

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 9th August, 2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Pattie Hill, Wanda King, Gemma Monaco and Mark Shurmer

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Dean Piper and Sarah Sellers

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley and Farzana Mughal

26. FINAL REPORT OF THE SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS SHORT SHARP REVIEW TASK GROUP

The Committee was presented with the final report in relation to the Support for Care Leavers Short Sharp Review Task Group.

At the meeting of the Council on 29th January, 2018, it was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, working with officers, would undertake a review and bring forward proposals to the Council to introduce any changes to either exempt or reduce the amount of Council Tax paid by care leavers for the age group of 18 to 25.

The report set out the work that the group had undertaken to investigate support for care leavers in Redditch, and in particular, the options for making changes to Council Tax Support arrangements for care leavers. The report also highlighted the positive work carried out by the agencies in supporting care leavers.

Councillor Pattie Hill, Chair of the group, gave an overview of the work carried out by Members. She stressed that all Members had responsibility as corporate parents and a duty in respect of care leavers and young people.

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Chair

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Councillor Pattie Hill highlighted the challenges that young people experience after leaving care and the difficulties they faced at the start of their adult lives. It was important to ensure that care leavers continued receiving the appropriate support and access to services to help them at an early stage. The group was proposing three recommendations to support care leavers.

Members welcomed the proposals set out in recommendations 1 and 2 but raised concerns that some care leavers residing in Redditch would not be entitled to assistance under the interim arrangements proposed in recommendation 3. Officers clarified that the support proposed under recommendation 3 would only apply for 12 months. Members also stated that it was important that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognised the vulnerability of young people leaving care and ensured that they were getting the help and support needed to reduce any problems they might experience.

The Committee requested clarity in relation to how the proposed means testing for the 22 to 25 age group would operate. In addition, information was requested as to why the actions proposed in the third recommendation would not apply to care leavers from outside of Worcestershire in that interim period. The Chief Executive confirmed that information would be requested from the Revenue Services Manager.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Councillor Pattie Hill for the information and for her contribution.

RESOLVED that

- 1) In recognition of the financial pressures faced by care leavers, and the Council's role as a corporate parent, that the Council Tax Support Scheme be amended to include:-**
 - a) a new category for care leavers aged 18 to 21 under which care leavers liability for Council Tax will be reduced to nil; and**
 - b) a new category for care leavers aged 22 to 25 under which tapered relief from Council Tax will be provided based on the means of individual applicants; and**

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- 2) **subject to the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed changes, the measures referred to in Recommendation 1 are brought into force in April 2019 as part of the 2019/2020 Council Tax Support Scheme; and**
- 3) **pending the review and adoption of the 2019/2020 Council Tax Support Scheme, interim measures are put in place by making changes to the Council Tax Support Hardship Policy under which net liability for young adults leaving the care of Worcestershire County Council in the age group 18 to 25 will be reduced to zero until the care leavers 25th birthday whilst they are living independently in the Borough and liable to pay Council Tax.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.30 pm