

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet 18 December 2018
Council Tax Discount for Care Leavers

Accountable member	Councillor Rowena Hay
Accountable officer	Jayne Gilpin, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Ward(s) affected	All
Key/Significant Decision	Yes
Executive summary	<p>Section 13A(1)c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 gives the Council discretion to reduce the amount of council tax payable. This can be for individual cases or by determining a class of case.</p> <p>This report proposes that a class of case is determined for Gloucestershire Care Leavers between the ages of 18 and 21, residing in Cheltenham.</p>
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Determines Care Leavers as a class for the purpose of Section 13A(1)(c) of The local Government Finance Act 1992b) Approves the Council Tax Discount Scheme for Care leavers in appendix 2 to be effective from 1st April 2019c) Delegates decisions relating to the application of these reliefs to the Head of Revenues and Benefits and officers in the council tax team. In the case of a dispute an internal reconsideration is to be made by the Executive Director Finance and Assets.

Financial implications	<p>The full cost of any council tax reduction awarded under section 13A(1)(c) must be borne by this council. Gloucestershire County Council has agreed to fund their share of the cost of any Care Leaver discounts awarded. This Council will be required to fund its own and the Police share.</p> <p>Although the cost of awarding these discounts is not known numbers are expected to be low. There are currently 14 Care Leavers who may be eligible and it is very likely they will already be in receipt of other discounts, exemptions or council tax support and full discounts will not be required in every case</p> <p>Contact officer: Paul Jones, Executive Director, Finance and Assets paul.jones@cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242 264365</p>
Legal implications	<p>Section 13A(1)(c) of The Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) gives the Council discretion to reduce the amount of council tax payable to individual cases or by determining a class of case.</p> <p>Care Leavers as defined in appendix 2 is a class of case</p> <p>Contact officer: peter.lewis@teWKesbury.gov.uk, 01684 272012</p>
HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p>There are none</p> <p>Contact officer: , @cheltenham.gov.uk, 01242</p>
Key risks	
Corporate and community plan Implications	<p>Creating the Care Leaver Discount scheme will provide support to Vulnerable young adults</p>
Environmental and climate change implications	
Property/Asset Implications	<p>There are none</p> <p>Contact officer: Dominci @cheltenham.gov.uk</p>

1. Background

- 1.1 Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 gives the Council discretionary powers to reduce the amount of council tax payable in individual cases or for classes of case. This includes reducing the amount payable to nil.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 Care leavers are considered to be a particularly vulnerable group for council tax debt. Moving to independent accommodation and managing finances for the first time is challenging. Care leavers are faced with a new set of potentially overwhelming responsibilities, without the family support and wider network that most other young people can rely on.
- 1.4 The 6 district Councils and Gloucestershire County Council are working together to provide a common council tax discount scheme for care leavers which provides a consistent approach to across Gloucestershire.
- 1.5 Cabinet is being asked to approve a class for awarding a council tax discounts for Care Leavers as detailed in Appendix 2.
- 1.6 Any reduction awarded using this power must be funded by the billing authority. However by agreement Gloucestershire County Council will fund its share of the cost of any care leaver discounts awarded.
- 1.7 The latest information from the County Council suggests there are 14 Care Leavers living independently in the Cheltenham area who may be eligible for a discount.

2. Care Leavers Discount Scheme

- 2.1 The Council Tax Discount Scheme for Care Leavers detailed in appendix 2 proposes discounts for Care Leavers between the ages of 18 and 21 residing in Cheltenham, who were formerly in the care of Gloucestershire County Council.
- 2.2 The scheme will provide for a full exemption from council tax to be awarded where care leavers live alone and a 50% discount where they live with others.
- 2.3 Some care leavers will already have their council tax liability reduced. The Care leaver discount will be awarded after all other discounts, exemptions and council tax support.
- 2.4 The full eligibility criteria and arrangements for administering the scheme are detailed in appendix 2.
- 2.5 The relevant team at Gloucestershire County Council will liaise with the Revenues team to ensure the necessary information is available to enable the Care Leaver discounts to be awarded.

3. Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 Creating the Care Leavers Discount Scheme will form part of an overall package to prepare Care Leavers for independence and support will them in making an effective social and financial transition from Local Authority care. Ultimately it will help to improve the life chances of looked

after children.

3.2 The discounts will sit alongside a number of other support arrangements provided to care leaver by Gloucestershire County Council.

4. **Alternative options considered**

4.1 The Council could chose not to approve a Care Leaver discount.

5. **Consultation and feedback**

5.1 No direct consultation has been taken in relation to the implementation of this scheme.

6. **Performance management –monitoring and review**

6.1 The impact of these changes will be monitored closely.

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Appendices	1. Risk Assessment 2. Council Tax Discount Scheme for Care Leavers
Background information	1. The Local Government Finance Act 1992 amended by Section 10 of The Local Government Finance Act 2012 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/17/contents

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk				
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-5	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Deadline	Responsible officer	Transferred to risk register
	If the Care Leaver Discount Scheme is not approved Care Leavers living in Cheltenham will not get the same level of support as in other areas of the county	Jayne Gilpin	18/12/2018	2	1	2	Accept	Approve the scheme		Jayne Gilpin	

Explanatory notes

Impact – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least impact and 5 being major or critical)

Likelihood – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6
(1 being almost impossible, 2 is very low, 3 is low, 4 significant, 5 high and 6 a very high probability)

Control - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close