

Question & Reply

QUESTION

Question from Councillor Bernie Muir to the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, Councillor Eber Kington.

Housing in Surrey is expensive and Care Leavers have to become independent and pay for their own housing much earlier than other young people.

Helping them by exempting them from Council tax is a way that Local Authorities at all levels can show that they are fulfilling their statutory duty to 'Apply Corporate Parenting Principles to Looked after Children and Care Leavers.' The guidance on this was published in 2018.

8 out of 11 Boroughs and Districts in Surrey and the County Council have all agreed to exempt care leavers from paying Council Tax up to the age of 25.

The three remaining Boroughs and Districts are Epsom and Ewell, Tandridge and Waverley.

In January, Rachael Wardell the Director of Children's Services wrote the Chief Executives and Leaders of the three councils to ask them once again to exempt Care Leavers. This follows up on the letter that Dave Hill sent last year to all 500+ elected councillors in Surrey.

On 13th January this year, the Local Taxation Division of the MHCLG wrote to the Council Tax Section of all Local Authorities pointing out the guidance on Applying Corporate Parenting Principles and informing the council that 'Many local authorities offer a council tax reduction for care leavers in their area to provide immediate financial assistance and to help reduce the risk of debt.' There is a clear expectation that other LAs will follow suit.

The question is "What have the Officers at Epsom and Ewell have done to look into this and when they will recommend that the Council adopt such a policy?"

Given how significance that this would be for Care Leavers and ultimately, when single discounts etc are deducted, this is a small amount of money for the Borough surely this causes great reputational damage to the Council, this having been raised repeatedly at the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Board , Corporate Parenting Board, Surrey Safeguarding Children Executive and Partnership and Full Council, not to mention with the public.

Council
20 April 2021

Reply from Councillor Kington, Chairman of Strategy & Resources Committee:

I can confirm that Officers have put together a paper on this issue and a Report will go to a future Strategy and Resources Committee Meeting. However, changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme of whatever nature are implemented at the start of the new council tax year.