



Rutland County Council

CONSULTATION ANALYSIS TECHNICAL REFORM OF COUNCIL TAX

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1.0 METHOD OF CONSULTATION

- 1.1 The Council opened the consultation for our Council Tax discounts and premium for empty homes on Friday 18th August 2017 and closed the consultation on Friday 15th September 2017.
- 1.2 The consultation could be completed by filling in a survey online or completing a paper form and returning this to us.
- 1.3 The consultation has been promoted by:
- A mailshot to a random selection of 300 taxpayers who were residents, owners, landlords and recipients of Local Council Tax Support with the inclusion of a reply paid envelope;
 - A flyer was included in all communications from the department during the consultation period; i.e, new and revised bills, benefit notification letters, reminder letters, invoices;
 - Social media announcements;
 - Press release; and
 - Paper forms available upon request and via Customer Services.

2.0 RESPONSE RATE

- 2.1 The Council has received 111 responses. Of these 37 were completed online (33%) and 74 were completed using paper forms (67%)
- 2.2 The consultation document asked for the first part of the respondents postcode, responses are given below:

POST CODE	Number	% of responses
LE15	67	92%
PE9	5	7%
LE16	1	1%
Outside Rutland	0	0%
Not provided	38	

- 2.3 The consultation document asked which statement best describes you and the following responses have been received:

Status	Number	% of responses
I own a property in Rutland that is uninhabitable	5	5%
I own a property in Rutland that is empty	5	5%
I live in Rutland	88	87%
I am representing and organisation	0	0%
Other	3	3%

3.0 RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

- 3.1 Question 1 asked 'Do you think we should do what we can to increase our income before we look at reducing or cutting services?'

Option	Responses	% of response
Yes	90	81%
No	12	11%
Don't know	9	8%

- 3.2 Question 2 asked 'Do you think we should charge full Council Tax or reduce the current discount for homes that are uninhabitable?'

Option	Responses	% of response
Full charge	42	48%
Reduced charge	12	14%
Don't change	34	38%
Don't know	0	0%

- 3.3 Question 3 asked 'Do you think we should charge full Council Tax or reduce the current discount on empty homes?'

Option	Responses	% of response
Full charge	43	51%
Reduced charge	11	13%
Don't change	30	36%
Don't know	0	0%

- 3.4 Question 4 asked 'Do you think we should increase the premium from 10% to the maximum of 50% on long term empty homes?'

Option	Responses	% of response
Yes	80	75%
No	22	21%
Don't know	4	4%

- 3.5 Question 5 asked 'Do you think we should offer a discretionary discount to people who have to pay Council Tax for an empty home if they are suffering from genuine financial hardship?'

Option	Responses	% of response
Yes	85	79%
No	19	18%
Don't know	4	3%

4.0 COMMENTS RECEIVED

- 4.1 Question 6 asked 'Do you have any other comments that you wish to make about paying Council Tax on empty homes?'. The following comments have been received:

Because we can now re cycle so much I think that the black bin collection could be cut to once a month, we could then keep our free green bin collections.
I am a pensioner who cares for my sick wife yet because I have a private pension I get no help at all, no benefits .These folk who have second homes are on a good thing and this should be stopped ASAP
Reduce Library Services, reduce staff levels, by not replacing, put all depts in Catmose
Give 12 months reduction, provided refurbish the house in that year and let it or sell it
What audit is made to ensure claims are valid? Only distressed situations warrant a discount
5/ If selling the property a loan could be given until the property was sold. Then repay the loan. No interest charged
I/we consider that properties in paras 2, 3, & 4 are assets of considerable worth. Therefore, there should be little favouritism towards their tax. Para 5, in remaining a discretionary matter, is a sensible and sociable thing to have.
Empty homes are a scandal - we do not need to build so many new homes in Rutland - if people can afford to keep homes empty they should pay substantially for the privilege
No, I won a property in Rutland that I intend to move into when renovated/extended. However, finding builders in the area that are competent and able to undertake the work is a major problem that has prolonged the exercise and the sale on my existing home in Northants.
I think if houses are empty due to renovation /building work ,a discount will be an incentive to update Rutland properties within a time frame limit and as you often cannot live in them while it takes place , this is fair .
No tenant =50% first month - 20% discount for further 3 mths.
Second homes for occupation less than 10 mths should have the tax increased by 100%
In extreme and clear cases of financial hardship, payment could be waived or in the case of a sale (the income) a delayed payment option.
unnecessary road repairs
Rutland Water Bus Service-never anyone on it
If the empty home is owned by an individual then a discount on Council tax owed for a fixed period is appropriate if the empty home is owned by a Company then the full Council Tax should be charged from the date the property becomes unoccupied.
Should pay full Council Tax.
If a house is damaged by fuel/flood etc then no tax should be paid. if

house is empty as person waiting for tenants /second home then there should be no discount .
Very difficult as there are so many different situations!
PART4. 10% TO 50% NO , 10% TO 20% YES.
It would stop and make people do something with them
To save postage on having these forms returned to you, ballot type boxes could be provided at destinations in the town .These could then be collected by a junior or lower paid member of the council staff.
Question 4 example 1) She should be realistic and realize that very few properties are sold for the asking price. She should accept the nearest offer.Q4 ex") Since he can afford to let the house remain empty for 5 years he can easily afford to pay a 50% premium - especially since being in band G it is of considerable value.
Perhaps a one year relief when the resident owner of a property has died. Wills & Probate take time, and families are under stress.
Our situation is unique because we had to move out as we are governed by the tenancy of the pub lease. We cannot rent the house due to our mortgage agreement so we pay on a house that we one day intend to reside in again.
We should do all we can to encourage all Rutland's homes to be lived in on a full time basis
It is important to return empty houses into occupied houses without becoming draconian. It probably requires a case by case assessment.
I don't understand the justification for charging for facilities or services which aren't used. All my answers are based on this.
Everyone should pay full council tax unless genuinely unable to do so ,i.e. very low pay, been made redundant ,ill etc
Empty property rates are unfair in some cases. We bought a property in March 2017 that had been empty since the previous occupant, a tenant of the owner from who we purchased it. As a rental property for many years it was totally run down and frankly inhabitable by today's standards. It needs total renovation which took some time to arrange builders and tradesman. The property will not be habitable for at least another two months, nine months after we purchased it. We have been paying full rates from day 1. We live in another authority and get no services from Rutland currently, other than using the road network. When we do move into the house there are many services we will not require.
I think the council spends too much on resurfacing roads, the frequency could be reduced significantly without negatively affecting the roads
That's too open a question, you could reduce how much councillors are paid and the some of the officers
CEO's and directors salaries
None. In my experience as an organisational consultant, all local authorities have a great deal of scope to look properly at the way they operate and reduce waste. A little bit of extra income is trivial in comparison.
I am a Rutland resident and pay council tax on my home. I pay council

tax because of the services I use in the county. I also recently bought a house to rent out. The income from this second home will help me bridge the gap between retiring at a reasonable age until I can claim my state pension. I cannot see why I should pay any council tax on a property that is empty and therefore not using the services that I pay council tax for. Second home-owners are already heavily penalised by central government paying an up-lift in stamp duty. I can just about make my second home mortgage payment if needed if my house was un-tenanted but would struggle if paying extra council tax on top. I would have to consider selling and buying in a different county. I'm not rich or wealthy, I simply own an additional house which will supplement my income during retirement.
I would not change the current charges
often homes are listed or in conservation areas even to do work to house before it can be sold or rented you have to wait at least 6weeks for each planning application this means that no meaningful work is taking place until decisions have been made by the council so the 100% first month is almost squandered
There is a housing shortage in this area, we need to remove incentives for the wealthy to leave properties empty. Some villages are empty during the week as second home owners stay in London. The schools suffer as locals can't stay in the area.
All circumstances are different and these differences need to be taken into account. I feel that the system is unfair and people who for genuine reasons cannot live in their homes shouldn't have to pay extra when they are still having to make mortgage payments etc. I feel that in respect of the armed forces this is particularly true yet they are unfairly penalised for ultimately protecting their country. They should be exempt from council tax payments period especially as they will return to Rutland after their posting. Furthermore, people shouldn't be forced into a position to rent out their homes which has taken years of saving and hard work to get in the first place!
We need to stop second home ownership. We need to stop holiday homes in the area. We need to avoid empty properties at all costs.

5.0 WHO RESPONDED

- 5.1 The consultation included an Equality and Diversity monitoring form to collate information to help us to get a picture of who has responded. People do not have to provide this information to us, but it does help us to ensure that we obtain views from a representative demographic of the County.

Gender	Number	% of responses
Male	44	51%
Female	42	49%

Gender identity: same	Number	% of responses
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as assigned at birth		
Yes	78	100%
No	0	0%

Sexual Orientation	Number	% of responses
Heterosexual	76	99%
Gay Man	0	0%
Gay Woman/Lesbian	0	0%
Bisexual	0	0%
Other	1	1%

Relationship Status	Number	% of responses
Married	47	56%
Civil Partnership	22	26%
Single	6	7%
Co-habiting	4	5%
Other	5	6%

Age	Number	% of responses
Under 16	0	0%
16-25	0	0%
26-39	5	6%
40-64	39	46%
65-80	35	41%
80+	6	7%

Caring Responsibilities	Number	% of responses
Relative	8	80%
Another person	2	20%

Child Responsibilities	Number	% of responses
Children 0 - 4	1	6%
Children 5 -10	4	25%
Children 11-18	11	69%

Faith/Religion/Belief	Number	% of responses
Atheist/none	16	23%
Baha'I	0	0%
Buddism	1	1%
Christianity	54	75%
Hinduism	0	0%
Humanism	1	1%
Islam	0	0%
Judaism	0	0%
Sikhism	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Ethnicity	Number	% of responses
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White-English/Welsh/Scottish/British/Northern Irish	83	99%
White- Irish	0	0%
White-Gypsy/Irish traveller	0	0%
White-Roma	0	0%
White- Other European	0	0%
White-other	0	0%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0%
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0%
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	0	0%
Asian or Asian British - Other	0	0%
Mixed/Dual Heritage-White & Black Caribbean	0	0%
Mixed/Dual Heritage- White & Black African	0	0%
Mixed/Dual Heritage- White and Asian	0	0%
Mixed/Dual Heritage- Other	0	0%
Black/African/Caribbean or Black British	0	0%
Black –Other background	0	0%
Other -Arab	0	0%
Other	1	1%

Language Preference	Number	% of responses
English	86	100%
British Sign Language	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Residency	Number	% of responses
British/UK Citizen	85	93%
EU National	6	7%
Refugee	0	0%
Student	0	0%
Asylum Seeker	0	0%
Other	0	0%

Disability	Number	% of responses
Yes	16	37%
No	27	63%
If Yes:		
Hearing	3	20%
Learning	0	0%
Communication	1	6%
Developmental	1	6%
Visual	0	0%
Mobility or Physical	9	56%

Memory	0	0%
Mental Health	0	0%
Long Term Illness	1	6%
Other	1	6%

Service Personnel	Number	% of responses
Are currently serving in the Armed Forces	0	0%
Are a veteran or ex-service personnel	9	64%
Are a member of service personnel immediate family	5	36%
Are a reservist or part time service	0	0%

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 Most people (over 80%) agree that the Council should do what it can to increase income before it looks at reducing or cutting services.
- 7.2 People are mostly supportive of increasing charges for uninhabitable and empty homes (47% and 51%).
- 7.3 Most people (over 75%) think that we should increase the premium for long term empty homes.
- 7.4 Most people (79%) think that we should support those who are experiencing genuine financial hardship.

A large print version of this document is available on request