



**COUNCIL**

**26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2019**

**AGENDA ITEM (10)**

**PROPOSALS FOR COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR CARE LEAVERS**

<b>Accountable Member</b>	Councillor AW Berry Cabinet Member for Resources
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Jon Dearing Group Manager for Customer Service 01285 623304 <a href="mailto:jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk">jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk</a>

<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To consider proposals to apply council tax discounts for care leavers (as recommended by the Cabinet)
<b>CABINET Recommendations</b>	<p>(a) That, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, care leavers who meet the eligibility criteria as detailed within this report be eligible to apply for a discretionary council tax discount as follows:-</p> <p>(i) where a property is solely occupied by a Care Leaver, 100% discount will be awarded;</p> <p>(ii) where a Care Leaver is in occupation and jointly liable with others, a 50% discount will be awarded;</p> <p>(b) that the Group Manager for Customer Service (Publica Group (Support) Limited) be authorised to award the specified discounts;</p> <p>(c) that the Council's Constitution be updated to reflect the approved delegated decision-making arrangements.</p>
<b>Reason(s) for Recommendation(s)</b>	<p>(i) The Government made recommendations in its care leavers strategy "Keep on Caring", published in July 2016, that local authorities should consider exempting care leavers from Council Tax, using their existing discretionary powers under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.</p> <p>(ii) Many councils have since introduced discounts for care leavers.</p> <p>(iii) The six Gloucestershire District Councils (billing authorities) and Gloucestershire County Council have worked together to agree and recommend a common Council Tax discount scheme for Care Leavers from April 2019.</p>

<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All (potentially)
<b>Key Decision</b>	Not applicable

<b>Recommendation to Council</b>	Yes, from the Cabinet
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<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>(i) Local Authorities are required to fund any section 13A discounts in full; however, by way of a local voluntary agreement, the County Council will fund its share of the costs of the discounts.</p> <p>(ii) The cost of awarding care leaver discounts based on any of the above recommendations would depend both on the number of care leavers liable for Council Tax and their meeting the eligibility criteria.</p> <p>(iii) At this stage, the Council has estimated data only on how many care leavers might be expected to qualify for a discount. The estimations are low, with three potential qualifying cases.</p> <p>(iv) Based on Council Tax figures for 2018/19 this would mean:-</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Council Tax Band</th> <th>County contribution %</th> <th>CDC/Police and Parish contribution %</th> <th>CDC cost 100% £</th> <th>CDC cost 50% £</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>A</td> <td>74%</td> <td>26%</td> <td>283.72</td> <td>141.64</td> </tr> <tr> <td>B</td> <td>74%</td> <td>26%</td> <td>329.01</td> <td>164.51</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C</td> <td>74%</td> <td>26%</td> <td>378.29</td> <td>189.15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>74%</td> <td>26%</td> <td>425.58</td> <td>212.79</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(v) These figures are based on gross liability, without any additional statutory discounts and/or exemptions and/or Council Tax Support which may be applicable. It is dependent on which property tax band(s) the three potential qualifying cases fall within as to how much it might cost Cotswold District Council. The financial impact is, however, expected to be minimal.</p>	Council Tax Band	County contribution %	CDC/Police and Parish contribution %	CDC cost 100% £	CDC cost 50% £	A	74%	26%	283.72	141.64	B	74%	26%	329.01	164.51	C	74%	26%	378.29	189.15	D	74%	26%	425.58	212.79
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<b>Legal and Human Rights Implications</b>	Councils have discretion under Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to reduce the amount of council tax payable for individuals or for classes of council tax payers. This includes the power to reduce the amount payable to nil.																									
<b>Environmental and Sustainability Implications</b>	None																									
<b>Human Resource Implications</b>	None																									
<b>Key Risks</b>	Failure to award the eligible discount could lead to a reputational risk for the authority.																									
<b>Equalities Analysis</b>	No effect on protected groups identified.																									
<b>Related Decisions</b>	None																									
<b>Background Documents</b>	None																									
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>Appendix 'A' - Eligibility Criteria</b>																									

<b>Performance Management Follow Up</b>	(i) Implement Council decision(s). (ii) Quarterly monitoring of applications.
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<b>Options for Joint Working</b>	This approach has been developed in partnership across all six Gloucestershire 'District' Councils and Gloucestershire County Council
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### Background Information

1. Billing Authorities have discretion under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to reduce the Council Tax payable for individuals, or for classes of Council Taxpayer. This can be a percentage discount or a full exemption. Reductions made using these powers have to be funded by the Billing Authority. A voluntary agreement has been made with the County Council for it to fund its share of the costs of the reduction proposed within this report.

2. In the Government's care leavers' strategy, 'Keep on Caring', published in July 2016, councils were encouraged to consider the role of a Corporate Parent 'through the lens of what any reasonable parent does to give their child the best start in life'. In relation to this, local authorities are encouraged to consider exempting care leavers from Council Tax using powers already at their disposal. In August 2016, through their report into homelessness, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee recommended to Government that care leavers be made exempt from Council Tax up to at least the age of 21.

3. A number of councils have already determined care leavers as a class under Section 13A, and award discounts or full exemptions.

4. A Care Leaver for the purpose of this report is defined in **Appendix 'A'** along with the eligible criteria.

5. For single tier authorities, the process of identifying care leavers is simpler as the authority has responsibilities for care leavers and Council Tax administration. In some cases, the team responsible for care leavers registers them with the Council Tax team. In Gloucestershire, where a two-tier arrangement applies, there would need to be a protocol in place to exchange the necessary information to ensure GDPR compliance.

#### 6. Cabinet Meeting - 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018

6.1 This matter was considered by the Cabinet at its Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

6.2 The relevant extract from the confirmed Minutes of that Meeting (Minute CAB.77 refers) is set out below:-

#### PROPOSALS FOR COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION FOR CARE LEAVERS

*The Cabinet was requested to consider proposals to apply council tax discounts for care leavers, for onward recommendation to the Council.*

*It was explained that the Government's care leavers' strategy, 'Keep on Caring', encouraged councils to consider exempting care leavers from Council Tax using powers already at their disposal; and, through a subsequent report into homelessness, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee recommended to Government that care leavers be made exempt from Council Tax up to at least the age of 21.*

*The Cabinet Member for Environment commented that she wished to endorse the scheme, explaining that it made 'absolute sense' and would helping vulnerable people within the District to live independently.*

*The Cabinet expressed its support for the proposals and commended the fact that the six Gloucestershire District Councils and the County Council had worked together to agree and recommend a common Council Tax discount scheme for Care Leavers from April 2019.*

**RECOMMENDED that:**

**(a) with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019, care leavers who meet the eligibility criteria as detailed within this report be eligible to apply for a discretionary council tax discount as follows:-**

**(i) where a property is solely occupied by a care leaver, 100% discount will be awarded;**

**(ii) where a care leaver is in occupation and jointly liable with others, a 50% discount will be awarded;**

**(b) the Group Manager for Customer Service (Publica Group (Support) Limited) be authorised to award the specified discounts;**

**(c) the Council's Constitution be updated to reflect the approved delegated decision-making arrangements.**

**Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstentions 0, absent 0.**

(END)