

## APPENDIX 4

### SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FROM LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SCHEME CONSULTATION: GENERAL CONCERNS AROUND THE WELFARE REFORMS (UP TO 30<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2012).

#### Q 20: Do you have any issues/concerns/comments about more general changes to welfare benefits?

##### **Awareness and Information about the changes:**

- Particular concerns around the impact on vulnerable people and families.
- The ability to target and support those most affected by the changes.
- Lack of awareness amongst those who are going to be affected.
- Lack of information on the changes should be addressed.

##### **Concern about reductions in household income:**

- Managing household budgets and being worse off/ pushed into poverty – children going without food, increased debt, use of loan sharks, losing their homes, DV, suicides, crime.
- The amount people will have to find out of benefits to cover CT ('£6 is a huge amount for me').
- Some tenants could run into difficulties where they now have to pay rent direct to landlord.
- The 'freeze' on benefits but the expectation on households to pay out more (CT/ underoccupancy).

##### **Concern about direct and indirect impacts:**

- Under-occupancy impacts on disabled people/carers and those separated but with children who stay over.
- Fairness of exemptions for pensioners, exceptions and discretion?
- Impact on disabled people – and their carers (alongside all the changes that are happening to disability benefits) and those who can't work.
- Impact on health (including mental health) and health services.
- Increased evictions, summons and unrest.

##### **Local Economy:**

- The 'war' on benefit claimants and unfair on those who are looking for work but can't get a job – lack of employment opportunities generally.
- Money devoted to helping people find a suitable career path is now being paid to agencies of variable quality.
- More attention should be given to the contribution people on low income make to the local economy, as any welfare benefits generally get spent in the local area.

##### **Other comments:**

- Local changes to Council Tax might reduce profits to landlords.
- People should work for their benefits.

- Council Tax changes make it fairer for people who pay full council tax. Benefit recipients should share the costs of the services they use.
- The reforms might cost the government more money in the long run.
- The council should stand up to national government about the cuts.
- The costs of the economic crisis are being passed on (back-handed cuts) – and ‘stop attacking the poorer people and start taking it from the very top level.
- The council should show more empathy and be more joined up - i.e. if your (benefit) payments don’t come through, so you can’t pay -you shouldn’t be penalised.
- The consultation won’t influence decision and there should have been more opportunity to comment
- Politicians are out of touch with the daily realities of those living on benefits.

## Plus You Limited: Resident Survey October 2012

Survey of 50 Residents:

**Do you currently receive any of the following benefits?** Housing/Council Tax, Job Seekers Allowance, Incapacity Benefit, Income Support, Income based or Child Tax Credits, Disability Benefit, Other benefit

1. Are you aware of the proposed changes to the benefits system and how they will affect you?
2. Do you know how these changes will affect you and the amount of benefit you will receive?
3. Do you have concerns about the changes to the benefits system and the amount of money you will receive after the changes are made?
4. Plus You Limited will be arranging a Benefit Changes Information day, where you can find out the information regarding the changes would you like to attend?

The response was

1. 50 received benefit one or more of the benefit,
2. 2 were aware of the changes, but didn't understand them
3. 48 said they were unaware until now, when explained HB and CTB would be change in April all 49 had concerns about the changes and how much benefit they will receive, 1 said she didn't care.
4. 49 would attend information here at Hightown.
5. 1 person would not attend the information day

During the consultation, residents were asked if they had received the City View.

- 21 said yes
- 10 they didn't know
- 19 said no
- Almost all said they never read it

Other comments received were:

Parent 1: I no longer get Income support and have been forced onto JSA, I would work but being a lone parent it's difficult to find affordable childcare and job that allows me to work around school hours.

Parent 2: The Government are tarring everyone with the same brush, I am on Incapacity which I will lose I can't work but will be forced to.

Parent 3: What's happening to my DLA?

All respondents asked questions regarding Welfare Reform, I obviously couldn't answer those individual questions as I'm not a benefit advisor, apart from informing that things like HB and CTB are changes from April and we are hoping to get DWP JSP SCC and 3rd sector organisation along to a benefit changes awareness day (as previously mentioned)