

## MOTION ON NOTICE

### Under-Occupancy 'Bedroom Tax'

- The under-occupancy reductions 'bedroom tax' came into effect on 1 April 2013. The reductions stipulate a 14% reduction for those homes deemed to have one bedroom more than they need and 25% reduction for those homes deemed to have two more bedrooms than they need.
- It will affect anyone of working age (below 61 ½) deemed to be under-occupying a social housing home. This equates to 2000 homes across Plymouth with the average reduction being £10 per week for one additional bedroom and £20 per week for two.
- Those couples who need an extra bedroom because of one of them having a medical condition or disability are not exempt and will be subject to a reduction.
- Non-resident parents who have their children to stay at weekends in the holidays for instance are not exempt and will be subject to a reduction.
- Families who offer regular respite support to other family members are not exempt and will be subject to a reduction.
- People living in homes which have been substantially adapted at tax-payers' expense to meet their need are not exempt and will be subject to a reduction.
- This Council is committed to supporting all residents both children and adults, including those with disabilities and medical needs.
- The Discretionary Payments Fund that the Government has made available is estimated to cover less than 17% of those affected by the bedroom tax.
- The Government's own Equality Impact Assessment estimates that two-thirds of households affected will have a member with a disability.
- Many independent analysts are predicting that households will move into the private rented sector, costing more, and that care needs for many disabled people will increase, again costing more. Rents for private housing invariably costs more than social housing and are less likely to be adapted for disability needs.
- There is not an excess supply of small properties available for households to move into in Plymouth.

Council therefore believes:

- That the bedroom tax will unfairly hit many people including families with disabled children or adults, families who share the care of their children, families who offer respite care to other family members.
- This policy may well end up costing the public purse more.
- That disabled people – both adults and children – deserve respect and not to be penalised for their medical needs.
- That we value the role of non-resident parents and believe they should be encouraged to play as full a part in the lives of their children as possible.
- That we value and appreciate the role of families who offer respite care – and not only because it saves the taxpayer billions of pounds.
- That Housing Associations will have difficulty in keeping arrears down, damaging services for all tenants.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State outlining our concerns and urgently requesting that the bedroom tax is scrapped.
- Ask the Cabinet Member for Co-operatives and Community Development to write to Plymouth MPs outlining our concerns and asking that they lobby for their affected constituents and push for the bedroom tax to be scrapped.
- To offer support and encouragement to the Plymouth Social Landlords Group as they proactively support their tenants.

**Proposed by Councillor Penberthy**

**Seconded by Councillor Kate Taylor**