

Report for: Full Council - 2 March 2026

Title: Review of Council Tax Reduction Scheme Administration for 2026/27

Report authorised by : Barry Francis, Corporate Director for Environment & Resident Experience

Lead Officer: James Straw, Benefit Manager

Ward(s) affected: All wards

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Key decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report sets out details of the review of Haringey's current Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) 2025/26 and recommends that it continues unchanged for 2026/27, save for minor updates mandated by legislation made by the Government.
- 1.2 The Council must approve the final scheme by 11th March 2026, even where the scheme remains unchanged, ready for implementation on the 1st April 2026.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 Since the decision by the previous Government to abolish Council Tax Benefit in 2013, we recognise that there has been a significant financial burden on many of the lowest income households in Haringey.
- 2.2 Haringey has designed a CTRS (Council Tax Reduction Scheme) which increased the maximum protection to disabled claimants and working age claimants with children to that already given to pensioners.
- 2.3 Continuing the protection of these groups by maintaining the current scheme allows the council to provide essential financial support to some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough and contribute to the stated ambition of making Haringey a fairer borough for all to live in.

3. Recommendations

That the Council:

- 3.1 Agrees to adopt the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27 as contained in Appendix 1 and therefore retains the same Scheme agreed for 2025/26. This means that from 1 April 2026 there is a means-tested scheme which provides:
 - i. That pensioners continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 100%.
 - ii. That working-age claimants in receipt of certain disability benefits continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 100%.
 - iii. That working-age claimants with children continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 100%.
 - iv. That all other working-age claimants continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 80.2%.
- 3.2 Authority is given the Corporate Director for Finance and Resources, Corporate Director for Environment & Resident Experience and Delivery Director Tackling Inequality to take all appropriate steps to implement and administer the scheme

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1 The Council is obliged to consider whether to revise or replace its CTRS each year. However, it is not obliged to revise or replace it. If any revision or replacement is to be made, the Council must follow the consultation process set out in the legislation and the decision must be made by Full Council.
- 4.2 The CTRS is a way the Council can redistribute the financial burden on Council Taxpayers and provide additional support to those in financial need.
- 4.3 The recommendation to retain the current scheme. This would help to ensure that already protected claimants will not be further disadvantaged and pay due regard to the challenging financial climate, recognising the continuing cost of living pressures on residents. It would also ensure the CTRS scheme remains affordable for the Council. The reduction in Council resources and service pressures have required the Council to implement significant annual expenditure reductions over several years. These are forecast to continue for 2026/27 and future years. The affordability to the Council of the CTRS scheme therefore continues to be an important consideration.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Consideration was given to revisiting the current scheme. A decision was taken to delay this and review changes for 2027/28, for the reasons given above.

6. Background information

- 6.1 Haringey Council has a Council Tax Reduction Scheme to provide support to residents who need help to pay their Council Tax.
- 6.2 As part of the government's welfare reforms, responsibility for setting Council Tax support was devolved to Local Authorities. Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced with a locally managed CTRS from 1st April 2013. Nationally, CTRS had 10% less government funding than the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. There was a mandate to protect pensioners from any changes.
- 6.3 Haringey's Council Tax Reduction Scheme protects pensioners (as prescribed by Central Government), those in receipt of certain disability benefits, and working age claimants with children, with support available for up to 100% of Council Tax liability, dependent on the means-test. The support for other claimants is capped at a maximum 80.2% of Council Tax liability.
- 6.4 The scheme for 2026/27 includes nationally-prescribed changes to allowances, premiums and non-dependant deductions, and the pension-age scheme by the Government. No other changes have been made which affect the administration of the scheme.
- 6.5 The Council must consider whether to revise or replace its CTRS for each financial year but can also choose to make no changes.
- 6.6 Before making any changes to the CTRS, the Council must follow the public consultation process set out in the legislation.
- 6.7 The final decision must be made by Full Council before 11 March 2026, to take effect from 1 April 2026.
- 6.8 The CTRS reduces the level of council tax which the Council and the GLA collect from Haringey residents. The current cost to the Council of the CTRS is £34.5m.

7. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026 High level Strategic outcomes

- 7.1 The CTRS contributes to the 'Adults, health and welfare' priority of the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-26 and positively impacts on creating secure and resilient lives and supporting vulnerable residents.
- 7.2 Continuing to provide the maximum level of financial support for households with disabilities, and with children, will ease the financial burden for these households. There are clear links between socioeconomic and health inequalities, and therefore, reducing the financial burden on recipients of CTRS will contribute to wider positive life outcomes.

8. Carbon and Climate Change

- 8.1 Not relevant to this report.

9. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Director of Legal and Governance, Equalities)

Finance

The report seeks Cabinet approval to retain the current CTRS scheme to support the claimants, due to the challenging financial climate and the continuing cost of living pressures on residents.

The CTRS is a means tested scheme, which enables the Council to help the residents in need of financial support. The financial burden on vulnerable residents relating to Council Tax is redistributed across the community as the Council Tax is a core form of funding to the Council which helps to finance its statutory and non-statutory expenditure.

The current cost of the CTRS scheme to the Council is £34.5m and the CTRS scheme reduces the level of Council tax that could be collected based on the GLA and Government guidance. Despite financial challenges, CTRS costs have been built into the 2026/27 budget and the medium-term financial strategy.

There are nationally prescribed changes expected in 2026/27 to allowances, premiums, non-dependant deductions, and the pension-age scheme by the Government. No other changes are expected which would affect the administration of the scheme.

Due to the current financial landscape, it should be noted that the Council has requested for Exceptional Financial Support from the Government to balance the budget over the medium-term financial plan.

Procurement

Strategic Procurement has been consulted on the preparation of this report and notes the contents herein. There are no procurement implications arising from the recommendations stated at 3 above

Director of Legal & Governance

The Director for Legal and Governance has been consulted on this report. Under section 13A(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council as billing authority must make a localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with Schedule 1A to the 1992 Act.

Each financial year the Council must consider whether to revise its scheme, or to replace it with another scheme. The Council must make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, no later than 11 March in the financial

year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect. The decision must be made by Full Council.

This report recommends that Full Council retains essentially the same provisions for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026-27 as was agreed for 2025-26 so that it continues largely unchanged. Therefore, Full Council is being asked to agree the continuing adoption of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1 April 2026 for the council tax year 2026-27.

Schedule 1A allows the Government to make regulations about the prescribed requirements for schemes. Any scheme that the Council adopts must comply with these regulations. Each year the Government has prescribed minor such updates to the CTRS for pensioners, to accord with national welfare changes. For example, to terminology or to the amount of allowances, premiums and non-dependent deductions for pension-age claimants. The Council must implement these and has no discretion to do otherwise: see the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 and the Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Consequential Amendments to Subordinate Legislation Regulations 2025. Therefore, regardless of the Council's decision whether to revise or replace the scheme for 2025/26, certain national welfare changes will be reflected in the pension-age scheme by the Government.

Schedule 1A to the 1992 Act makes further provision about Council Tax Reduction Schemes including prescribing the consultation process that must be followed if the scheme is to be revised. However, there is no obligation to consult here as no changes which are not mandated by Government are being recommended for the 2026/27 scheme.

Equality

The Council has a public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

9.10 The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

9.11 This report sets out details of Haringey's current Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) 2026/27 which provides support to residents who need help to pay their Council Tax.

There are no changes being made to the scheme eligibility criteria or process for 2026/27, thus the positive impact on residents remains unchanged.

9.12 The scheme supports our lowest-income residents as follows:

- i. Low income pensioners, who continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 100%.
- ii. Low income working-age claimants in receipt of certain disability benefits continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 100%.
- iii. Low income working-age claimants with children continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 100%.
- iv. That all other low income working-age claimants continue to receive support for the payment of Council Tax up to 80.2%.

9.13 The council is not seeking to change the current scheme, and the continuation of the existing scheme is expected to have a positive impact on a variety of people with protected characteristics who are overrepresented among CTRS claimants. This decision will provide opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations by reducing the financial burden on groups in particular need.

10. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1: Haringey Council 2026/27 CTR scheme

Background papers

- Review of Council Tax Reduction Scheme Administration for 2025/26:
<https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s150017/Full%20Council%20report%20-%20CTRS%202025-26%20-%20final%2016.51.pdf>
- The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2026:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2026/27/contents/made>
- The Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Consequential Amendments to Subordinate Legislation Regulations 2025:
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2025/201/contents/made>