

# Council

Monday, 29 January 2018

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Jennifer Wheeler (Mayor), Councillor Nina Wood-Ford (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Roger Bennett, Natalie Brookes, David Bush, Michael Chalk, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford, Mark Shurmer, Rachael Smith, Yvonne Smith, Paul Swansborough, David Thain and Pat Witherspoon

### Officers:

Claire Felton and Sue Hanley

### Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

### EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 29<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2018

#### 68. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

##### a) Transition Support for Young People Leaving Care in Redditch

A Notice of Motion had been submitted by Councillor Tom Baker-Price in respect of transition support for young people leaving care in Redditch. This was seconded by Councillor Jane Potter.

In proposing the motion Councillor Baker-Price highlighted the difficulties experienced by many young people who left the care system, including the risks they faced in respect of falling into poverty due to their limited access to support networks. By reducing the net liability for Council Tax of care leavers until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, and by introducing a transitional discretionary discount scheme to enable reduction of liability for Council Tax up to and including zero from their 21<sup>st</sup> to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthdays, it was suggested that the Council could help to nurture independence amongst young care leavers.

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Chair

The Children's Commissioner for England had suggested that these types of schemes could be helpful for young people leaving care. Worcestershire County Council had recently considered a Notice of Motion on a similar subject and this had received support. Motions proposing similar reviews had also been presented for Members' consideration at Wyre Forest District Council and Worcester City Council and these had been welcomed. It was estimated that if this type of scheme was introduced across the whole of Worcestershire the cost would be £17,000 per annum.

In seconding the motion Councillor Jane Potter noted that all local authorities, not just the County Council, had legal responsibilities in respect of care leavers. Young people leaving care could experience a difficult start in life and it was important to ensure that they continued to have access to sufficient support into their early adulthood.

During consideration of the Motion an amendment was proposed by Councillor Mark Shurmer which was circulated in writing at the meeting. In proposing this amendment Councillor Shurmer commented that he recognised the vulnerability of young people leaving care and their need to have access to appropriate support. However, Members were advised that there were additional implications in respect of the proposed changes to Council Tax liabilities for care leavers which he felt merited further investigation. In this context Councillor Shurmer was proposing that the subject should be reviewed in detail by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with the findings to be reported back to Council in six months' time.

Councillor Shurmer also noted that not every local authority that had received a proposal to introduce a similar scheme had agreed to do so. Members were advised that this could create a postcode lottery in terms of the support available to care leavers across the country. To address this Councillor Shurmer was also proposing that the Council should write to the Government requesting that consideration be given to introducing national legislation that would assist care leavers.

In seconding the amendment Councillor John Fisher concurred that it was important to provide appropriate support to young care leavers. The proposed scrutiny review would provide the Council with an opportunity to learn more about the options available to the Council in terms of potential discretionary Council Tax discount schemes. A cross-party scrutiny review could also investigate the financial implications for the Council of any such scheme and the options available to the Council in terms of funding the scheme. This would

need to take into account the number of care leavers in Redditch Borough.

Following presentation of the amendment Members discussed the proposals and concerns were raised about the potential delay that could be caused by undertaking a scrutiny review of the matter. However, it was suggested that by asking for this review to be completed to report back to Council in six months' time no delays would occur as these were the same timescales as those that had been included in the original Motion. Furthermore, it was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could launch a Short, Sharp Review to investigate this matter within the timescales available.

Reference was also made to the Notice of Motion that had been agreed by Worcestershire County Council in respect of care leavers earlier in the month. Discussions had subsequently been held between the Leader of the County Council and all of the Leaders of the District Councils and the matter was due to be considered further when Leaders of the District Councils in Worcestershire met in February.

During consideration of this matter a five minute adjournment took place to provide all Members with an opportunity to consider the amendment to the Motion. Following this adjournment Councillor Tom Baker-Price, as the mover of the original Motion, confirmed that he was willing to accept the amendment as the substantive Motion.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.5, the amended Motion in respect of transition support for young people Leaving Care in Redditch was the subject the following named vote:

Members voting FOR the resolution:

Councillors Joe Baker, Tom Baker-Price, Roger Bennett, Natalie Brookes, Michael Chalk, Debbie Chance, Greg Chance, Anita Clayton, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, John Fisher, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Gay Hopkins, Wanda King, Jane Potter, Gareth Prosser, Antonia Pulsford, Mark Shurmer, Rachael Smith, Yvonne Smith, Paul Swansborough, David Thain, Jenny Wheeler, Pat Witherspoon and Nina Wood-Ford.

Members voting AGAINST the resolution:

No Members voted against the resolution.

Members ABSTAINING on the resolution:

No Members abstained in the vote on this resolution.

Accordingly the Motion was approved and Members

**RESOLVED that**

**The motion be agreed in the following terms:**

**This Council notes with deep concern the Children's Society's 'Wolf at the Door' report (2015) and the representations made by Kelly Pickard the Children's Commissioner on the subject of council tax for care leavers.**

**We would like to reaffirm the commitment this Council has to partnership working with Worcestershire County Council, to ensure young people who have left care are appropriately housed and supported in their transition.**

**The Children and Social Work Act 2017 clearly places corporate parenting responsibilities on District Councils for the first time, requiring them to have regard to children in care and care leavers when carrying out their functions.**

**This Council is the Council Tax billing and housing authority for the Borough of Redditch and as such recognises this group is particularly vulnerable to falling into debt when moving into independent accommodation for the first time.**

**This Council therefore requests the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out a full investigation and review.**

**The objectives are to explore the available options that can be put in place to enable more support to be given; to determine how the process could work in liaison with the County Council; and to assess the financial impact to the Borough, including how we would recover a commensurate share of the necessary funding from the County Council.**

**In order to provide the maximum support possible to care leavers, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, working with officers, are asked to bring forward proposals to this Council utilising powers granted to this Council under section 13A of the local government financing act 1992 to ensure the following:**

1. Reduce their net liability for Council Tax under the national scheme and after Council Tax support to zero, until the care leaver's 21st birthday.
2. Introduce a transitional discretionary discount scheme to enable a reduction of liability for Council Tax, up to and including zero, from their 21st birthday until the care leaver's 25th birthday.

These proposals are to be presented to Council within six months of the adoption of this motion.

In order to eliminate the current postcode lottery of exemption, the Council will also write to the Government requesting that consideration is given to introducing national legislation to help care leavers.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 8.52 pm