

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

9TH JANUARY 2008

CONCESSIONS POLICY FOR USERS OF COUNCIL SERVICES

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Margaret Sherrey
Responsible Head of Service	Michael Bell / Jayne Pickering / John Godwin

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council currently provide a reduction in cost for certain services for residents in particular circumstances. This report is considering the application of a standard concession to all services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That members consider option 3 for future application of concessions across relevant services as being the most equitable.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council currently provide a range of discounted services for residents who fall into certain users groups. This primarily refers to the over 60's, Students, people on Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance, the disabled and carers of disabled people.
- 3.2 However different departments apply differing criteria to discounting of services and apply them to different user groups, thus producing an inconsistent approach.
- 3.3 At its meeting in November 2006 Cabinet agreed, in relation to the provision of a free Pest Control Service that the definition of vulnerable was 'where the main householder is in receipt of one of the following, Income Support, Housing Benefit or Council Tax benefit.'
- 3.4 It further agreed that this definition is used in the future as a Council definition for determining any service concession.
- 3.5 Cabinet also agreed that any concession be considered on a service by service basis until such time as a comprehensive concessions policy is developed.

3.6 The following are some of the concessions currently provided by this Council:

- Parking Passes for residents over the age of 60 at a discount of approximately 95%
- An extra hours parking for blue disabled badge holders.
- A free pest control service for 'vulnerable' people as defined above.
- A discount of 50% for Dolphin Centre Services for Students, those on Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance and the over 60's. Disabled users are provided with free access to Dolphin Centres services for off peak usage.

	Parking	Dolphin Centre	Rodent Control
Vulnerable People	0%	50%	100%
Students	0%	50%	0%
Disabled	Extra time allowed	100%	0%
Over 60's	95%	50%	0%

3.7 This list demonstrates the inconsistency between different services, but also shows that the same groups are being provided with concessions but to a different degree. However it also demonstrates that it will be difficult to standardize concessions across all services.

3.8 It is therefore proposed that concessions continue to be delivered along departmental lines but with some modification to the reductions given in order to make them more equitable.

3.9 The two areas that are most obviously inconsistent are the over 60's group and the disabled group and a number of options for resolution of this inconsistency exist.

3.10 Changes also need to take into account that the fact that 'objective justification' can be a reason to apply a specific concession in particular circumstances.

Option 1

	Parking	Dolphin Centre	Rodent Control
Vulnerable People	0%	50%	100%
Students	0%	50%	0%
Disabled	0%	50%	0%
Over 60's	0%	50%	0%

In this option the concession for parking for those over 60 is removed as is the extra time allowance for disabled parkers. This provides a completely equitable system across all services except for pest control for the vulnerable. However there is 'objective justification' for this concession

Option 2

	Parking	Dolphin Centre	Rodent Control
Vulnerable People	97%	50%	100%
Students	0%	50%	0%
Disabled	Extra time allowed	50%	0%
Over 60's	0%	50%	0%

In this option the concession for parking for those over 60 is removed, but extra time for disabled parkers is retained, disabled users of the Dolphin centre have the concession brought in line with others within the target group by a reduction in concession of 50% and 'vulnerable people' have a concession for parking based on the existing concession for rodent control minus an administration fee. There is 'objective justification' for each of these changes and for retaining the pest control discount for the vulnerable group.

Option 3

	Parking	Dolphin Centre	Rodent Control
Vulnerable People	0%	50%	100%
Students	0%	50%	0%
Disabled	Extra time allowed	100%	0%
Over 60's	0%	50%	0%

In this option the concession for parking for those over 60 is removed, but extra time for disabled parkers is retained and the 100% discount for disabled users at the Dolphin centre retained. There is again 'objective justification' for retaining the pest control discount and the current discount for disabled users at the Dolphin Centre..

4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Option 1: Increased income of £93,000 in year 1. There is likely to be an additional income from removing the extra time concession for disabled users of car parks but this is difficult to quantify. Higher increases in future years once existing passes have run out.

Option 2: Increased income of £90,000 in year 1 for parking however there is likely to be an offset of this income because of the granting of an additional concession to vulnerable people. This has the potential to be in excess of £90,000. It is difficult to predict the impact on Dolphin centre usage and income increases but this is likely to be small because the concession applies to off peak services.

Option 3: Increased income of £90,000 in year 1 for parking. Higher increase in future years similar to Option 2. No change to usage of the Dolphin Centre

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There is currently a Discrimination Law review which is likely to result in a single Equalities Act. This would mean that current legislation under age discrimination which currently only applies to employment and training will be extended to the provision of goods, facilities and services. Consequently concessions based on age could be classed as unlawful discrimination under the new legislation.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

6.1 Improvement in the equality of access to services would support the Councils aim of Customer First and Equality.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

- Resistance from user groups affected by the changes
- Negative press coverage to changes

7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Resistance from user groups affected by the changes

Risk Register:
Key Objective Ref No:
Key Objective

- Negative press coverage to changes

Risk Register:
Key Objective Ref No:
Key Objective:

7.3 Currently the risk identified in the bullet point in 7.1 and 7.2 are not addressed by any risk register and will be added to the Street Scene and Waste Management risk register as follows:

Ensure sufficient advanced warning through press releases.
Regular press releases in period approaching change.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Press releases and information bulletins will be prepared in advance of the change. Detailed discussion will be had with CSC to update Resource Level Agreement. Stock responses will be prepared for staff answering queries.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This report aims to provide consistent access to services for users, with concessions based on equality and diversity. It uses the principle of 'objective justification' for varying the charges for some services. However members need to be aware that when charges were introduced for disabled users of car parks there was considerable resistance to this change. This resulted in additional time being granted to disabled users when purchasing a parking ticket. There is 'objective justification' for doing this hence the retention of this extra concession within the recommendation.

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Please include the following table and spell out any particular implications in the relevant box. If there are no implications under a particular heading, please state 'None':-

Procurement Issues:	None
Personnel Implications:	None
Governance/Performance Management:	None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998:	None
Policy:	
Environmental:	None

11. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Please include the following table and indicate 'Yes' or 'No' as appropriate. Delete the words in italics.

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Yes
Corporate Director (Services)	Yes

Assistant Chief Executive	
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

12. **APPENDICES**

None

13. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Executive Cabinet Report, Review of Pest Control Services: Update
November 2006

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