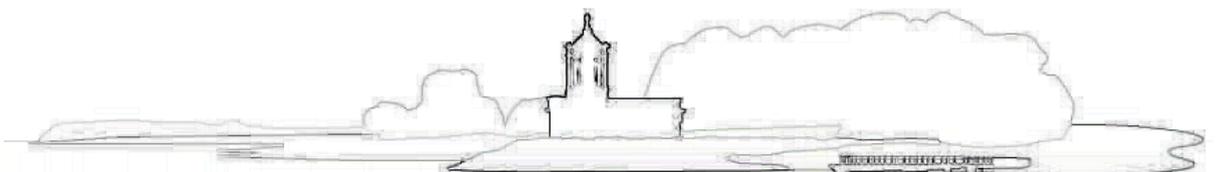


Rutland County Council

Consultation Analysis- Empty Home Premium

Version & Policy Number	Version 1
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1.0 METHOD OF CONSULTATION

- 1.1 The Council opened the consultation for our Council Tax premium for long term empty homes on Wednesday 21st August 2019 and closed the consultation on Wednesday 2nd October 2019.
- 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 687 taxpayers including all current empty home owners and a random selection of residents and recipients of Local Council Tax Support with a link to the online consultation;
 - 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;
 - Front page news article of the Rutland Times on 06/09/19; and
 - Paper forms available upon request and via Customer Services.

2.0 RESPONSE RATE

- 2.1 The Council has received 125 responses. Of these 123 were completed online and 2 were completed using paper forms.
- 2.2 The consultation document asked for the first part of the respondents postcode, responses are given below:

Post Code	Number	% of responses
LE15	85	68%
PE9	12	9.6%
LE16	1	0.8%
Outside Rutland	9	7.2%
Not provided	18	14.4%

- 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 empty	21	16.8%
I live in Rutland	94	75.2%
I am representing and organisation	2	1.6%
Other	8	6.4%

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	93	74.4%
No	23	18.4%
Don't know	9	7.2%

We asked ‘If no, can you indicate what services you think we could reduce or cut?’ Some of the comments we received are detailed below.

Be more prudent with salaries, benefits and staffing levels
This has to be approached from a cost perspective first as wasteful or unnecessary spending should be eliminated and services provided in the most cost efficient way in order to determine the need before the ways of adjusting income are assessed
You are a conservative led council, therefore, I believe you should be negotiating with your government, who are responsible for the successive cuts to English councils' funding, for a greater level of funding particularly as austerity is now officially over. You should not be seeking to extract yet more money from easy targets (such as empty homes) or making any cuts to services, when you have not exhausted all negotiating efforts with central government. Negotiation for higher levels of funding (when you have stated you already receive less funding per head than other English councils) is the priority for Rutland Council.
I don't think increasing council tax for empty houses is the answer for increasing revenue. The empty houses are using none of the council provided services and feel these property should be exempt altogether
I believe you should be negotiating with your government, who are responsible for the successive cuts to English councils' funding...

3.2 Question 2 asked ‘Do you think we should increase the premium to: 100% for properties that have been empty for less than five years; 200% for properties that have been empty for more than five year and 300% for properties that have been empty for longer than ten years (the latter from 2021/22)?’

Option	Responses	% of response
Yes	71	56.8%
No	45	36%
Don't know	9	7.2%

We asked people to explain why they had said yes or no. The following comments were received.

Houses are meant to be lived in and not left empty for in some cases investment gain, or to let the building decay with the hope of demolition and redevelopment to a more financial advantage. Plus an empty house particularly one in poor condition can effect the ambience of an area.
Whilst, I guess, an empty property make zero demand on council services, this tactic would help discourage those deliberately leaving properties empty for the sole purpose of capital gain.
It is unreasonable to charge any premium when a house is on the market and has not sold in the first year. You can't say that people should accept any price. If it has not sold after 1 year of being unoccupied then increase the premium
Again I don't think you should tolerate empty property but if no one is living in the property that is no reason not to pay full council tax. Only exceptions are if someone is renovating a property for their own use and they should be given say 12 months to do this and then pay the full rate.
If empty property owners are not prepared to actively sell or rent their properties, they should be prepared to pay increased premiums on their council tax bills. Empty properties do deteriorate and become unsightly and it is totally irresponsible to leave a property empty and falling into disrepair when people are desperate for housing
There is no need for these properties to remain empty, they should be sold at a reasonable price or let out in good condition.
Unfair as hardly any services are used if vacant

3.3 Question 3 asked 'Do you think we should offer an exemption from paying the premium if the owner is actively trying to sell or let the property for a reasonable local market value?'

Option	Responses	% of response
Yes	96	76.8%
No	24	19.2%
Don't know	5	4%

We asked 'Do you think we should exempt other types of owners or circumstances please tell us who and why?' The following comments were received.

Yes I'd conditional on a time frame which I think should be 3 years and then incremental based on years empty beyond this.
Yes - and it should be for all home owners trying to sell their property at market value not just ones as described
But how does the customer prove this as most estate agent offers are verbal

Reduce price until it's reasonable. All property will sell at the right price. A property is only worth what a buyer is willing to pay, so accept this and stop being greedy.
Military personnel do not have the opportunity to choose.... they should have an exemption
Who decides 'reasonable'. If the house is on the market a charge can be put on the property to cover the outstanding charges

3.4 Question 4 asked 'Do you think we should continue to 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	93	74.4%
No	22	17.6%
Don't know	10	8%

3.5 Question 5 asked 'Do you have any other comments that you wish to make about paying a premium on long term empty homes?' The following comments have been received:

There should be a grace period in the first 12 months. For example, the house may have been rented and damaged by previous tenants. The owner needs time to renovate and market the property before they can secure a new tenant.
There is a shortage of affordable housing and so we should be encouraging empty homes back onto the market as quickly as possible. Premiums for longer-term empty homes are a good way to do this and have the added benefit of income raising at a time when funding is being cut.
I've purchased a property that is uninhabitable at the moment and I'm undertaking renovation work to make it habitable - the house, ultimately, is for my own residential home. This property couldn't have been occupied during the extensive work & may have been left empty if people like myself aren't prepared to buy them and invest the time, money & interest to make them into their home.
Basically if a person has the privilege of owning an extra house, and doesn't rent it out, they should definitely pay a premium. There is such a shortage of homes for people all over the country that I think it's selfish to hold onto empty homes. The least they can do is pay a premium.
There are companies that will 'guarantee to buy any house' and any property will sell at the 'right price' or what a buyer is prepared to pay for it.
Houses that have been vacant for more than 5 years should be compulsorily purchased at market value for its condition.
If a home is empty there should be a discount

4. WHO RESPONDED

4.1 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	48	45.28%
Female	55	51.89%
Other	3	2.83%

Gender identity: same as assigned at birth	Number	% of responses
Yes	100	99.1%
No	1	0.99%

Sexual Orientation	Number	% of responses
Heterosexual	82	90.11%
Gay Man	0	%
Gay Woman/Lesbian	0	%
Bisexual	1	1.10%
Other	8	8.79%

Relationship Status	Number	% of responses
Married	67	66.34%
Civil Partnership	2	1.98%
Single	17	16.83%
Co-habiting	4	3.96%
Other	11	10.89%

Age	Number	% of responses
Under 16	0	%
16-25	1	0.97%
26-39	20	19.42%
40-64	43	41.75%
65-80	36	34.95%
81+	3	2.91%

Caring Responsibilities	Number	% of responses
Relative	16	84.21%
Another person	3	15.79%

Child Responsibilities	Number	% of responses
Children 0 - 4	13	50%
Children 5 -10	5	19.23%
Children 11-18	8	30.77%

Faith/Religion/Belief	Number	% of responses
Atheist/none	24	27.91%
Baha'i		%
Buddism		%
Christianity	56	65.12%
Hinduism		%
Humanism	2	2.33%
Islam		%
Judaism		%
Sikhism		%
Other	4	4.65%

Ethnicity	Number	% of responses
White-English/Welsh/Scottish/British/Northern Irish	103	93.64%
White- Irish	1	0.91%
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	2	1.82%
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	4	3.64%

Language Preference	Number	% of responses
English	106	98.15%
British Sign Language		0%
Other	2	1.85%

Disability	Number	% of responses
Yes	16	14.68%
No	93	85.32%
If Yes:		

Hearing	6	40%
Learning	1	6.67%
Communication	1	6.67%
Developmental	1	6.67%
Visual	1	6.670%
Mobility or Physical	8	53.33%
Memory	3	20%
Mental Health	3	20%
Long Term Illness	7	46.67%
Other	1	6.67%

Service Personnel	Number	% of responses
Are currently serving in the Armed Forces	1	0.8%
Are a veteran or ex-service personnel	15	12%
Are a member of service personnel immediate family	5	4%
Are a reservist or part time service	2	1.6%

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Most respondents (over 74%) agree that the Council should do what it can to increase income before it looks at reducing or cutting services.
- 5.2 Majority of respondents (over 56%) think that we should increase the premium for long term empty homes.
- 5.3 Most respondents (76%) think that we should exempt homes from the premium if they are actively and genuinely being marketed for sale or let or being renovated.
- 5.4 Most respondents (74%) think that we should support those who are experiencing genuine financial hardship.

A large print version of this document is available on request