

RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET ON 2 OCTOBER 2018 TO COUNCIL ON 18 OCTOBER 2018

CAB70: COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS 2019/20

Cabinet considered a report which covered three proposed changes to Council Tax discounts for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020. The first was a review of the one month, 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties. The second was the increased premiums payable for long term empty properties. The third was the introduction of a 100% discount for care leavers. The first two changes were proposed to take effect starting from 1 April 2019, with the Care Leavers' discount starting from 1 April 2018. The report also covered a change to the delegated authority for considering individual discount applications.

The Corporate Performance Panel at its meeting on 10 September 2018 had considered the report and commented that relating to the Care Leavers discount, it indicated that when a carer leaver moved in with a single household who then lost their single resident 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. This point had been incorporated into the proposals.

In response to questions relating to the potential exclusion of Almshouses with residency criteria which meant the properties may be empty whilst suitable tenants were found, or older properties undergoing renovation which may take longer to carry out than the year permitted under the empty property regime, it was noted that there was a Hardship Fund which individuals could apply to.

The recommendation to remove the one month discount, and the high costs in officer time of the administration of the discount were discussed.

The Cabinet fully supported the comments from the Corporate Performance Panel regarding the disregarding of care leavers moving into properties.

RECOMMENDED: 1) That the proposal to remove the one month 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties from 1 April 2019 be approved.
2) That the maximum increases to the long term empty property premium starting from 1 April 2019 be approved.
3) That the introduction of the Care Leavers' local discount from 1 April 2018 on the criteria listed in the report be approved.
4) That the wording for delegated authority for individual applications be amended to "Applications will be determined by the Revenues and Benefits Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance and the relevant Ward Member".

Reasons for Decisions

To ensure council tax discounts are reviewed and updated in line with recent changes and to take into account the comments from the Corporate Performance Panel.