

Policy Review: Council Tax Local Discounts & Premiums

Appendix 1 - consultation responses

Category	Response	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not answered
	Questions						
A	How strongly do you agree or disagree that unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties should be awarded a 100% discount for up to 3 months?	16 19.51%	28 34.15%	9 10.98%	6 7.32%	23 28.05%	0 0.00%
B	How strongly do you agree or disagree that unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties should be awarded a 0% discount from 3-24 months?	15 18.29%	17 20.73%	5 6.10%	13 15.85%	32 39.02%	0 0.00%
C	How strongly do you agree or disagree with charging a Council tax premium on second homes?	25 30.49%	19 23.17%	12 14.63%	3 3.66%	23 28.05%	0 0.00%
D	How strongly do you agree or disagree with charging a Council tax premium on homes that have been empty for one year or more?	23 28.05%	21 25.61%	9 10.98%	10 12.20%	19 23.71%	0 0.00%

Additional Consultee Comments

1. My Father has had to leave his property and move in with Family due to illness. It has taken him almost a year to come to terms with the fact that he will never return to his home and agree that selling is the right option. There is quite a lot to do for us with regards to clearing the property and making it saleable as we all work full time and have families. I believe that the individual circumstances should firstly be assessed before imposing cost burden on them.
2. Jones could be being renovated and 3 months is not enough time to do this I myself was in this position when I bought my latest house and needed the 6 months afforded to me at the time. Shameless money grab from south ribble borough council
3. Reducing the period of 100% discount to 3 months will discourage private renters from the market as it can take and greater than that period to maintain and then find a new tenant for a property following the vacation by the previous tenant.

There is a saying which reflects your proposals, using a stick rather than a carrot. I believe your proposals will have the effect of driving property rentals out of the market over a period of time causing a greater shortage of affordable rentals.

4. You can't do a redecoration on a first house within 3 months whilst working a full time job. I have bought my first house on my own and I don't have the time to complete the renovations within 3 months. 6 months is reasonable. I am at the house every night after work till late and 3 months is totally unrealistic.
5. STOP TAXING PEOPLE.

If you want to improve the area start by sorting your own responsibilities first

Your Council Tax liability notices are unlawful as they are held in bogus courts not operating under CPR which Courts have to abide by. You operate under The Local Government Finance Act 1992, which is not a set of rules for a REAL court. Hence no court has issued liability notice for years!

6. My father is in a nursing home which costs just under £1000 a week , so his funds won t last long and the house will eventually have to be sold to continue paying for his care but for now he has no mobility whatsoever but he still has capacity , and does not want his home selling it is empty but to charge council tax for it just seems so unfair , that money could go towards his care
7. My only concern would be where someone has died and relatives have to pay, probate can take months, I think in these cases and these only it should be at least 6 months.

8. I live and work in this area and feel these changes are too broad.
My home, as a result of previous owners will need substantial renovations in the next 12-18 months which will leave it empty for between 3 and 6 months. Why can't there be a sub-category for homes that are undergoing building/renovation to maintain the current 6?

9. A lot of landlords are now selling due to increased fees such as what you are proposing. This will only lead to the shortage of rented properties, and increased homelessness.

Many properties that are rented out need extensive repairs due to vandalism once a tenant has moved out which could be longer than 3 months.

Having a property empty obviously isn't cost effective for a landlord but sometimes it can happen due to the availability of tradesmen.

10. How do these proposals affect homes on the market but not sold due to market conditions in the housing market?

11. To put extra charges on people that have purchased houses that require renovation works is very unfair. Some properties that I personally have purchased over the past few years have been not fit for human habitation and required substantial renovation including Damp Mould Dangerous Electrical installation etc. Building works required take several months even years. Property should be looked at in individual cases and reviewed accordingly as there are many reasons for the property being empty.

12. Landlords need to be able to carry out refurbishment, essential maintenance works, energy efficiency upgrades or improvements without council tax penalties. Reducing the time period to carry out these works in between tenancies can be a disincentive to improve housing standards. Reducing this period to the proposed 3 months could have a detrimental impact on the quality and standard of rental accommodation as Landlords will be put under more time pressure.

13. I envisage a situation where a resident has died and I think that the people dealing with the estate should be given a year to either sell or rent out the said property. Three months does not allow long enough for this process in my opinion. I see no reason for the beneficiaries to pay council tax which they are not inhabiting.

14. I agree with charging a premium where a property is either a second home, or bought and deliberately left empty as an investment. However, not if a property is temporarily empty because of a work posting and being retained as a primary residence for when the posting is complete. Perhaps an exception can be made to owners who have been temporarily sent elsewhere to work on submission of a letter from their employer?

15. I would want to change regulations so that it is a change of use requiring planning consent to change a home from primary residence to second (or third etc) home or to rented sector

I would want to charge an additional premium after two years and each subsequent year.

16. No 1 Abbotsway has been vacant since 2013 since the death of the occupant. Her daughter now owns the property but lives in the midlands. The property is deteriorating and is neglected and unsightly. Apparently she has no interest in selling this potentially attractive family home which seems a great shame in these times of housing stock shortage.

Any policy discouraging this selfish behaviour has my full support.

17. No homes should be left empty, especially with the housing situation, and all second home owners should pay 100% from day one, if some one can afford a second home, council tax should not be a problem.

18. Consider appeals/rebates for house owners in hospital and/or delays on death where a grant of probate or letters of administration are subject to legal delays

19. Some commercial property on Towngate have been empty for years, what will the council do about them.

20. There's a fault in the phone number question. It won't let you enter a phone number. Also the Likert scale questions are incorrectly written. It should be strongly agree, agree, neither, disagree, strongly disagree

21. As a landlord we need time to turn a property around after a tenant has left, especially as building costs and materials have gone up and we struggle to find trades people, so 6 months is fine. Private landlords are taking the pressure off you, the council, from finding homes for people, so don't penalise us for that. As for taxing second homes, I feel that only the houses which would be affordable to lower income families should be taxed. You need to tackle AirBNB!

22. 3 months isn't sufficient time to start charging a landlord for an empty property. There maybe issues that may need resolving and 3 months isn't enough time. The present system of 6 months is much fairer.

23. 100% discount for subs. unfurnished and empty properties shd remain at 6 months. Any less is unreasonable and penalises proper refurbishment.

It follows that the 0% discount should apply for 6 to 24 months, not 3 to 24 months.

Questions 5 and 7 r mutually contradictory. After 24 months it's reasonable to apply a premium (additional charge). There should be a discretionary waiver (+ *tailored* help) for those who are unable for sound reasons, and a greater premium for wilful resister.

24. This is all very well but when a property is left vacant due to death and the property is for sale the family should not be penalised for the length of time it takes to sell the said property. Provisions must be made when a property is for sale due to the death of the last surviving occupant.
25. Sometimes it is difficult to sell properly in the current climate??
26. House may take >3 months to sell: proposed policy = severe time constraint.
I'm refurbishing an old semi, to control costs am doing the vast majority myself, as well as full time job. Already impacted by empty homes premium, penalising me for not progressing fast enough! Ultimately this is for suitable space for my family not 2nd home. Proposal won't change my bill but make anyone doing same even more unfairly penalized. Proposed policy does not seem fair.
27. I am renting privately & live next door to a privately owned terraced house, advised by the neighbour's when I moved in that it has stood empty for 10 years. Being a terraced house the cold and damp that comes from the empty property is very noticeable. I believe if people can afford to leave empty second/multiple homes they own they can afford to contribute to council funding. No maintenance is carried out at the property with overgrown front & rear gate hanging off its hinges.
28. Another ridiculous stealth tax, this is absolutely disgusting
29. Should be up to 2 months
30. The proposals are fine in Principle but do not cover the basics, second homes are usually in the higher priced brackets for rentals. The empty properties that are in need of repair should be the priority.

In my case we are trying to downsize and have purchased a property to move into but cannot sell the first one due to the financial markets. So we are paying for 2 houses.

More effort should be made to force householders with empty properties to bring them up to speed and sell them on
31. I strongly agree that empty houses should be premium charged for keeping a property empty particularly over 12 months. I have a neighbouring house both next door and across the road that haven't been lived in one for nearly seven years and another for over two years.
32. New tenants need to give notice and be allowed to view the property. Some tenants leave a mess and also with refurbishment of the property this takes time

33. This is a poorly worded and structured survey with agree showing above strongly agree

I believe the current 12 month discount at 100% for unfurnished and not habitable properties should be sustained to allow home owners and landlords to repair and maintain their property - forcing properties back into occupation quickly will lead to degraded properties

34. 57 Leyland Road PR1 9QH empty approx 12 yrs continues to deteriorate virtually a derelict property and I strongly believe he should be charged HIGHER council tax. Several departments within South Ribble & chief Exec have been involved and the owner gets away with his house remaining in a state of disrepair while he lives elsewhere.

35. If nobody lives there that would be disgraceful as no services are being used Our second home is under renovation and is uninhabitable which has taken 8 months so far Renovation is progress not something to be penalised Improvements to buildings should be encouraged not penalised It is not our fault the housing market is dire and our current home will not sell Had it sold we would have expedited the renovation and moved into that second home already Are we to be penalised for the state of the market We cannot rent the other place out because for if we sell ours we will need it straight away and good landlords do not chuck their tenants out with barely any notice This is a terrible decision Just awful HAD WE KNOWN THIS WE WOULD NOT HAVE BOUGHT IT You are effectively changing the rules half way through the game for us

36. As a landlord there can be unavoidable void periods where a property is fully marketed with no resulting tenancy. The fees for finding new tenants plus the loss of income is already very substantial and I don't agree with penalising good landlords who are at least trying to help house members of the public in South Ribble.

37. I purchased my house a year ago but the delay in tradespeople completing jobs or returning enquiries plus more issues than originally found on the survey mean I am yet to move in.

Hopefully the work will be completed soon but people in a similar situation would be penalised under the new proposals.

As a first time buyer and with increasing mortgage rates, it just feels like a further expense. I think second homes is a different entity and should be treated as such.

38. I disagree with the amount of time being cut to 3 months with 0% discount as it depends on the circumstances of the property being empty. In my case, 4 months ago I put my property on the market in the hope it would sell quickly. I was in a position where I could move into my new home to carry out refurbishments. The empty property is available for occupancy, unfortunately no one has agreed to purchase it, which is beyond my control. Even if an offer had been received when it first went on the market, it could take 3 months, or more, to finalised the sale. 100% discount for 6 months is a much more realistic timescale.

39. Second homes are often family homes used by family members as holiday or short stay accommodation. Standard rate council tax should apply to these properties - but as they are usually fully maintained properties (at a cost) and not neglected or long term empty and unfurnished properties - these owners and their families should not be subject to the unjust and extremely punitive additional charges you. proposed. This is not Cornwall. Action such as this in the South Ribble area. does not solve a local housing crisis - it is a taxation and revenue raising exercise which is wholly inappropriate in an era where taxation is excessively high and families are struggling to make ends meet.

40. 3 months may not allow sufficient time for renovation where extensive work is required prior to occupation.

41. I own a Rental property that I am currently renovating in south ribble . It is not liveable. I was surprised not to be charged any council tax and was expecting to have to pay it.

I don't think that 3 months is necessarily long enough to convert a completely unliveable property into a property that is rentable, especially if you are trying to find contacts in the area to do the building work.

That said, council tax is not a large amount of money and it wouldn't make me any quicker to get the property rented out if it was being charged. I'd only have to suck it up for a month or two.

I absolutely agree that liveable empty properties should be charged a council tax premium. There is high demand for rentals in the area my house is in and it is better to rent out/sell what is there than build nasty modern developments.

42. It all depends on the circumstances i.e.; if its a second home then full tax should be paid however if the property is on the market for sale and is unoccupied then a discount would be fair

43. Poor decision

44. This will severely impact people who need a second property for work purposes. I agree that properties should not sit empty but I use a second home as I live between Scotland and England for work. There should be some exemptions. I actually live in my property in England more than Scotland but it isn't my primary residence as this is for work purposes. I don't feel I should have to pay double council tax to be able to do my job.

45. Any measures taken that will help reduce the swallowing up of our green spaces by housing development and the consequent detrimental impact on wildlife and the ecosystem should be prioritised.

46. Your changes will do not help the owners to invest in the property refurbishment to bring them up to date. Three months is absolutely not sufficient time for an owner to update a property.
You should already be aware of the challenges faced in securing quotes and engaging builders.
Your change in policy will only result in more un maintained properties being brought back on to the market. The only persons who will suffer is the new tenant.
Please remember I'm losing rent the longer I'm not renting my property so it's in my interest to get it back on to the market. You need at least a 6 month window to allow good landlords to maintain their property.
If the objective is as you say to ensure owners not to have empty properties then you need to target the owners who have long term empty properties and your policy needs to be changes to address them. 6 months is not long term.
47. If nobody lives there that would be disgraceful as no services are being used Our second home is under renovation and is uninhabitable which has taken 8 months so far Renovation is progress not something to be penalised Improvements to buildings should be encouraged not penalised It is not our fault the housing market is dire and our current home will not sell Had it sold we would have expedited the renovation and moved into that second home already Are we to be penalised for the state of the market We cannot rent the other place out because for if we sell ours we will need it straight away and good landlords do not chuck their tenants out with barely any notice This is a terrible decision Just awful HAD WE KNOWN THIS WE WOULD NOT HAVE BOUGHT IT You are effectively changing the rules half way through the game for us
48. My chief concern is that council tax changes should NOT encourage or help home owners, particular second home owners, to rent out their properties as short term holiday lets without any change of use. This is currently permitted in inappropriate residential areas where deeds have specifically stated properties should not be used for business purposes, yet these Air bnbs etc are allowed. They ruin the nature of what have for many years, been residential only estates, where residents now have to endure noise, inconsiderate parking and undesirable 'guests'. They do nothing to help people in the area finding a long term home, in fact they reduce the number of properties that could potentially be available to long term tenants. They are merely acting as a cash cows for absentee owners and property management companies. They are a businesses and as such, should pay premium business rates and have to apply for a change of use from residential.
49. Like many others rental income provides us with our pension income. Between lettings, refurbishments / improvements to achieve good standards can take up to 6 months if not more.
If we have to pay Council Tax during refurbishments / lettings then it will become unfeasible to remain as landlords at current rates, either
1. Rent will need to be increased substantially or
 2. We sell the property as being uneconomic.
- The result being less reasonably priced rental property available and achieving the opposite result to that envisaged by the Council.
Please retain the status quo.

If the real intention is simply to increase Council income, then please be honest and seek other ways without damaging the current rental market.

50. policy takes no account of market/individual circumstance, there should be an appeals procedure
51. I believe that each case should be considered on its own merits. For example, if a landlord is trying to re-let or sell a property the 100% discount should last until the property is re-let or sold. And if an owner is unable to occupy a property due to building or renovation work, again, the 100% discount should be applied until the work is complete.
52. Housing is in crisis and will get worse in the future. Builders are holding onto land and there seems to be no appetite for building real affordable houses for our young people. We have got to break this culture of "not in my backyard" adopted by most local authorities.
53. I do think individual circumstances need to be taken into consideration as to why a house is empty. When my mother died for example she had left her property to myself and my 4 siblings. As is sometimes the case the house had to be sold to convert into money so each person had a 5th share. This all took more than 1 year. That said I have been homeless and understand the need for housing. Were it not for a kind farmer that allowed me to use a disused shed I would have been on the streets.
54. This seems to me to just be an exercise in fleecing landlords of more money and quite possibly people who have inherited houses and are trying to sell. It is probably typical Labour policy to screw anyone trying to make some money. I have brought 9 properties back into use over a 10 year period and it is nigh impossible to renovate a property in 3 months time. You should be extending the time without council tax payment rather than reducing it
55. A clause for properties that are waiting clearance after the owner's bereavement.
56. Your survey does not distinguish between a holiday home and rental properties owned by landlords. The two are completely different.

Both the Central Government and local Gov policies, taxation, the Courts/legal system, Energy policies, section 21, rent control agendas, the Citizens advice bureau, local housing authorities etc are anti Private rental sector/landlords.

They support/help bad tenants and have no consideration for good landlords. This culture encourages bad tenants which does not

help the good tenants or good landlords.

I will leave the sector after 25 plus years as soon as possible (tax efficient to do so) and take every opportunity to dissuade others from becoming landlords in the private rental sector.

57.

Re: Policy "Amend the period after which a long-term empty period applies from 2 years to 1 year from 1 April 2024."

This causes difficulty as private landlord. Post Pandemic ever increasing bills. Many landlords sold up.

Landlords don't choose empty property. Vacated property needs work. Tradesmen availability is major issue. At BREXIT those from abroad returned home. An acute shortage of tradesmen exists.

Government encourages building large house numbers. Builders offer well paid jobs to attract tradesmen. My tradesmen are not available.

Tradesmen taking months to come and sequence of trades required. I need tradesmen to return property to market. Situation is Grim. It costs waiting for tradesmen.

This is a big increase in rates at short notice in winter period, I am being driven out.

To continue I need further six months granted.

Request Policy is:

"Amend the period after which a long-term empty period applies from 2 years to 1 year from 1st October 2024".

58. I am a landlord and a property investor/builder.

Due to the current high expenses of hiring contractors to do renovation work, I do almost all of it myself which can sometimes take upto a year if not more. If I hired contractors, it wouldn't be financially worth renovating some of the old deteriorating homes in the South Ribble.

I think by bringing in these new changes it will deter people from buying old run down homes or it will cause shortcuts in the renovation of old homes.

I take pride in what I do and sometimes that takes time.

59. No point building more houses, especially on green belt when houses and offices lying empty