



## APPENDIX A

### Consultation on Council Tax discounts and premium for empty homes

#### 1. Why are we consulting?

The Government gave local authorities discretion to set their own discounts for empty homes and set a premium for long term empty homes.

Discounts reduce the amount people pay on their council tax bill if they own an empty home. A premium increases the amount of council tax that people pay on their council tax bill if they own a home that has been empty for over 2 years.

We set our discounts and our premium in 2013 and we haven't changed them since.

There are two key drivers that have prompted us to think that we need to look at them again now:

- a) We continue to face financial pressures. Although we spend less per household than the average UK council, we continue to receive less central government funding than other councils. It is therefore important that we look at all discounts that we offer and premiums that we charge to make sure that we consider any opportunities to increase our income before we look at reducing or cutting services.
- b) Empty homes continue to have an impact on our community. They can be a health and safety risk to others, they can be a focal point for anti-social behaviour and they can be a waste of housing when people are in need. We want to do what we can to bring empty homes back into use.

#### 2. What are we consulting on?

We are asking for your views on the discounts we offer and the premium we charge. We are asking for your views on 5 main issues:

- a) should we do what we can to increase our income;
- b) the amount of discount that we offer on uninhabitable homes;
- c) the amount of discount that we offer on empty homes;
- d) the amount of premium that we charge on long term empty homes; and
- e) whether or not we should help people who have a council tax bill to pay for their empty home but are suffering from genuine financial hardship.

### 3. What we are not consulting on?

We are not consulting on:

- a) Our Local Council Tax Support scheme and the discretionary fund that sits alongside the main scheme. This helps people who are on a low income and reduces or fully remits the amount of council tax that they have to pay.
- b) Our Discretionary Crisis Fund that helps people in one-off severe financial hardship.
- c) Our Discretionary Housing Payments Policy. This fund helps people who have a shortfall in their rent.
- d) Other empty home exemptions that we can't change because they are set by central government. For example- a home that is empty as the owner is now living in a residential care home.

We have no plans to change the above. If we want to look at these again we will conduct a separate consultation.

### 4. How can I have my say?

We are inviting all residents and other key stakeholders to have their say and we are keen to hear your views so please tell us what you think by:

- Completing our online survey at <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-council/have-your-say/public-consultations/>
- Completing and returning a paper survey

A large print copy is available on request. If you need some help in completing the questionnaire please contact us by email at [localtaxation@rutland.gov.uk](mailto:localtaxation@rutland.gov.uk) .

### 5. What happens next?

The consultation closes on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017. We will use the information from the consultation to help make our decision. A report with recommendations will be taken to Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

#### **Data Protection**

The information you provide will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will only be used for the purposes for which it has been collected. Your details will not be passed on to any other individual, organisation or group. Rutland County Council is the Data Controller for the information on this form for the purpose of the Data Protection Act 1998.



# Rutland County Council

1. We continue to face financial pressures. Although we spend less per household than the average UK council, we continue to receive less central government funding than other councils. It is therefore important that we look at all discounts that we offer and premiums that we charge to make sure that we consider any opportunities to increase our income before we look at reducing or cutting services. There is more information on our website about our funding and spending here <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-council/contacts-facts-and-figures/council-spending/low-cost-council/>

**Do you think we should do what we can to increase our income before we look at reducing or cutting services?** (please tick one box)

Yes

No

Don't know

**If No, can you indicate what services you think we could reduce or cut?**

2. We currently offer a discount of 50% for 12 months for an empty home that is uninhabitable. After 12 months the full council tax charge is payable.

Example 1- Mr West, a local builder, buys a rundown house in Uppingham to renovate and sell. The house is in Band C. Mr West receives a discount of £726.18 for the financial year 2017/18. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 he will pay the full council tax charge.

Example 2- Mrs Scott lives in Wales and has inherited a house in Oakham. It is in a very poor state of repair so she decides to 'do it up a bit' before she sells it on and this involves major remedial works. The house is in Band E. Mrs Scott receives a discount of £1,133.73 for the financial year 2017/18. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 she will pay the full council tax charge.

In 2016/17 we awarded 70 uninhabitable home discounts which cost £25,000.

**Do you think we should charge full council tax or reduce the current discount for homes that are uninhabitable?** (please tick one box)

Full charge

Reduce charge

Don't change

Don't know

3. We currently offer a discount of 100% for 1 month followed by a 50% discount for a further 5 months on all other empty homes that are habitable. After 6 months the full council tax charge is payable.

Example 1- Ms Kaur owns 1 Spark Lane, her tenant moves out on 1st May 2017. Ms Kaur doesn't find a new tenant for a few months. She doesn't pay any council tax for the first month and then she is billed 50% for the following 5 months. The house is in Band B. MS Kaur receives a discount of £355.95. After 6 months the full council tax is charged.

Example 2- Mrs & Mrs Green own 10 Crofters Mews, their daughter lived here but she has recently moved to London. Mr & Mrs Green have not yet decided what they want to do with the house. They don't pay any council tax for the first month and then they pay 50% for the following 5 months. The house is in a Band D. Mr & Mrs Green receives a discount of £523.90. After 6 months the full council tax is charged.

In 2016/17 we awarded 1,350 discounts at 100% for 1 month (or up to 1 month) and 801 discounts at 50% from 2-5 months which cost £200,000.

**Do you think that we should charge full council tax or reduce the current discount on empty homes?** (please tick one box)

**Full charge**  **Reduce charge**  **Don't change**  **Don't know**

4. We currently charge a premium of 10% on homes that have been empty for over 2 years. This means that people pay 110% council tax.

Example 1- Ms Baxter lives in Birmingham and owns Hope Cottage in a Rutland village. The property has been empty and up for sale for 3 years. She has received a number of offers but none for the asking price. The house is in Band A. Ms Baxter has been charged an extra 10% on her council tax bill for this house from 2017/18 of £121.44.

Example 2- Mr Webb own Foxglove House in Oakham. Mr Webb inherited the property when his mother died 5 years ago. He doesn't want to sell or rent out the house as he is emotionally attached to it. The house is in Band G. Mr Webb has been charged an extra 10% on his council tax bill for this house from 2017/18 of £309.20.

In 2016/17 we charged 90 premiums at 10% which resulted in additional income of £8,500.

**Do you think we should increase the premium from 10% to the maximum premium of 50% on long term empty homes?** (please tick one box)

**Yes**  **No**  **Don't know**

5. Currently we do not offer help to people who have to pay council tax for an empty home but can't afford to pay their bill due to genuine financial hardship.

Example 1- Miss Browne owns and lives at 42 Park Crescent, Langham. Her house was struck by lightning, a fire broke out and she had to move out. She has been rehoused in temporary accommodation by her home insurance company. Miss Browne has been billed council tax on the empty home. She can't afford to pay the bill because she is unable to work as she was injured while she was escaping from the fire and is now claiming out of work benefits.

Example 2- Mr Radcliffe inherited 1 Welland Street, Cottesmore when his mother died 2 years ago. The bungalow is on a complex for the over 55's. It is being actively marketed and the price has been reduced to attract a buyer but to date, no offers have been made. Mr Radcliffe has been billed council tax on the empty home. He can't afford to pay the bill because he is in poor health and is receiving home care and his sole income is from state benefits.

**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? (please tick one box)**

Yes

No

Don't know

6. **Do you have any other comments that you wish to make about paying Council Tax on empty homes?**

7. **Please indicate which statement best describes you:**  
(please tick one box)

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) I own a property in Rutland that is uninhabitable | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) I own a property in Rutland that is empty         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) I live in Rutland                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) I am representing an organisation                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Other   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please return this completed survey to Rutland County Council, Catmose, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6HP.

We want to make sure that our services are provided fairly and to those who need them. The information collected helps us get a picture of who contacts us, uses or does not access our services so will help us improve what we provide and reduce potential barriers to access.

Please answer the questions below by ticking the boxes that you feel most describes you.

**If you do not want to answer any specific question then please leave it blank.**

Some questions may feel personal, but the information we collect will be kept confidential and secure. The better the information is that we collect the more effective our monitoring will be.

### Ethnicity

<b>White</b>		<b>Mixed / Dual Heritage</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> English / Welsh / Scottish / British / Northern Irish		<input type="checkbox"/> White and Black Caribbean	
<input type="checkbox"/> Irish		<input type="checkbox"/> White and Black African	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy/ Irish Traveller		<input type="checkbox"/> White and Asian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Roma		<input type="checkbox"/> Other mixed background (please state):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other European (please state):		<b>Black / African / Caribbean or Black British</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other white background (please state):		<input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other African background(please state):	
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>		<b>Other Ethnic Group</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Arab	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> Other ethnic group (please state):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Asian background (please state):			

### Language Preference

<input type="checkbox"/> English	<input type="checkbox"/> British Sign Language
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):	

### Residency

Are you a: British / United Kingdom citizen	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you a national of another country?	
<input type="checkbox"/> EU National	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)
<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee	<input type="checkbox"/> Asylum Seeker
<input type="checkbox"/> Student	

### Postcode

(first part of code only e.g. LE15)	
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### Disability

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<b>If you have answered 'yes', please tick boxes below that best describe your impairment. This information helps us improve access and remove barriers to our services.</b>	
<b>"An impairment that has (or is likely to have) a substantial, adverse, long-term effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities"</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Hearing e.g. profound to mild deafness	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning e.g. Downs syndrome

<input type="checkbox"/> Communication e.g. speech	<input type="checkbox"/> Developmental e.g. Dyslexia		
<input type="checkbox"/> Visual e.g. blind or partial sighted	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobility or physical e.g. walking, dexterity		
<input type="checkbox"/> Impaired memory / concentration or ability to understand e.g. Stroke, dementia, head-injury			
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental ill health e.g. Bi polar disorders, schizophrenia, depression			
<input type="checkbox"/> Long-term illness or health condition e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, chronic asthma			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):			
<b>Gender</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):			
<b>Gender Identity</b>			
Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>			
Do you consider yourself to be?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/> Gay man	<input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual	
<input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian / gay woman	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state):		
<b>Relationship Status</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Married		
<input type="checkbox"/> Co-habiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Single		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)			
<b>Age</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 16- 25	<input type="checkbox"/> 26 - 39	<input type="checkbox"/> 40 -64
<input type="checkbox"/> 65 – 80	<input type="checkbox"/> 80 +		
<b>Caring Responsibilities - Do you provide regular and substantial unpaid care for:</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Relative (e.g. disabled child, partner, parent etc)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Another person (please state)			
<b>Childcare responsibilities</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Children 0 to 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Children 5 to 10		
<input type="checkbox"/> Children 11 to 18			
<b>Faith / Religion / Belief</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Atheist/None	<input type="checkbox"/> Baha'I	<input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism	<input type="checkbox"/> Christianity
<input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism	<input type="checkbox"/> Humanism	<input type="checkbox"/> Islam	<input type="checkbox"/> Judaism
<input type="checkbox"/> Sikhism	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)		
Do you actively practice your religion/ belief?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No		
<b>Service Personnel and their Families</b>			
Are you currently serving in the UK Armed Forces?			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you a veteran or ex-service personnel of the UK Armed Forces?			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you a member of a service personnel immediate family?			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are you a reservist or in part time service such as in the Territorial Army?			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No