

Kentish Express article dated 29/09/11 – Thousands will pay more for home support.

Press Release - WHAT PRICE DEMOCRACY???

I read the article concerning the increase in Social Care costs with a wry smile!

What was the point of Kent County Council undertaking a consultation with 24,500 people on the impact of proposed changes to their Charging policy if they were going to disregard the respondent's views?

6,756 people responded to the consultation with a clear majority disagreeing with the four proposals but members of the Cabinet and the Adult Social Services Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to ignore the result and increase charges. Despite protestations to the contrary, it is impossible to shake off the feeling that the entire charging consultation was a farce and all decisions were taken months ago. Comparing it to an environmental consultation with the question "which of these four roads would you like?" the answer is actually none – though sorry, that's *not* an option. In this case we are getting all four roads regardless of our views! Introducing the four measures in steps, two in January and two in April in itself is discriminatory, setting different groups of disabled people up against each other and is surely in contravention of the Disability Equality Duty.

Around 5,000 disabled and older people now face an increase in their contributions of 15% to 35% for their care packages, which is far more than the rate of inflation and any increases they receive in income (pension, disability allowances, etc).

As a demographic group, disabled and older people are on fixed – and very low incomes. Whilst £10 a week may be very little to someone on wages of £25k per annum, to a disabled person's income, it represents a huge and noticeable amount.

Also, in reducing the weekly amount of money allocated to people living with a disability from £21 to £17 at the same time as increasing the percentage of "net disposable income" chargeable to 100% (from a mere 85%) is a double whammy and rubbing salt in the wounds of the already wounded.

Those who need personal care do not have it for fun or a luxury, but because they need it to perform everyday tasks that "norms" take for granted.

It has often been said that society must judge itself on how it treats its weakest members. In the case of disabled and older people who need care and support we must surely judge that KCC is failing in its duty of 'care'.

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