

Digital Access to Council Tax Records & Applying for Housing and Council Tax Reduction On-line

Briefing Note No. 19-005

Service Area: Finance

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Introduction

The Council's Revenues Department have in conjunction with our software supplier, Northgate, developed a citizen's portal making it simpler, quicker and easier for customers to access current and historic information about their council tax accounts, known as *Revenues on Line*.

We have also introduced a replacement for the on-line claim form enabling residents to claim both housing benefit and council tax reduction through this new system.

This briefing note explains how we intend to launch the portal during February and March and how we intend to raise awareness of the systems culminating in a mail shot which will accompany the annual council tax bills issued in March.

Background

The Revenues and Benefits team already manage one of the largest council tax databases in the UK. Since April 2018 the number of properties subject to council tax has grown from 217,000 to 219,000. The demand in terms of telephony averages 2,500 calls per week. Hundreds of e-mails are answered and numerous visitors seen at the four hubs. This demand was captured and analysed by the Systems Thinking Team who identified that demand could be reduced if more detailed and real-time information was made available on-line.

The solution from Northgate, which is a hosted system, was purchased and has been implemented over the last six months. It will be launched to all customers in March 2019.

Roll out Plan

The plan to roll out the new portal is already underway and will be delivered in three phases. The first phase has taken place, with testing carried out by the Revenues and Benefits team. In conjunction with the council's digital champions, members of the team have already created on-line accounts enabling them to view their own records and account history and report changes. The team are also developing a short Youtube tutorial which will be available on the wire and the internet to guide our staff initially and later residents around the portal. During phase 2 (from 22nd February until 4th March 2019) we will raise awareness of the portal with staff who also live in Wiltshire and ask them to sign up and test the system before we formally launch it. Access will then be made available to all residents in Phase 3, via the council tax pages of our website. The link will be made available on our website from midday on 4th March 2019 and further information will be included with all council tax bills.

To gain access to the system now you can use the following URL but this will only be available until 28th February 2019:

https://www.northgate-nes.co.uk/pls/pwslive/call_initial_apex_page.nes_selfsrv?service=CAR&ia=WILT&language=ENG&options=CT

You may need to load the link into a Chrome browser.

We will monitor demand and feedback in order to develop and enhance the portal for residents. We realise that the functionality may appear limited but much of our current demand could be met by this product. And this is just the start. The system will also work and be developed in conjunction with other products and systems being introduced by the digital programme, making it simpler, quicker and easier for residents to transact with us online.

The team would be most grateful if you would consider using the system and to promote it wherever possible with residents.

Should you require any information about the product or wish to have your own guided tour please contact a member of the Revenues and Benefits Service for a demonstration.

Ian P Brown
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