

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY**  
**(ORDINARY MEETING)**

**WEDNESDAY 29th OCTOBER 2003**

**URGENT QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY GROUP LEADERS IN ACCORDANCE**  
**WITH COUNCIL ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE RULE 3.11**

**1. QUESTION TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL FROM COUNCILLOR IAN WINGFIELD**

Could the Leader of the Council explain why the Council is increasing home care costs for elderly and vulnerable people to levels in excess of 120%?

**RESPONSE**

The Executive agreed changes to how the Council charges for community care services in November 2002 in response to the government's new statutory guidance on fairer charging which aimed to achieve national consistency on charging. This resulted in the Executive reviewing their previous policy where people on benefits were all charged the minimum charge.

The effect of the changes were that:

- Approximately 60% of community care service users were no longer charged whilst a further 16% paid a lower charge
- Charges did, however, increase for the remaining 24% because, in part, of the increase in the maximum weekly charge. In the first year, in order to allow people to prepare for the increase, transitional protection was applied for people whose increase in charge exceeded 7%. This transitional protection has now been removed and people are now liable to pay the full charge due.

**SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTION FROM CLLR IAN WINGFIELD**

I thank the Leader for his reply, however as I am sure he is fully aware the provisions of the 1948 National Assistance Act and also the 1983 Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act do give Councils wide discretion on how to set their charges and it is stipulated quite clearly within those Acts that such charges should be reasonable and no one should be asked to pay more than they reasonably can. Therefore my question to the Leader is does he consider an increase in charges in excess of 120% a reasonable figure to charge?

## **RESPONSE**

That's clearly an impossible question to answer without knowing what the charge was in the first place and how much the person in receipt of it earns.