TWO-STAGE REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX LOCALISATION AND BENEFITS REFORM
(UNIVERSAL CREDIT)

STAGE 1 – COUNCIL TAX LOCALISATION

ONE PAGE STRATEGY

What is the broad topic area?
The implementation of the provisions of the Local Government Finance Bill for the localisation of support for council tax, to replace council tax benefit

What is the specific topic area?
The Local Government Finance Bill contains provisions to localise ‘support’ (ie discount) for council tax. This means that the council, rather than central government, will decide what support to provide and how to provide it, subject to the stipulation that the existing level of council tax benefit available to people of pensionable age must be preserved. The Government’s stated intention is that the support system should protect the most vulnerable people but at the same time ensure that it pays to work.

What is the ambition of the review?
To make recommendations on the underlying principles of the operation of a localised council tax support scheme.

What are the measures of success of the review?
Scheme operational by April 2013.

How well do we perform at the moment?
There is no localised scheme at present, so no baseline can be drawn.

Potential consultees and witnesses
Precepting authorities and other local authorities in Warwickshire. Public consultation, possibly including involvement of particular groups.

Can we learn from other councils?
There may be scope for collaboration with other councils to reduce costs.

What other help do we need?
Need for task group members to understand the present scheme and the technical details of the new legislation.

How long should it take?
The review should report to Cabinet on 15 October 2012.

What will be the outcome?
A fair council tax support scheme that complies with legislation and meets local needs.
STAGE 2 – UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Stage 2 of the review will deal with the impact of universal credit on the benefits service.

Little is currently known about how universal credit will work, and it is partly because of this that this stage of the review is being timed to take place during the second half of the municipal year. It is therefore suggested that the one page strategy for that part of the review should be reported to the Corporate Performance Committee later in the year. This could be provisionally put in the work programme for the 22 November meeting.

It is suggested that the task group membership for Stage 2 should be the same as that for Stage 1, and this will be made clear when inviting members to serve on the task group.