

COUNCILLORS BRIEFING NOTE

No 370

Service Area: Finance, Revenues and Benefits **Further Enquiries to:** Ian P Brown

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Council Tax Single Person Discount Review

Wiltshire Council currently administers the collection of council tax from over 218,000 households across the county. Excluding those on council tax benefit, approximately 50,000 of those households are currently claiming a discount of 25% on their council tax as they are living alone. With typical council tax charges amounting to £1777.00 per annum the average worth of each claim is in the region of £400.00. The total value of discounts awarded to single occupiers in the current financial year is in excess of £24 million.

In the past the council's Revenues and Benefits Team has undertaken a variety of reviews using various methods to ensure that discounts are correctly awarded. The reviews have been undertaken by mailshot but more recently, through the comparison of data held within the council. The council has always undertaken data matching exercise once every two years with the National Fraud Initiative (NFI). This typically identifies around 1000 households per annum where there may be a discrepancy, however the current methods of review are still limited in scope.

SWe are now using the services of a third party organisation to review entitlement to single person discounts.

Following a tender exercise a suitable supplier was found to conduct the review between now and the beginning of December 2018. The review will cost £30,000.

An extract of our records will be taken of those single occupier households and will compare these to a series of databases to which they have access. As other information is disclosed to the supplier and we do not have access to their database.

Where mismatches are identified, the household will be asked to return a new claim form. The process will be managed by the supplier who will also deal with any telephone calls and match the responses against their findings. If no response is received from the household, the council tax discount will be ended.

The work has started and publicity will go out to explain the campaign.

If you require any further or more detailed information about either of the updates outlined above, or if you have any questions, please contact the officers below –

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