

EXECUTIVE BOARD

26TH FEBRUARY 2018

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR CARE LEAVERS

Purpose:

This report recommends a policy for granting discretionary Council Tax discounts to alleviate Care Leavers of their Council tax liability with effect from 2018/19.

Recommendations / Key Decisions Required:

It is recommended that Council adopts a policy for waiving the Council Tax liability of Care Leavers aged from 18 up to 25, years of age, as specified in the attached detailed report.

Reasons:

1. The following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Glynog Davies was agreed unanimously by Members at the Council meeting held on 10th January 2018

"CARE LEAVERS' COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION

Care leavers who were looked after by the local Authority are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our community. As a part of our corporate parenting role, we believe that Carmarthenshire County Council should aim to keep young people safe and improve their life chances.

We have a duty to care leavers. We believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that, when young people make the transition from care to adult life, the process is as smooth as possible and that we should do all we can to mitigate the changes that often result in care leavers falling into debt as they begin to manage their own finances.

We propose the following notice of motion: 'That all care leavers should be exempt from council tax up to the age of 21 (with the discretion of extending the age up to 25 in exceptional circumstances).

2. The policy specified in the attached detailed report will achieve the above objective.

Relevant scrutiny committee to be consulted – N/A

Exec Board Decision Required YES

Council Decision Required YES

Relevant Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Jenkins (Resources)

Directorate: Corporate Services

Designations:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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26TH FEBRUARY 2018

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR CARE LEAVERS

1. Council has discretionary powers whereby it can reduce or waive the Council Tax payable in individual “one-off” cases or for a particular class of case. These powers are contained in Section 13A of the Local Government Act 1992 (introduced in 2004).
2. Council has never determined a class of case where relief would be automatically granted, but individual, ad hoc requests are currently decided by the Executive Board Member for Resources.
3. However it would be possible under Section 13A for the Council to adopt a policy whereby Care Leavers could be relieved of their Council Tax liability (after any other reliefs or discounts) but without any need for means testing.
4. The lost income would be borne by the County Council but based on the likely numbers, the loss will not be significant as the total number of care leavers aged between from 18 up to 25 years of age, is currently in the region of 82, but the significant majority are not liable to pay any charges, either due to Council Tax Reduction (Benefit) entitlement, or some other form of exemption.
5. The attached detailed report provides additional information, and recommends a policy for waiving any Council Tax liability faced by care leavers.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

Yes

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: C Moore Director of Corporate Services

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

1. Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities

The policy is being introduced in response to a motion put forward to Council on 10th January 2018 and which was unanimously supported by Members.

The recommendation is for the policy to be introduced initially for 2018/19 to allow its effectiveness to be monitored.

It is anticipated that the assistance it will provide will have a positive impact on the limited number of care leavers that are in scope and it is not therefore considered necessary to undertake a consultation exercise.

2. Legal

Under the provisions of Section 13a of the Local Government Act 1992 Council has the discretionary power to reduce or waive in full, the Council Tax payable in individual “one-off” cases or for a particular class of case.

It would be possible under these provisions for the Council to adopt a policy whereby Care Leavers could be relieved of their Council Tax liability.

3. Finance

The cost of providing the discount (net of other discounts and exemptions which might apply, such as Single Person Discounts and Council Tax Reduction (Benefit)) is estimated to be in the region of £6,000 - £8,000 per annum.

The cost of the scheme would be borne entirely by the Council but given the relatively low number of cases the loss can be accommodated within the “collection rate” within the Council Tax Base calculation and would not impact on revenue, or on precepting bodies.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: C Moore Director of Corporate Services

1. Scrutiny Committee - n/a
2. Local Member(s) - n/a
3. Community / Town Council - n/a
4. Relevant Partners
5. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

No consultation exercise has been undertaken in respect of this proposal. However it is proposed that a review is undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the on-going scheme during the course of 2018/19.

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Various related documents		Council File Plan: <i>Finance/Local Taxation/Council Tax - Policy for Reductions for Care Leavers</i>