

Proposal to increase the Council Tax premium charged on domestic properties that have been empty for over two from 50 per cent to 100 per cent from 1 April 2019.

Evidence based equality analysis

Main aims, purpose and outcomes and how does it fit in with the wider aims of the organisation:

The Council currently charges a Council Tax premium of 50 per cent to properties that have been empty for more than two years – this is the maximum allowed by current legislation. A proposal is currently being considered by parliament to increase the maximum premium chargeable from 50 per cent to 100 per cent with effect from 1 April 2019. The Council is proposing to increase the premium it charges to 100 per cent from 1 April 2019. The purpose of the proposed change is to further incentivise the owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use, thus increasing the amount of housing available in the borough. It is not believed that the increase in the premium will impact on vulnerable individuals as exemptions still exist in specific circumstances e.g. if the occupier has to vacate their home to go into care. The Council will carry out a consultation to try to identify any circumstances where the increase in the premium may cause hardship to vulnerable individuals.

Lead officer: David Sconce, Finance Officer

Stakeholders: Council Tax team; Strategic Housing team

Equality analysis is a valuable tool to help embed equality into everything we do

While process is important, equality analysis is essentially about outcomes

Lack of evidence of discrimination is not evidence of a lack of discrimination

It is not acceptable to say that a policy is applied uniformly to all groups and is therefore fair and equal. Applying a policy or procedure consistently may result in differential outcomes for different groups.

For each of the areas below, an assessment needs to be made on whether the policy has a positive, negative or neutral impact, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation should be included. Where the impact is negative, this needs to be given a high, medium or low assessment. It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Target group / area			
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers, asylum seekers etc.)	No anticipated impact.		
Disability (as defined by the Equality Act - a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)	No anticipated impact. Empty properties where the previous occupant is now detained elsewhere on mental health grounds will continue to be exempt from Council Tax charges; empty properties where the previous occupant now has their sole or main residence in a hospital, residential care home or nursing home will continue to be exempt from Council Tax charges.		
Gender	No anticipated impact.		
Gender identity (gender reassignment)	No anticipated impact.		
Religion and belief	No anticipated impact.		
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual)	No anticipated impact.		
Age (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults aged 25 – 50,	No anticipated impact. An existing exemption from the premium relating		

younger older people aged 51 – 75/80; older older people 81+. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs)	to empty leasehold properties in retirement villages that are advertised for sale will remain.		
Carers	No anticipated impact. Properties left empty by a person living elsewhere to provide personal care continue to be exempt from Council Tax charges.		
Rural communities	No anticipated impact.		
Areas of deprivation	No anticipated impact.		
Human rights			Article 1 of Protocol 1 states that a person is 'entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions'. This proposal does not prevent this, but will impose additional costs on a person who chooses to have an empty property.
Health and wellbeing (consider both the wider determinants of health such as education, housing, employment, environment, crime and transport, as well as the possible impacts on lifestyles and the effect there may be on health and care services)		The proposed change could incentivise property owners to bring empty homes back into use quicker and therefore increase the amount of housing available in the borough.	
Procurement/partnership (if	No anticipated impact.		

project due to be carried out by contractors/partners etc, identify steps taken to ensure equality compliance)			
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Evidence:

A 12 week consultation is planned which will be publicised through social media and local members. This consultation will ask for situations where the increase in the premium might cause hardship to vulnerable individuals. In such circumstances, the Council can decide on a case by case basis whether to charge the premium or not.

Action plan:

Actions required	Key activity	Priority	Outcomes required	Officer responsible	Review date
Consultation	Design/publish/publicise/analyse responses	High	Range of views on the proposal to be considered prior to a final decision being made	David Sconce	October/November 2018

Sign off	
Lead officer:	David Sconce
Approved by Tier 4 Manager:	Claire Jones (by email)
Moderation and/or Scrutiny	
Date: 10 July 2018	Corporate Equality and Diversity Group
Date analysis to be reviewed based on rating (high impact – review in one year, medium impact - review in two years, low impact in three years)	Three years