

Member Briefing

Number: 1074

Title: Council Tax discounts and premiums consultation

Summary: This note provides details of the consultation on potential changes to the Council's discretionary Council Tax discounts and premiums.

Background

The majority of Council Tax discounts and exemptions such as single person discount, student exemptions and exemptions for property left empty by individuals who now reside in a hospital, residential care home or nursing home are set nationally by central government.

The Council does have discretion over a small number of discounts and a premium relating to empty properties and second homes. Currently, the Council offers the following discount in respect of empty and unfurnished properties – 100 per cent for the first month, followed by 25 percent for up to 23 months. The majority of properties that are awarded this discount are landlord-owned properties which may be empty for short periods between tenants. The cost to the Council of awarding this discount in 2016-17 was £1.4 million.

Only 11 other local authorities offer a discount for the full two year period and 74 local authorities offer no discount at all. On 12 July 2017 Cabinet agreed to a public consultation on the proposed removal of this discount with effect from 1 April 2018.

Consultation

The consultation seeks views on the proposal to remove the discount given to empty and unfurnished properties with effect from 1 April 2018, as well as on other discretionary Council Tax discounts and premiums relating to empty and uninhabitable properties, second homes and unfurnished property that has been empty for over two years.

The consultation was launched on 25 July 2017 and will be open for a 12 week period until 16 October 2017. It is available on the consultations page of the Council website:

- www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/counciltaxconsultation

The survey can be completed and submitted online and there is also a version that can be printed and returned via post or email.

We would like to get a good range of views from residents across the borough to inform the final decision on changes to the discounts and premiums. It would be appreciated if Members could raise awareness of the consultation in their wards and encourage residents to have their say. Further awareness raising will be done via the Landlords' forum, social media and parish and town councils.

The results of the consultation will be reported to Cabinet on 29 November 2017. The final decision on the discretionary Council Tax discounts and premiums applicable from 1 April 2018 will be made by Council at its meeting on 14 December 2017.

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Date: 27 July 2017