

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
SPECIAL CABINET
COUNCIL CHAMBER, WYRE FOREST HOUSE, FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER
4TH OCTOBER 2016 (6 PM)**

Present:

Councillors: M J Hart (Chairman), S J Chambers, N J Desmond, S E Fearn, I Hardiman, and R J Vale.

Observers:

Councillor: J A Shaw.

CAB.35 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

CAB.36 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

CAB.37 Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review for 2017-18

A report was considered from the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager, which updated Cabinet on the National changes to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit as part of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 that affect the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme and proposes a public consultation in order to align the schemes from 2017-18 onwards.

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Change led the Cabinet through the report and advised that, at the meeting of the Cabinet held on November 10th 2015, Cabinet stated in their recommendation that the Council would be minded not to make any significant changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme before 2019-20. She clarified that the proposed change did not conflict with this decision as, due to Government changes to the Housing Benefit Regulations, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme was no longer aligned with Housing Benefit. She added that there were further elements that have been introduced within Universal Credit that have impacted on the scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Change emphasised that, if the Council did not mirror the Government changes, it would lead to negative impacts for the Council, namely: increased complexity for Council Officers in administering the Council Tax Reduction Scheme due to advising on two sets of criteria regarding eligibility; the risk of increased software costs; and the certainty that, should the Council not align its scheme with benefit changes made by the Government, more households would be entitled to receive more council tax support from the Council, and thus the Council would incur extra costs.

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Change highlighted that consideration had been given to a proposal to remove the additional earnings disregard for those claiming Universal Credit and confirmed that this option would not form part of the consultation as it did not comply with the Council's agreed principle of incentivising people to work.

The Leader of the Council emphasised that the Council is open and transparent and commented that it was important to hear the views of the public and stakeholders in the form of a consultation before any decision is made. He re-iterated that the need to consult was in response to the changes made by Government and added that the Council had made a commitment that it would not be minded to review the level of percentage contribution before 2019-20. The Leader of the Council maintained that this commitment remained.

Decision:

- 1. The Cabinet AGREED a consultation about proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 2017-18;**
- 2. The Cabinet NOTED that a further report outlining the results of the consultation will be presented to Cabinet in November when it will consider any recommendations that will go to full Council in December.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.09 pm.