

<b>Time</b>	5.00 pm	<b>Public Meeting?</b>	YES	<b>Type of meeting</b>	Executive
<b>Venue</b>	Council Chamber - 4th Floor - Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1SH				

## Membership

### Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members

Quorum for this meeting is five Councillors.

## Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the Democratic Services team:

**Contact** Dereck Francis  
**Tel/Email** Tel: 01902 555835 or dereck.francis@wolverhampton.gov.uk  
**Address** Democratic Services, Civic Centre, 1st floor, St Peter's Square,  
Wolverhampton WV1 1RL

Copies of other agendas and reports are available from:

**Website** <http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk>  
**Email** [democratic.services@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@wolverhampton.gov.uk)  
**Tel** 01902 550320

Please take note of the protocol for filming, recording, and use of social media in meetings, copies of which are displayed in the meeting room.

Some items are discussed in private because of their confidential or commercial nature. These reports are not available to the public.

# Agenda

## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*    *Title*

### MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 1            **Apologies for absence**
- 2            **Declaration of interests**
- 3            **Minutes of the previous meeting** (Pages 3 - 6)  
[For approval]
- 4            **Matters arising**  
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting]

### DECISION ITEMS (AMBER - DELEGATED TO THE CABINET)

- 5            **Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme Policy** (Pages 7 - 22)  
[To approve the Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme Policy]

<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Meeting of the Cabinet</b> Minutes - 21 April 2021
--	--

## Attendance

### Members of the Cabinet

Cllr Ian Brookfield (Chair)  
Cllr Louise Miles (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Steve Evans  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal  
Cllr Linda Leach  
Cllr John Reynolds  
Cllr Stephen Simkins  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

### Employees

Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
Mark Taylor	Deputy Chief Executive
Emma Bennett	Director of Children's and Adult Services
Ross Cook	Director of City Environment
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration
Claire Nye	Director of Finance
David Pattison	Director of Governance
Jaswinder Kaur	Democratic Services Manager
Dereck Francis	Democratic Services Officer

---

## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*    *Title*

- 1        **Apologies for absence**  
No apologies for absence were received for the meeting.
  
- 2        **Declaration of interests**  
No declarations of interests were made.
  
- 3        **Minutes of the previous meeting**  
Resolved:  
That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 March 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 **HR Policy - Domestic Abuse policy**

Councillor Paula Brookfield presented the report on a proposal to replace the existing Domestic Violence policy with a Domestic Abuse policy. The new policy expanded both examples of what constitutes abuse and victim profiles. The policy had been developed following workforce and trade union consultation and offered guidance for both employees and managers. Managers would be given training on how best to support employees and how to signpost them to internal and external help.

Resolved:

That the Domestic Abuse policy be approved for use by managers and employees of the Council.

6 **Domestic Abuse Bill Grant Allocation (2021-2022)**

The intention to make a key decision on the report 'Domestic Abuse Bill Grant Allocation 2021-2022' at the meeting was not publicised in advance as required by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. The decision was urgent and could not be reasonably delayed for the following reason:

- Due to a technical oversight, it was not realised that the key decision had not been published in the forward plan. The reason the decision cannot be delayed is the report asks for delegated authority around the £651,000 grant allocation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to provide support for victims of domestic abuse within safe accommodation. This funding allocation and associated delivery must be completed during 2021-2022, therefore activity must be commissioned as soon as possible in order to ensure that delivery is met within the timescales and that the City of Wolverhampton Council are able to discharge their statutory duties outlined in the Domestic Abuse Bill.

In light of the above, consent had been obtained for the key decision to be made at the meeting under the General Exception provisions

Councillor Jasbir Jaspal presented the report on a proposal to delegate grant funding allocated to the Council by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in order to be compliant with the statutory duty outlined in Part Four of the Domestic Abuse Bill, to provide support for victims and their children within domestic abuse safe accommodation. The funding would be utilised to build on existing support provision within Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation.

The Chair welcomed the extra allocation of funds. He reported that the Council takes its responsibilities seriously and anything it could do to mitigate and even bring down the levels of domestic abuse within any home within the city, it was willing to do.

Resolved:

1. That the establishment of supplementary revenue budgets totalling £650,902 fully funded by grant be approved.

2. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, to utilise the £650,902 Wolverhampton Domestic Abuse Bill Allocation from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for 2021-2022 and to approve the award of a grants for services when the evaluation process is complete.

7 **Police and Crime Commissioner Grant Allocation (2021-2022)**

Councillor Jasbir Jaspal presented the report seeking approval of Safer Wolverhampton Partnership's plans for the Police and Crime Commissioner Community Safety Partnership fund allocation for 2021-2022. The funding would be used for specific projects to add value to mainstream delivery against the Community Safety and Harm Reduction Strategy 2020-2023.

Resolved:

1. That the use of the Wolverhampton Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) Community Safety Partnership Fund allocation for 2021-2022 by Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP), to deliver and commission activity to support strategic community safety priorities in line with grant conditions be approved.
2. That the establishment of supplementary revenue budgets totalling £38,400 fully funded grant, subject to the carry forward of 2020-2021 unspent grant being approved by the PCC be approved.

8 **Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund - Grant Award**

The intention to make a key decision on the report 'Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund - Grant Award' at the meeting was not publicised in advance as required by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. The decision was urgent and could not be reasonably delayed for the following reason:

- Due to an oversight by officers, it was not realised that accepting this grant required this level of approval until after the deadline had passed. The reason the decision cannot be delayed is to allow the signing of the Grant Agreement in line with the timetable agreed with the funder; a delay would jeopardise the funding and delivery of the project.

In light of the above, consent had been obtained for the key decision to be made at the meeting under the General Exception provisions

Councillor Steve Evans presented the report on a proposal to accept a grant offer of £129,500 from the Woodland Trust's Emergently Tree Fund to fund the planting of 10 hectares of woodland in the Council's parks and open spaces during the 2021-2022 planting season. Six to eight parks and open spaces would be identified, with a focus on parts of the city where there was a deficit of tree planting. Councillor Evans thanked the Woodland Trust and officers of the Council for the work in securing the grant.

Cabinet colleagues welcomed the proposals and commented on the mini forests planted in the Graiseley area and Bilston North, that had been well received by local schools and communities.

Resolved:

1. That the Council accept the grant offer under the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund.
2. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for City Environment, in consultation with the Directors of City Environment and Governance, to sign the Grant Agreement and any other required agreements to enable to grant to be accepted.
3. That the establishment of a revenue budget of £129,500 for the project be approved.

9

**Vote of thanks**

The Chair reported that this was the last of the Cabinet meetings during this Municipal Year. He placed on record his thanks to everyone who had been involved, cabinet colleagues and officers who support and work on behalf the people in the city, for the fantastic work they have all done during a different and difficult year. He added that whilst Councillors are involved in the May 2021 elections, the work would continue, and he was confident that all councillors and officers would continue to do their best for the people of the city.

Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre thanked the Chair for the relaxed and business-like way he had conducted the business of Cabinet during the Municipal Year.

<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Cabinet</b> <b>26 May 2021</b>
--	--------------------------------------

<b>Report title</b>	Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme		
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER		
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Resources		
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes		
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes		
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards		
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Claire Nye, Director of Finance		
<b>Originating service</b>	Revenues and Benefits		
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Tracey Richards	Head of Revenues and Benefits	
	Tel	01902 552493	
	Email	Tracey.richards@wolverhampton.gov.uk	
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Finance Leadership Team	21 April 2021	
	Strategic Executive Board	6 April 2021	

**Recommendation for decision:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve changes to the Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme (CTDDS) to provide additional support to residents who are liable for Council Tax and are experiencing exceptional hardship.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for changes to the Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme (CTDDS) to be effective from 1 June 2021.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic the Council has continually sought to help those who need us most. One of the ways that residents have needed support is in respect to financial hardship. The Council undertook a number of steps to help, including launching a Benefits Helpline, temporarily pausing debt recovery action and launching a Talk to us Campaign. As part of the Relighting our City recovery plan, the Council is considering further ways to provide support and consequently has undertaken a review of the existing Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme (CTDDS). The purpose of CTDDS is to assist those people experiencing significant hardship by providing a reduction in the amount of council tax they have to pay.
- 2.2 The council already has a CTDDS but there have been few awards of CTDDS due to the limited eligibility criteria in the current policy. In response to the financial impact of the pandemic a review of the current scheme has taken place. This report outlines the recommendations of that review.
- 2.3 A CTDDS is only granted in exceptional circumstances. One of the proposed changes to the scheme will provide financial assistance where the customer is the victim of unusual and significant misfortune. A consideration would be whether the situation is of such an unusual nature and have such an impact on the customer that any reasonable taxpayer would accept them being allowed relief to reduce their council tax e.g. where an area is subjected to unexpected flooding.
- 2.4 CTDDS also aims to support people to meet their council tax liability where they can demonstrate exceptional hardship. The test of hardship will be determined by the applicant's individual circumstances and financial ability to make payment.
- 2.5 The Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme provides support to residents who have a low income to help them to pay their council tax, however, under the scheme claims can only be backdated for up to one month. Due to the pandemic some people who are experiencing financial for the first time may be unaware of the support available through the CTS scheme and have missed out on claiming support. Therefore, it is recommended that where the eligibility criteria for CTS is met, support can be granted under the CTDDS.
- 2.6 Covid-19 has adversely affected many households in the City and some resident's ability to pay their council tax. Whilst Council Tax Support (CTS) does help low income households to pay their council tax, there may be some where they are not eligible to CTS or other benefits, but who are in financial difficulty. This can often be following a significant life event such as redundancy, bereavement etc. Therefore, it is appropriate to expand the criteria of the CTDDS to reach those people.

### **3.0 Changes recommended to CTDDS.**

- 3.1 The following changes are recommended to provide additional support to residents who are liable for Council Tax:
1. support residents who fall outside the criteria of the Council Tax Support Scheme but are suffering financial hardship;
  2. support residents who fall outside the backdating rules, referred to at 2.5, but who have an underlying entitlement to Council Tax Support;
  3. expand the period in which a discretionary discount can be given beyond within the existing financial year;
- 3.2 During the process of considering a CTDDS, appropriate advice and support will be given and residents will be encouraged, where appropriate, to seek appropriate debt advice to help them improve their financial situation
- 3.3 Consultation regarding the changes recommended have been considered and discussed with Welfare Rights Service and Citizens Advice.

### **4.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 4.1 The alternative options have been considered and discounted due to the negative impact they would have:
- Make no change to the existing CTDDS. This would result in very few discounts being awarded.
  - Partially implement the recommendations of this report. This would result in an increase in discounts being awarded but could result in some residents not being eligible for a discount due to the restrictions in the existing policy.

### **5.0 Reasons for decision**

- 5.1 Extending the eligibility criteria will result in more discounts being awarded to residents who are experiencing exceptional hardship, helping them pay their ongoing council tax.
- 5.2 By ensuring that residents seek appropriate debt advice, help with money management and budgeting could result in increasing their income. This will in turn will increase their ability to pay Council Tax.
- 5.3 The risk of not enhancing the CTDDS would be that residents would not be given short term assistance to support them through a particularly difficult time.
- 5.4 Revenues and Benefits are working with other council services to assist residents identified as needing additional support to be able to pay their council tax. It is recognised that some residents are reluctant to engage with the Revenues and Benefits Service when they have council tax arrears, but are willing to talk to their social worker, troubled family support worker, or Wolverhampton Homes officer. We are working with

Wolverhampton Homes, Troubled Families, Children's Services and Welfare Rights. As part of this collaborative approach we will be working together to promote the changes to the CTDDS. As part of this joint working we will be able to reach a much wider audience across the City.

- 5.5 We launched a "Talk to Us" campaign to encourage people who have council tax arrears to get in touch so that we can check that they are receiving all appropriate discounts and exemptions, council tax support and to make direct referrals to help them receive debt advice. We will incorporate the CTDDS within this campaign.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 Some additional support has been provided to residents over the last 12 months through a Government Scheme in response to the impact of Covid-19, however this scheme expired at 31 March 2021. The Government provided a Council Tax Covid-19 Hardship Fund, which was available to reduce council tax for 2020-2021, initially for working age households in receipt of CTS. Wolverhampton were awarded an amount of £3.27 million. £3.1 million has been used to date to reduce council tax.

- 6.2 It is estimated that the cost of the proposed changes to the Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme could be in the region of £100,000 per year. This cost will be funded from the remaining Council Tax Covid-19 Hardship Fund allocation and Covid-19 Emergency Grant Funding initially. At the point that this funding is no longer available, the cost of providing additional support to residents experiencing exceptional hardship will be considered in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as part of the council tax budget setting process.

[MH/12052021/M]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 The Local Government Finance Act 2012 introduced Section 13A (1)(c) Local Government Finance Act 1992 which provides the Council with additional discretionary powers to reduce a person's council tax liability.

[TC/12052021/K]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 An equality analysis has been carried out in respect of the proposed changes to the CTDDS. No adverse equality implications were identified.
- 8.2 Equalities considerations will be included in the monitoring of the policy to ensure that it will demonstrate the approach taken is applied fairly and equally. In this way Councillors can be confident that the approach will meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty as established by the Equality Act.

## **9.0 All other implications**

9.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has adversely affected many households in the City and in turn this has affected some resident's ability to pay their council tax. There are no adverse impacts considered as part of this proposed decision.

## **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 [Local Government Finance Act 1992 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

## **11.0 Appendices**

11.1 Appendix 1: Draft Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme Policy

This page is intentionally left blank

**City of Wolverhampton Council**  
**Council Tax Discretionary Discount Scheme Policy**

**Contents**

		Page
1	Introduction	1
2	Categories of Award	1
3	Application Process	1
4	Period of Award	2
5	Reviews and Appeals	2
6	Fraud	3
Appendix 1	Hardship	4
Appendix 2	Care Leavers	6
Appendix 3	Overpayments of council tax support	7
Appendix 4	Long-term empty property premium	8

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides councils with discretion to grant a discount in individual cases or to a prescribed classification of cases, Council Tax Discount Discretionary Scheme (CTDDS). The CTDDS can reduce up to 100% of the council tax charge and is met from Council resources.
- 1.2. This document sets out the Council's framework for exercising its discretion to award a CTDDS that will waive some, or all, of a council tax liability.

## **2. Categories of award**

### **2.1. Hardship**

- 2.1.1. Awards in this category will discount up to 100% of the council tax charge for people experiencing exceptional hardship or, through no fault of their own, a crisis that has made their property uninhabitable.
- 2.1.2. The circumstances in which this category of award will be considered and criteria for making an award are set out in appendix 1 of this policy.

### **2.2. Care Leavers**

- 2.2.1. Awards in this category will discount up to 100% of the council tax charge for care leavers up to the age of 25.
- 2.2.2. The circumstances in which this category of award will be considered and criteria for making an award are set out in appendix 2 of this policy.

### **2.3. Overpayments of Council Tax Support**

- 2.3.1. Awards in this category will remove the requirement for overpayments of council tax support to be repaid in limited situations.
- 2.3.2. The circumstances in which this category of award will be considered and criteria for making an award are set out in appendix 3 of this policy.

### **2.4. Long term empty property premium**

- 2.4.1. Awards in this category will discount up to 100% of the long-term empty property premium, applied after a property has been empty for two years.
- 2.4.2. The circumstances in which this category of award will be considered and criteria for making an award are set out in appendix 4 of this policy.

## **3. Application process**

- 3.1. Applications should normally be made in writing, or using the online application form, and include supporting evidence. If appropriate, the Council may ask for further information to support the application. If this is not provided within the timescale requested, a decision will be made based on the information already provided.

- 3.2. The application should normally be made by the person liable for council tax. However, a person acting on their behalf can apply if the customer is vulnerable and requires support. The applicant must provide their consent in these circumstances.
- 3.3. In the case of a care leaver, the Council will apply the CTDDS where its own records show that the conditions in appendix 2 are met.
- 3.4. In the case of an overpayment of council tax support, the Council will apply the CTDDS where its own records show that the conditions in appendix 3 are met.
- 3.5. The council will aim to process all applications within 20 working days and applicants will be notified of the decision in writing.

#### **4. Period of award**

- 4.1. Awards will commence from the date of application or the date on which the need for assistance arose.
- 4.2. Awards will end on either the last day of the current financial year or the date on which the need for assistance is considered to have ended, whichever is the earlier.
- 4.3. If an award is made and the customer has a change of circumstances which reduces or removes the need for CTDDS, they should inform the Council in writing within 14 days of the change in circumstances and the award may be reduced or recovered.
- 4.4. The award will end or be reduced if the Council determines any of the following:
  - The application was based in whole or part on a misrepresentation
  - The applicant has failed to disclose a material fact
  - The award was made as a result of an error
  - The applicant informs the Council of a relevant change in circumstances
  - The applicant fails to inform the Council of a relevant change in circumstances.
- 4.5. If the Council decides to end or reduce the award, it will notify the applicant of the decision in writing with reasons. The applicant may request a review of the decision in accordance with Section 5.
- 4.6. Any award that is deemed to have been granted incorrectly will be recovered from the council tax account or by invoicing the recipient.

#### **5. Reviews and Appeals**

- 5.1. Appeals against the Council's decision may be made in accordance with Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 5.2. If an application is refused the Council will provide a reason for refusal.
- 5.3. If the person wishes to challenge a decision to refuse to grant a CTDDS; the amount or period of the CTDDS, they must write to the Council requesting a review of its decision.

- 5.4. The request for a review should set out the reasons for disagreeing with the decision, include any supporting evidence and provide information stating the reason for a review against the decision.
- 5.5. If the person wishes to appeal against the decision, they must write to the Council stating the reasons for the appeal and include any supporting information and evidence.
- 5.6. The appeal will be considered by an officer independent of the original decision maker.
- 5.7. The applicant will be notified of the outcome of the appeal in writing within two months.
- 5.8. If the applicant remains aggrieved, or no response to the appeal has been given within two months, an appeal can be made to the Valuation Tribunal. This further appeal should be made within 2 months of the decision of the Council (or when that decision should have been received if no response has been made). Further details can be obtained from the Valuation Tribunal Service website <https://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/>

## **6. Fraud**

- 6.1. The Council is committed to protecting public funds and ensuring funds are awarded to the citizens who are rightfully eligible to them. An applicant who tries to fraudulently claim an award from the council tax discretionary fund by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or providing evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.
- 6.2. Where the Council suspects that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

## Hardship

1. A CTDDS may be made:
  - Where a person is experiencing significant hardship either because of the introduction of, or revisions to, the council tax support scheme. It is expected that a CTDDS will only be granted in exceptional circumstances
  - or
  - Where a person is experiencing significant hardship, but they do not meet the criteria under the Council Tax Support Scheme backdating rules, but they would otherwise have had an underlying entitlement to Council Tax Support during the relevant period
  - or
  - Where a person suffers unusual and significant misfortune and because of this any council taxpayer would consider it reasonable to provide financial assistance through a CTDDS.
  - or
  - To support people to meet their council tax liability where they can demonstrate significant hardship.
2. The Applicant may be expected to engage with the following:
  - seek specialist debt advice to help them to improve their financial situation;
  - and/or
  - Engage with appropriate advice to maximise their income through benefit entitlement and/or reviewing their existing commitments.
3. A CTDDS will be considered to meet some or all of the council tax liability for a period of time where the applicant is able to demonstrate significant hardship. It may be granted for any period considered to be reasonable and where the applicant's circumstances are long standing will be subject to a review before the end of that period to consider any changes. The period and amount of any CTDDS under this scheme will be at the discretion of the Council or in accordance with any specific scheme funded by the Government.
4. The application should relate to the current council tax year unless the liable person has recently received a council tax bill for a previous year. No award may be made in respect of future financial years.
5. Factors that may be considered include:
  - That there is an amount of council tax due to be paid;
  - Whether an alternative repayment is an appropriate remedy, such as extended repayment period; deferring or delaying repayment, such as on the successful sale of a property;
  - Evidence of hardship or particular personal circumstances;

- Whether any other occupants of the property could be expected to contribute to the council tax;
  - The applicant has taken reasonable steps to resolve their situation prior to their application i.e. has made efforts to access alternative source of support, claimed discounts, exemptions and any council tax reduction they may be entitled to;
  - Enforcing payment of the customer's full council tax liability would result in severe hardship e.g. insufficient money being available for their basic and essential needs such as housing, food, heating, lighting or medical needs;
  - Whether there has been a major incident which forces the customer out of the property such as a flood, storm damage or explosion;
  - Whether the circumstances satisfy the criteria set by the Government for any specific scheme;
  - Whether any award would be reasonable having regard to the interests of other council taxpayers.
6. Meeting the factors of significant hardship and/or having suffered an unusual or significant misfortune will not alone give an automatic entitlement to a CTDDS. The discretionary nature of this scheme will require consideration of individual circumstances based on supporting information to demonstrate exceptional hardship.
7. Where there is a severe weather event and the Government invokes their support plan, relief will be granted strictly in accordance with Government guidance. In assessing basic and essential needs the claimant's age, health and status will be taken into consideration.
8. A CTDDS would be considered to cover the following, however, this does not guarantee a CTDDS to cover the full council tax liability:
- The shortfall between the amount of daily council tax reduction awarded and the daily council tax liability
  - In the case of persons not in receipt of council tax reduction the CTDDS could be up to the amount of daily council tax liability but not exceed it.
9. A CTDDS will not be considered to cover the following:
- Court and bailiff costs applied to the account
  - Charges relating to empty homes that are normally rented out on a commercial basis.
10. No cash payments will be made. Any CTDDS will be credited to the council tax account.

## Care Leavers

1. The council's Corporate Parenting Strategy gives a commitment to improving outcomes for looked after children and to narrowing the gap between them and their peers.
2. Awards in this category aim to assist those care leavers up to the age of 25 whose only support is the council, by reducing the barriers of living in the community, providing them with increased support and lifting them from poverty. It will support these care leavers to meet their council tax liability.
3. This category is effective from 1 April 2016; CTDDS cannot be backdated prior to this date.
4. A CTDDS will be applied of up to 100% of the council tax liability after any other discounts have been applied for any care leaver living in Wolverhampton until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.
5. For the CTDDS to apply, City of Wolverhampton Council must have been the Corporate Parent and held responsibility for the care leaver at the point the young person left care.
6. CTDDS can be backdated to the 1 April of the financial year in which either an application for a CTDDS is received or the council identifies that the conditions for the CTDDS are met. Where the liability started after the 1 April of that financial year, then the CTDDS will be awarded from the date the liability started.
7. Where other people are resident, the 100% CTDDS will still be granted, even where there are others that are jointly and severally liable with the care leaver.
8. If the person leaves Wolverhampton and returns, they will be entitled to the CTDDS for any period they are liable for council tax in Wolverhampton provided the other conditions are satisfied.

### Overpayments of Council Tax Support

1. Council tax support may be reduced if the amount that has been assessed is found to be incorrect.
2. If the correction is backdated, an overpayment will be calculated resulting in an increased bill. Overpayments may also be referred to as 'reversals' or 'adjustments'
3. Most overpayments of council tax support are recoverable from the council taxpayer.
4. This policy allows the council to use its discretion not to require repayment of an overpayment of council tax support.
5. Awards in this category provide a CTDDS of up to the amount of any overpayment that:
  - Has resulted from an act or omission by an officer of the Council – an 'official error'  
and
  - The claimant could not reasonably have known about it  
and
  - The claimant did not contribute to.
2. The period of the overpayment covered under this policy is from the effective date of the correction up to the date that the correction is made.

## Long Term Empty Property Premium

1. In addition to those criteria listed under hardship, the following will be considered:
  - Where the owner can clearly demonstrate ongoing and realistic efforts to sell or let their property over the last two years since it became empty
  - Where the owner is experiencing particular legal or technical issues which is preventing the sale or letting of the property.
  - Where the long-term empty property premium is already being charged and the new owner is being prevented from immediate occupation due to major repairs needed to make the property habitable. The new owner must themselves occupy the property within 3 months of purchase and then continuously for at least 6 months.
  - Where the owner is in negotiation with the Council with a genuine view to letting the property under the Council's scheme(s).
  - Whether collection of the charges could reasonably be deferred until the property is sold.

This page is intentionally left blank