

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET ON 2 OCTOBER 2018 FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2018

CP38: COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS 2018/2019 AND 2019/2020

The Revenues and Benefits Manager presented the report which covered three proposed changes to Council Tax discounts for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. The first is a review of the one month, 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties. The second is the increased premiums payable for long term empty properties. The third is the introduction of a 100% discount for care leavers. The first two changes were proposed to take effect commencing from 1 April 2019, with the Care Leavers' discount commencing from 1 April 2018.

The Panel was advised that the Council could decide to do nothing and keep the discounts as they are, to make the recommended changes for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, or to implement only some of the recommendations.

In response to questions to the percentage of rates not being collected and increasing the liability of non-payment, the Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that the Borough Council collection rates were above the national average. Members were advised that the Borough Council also had a hardship fund to assist with payment. The Revenues and Benefits Manager confirmed that the premium did not apply to any empty property while waiting for probate to be granted or Where the owner was in a care home.

Following questions on identifying empty properties, the Revenues and Benefits Manager outlined the Council's current procedure and added that with some current cases the Borough Council had been successful in obtaining a charge order against a property.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager provided clarification on the definition of an empty property.

In response to further questions, the Revenues and Benefits Manager provided an overview of the reasons why a property could be left empty of a period of time.

Councillor Mrs Westrop commented that she supported the recommendation relating to the Care Leavers discount, but commented that it indicated that when a carer leaver lived with a household not normally receiving a discount then it might be considered to extend a care leaver discount to that residence and that Cabinet be asked to consider this when determining the decision.

RESOLVED: The Panel recommend to Cabinet:

- 1) The Panel supports the proposal to remove the one month 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties from 1 April 2019.
- 2) The Panel supports the maximum increases to the long term empty property premises starting from 1 April 2019.

3) The Panel supports the introduction of the Care Leavers' discount on the criteria listed above.