

REPORT

Subject: COUNCIL TAX BASE 2016/17 AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

Directorate: Chief Executives - Finance

Meeting: Cabinet

Date: 2nd December 2015

Divisions/Wards Affected: County Wide

1. PURPOSE:

To agree the Council Tax base figure for submission to Welsh Government, together with the collection rate to be applied for 2016/17 and to make other necessary related statutory decisions.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That in accord with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995, the amount calculated by the Council as its Tax Base for 2016/17 shall be notified as **£45,102.03** and the Collection Rate set at **98.5%**.
- 2.2 That no Special Resolution declaring Drainage Rates as Special Expenses be made.
- 2.3 That any expenses incurred by the Council in performing in part of its area a function performed elsewhere in its area by a Community Council shall not be treated as a special expense for the purpose of Section 35 of the Local Govt. Finance Act 1992.
- 2.4 That Council Tax setting continues to be a function of full Council.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Council Tax Base

For each financial year the Council shall set its Council Tax, taking account of its own total net budget requirement and amounts receivable for redistributed Non Domestic Rates, Revenue Support Grant and any other additional grants. It will also take account of any precepts it receives from other authorities and the value of the Council Tax Base. In simple terms, the net spending not met by grant is divided by the Tax Base to give the amount of Council Tax for a dwelling in Band D. The budget requirement, grant calculations and precepts will be addressed in the Council Tax Setting report.

It was agreed by Council in January 2005 that the, largely technical, matter of the Council Tax Base Resolution and tax setting should be dealt with by Executive decision. Legally, the tax setting decision could also be decided by the Executive, but has always been referred to full Council given its wide interest and importance. It is therefore recommended that this continue to be put for decision by full Council.

The ratified council tax base information must be passed to Welsh Government (WG) by 4th January 2016 with reference to dwellings in the Valuation List as at 31st October 2015 and taking into account anticipated changes likely to occur during 2016/17. Provisional information has been provided to WG, if any changes to policy are considered which affect the tax base, revised information will need to be submitted. Significant differences may require WG to make adjustments to the RSG entitlements via an amending report. The prescribed period during which Councils would notify precepting authorities of the council tax base figure is normally 1st November to 31st December.

3.2 Collection Rate

It should be recognised that council tax is being perceived as an increasing burden on taxpayers with more arrangements outside the statutory scheme being sought, thereby increasing the time over which the debt is paid.

Between 2004/5 and 2007/8 the anticipated in-year collection rate was static at 96%; this was increased to 96.5% for 2008/9 and 2009/10 and to 97% for 2010/11. From 2011/12, despite ongoing economic difficulties, the collection rate was increased to 98%, reflecting results achieved in subsequent years from sustained recovery action. For 2016/17 it is considered reasonable to increase the collection rate further to 98.5%.

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) was introduced by the Welsh Government on 1st April 2013, replacing what was the Council Tax Benefit Scheme. On inception the Welsh Government fully funded the scheme, pending a full review. This review was concluded in the summer of 2014, with the Welsh Government announcing its intention to continue to fund the scheme for another 2 years - 2015/16 and 2016/17. Funding will therefore remain at current levels but Local Government will have to fund additional costs arising from any Council Tax increases. From a household perspective they will not be required to make any contributions.

3.3 Special Items and Expenses (Section 34)

Certain items of expenditure, and precepts made upon the Council by Community Councils are applicable only to certain parts of the area and special rules exist to deal with these items. These rules apply to all of the Town and Community Council precepts in respect of each of their respective areas. They also apply to Drainage Rates which are charged only in certain parts of the East and South of the County area. The Council has always considered that the general body of taxpayers should be treated equally in this respect and such expenditure should be defrayed over the whole area rather than charged as an additional item on those who happen to be in a particular catchment area. If this view continues to prevail then no special resolution declaring these to be special expenses will be necessary.

Finally, expenses incurred by an authority in performing in part of its area a function performed elsewhere by a Community Council (concurrent functions) must be treated as a special expense unless a negative resolution is in force.

The effect of the above result is a recommendation leading to drainage rates and concurrent functions being charged equally across the County.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 To agree the council tax base figure and the collection rate for the forthcoming financial year as required by legislation.

- 4.2 To determine whether a special resolution should be made declaring Drainage Rates a special expense.
- 4.3 To determine whether or not any expenses incurred in part only of the area should be treated as special expenditure in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- 4.4 To confirm that the important matter of tax setting should continue to be a function of full council rather than be devolved for executive decision.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

Overall the Council Tax base calculated for 2016/17 has risen by 1.2% compared to 2015/16. This increase takes into account both the anticipated changes in dwellings and the adjustment in the collection rate. Collectively the estimated income derived from these changes (£621k) has been included in the developing budget proposals which are being considered by Cabinet.

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

There are no implications for sustainable development.

The Council Tax base itself is mainly calculated from information about the numbers of properties within the County, adjusted to an equivalent band D figure for things such as discounts, exemptions and reliefs, and is therefore based on fact and provided for information.

Our Sustainability Community Officer has confirmed that under these circumstances there is no requirement to complete a Future Generations Evaluation.

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

None

8. CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team
All Cabinet Members
Head of Legal

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

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