 London Authorities showed that all but 2 charge a £10 fee (this is Sutton and Southwark).

The Forum thanked SW for his presentation and provided initial feedback to the consultation:

- Members of the Forum felt that a £10 charge was a reasonable cost and that it was an appropriate administration fee. The Forum felt that the value placed onto Blue Badges by those that needed one outweighed the £10 charge.

- There were questions raised about the relationship between fraud and the increased charge. The £10 charge would contribute to the administration of the Blue Badge, which was equivalent to approximately £47 per person. The charge of £10 would be set and there would be no year on year increases to this charge.

SW confirmed that the following the consultation, the decision to implement a £10 charge would rest with the Strategy and Resources Committee within the Council. Cllr Davey confirmed he would express these views at this Committee on 2nd July.

5. Housing Centre

This item was deferred.

6. Work of Victim Support

Safet Vukalic presented a summary of the role of Victim Support. The key messages from the presentation were:
• Victim Support gives information, emotional support and practical help to people, regardless of whether or not the crime has been reported to the police or whenever the crime happened.

• Trained staff and volunteers try to help and empower those affected by crime to find the strength to rebuild their often shattered lives.

• Victim Support also operates a Victim Care Unit and Witness Service.

• Safet confirmed that Victim Support also operated out of the Civic Centre and the Tweeddale Centre.

The Forum thanked Safet for his presentation and questions focused on:

• Support to hate crime victims; it was confirmed there were a number of trained volunteers and that there was a local leaflet on racially motivated crimes.

• Bringing in other organisations to support; this is a normal path for Victim Support and the focus remained on being client-led.

It was clear there were a number of connections made through the Forum and Safet was invited to attend a future Forum (Action: Victoria Lawson to put onto the Forward Plan).

7. Police Update

Inspector Stalley provided a police update to the Forum which focused on:

• Total Victim Care; which was a new initiative to provide a victim care card and the process that would be undertaken.

• Quality Call Back; where the police call back victims to assess their satisfaction with the process. Inspector Stalley informed the Forum that 86% of victims were satisfied with crime prevention advice (the lowest score) and 100% were satisfied with their position within the process.

• Anti Social Behaviour Calls; where vulnerability assessments are completed with each call to ascertain the risk and vulnerability of the caller. Secondary assessments are then completed by Inspector Stalley's team. This has led to a number of positive interventions including reassurance visits and calls. This is in the process of being extended to other partners.

The Forum asked a number of questions based on:

• Crime prevention advice; whereby advice is provided directly by the officer involved and any concerns are flagged to the crime prevention officer.

• Victim Support Cards and their accessibility. It was confirmed that they were available in the 10 most spoken languages in London, plus in pdf format for 169 languages and that different coloured versions to address any visual issues.

• Repeat victims; where 2 convenience stores had been highlighted for repeat incidents. These were being addressed by the police.

The Forum thanked Inspector Stalley for his update.
8. Hate Crime Update

Ian Kershaw provided a brief verbal update on hate crime within Sutton. The key messages were:

- There had been no significant changes from the last Forum and that the focus remained on driving up reporting and the use of the Stop Hate line.
- Recently worked had been undertaken with Sutton Housing Partnership on promoting the Stop Hate line and with The U.
- Stop Hate reporting had trebled over the year to 226 incidents, of which 83% related to race hate crime and 10% to LGBT hate crime. There was further work to do to increase reporting of disability hate crime.

9. Open Space

Cllr Davey thanked the Forum for allowing the Open Space item onto the agenda and invited comments on the focus and direction for the Forum over the coming year. Suggestions from the Forum were:

- How we could support community voices and encourage more local groups to attend the Forum, which could include changing the venue of the meeting
- Endorsement of events by the Forum and the development of a brand to support this.
- Greater consultation and input from the Forum in areas such as the equality impact of the financial reductions in the public sector, equality impact of events such as participatory budgeting and ensuring diverse communities have equal access
- Reporting on the Public Sector Equality Duty
- Supplementary schools
- Unemployment and its impact within Sutton.
- Sharing expertise and bring in CCGs when they have responsibility for the Equality Delivery Scheme.

Further suggestions should be submitted to Victoria Lawson in order for a work programme to be developed for the Forum (Action: All). It was agreed the Open Space should remain as a regular agenda item (Action: Victoria Lawson).

10. Any other business

Julie Duffy raised two additional agenda items:

- Interfaith Week; a steering group was meeting on 31st May to develop the 2012 programme which would run from 18th to 27th November.
- SCVS Safeguarding Week; which SCVS had organised in partnership with the LSCB and ASSH. The opening event would be on 18th June from 9:30am.
Thikra Ali also provided leaflets on the Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month and the programme of activity throughout June, along with leaflets on Happy Soul Festival and the St Helier Festival.

11. Date of Next Meetings

The schedule of meetings for 2012 are:

- 17th July
- 13th November
- 19th March

If Forum members have any particular agenda items, can they please forward them to Victoria Lawson (Action: All).
Consultation

Council Tax Benefit is changing

take part, take pride
Why are we consulting?

- Welfare Reform Act
- Funding Reduction
- Other Discounts and Exemptions
- Consultation 26 June 2012 to 17 September 2012
What is Council Tax?

- Property based local tax set annually by LA
- Funds local public services
- Existing Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions
- LGFB provides for local discretion on some Discounts and Exemptions
What is Council Tax Benefit?

- Helps meet council tax liability if on a low or no income
- National scheme with little local discretion
- £14 million in London Borough of Sutton
What are the changes to Council Tax Benefit?

- No reduction in support for Pensioners
- Vulnerable support in scheme design
- Incentivise work
- Approximately £1.4 million less money to spend on the local scheme
## Proposed Savings

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<td>Low impact</td>
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<td>Reduction in council tax</td>
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<td>support expenditure</td>
<td>£789,000.00</td>
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<td>Increase in income –</td>
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<td>discounts and exemptions</td>
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<td>Total saving</td>
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Proposed Options – 1

- Capping the Council Tax Support to a Band D property.
- Changing the amount of savings a person can have before benefits are awarded.
- Remove second adult rebate from people below pensionable age.
- Increase the % a working claimant pays towards their council tax.
- Changing the Lone Parent earned income disregard
- Including 25% of the child benefit as an income
- Introducing a contribution for all non-working households of £3.55 each week.
- Increasing contributions from other adult members of the household
Proposed Options - 2

● Remove the 10% discount currently allowed on second homes
● Remove the 100% exemption for unoccupied and unfurnished properties
● Remove the 100% exemption for uninhabitable properties, which are unoccupied and undergoing or requiring major repair or structural changes.
● Remove the 100% exemption of properties that have been repossessed by the mortgage provider.
● Charge a premium for long term empty properties
Questions?
How to have your say

- Please complete the questionnaire today or,
- To complete online go to [www.sutton.gov.uk/localisedcounciltax](http://www.sutton.gov.uk/localisedcounciltax)
Equality Analysis – Localised Council Tax Support

Context

The report presented to Housing, Economy and Business Committee sought approval to consult on a range of proposed options for the delivery of a local Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1st April 2013. The consultation would last for 12 weeks and would seek views on a range of options that could form a local Council Tax Support scheme within Sutton.

To put this into context, the localisation of Council Tax Support is a new scheme being brought into operation by the Welfare Reform Act and the Local Government Finance Bill. The policy is being driven by Central Government and will bring about national savings of between £480m and £500m. It sits within the Coalition Government’s agenda of devolving power to a local level by:

- Giving local authorities a greater stake in the economic future of their local area
- Providing local authorities with the opportunity to reform the system of support for working age claimants.
- Reinforcing local control over Council tax by enabling decisions taken locally about the provision for support with Council Tax is consistent with the driver for greater local accountability (referendums)
- Giving local authorities a significant degree of control over how a 10 per cent reduction on the current Council Tax benefit bill is achieved.
- Giving local authorities a financial stake in the provision of support for Council Tax and create a stronger incentive for Council to get people back into work.

Council tax support (which will replace Council tax benefit) is designed to assist those who are on a low income and have to pay Council Tax. The support offered is means tested and as a result is aimed at those with the greatest need.

At a local level, the Council is tasked with managing a 10 per cent reduction in Council tax support funding whilst adhering to our objectives of creating a safer, fairer, greener Sutton. The total reduction is approximately £1.4m. Sutton has the option of allowing this cost to fall upon the general fund – and ultimately tax payers, or fashioning a revised scheme of Council Tax support which incentivises work. Any element that falls to the general fund would need to be subject to an individual equality impact assessment to consider the impact on recipients of local services that may be impacted upon by these alternative decisions.

Whilst local authorities may have a greater degree of control over how the 10 per cent reduction is achieved there are strict guidelines passed down from the Government. Councils are not permitted to reduce the Council tax support for pensioners – for whom the default national rules will be
retained. The Council must also have due regard to protect the most vulnerable in society and this must be considered in the development of the options taken forward.

The Government has highlighted the following acts to illustrate the areas where authorities have greatest responsibility with regard to vulnerable groups:

- Child Poverty Act 2010
- Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Housing Act 1996

These stipulations are borne from the fact that the newly devised scheme should incentivise work from those of working age who are able to work and not penalise those who cannot.

Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the proposal?

The main stakeholders in relation to this proposal are:

- Current Benefit claimants
- Future Benefit claimants
- Residents and the wider public
- Staff
- Members
- Sutton Housing Partnership,
- Other Social Landlords
- Private Landlords
- Neighbouring boroughs
- Voluntary Sector
- Other interested community groups
- Precepting Authorities

Potential Impact

The Council has 16,275 Housing Benefits and Council Tax Benefit claimants of which 14,346 are claims for Council Tax Benefit.

The current caseload consists of the following customer groups:

- Pensioners (39%) of the caseload
- Disabled customers (8%) of the caseload
- Child in household (31%) of the caseload
- Working age (22%) of the caseload

The proposed options to develop a local Council Tax support scheme exclude any changes for the following vulnerable groups of claimants:

- Pensioners
- Disabled claimants and/or disabled partners
- Claimants with dependent children aged 5 or under
These exclusions will lessen the impact of the current Sutton caseload. However, it will be prudent to consider any other of the protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, which may be unintentionally impacted upon by the development of the options that will make up our local council tax support scheme e.g. carers, women, young people. Recent press articles\(^1\) have indicated that there may be some unintended consequences for those who are in a lower socio-economic position, which we will need to consider.

Any potential impact will need to be identified and determined for each option and a further breakdown of customers that may be affected by the proposals will be identified and included as appropriate. In addition, as proposals to deliver the new scheme are identified this Equality Impact Assessment will be updated and the impacts assessed.

This Equality Impact Assessment has been developed considering the following national Equality Impact Assessments:

- Local Government Finance Bill: Localising support for council tax
- Local Government Finance Bill: Technical reforms to council tax
- Local Government Finance Bill: Summary impact assessment

**Identified impacts against particular options**

The particular impact of the scheme will depend upon the configuration which is employed locally and therefore, careful consideration will need to be given to how the different options are put together to ensure any potential impact is not amplified during the development of the scheme. There are a number of options that have been identified and could form part of the scheme moving forward.

The options to be considered that could form the localised Council Tax Support scheme are:

- Cap maximum payments at either Band D, Band E or Band F
- Change the maximum capital savings limit so that customers will not be entitled to Council Tax Benefit if it’s above the maximum limit.
- Remove second adult rebate from people below pensionable age
- Increase the percentage a working claimant pays towards their Council Tax
- Customers who are Lone Parents and work over 16 hours per week to change the earned income disregard from £25 to £10. This amount is disregarded from the income that is used to calculate the benefit entitlement
- Include 25% of the Child Benefit as income
- Non working households contribute at least £3.55 per week
- Increase non-dependant contributions by 40%

\(^1\) [http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/home/-/journal_content/56/10171/3602140/NEWS-TEMPLATE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/home/-/journal_content/56/10171/3602140/NEWS-TEMPLATE)
In addition there are a range of technical changes that may have a more limited impact upon the different protected characteristics. These options for amending council tax discounts and exemptions include:

- Remove the 10% discount for second homes
- For unoccupied or unfurnished properties award 6 month discount of 50% or 0%
- Remove exemption for repossessions
- Charge a premium above the full council tax for homes empty for longer than 2 years at 25% or 50%

In financial terms the first set of options will save up to £789,000 whilst the technical options would save between £385k and £678k depending on the option taken. Clearly, if the full £1.4m is not fully found through our local scheme and by amending the discounts and exemptions above the Council will be required to take further measures to plug the funding gap.

With regard to each option the impact upon the different protected characteristics has been considered.

**Cap Maximum Payments at band D**

**Context**

The preferred option is to cap maximum payments at this Band, though there are options to cap the maximum payments at Band E or F though this will yield less savings (see Appendix E to the report).

Restrict payments on larger properties by applying a cap at Band D; claims would be worked out using a maximum liability of band D which is currently £1447.61. Customers in higher bands could still apply but their eligibility would be based on a Band D liability and proportionally reduced.

**Potential Impacts**

- Capping payment at by band could predominantly affect families in need of larger accommodation or affect the asset rich on a low income.
- Capping at Band D would impact upon 268 benefit claimants in Sutton.
- Families may require extra room due to having family members with a disability. Allowances need to be made for these circumstances.
- It could encourage some households to move to smaller more affordable accommodation.
- The average difference per week is £4.10; however it could be argued that this may impact upon larger families with dependent children and older people of working age. This needs to be tested through the consultation process.
Decrease maximum capital level to £8000 and minimum level to £4000

Context
This option is to make claimants pay more towards their council tax if they have savings by reducing the thresholds down from £16,000/£6,000 to £10,000/£6,000.

Stakeholders
This could affect any part of the borough’s demographic where they have significant savings or capital holdings, such as company shares. Pensioners will not be affected as they have protected status.

Potential Impacts

- There would be 283 households affected.
- Residents approaching pension age who have worked for most of their lives may see this as a punishment for saving. Moreover, this group could also find it more difficult to find employment to offset this drop in benefit.
- This could be seen as a disincentive to save by the working population.
- The ability to save is determined by the amount of income received, therefore some may feel that in order to minimise other impacts on claimants with no excess income the capital thresholds could be reduced.

Remove second adult rebate from people below pensionable age

Context
Currently a Second Adult Rebate (SAR) is awarded if the claimant is not entitled to council tax benefit in their own right. They can be awarded up to 25% benefit if they have a second adult living with them who is on a low income, as a form of compensation for losing sole person discount.

Stakeholders
- No particular stakeholders other than those who claim have been identified through the desk top exercise.

Potential Impacts

- There would be 66 households affected by this option.
- If a particular demographic has more people on benefits/low income, this could be seen as disproportionately unfair, for example:
  - Age – Households with young adults on a low income may be affected
  - Gender – Perhaps more women are working part time and will lose out. All of this would need to be explored through the consultation.
- Claimants do not have to provide evidence of their income; this means some claimants could be in a position to meet their full council tax liability without second adult rebate.
**Increase taper rate**

**Context**
All working customers would be required to contribute more towards their Council Tax by increasing the excess income taper from 20% to 25% - this is the amount of money the claimant is expected to contribute from any excess income they have above their or their family’s assessed needs.

**Stakeholders**
The potential impact would be on working claimants and this would need to be tested through the consultation.

**Potential Impacts**
- This is a means tested contribution taken from excess income above the accepted living wage. It will therefore not negatively affect any group above others.
- The increased customer contribution reduces entitlement to support in proportion to their ability to pay.

**Increase Working Tax Credit disregard by 50%**

**Context**
The option is to reduce the elements of earned income that are not included in the calculation of council tax benefit.

**Stakeholders**
The potential impact would be on working claimants and this would need to be tested through the consultation.

**Potential Impacts**
- This may incentivise workers to take on more hours.
- Older claimants may be reticent to increase their hours and may therefore find this change more difficult than most.
- Working claimants with a disability may find difficulty in increasing their hours and may therefore find this change more difficult than most. However, the council is proposing that claimants and/or partners that are in receipt of a disability related benefit will be no worse off so we do not anticipate this to have an impact.
- This change will not affect part-time workers on 30 hours or less, as they do not receive this income disregard.
Reduce lone parent earned income disregard from £25 to £10 to align this with the rate a couple receive

Context
Customers who are Lone Parents and work over 16 hours per week currently have £25.00 disregarded from the income that is used to calculate benefit. The option is to have this disregard reduced to £10.00.

Stakeholders
The potential impact would be on working claimants and this would need to be tested through the consultation.

Potential Impact

· There would be 978 households affected

· Further work needs to be undertaken to test if there are groups impact by this option e.g. whether there are certain communities overrepresented in the lone parent category e.g. women nationally represent 92% of all lone parents, those from different ethnic minorities and the combined potential relationship with poverty. Further national statistics on lone parents: http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/content.aspx?CategoryID=365

Include 50% of child benefit in calculation

Context
The inclusion of 50% of child benefit as income used to calculate council tax support

Stakeholders
This could impact upon families and lone parents and this would need to be tested through the consultation

Potential Impact

· There would be 2025 households affected.

· Lone parents (see concerns about impact, above)

· Particular groups may feel this is unfair due to large families being a cultural factor. This can be related to religious beliefs and would affect the families disposable income.

Non working households contribute at least £3.55

Context
Households claiming council tax support will be required to contribute at least £3.55 towards the bill.

Stakeholders
This could impact upon non working households.

Potential Impact
There would be 1,837 households affected.

We are not anticipating that this change will disproportionately affect a particular group, but this would need to be tested through the consultation.

Increase non dependent contributions by 40%

Context
Increase the contributions non-dependent adults are obliged to make to Council tax payments by 40%.

Stakeholders
This may impact upon households with non-dependent adults.

Impact
- There would be 680 households affected.
- Due to levels of unemployment/low income by demographic this may disproportionately affect residents by ethnic minorities, gender and age. Recent NOMIS statistics from May 2012 indicate that a higher proportion of men are claiming JSA (3.4% compared to 2% women) and 5.4% of JSA claimants are aged 18-24 years old. This is the highest rate in any age category. (http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038431891/report.aspx#tabempunemp)

Options Configuration
In order to make the required savings it is likely several of the above options will be employed simultaneously. This creates the added risk of multiple detrimental effects on particular social groups. Any configuration of options would need to be tested with this in mind.

Mitigations
There are a number of options for the Council to consider in responding to this reform. These include:

- The option to retain the default scheme (continue as we are with a cost implication of £1.4m)
- Design a new scheme to manage the funding reduction
- Manage the gap in funding through savings from the Council’s overall budget (but has the potential to impact upon other services)
- Combination of the above.

The proposals are based on a necessity to find savings of £1.4m within the council tax support budget. Some residents will be affected as the scheme is adapted to operate with reduced resources.

However, the Council will be taking additional measures to reduce and mitigate any identified adverse impact on particular social groups. The nature of these mitigations will crystallize during the consultation where the saving options will be tested and resident feedback gathered. This feedback will be provided by a diverse range of residents, who will have firsthand knowledge of how particular
changes will affect them. Members will ultimately sign off on the configuration of options which will form the local scheme.

**Impact Assessment Results**

The final options for the scheme will be tested during consultation and subsequently evaluated against the following framework from the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s guidance on “Making Fair Financial Decisions”:

**Outcome 1: No major change required** the assessment has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to advance equality have been taken.

**Outcome 2: Adjustments to remove barriers identified by the assessment or to better advance equality.**

**Outcome 3: Continue despite having identified some potential for adverse impacts or missed opportunities to advance equality.** In this case, the justification will be included in the assessment and will be in line with the duty to have ‘due regard’. This will include sufficient detail on how the impacts are being reduced and how this will be monitored.

**Outcome 4: Stop and rethink** This is unlikely, but will be the measure taken if unlawfully disproportionate actions are found.

Please provide suitable evidence, such as the results of consultation, service take-up, service monitoring, surveys, stakeholder comments, and complaints where appropriate. Are there any gaps in your evidence or conclusions that make it difficult for you to quantify the potential adverse impact?

The Equality Impact Assessment, completed above, is based on a thorough desktop analysis of the impacts based on the current demographics of current benefit claimants. However, in order to ensure a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the potential impacts of developing a localised council tax support scheme the Council is proposing to undertake a 12 week consultation.

The scheduled 12 week consultation will allow the authority to test the impacts forecasted in this assessment and work with the community to put in place tangible mitigations. Questions posed by stakeholders will be noted and where appropriate the answers will be integrated into the final draft of this document. A broad range consultation will be undertaken which will include:

- Promote survey to both benefit and non benefit claimants, including availability to our e-survey from 25th June.

- Five consultation workshops have been scheduled between 6 July and 7 August to provide a comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

- A dedicated session with the Equality and Diversity Forum in July. The forum consists of representatives from across the community and voluntary sector in Sutton and would be given the option of consulting their resident networks on the proposals and feeding this back to the council.
• Interacting with local people via our online consultation hub and Speak Out Sutton to encompass as many views as possible into the development of the finalised local scheme.

• Stakeholder views will also be collected using our tailored consultation software from YouGov. The software will allow users to calibrate where they would like to see spending reduced and areas they find particularly important.

Within our consultation period we aim to provide a representative picture of the borough by capturing the thoughts of 1000 local people which we can scale into a usable sample. Within this sample we will collect thoughts from residents with an array of circumstances and backgrounds.

To respond to this, in our consultation monitoring we are asking for appropriate equality monitoring information against the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010 to ensure we are giving due regard. This will ensure we can capture information and views from the full range of protected characteristics e.g. sexual orientation, religion/belief; which are not currently collected through the current Council systems. This will help to ensure we are making full and informed decisions. In addition, we are asking respondents to identify if they are:

• A family with one or two dependent children
• A family with three or more dependent children
• A lone parent household
• A carer
• A household with full and/or part time workers
• A household that includes someone who is disabled
• A single person household or a couple without children

This approach will add greater transparency to our decision making on the Sutton Council Tax Support scheme.

The final options that will create Sutton’s Council Tax Support Scheme will be reported to the Housing, Economy and Business Committee on 27th November and to full Council on 14th January 2013 who will make the final decision.
Delivering our Equality Plan

2012/13
This document sets out our Policy Statement on Equality and Diversity, an explanation of the current context, an action plan outlining how we will achieve the aims of our policy, in the context of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This year will be a consolidation year, building upon the practices we have put in place as a result of the regulations outlined in the Equality Act 2010 being brought in. This provides us with the opportunity to reassess the ways in which we will achieve the aims outlined in our Action Plan, measure our progress and be sure that our approach to Equality and Diversity is proactive and focussed. We will undertake this specific work during 2012, through our Equality Champions Group and the Equality and Diversity Forum.
The Sutton Equality Plan provides a strategic view of the Council’s work on equality and diversity, how we will meet our legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and what we want to achieve over the forthcoming period to realise our vision of building a community in which all can take part and take pride. Our commitment to reduce inequality and promote diversity underpins everything that we do and is the responsibility of all of our staff.

During periods of significant change it is even more important that we are clear about our responsibilities with regard to ensuring fairness. The purpose of this plan is to set out how we will achieve this. The environment in which all local authorities are working will continue to change. Legislative changes, such as those in the Open Public Services White Paper and Localism Act, will provide opportunities for new responses to how we continue to engage our residents so they are even more empowered and the needs of people with protected characteristics are fully considered.

To help us achieve this, we will work hard to cut bureaucracy and red tape and be an ‘Open Council’. This means being open and transparent about our data, our decision-making, equality and diversity information, our spending and our performance. All these things together will help create a place where people feel engaged and empowered to help build a better quality of life and foster good relations across the borough. We have already taken steps toward providing open data through our Equalities Open Data webpage.

We have a well established set of Council-wide values and we believe these will continue to provide a key foundation for delivering equality outcomes over the coming period. They are:

- Working in **PARTNERSHIP** with the people who live or work in the borough
- Making our services open and accessible so that everyone is listened to and treated with **RESPECT**
- Seeking **INNOVATIVE** approaches in order to provide better services
- Promoting **DIVERSITY** and ensuring that we recognise and celebrate difference within the context of fairness and equality
- **EMPOWERING** everyone so that we can all ‘take part and take pride’ as active citizens and employees.
The Equality Act 2010, which replaces all previous legislation, places a general duty on the Council to have due regard to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.

- Advancing the equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The Act also requires the Council to meet specific duties around setting equality objectives and publishing information to show how it is meeting the general equality duty.

We want to build a community in which all can take part and all can take pride. This is the Council’s vision and describes what we want to achieve through our work on equality and diversity. As a community leader, a service provider, a major employer and a purchaser of goods and services, our policy is to prevent discrimination and advance equality, through the following objectives:

1. Embedding and mainstreaming equalities, so that it’s everyone’s job

2. Improving how we communicate equality information and outcomes to give the work more external and internal profile, and so that residents can hold us to account

3. Improving the quality and relevance of Equality Impact Assessments

4. Building a workforce that is representative of our local communities

5. Involving equality and diversity groups in decision making

This policy explains how we will meet our legal duties and how we will ensure that equality and diversity is promoted among our residents and our staff.
Reducing inequality is at the heart of the Council’s work and much has been undertaken to ensure equality is integrated into the Council’s business; starting from the top with the Sutton in Partnership strategy which focuses on safer, greener and fairer outcomes for Sutton’s residents. This focus is reflected at all levels of the Council’s business planning and performance framework.

In the past year there have been a number of achievements against out key objectives:

Embedding and mainstreaming equalities, so that it’s everyone’s job

- The Domestic Violence One Stop Shop, established in July 2011, has seen 117 clients receiving multi-agency services from advocates, Police, lawyers and the CAB.

- Improved outcomes, in terms of housing support, for people experiencing domestic violence in key areas such as managing money, being healthy, staying safe and making positive contributions.

- The gap between achievement levels of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and those without has fluctuated over the past three years at Key Stage 2, with an overall decrease since 2009 of 5%. The gap between attainment at Key Stage 4 for those pupils with SEN and those pupils without has decreased since 2009 by just over 2%.

- The achievement of pupils eligible for Free School Meals has seen steady improvement at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 2, the gap has narrowed by over 12% since 2007/08 demonstrating improved performance for those pupils on Free School Meals. The achievement gap at Key Stage 4 is wider and increasing, however, the actual achievement over time of those eligible for FSM is improving steadily and is well above the London and national average.

- Between 1998 and 2010 there has been significant progress in reducing under-18 conceptions. The rate of conceptions per 1,000 girls aged 15-17 years has seen a 36.6% reduction since 1998, the third highest reduction in Outer London during the period 1998-2010. Progress was particularly marked between the years 2008-2010, dropping from a peak of 145 conceptions in 2008 to 88 in 2010.
Improving how we communicate equality information and outcomes to give the work more external and internal profile, and so that residents can hold us to account

- Stop Hate a 24/7 third party telephone, text and email reporting system has been running for two years now in the Borough. We have seen a tenfold increase in reported incidents during this period. We have provided training and established reporting through 12 local voluntary sector organisations as well as a web presence and Facebook page.

Improving the quality and relevance of Equality Impact Assessments

- Delivery against our legislative requirements, by publishing our equality data on the Internet and by defining our equality objectives.

Involving equality and diversity groups in decision making

- Promoted a number of community events throughout the year such as Holocaust Memorial Day, Interfaith Week, International Day against Homophobia and supported local community groups to deliver their own events e.g. Black History Month.
There are some very specific things we will achieve over the next year to demonstrate progress against our objectives. The Council has identified the following objectives for 2012/13 as part of its annual business planning process. Progress against these objectives will be monitored through our corporate performance management framework.

In addition, we are determined that the Council’s key area of improvement work in relation to safeguarding and looked after children will have at its heart, commitments to reduce the risk of inequality of outcomes for children and young people.

**Adult Social Services, Housing and Health Directorate**

1. Personalise services through taking forward the Transforming Lives programme – ensuring that personal budgets are available for all those eligible for local authority funded social care and that citizens are supported in line with our equality duties

2. Improve practice, processes and systems with partners to ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded in Sutton and people feel protected.

3. Maintain and improve performance where possible, given financial constraints, including improving on equalities standards.

**Chief Executive’s Directorate**

1. Ensure that transformation of customer services through digital channels does not discriminate against any of our residents.

2. Enable residents to have the opportunity to have their voices heard on key decisions.

3. Develop a revised Council-wide approach to equalities to ensure adherence to the Equality Act (both the general and specific duties).

4. Support the delivery of a co-ordinated approach to families who need the most help in Sutton.

5. Review employee terms and conditions – deliver savings for 2012/13 through negotiating reduction in terms and conditions of employment, ensuring equality and compliance with the Equal Pay Act.

6. Reduce the risk and incidence of domestic violence.


**Children, Young People and Learning Services Directorate**

1. Raise attainment and close the gap between vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and their peers.

2. Children, young people and their parents are able to express their views, make informed choices and exercise control over the decisions that affect them especially those from vulnerable, hard to reach and minority groups.

**Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate**

1. Develop opportunities afforded by the Localism Act 2011 to devolve greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and to give local communities more control over housing and planning decisions.

2. Refurbish, enhance and modernise Westcroft Leisure Centre.

3. Deliver growth through a socially inclusive economy which ensures employment agencies and funding opportunity meet the needs of local residents.

**Resources Directorate**

1. Improve the average time taken to process new financial assessment claims and maximise income generation.

In addition, to specific Directorate activity there are a number of organisational changes that need to be put in place to drive our progress against equality and diversity. These will put in place strong foundations that contribute to achieving our overarching objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will we do?</th>
<th>How will we measure it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>We will embed and mainstream equality and diversity, so that it is everyone’s job, through:</strong></td>
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| Leading the Council’s corporate policy and strategic development, ensuring strong relationships with partners and engaging local communities | Monitor the equality objectives in the Council’s business plan through the quarterly performance and finance reports.  
Embed equalities further into our business planning practices. |
| Fully considering the equality impacts of the Smarter Council paper and our programme of transformational reviews through the Smarter Council programme and ensure a well-managed approach to implementation | Completion of all Impact Assessments, including the development of a Strategic IIA to understand the cumulative impacts and support the provision of services.  
Learning from impact assessments to be shared. |
| Ensuring we use our commissioning power to achieve equality objectives through organisations delivering services to and on behalf of the council | Completion of equality training for commissioners  
Appropriate equality impact considered throughout the commissioning cycle. |
<p>| Training and communication to staff and Members to ensuring the perception and understanding of | Implement the equality and diversity training offer including bite sized |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What will we do?</th>
<th>How will we measure it?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>equality and diversity is continuously challenged and championed.</td>
<td>training for officers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>We will improve how we communicate our equality and diversity achievements to give the work more external and internal profile, through:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Publish an annual review of equality and diversity, including an annual refresh of our equality information to ensure that our community is fairly served (Equalities Open Data webpages)</td>
<td>Published review by 31 March 2013.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regular Insight articles on equality and diversity issues</td>
<td>Publication of one equality related insight article every month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop 12 case studies focussing on learning points and service improvements from complaints; complimented by examples of decisions which were reversed, modified or mitigated as a result of equality analysis.</td>
<td>Ensure senior managers implement change as a result of learning from complaints.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refresh of all equality webpages to ensure they are relevant and informative for staff and residents</td>
<td>All pages revised by June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an annual programme of equality and diversity events building upon current practice that brings together key partners and residents.</td>
<td>Successful 2012/13 events programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We will improve the quality and relevance of Equality Impact Assessments, through:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create an Integrated Impact Assessment process to include Health, Sustainability, Equality and ensure they are published on our Equality Open Data webpage.</td>
<td>Devise an Integrated Impact Assessment plus supplementary guidance and training to support the new Governance Arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading and delivering a corporate programme of research and intelligence, delivering better analysis and publication of equality information to inform service provision.</td>
<td>IIA’s are better informed by accurate, up to date customer insight, research and analysis. Standardised equality monitoring for all consultations to ensure the development of an adequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What will we do? | How will we measure it?
---|---
Update Joint Strategic Needs Assessment annually | Sutton JSNA in place
We will continue to focus on building a staff profile that is representative of our local community, through:
Reporting on headline figures for employment and developing interventions as required. | Reports to Equality Champions, CMT and committees as required
Develop Strategic EIA for the Council for 2012 based on financial position and emerging policy context | Strategic EIA completed
Improve the involvement of our equality and diversity groups in Council decision making and demonstrate real improvements in outcomes, through:
Identification of key equality groups who can be consulted with including the Equality and Diversity Forum. | Broad representation of groups identified
Enable residents to have the opportunity to have their voices heard on key decisions. | Equality and diversity monitoring that supports commissioning, research and consultation practices demonstrate a diversity in the views sought

How will we show that we are achieving these aims?

The key objectives and deliverables for 2012/13 are embedded within the council’s business planning framework. This means that performance will be managed through our corporate performance management framework, which ensures that any underperformance is highlighted so that interventions can be made.

As well as relying on the Council’s corporate performance management framework we will work with the Equality Champions Group – our challenge network for equality and diversity, chaired by the Executive Head of Policy and Customer Services, to monitor achievement of these priorities and to provide a mechanism to challenge our level of progress. During 2012, the ECG will undertake specific work to ensure that...
the aims in this plan are underpinned by targeted and measured activity across each of the Groups within the Council. At the end of the financial year we will publish an annual review within the Performance and Financial report, showing the progress we have made.
Leadership for the delivery of this plan rests at many levels. Each has their own part to play in ensuring different communities voices are represented throughout the work of the Council and its partners. Key structures in place are outlined below with a focus on their role and responsibility but also their accountability for leading and delivering this agenda.

**Sutton in Partnership**

- To provide a Borough wide community leadership role and ensure the implementation of the six key commitments in their Equality Charter
- To contribute to the annual Sutton Equality and Diversity Review
- Support the identification of key groups for consultation

**Lead Member for Equality (Cllr Adrian Davey)**

- To provide political leadership on equality and diversity and to chair the Equality and Diversity Forum

**Equality and Diversity Forum**

- To act as the key Forum for bringing together key partners and stakeholders with an influence and interest in equalities issues.
- To act as a key consultation group for the Council and its partners in the shaping of key Council or Borough wide policy.
- To act as a critical friend to impact assessments produced on major policies and programmes.

**CMT**

- To provide overall governance and leadership to the equality and diversity priorities and objectives identified above.
- To scrutinise and performance manage progress against key objectives through the quarterly performance report and the annual equalities report.
- As project sponsors ensure appropriate completion of Impact Assessments.
Role of DMTs

- To provide leadership along with CMT on the delivery of equality and diversity priorities and objectives.

- Ownership of the impact assessment process ensuring completion and appropriate challenge of reports when shared at DMT

- Oversight and management of the Forward Plan to ensure timely completion of IIAs

Role for Equality and Diversity Champions

- Conduit for sharing, promoting and actively supporting the delivery of the key priorities and activities within their Directorates.

- Regular reporting through to DMTs on equality performance e.g. against objectives.

- Quality champion for all Impact Assessments and the “critical friend” at DMTs when reports are shared

- Equality lead in the new officer governance arrangements ensuring the timely completion of IIAs and appropriate challenge and support from an equality perspective.

- Promotion of equalities within the wider Directorate and Council e.g. annual equalities conference, annual programme of events.