Local Government and Communities Committee

Consideration of the Council Tax (Substitution of Proportion) (Scotland) Order 2016

Submission from Joyce McCrae

I am writing to you to bring your attention to three issues: Rent, Council Tax, and State Pension Age.

I am a mid-market tenant of Dunedin Canmore in Edinburgh. I rent a small two bedroom flat. Dunedin Canmore have just increased the rent again this year, by 2% and 2% is above the current rate of inflation. My salary has not increased by 2%.

My council tax is 105 pounds per month. (Council Tax Band C.) My net monthly income for working a 37.5 hour week for the NHS such that I am paying out just under 50% of my net monthly income for rent and council tax. Do you think that is fair?

A relative, who lives in a 4 bedroom, 3 bathroom, 2 living room house, currently valued at approximately 700,000 pounds, is in Council Tax Band E. Without the 25% single occupancy reduction, I would be paying 1,039.11 per year. My relative is currently paying 1,428.78 per year.

Are you beginning to detect a theme here?

Because my birthday falls in 1955, the Department for Work & Pensions tells me that I must work until I am 66. Like many other women born in the fifties, we now find ourselves in a distinctly disadvantaged position.

My questions to you are:

Why has the SNP chosen not to do anything really radical with the Council Tax? Why has the SNP chosen merely to tinker with the Council Tax, rather than get stuck into the business of making local government taxation progressive, or even taken the most basic step of revaluation? I cannot begin to express my disappointment on this issue and with a party which I joined in the wake of the Scottish Independence Referendum.

The 2016 Holyrood election will be the first since 2003 when the SNP will not stand on a platform to "replace the unfair and spiralling Council Tax with a fairer system based on ability to pay".
I will end with a quote from Christopher Silver. "That the SNP will make canny political calculations to boost their already magnificent electoral chances is perhaps a dreary reality of power and the business of keeping hold of it. That it would cast off its principles on an issue with so much historic resonance in a country still marred by systemic inequality is far more worrying. In doing so it takes a step backward from the idea that Scotland could be different, that it could move on from its notoriously unjust past and chart its own distinct course. It also forgets that this country deserves, more than anything else, to see the promise of systematic change delivered."

Regards,

Joyce McCrae