Changes to Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions for Empty Dwellings and Second Homes
Introduction

Stockton-on Tees Borough Council is reviewing what it can do to bring some of the homes that are stood empty across the borough back in to use.

The Government is making a number changes in relation to Council Tax that take effect by 1 April 2013, so that councils can ensure that the Council Tax scheme supports local priorities. As part of this, councils will be able to change the level of council tax discounts and exemptions on certain empty properties and second homes.

Empty homes have a financial impact on the local area. Empty homes can be targeted for vandalism and can quickly become a dumping ground for rubbish. So not only does the empty home owner lose potential income from letting or selling the property, an empty home also affects the value of surrounding properties and could be a potential cost to the Council.

We think that there are some changes on empty property and second home Council Tax discounts that will support our aim to turn empty properties into homes that people value.

The changes would also generate additional income for the Council which could be used to support our work to reduce the problem of empty homes as well as helping to deliver a balanced Council budget.

We would like your views on these proposed changes - the closing date for this consultation is 6 January 2013.

Please return completed forms to:

PO Box 410
Kingsway House
West Precinct
Billingham
TS23 2YD
What are we considering?

- Ending the Council Tax exemption for dwellings that are empty for less than six months. This means that people who own empty homes will have to pay full Council Tax from the time that they become empty.
- Ending the 50% discount for dwellings that are empty for more than 6 months.
- Ending the Council Tax exemption on empty dwellings that require or are undergoing major structural repair work to make them habitable. This means that people who own empty dwellings that are uninhabitable or undergoing structural repairs will have to pay full Council Tax.
- Ending the 10% discount on second homes.
- Introducing an additional 50% Council Tax charge for dwellings that have been empty for over two years. This means that owners of all dwellings that have been empty for over two years will have to pay 150% Council Tax for their dwelling.

Other discounts and exemptions are not affected by these proposals, for example there will be no changes to other council tax discounts such as single person discount or exemptions for example when the owner of a property is in a residential care home these discounts and exemptions will remain the same.

When would this happen?

The changes would take effect from 1 April 2013.

Currently, owners of empty homes:

- Can be exempt from paying Council Tax for six months after the property becomes empty and unfurnished.
- Receive a 50% discount on Council Tax charges for properties that are empty and unfurnished for over six months.
- Are not required to pay Council Tax charges on properties that are empty and require or are undergoing major structural repair work to make them habitable, for a period of up to 12 months (i.e. ‘uninhabitable properties’).

Currently, owners of second homes:

- Receive a 10% discount on Council Tax charges for those homes.
The following questions ask for your views on the Council’s proposals for changes to the Council Tax charges applied to empty and second homes.

## Empty Homes

1. **To what extent would you agree with the following proposals for changes to Council Tax charges for empty homes? Please select the most appropriate option for each proposal below.**

   | Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree, nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know | No opinion |
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
Owners of homes that become empty should be charged full Council Tax on those homes from the time they become empty |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
Owners of homes that have been empty for more than 6 months and which are unfurnished should be charged full Council Tax on those homes |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
Owners of homes that have been empty for 2 years or more should be charged 150% of the Council Tax charge for those homes for so long as the home remains empty |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
Owners of homes that are empty and require or are undergoing structural repair should be charged full Council Tax on those homes from the time they become empty |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
2. If you would like to, please briefly explain your responses to Q1 in the space below.

Second Homes

3. To what extent would you agree with the following proposal for changes to Council Tax charges for second homes? Please select the most appropriate option below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owners of second homes should be required to pay full Council Tax charges on those homes at all times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. If you would like to, please briefly explain your response to Q3 in the space below.

☐ Please put a tick in this box to confirm that this is your one and only response to this questionnaire, and that the answers you have provided are your own. The Council’s consultation data quality management rights can be found at www.stockton.gov.uk/yourCouncil/consult/howweconsult
5. If you would like to, please use the space below to share with us any other brief thoughts or comments you have about changing Council Tax charges on empty and second homes


6. What is the nature of your interest in this questionnaire/consultation? Please select as many options as necessary below.

- Developer
- Estate Agent
- Home owner in Stockton-on-Tees
- Housing Association
- Letting Agent
- Owner of a second home in Stockton-on-Tees
- Owner of an empty, unfurnished home in Stockton-on-Tees
- Private Landlord
- Registered Social Landlord (RSL)
- Tenant in Stockton-on-Tees
- Prefer not to say
- Other (Please specify)

7. If you are responsible for an empty property within the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees at the moment, why is the property currently empty? Please select the most appropriate option.

- It is awaiting probate settlement
- It is being renovated/repairs
- It is on the market awaiting sale
- It is in need of renovation/repair
- It is waiting for new tenants
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)
About you

To help us understand what different people think about the proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions for empty dwellings and second homes, please provide us with the following information.

**Your age**

Please state which of the following age groups you fall into:

- 0 – 19 years
- 20 – 29 years
- 30 – 39 years
- 40 – 49 years
- 50 – 59 years
- 60 – 69 years
- 70 – 79 years
- 80 – 84 years
- 85+ years
- Prefer not to say

**Your ethnic origin**

Please tick the most appropriate box below:

**White**

- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Any other White background, please specify:

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**Black/Black British**

- Caribbean
- African

Any other Black background, please specify:

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**Asian/Asian British**

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese

Any other Asian background, please specify:

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**Other ethnic groups**

- Arab

Any other ethnic background, please specify:

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**Mixed /multiple ethnic groups**

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian

Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background, please specify:

- Prefer not to say

**Your country of birth**

Please state (or, leave blank if you would prefer not to say):

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**Your nationality**

Please state (or, leave blank if you would prefer not to say):

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**Your gender**

Please tick the most appropriate box below:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

**Your marital status**

Please tick the most appropriate box below:

- Single
- Married
- Civil Partnership

- Living with partner
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widow
- Widower
- Civil widow
- Civil widower
- Prefer not to say

**Disability**

Do you consider yourself to be a person with a disability as described by the Equality Act 2010? Please tick the most appropriate box below:

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

**UK Armed Forces (including Territorial Army (TA))**

Do you currently serve in the UK Armed Forces (including Territorial Army) or have you done so previously? Please tick the most appropriate box below:

- I am currently serving in the UK Armed Forces (including Territorial Army)
- I previously served in the UK Armed Forces (including Territorial Army)
- Prefer not to say
If you would like this information in any other language or format for example large print or audio please contact ‘Diversity Team’ on 01642 528830.

إذا كنت ترغب الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغات أو بأشكال أخرى على سبيل المثال بالطبعة الكبيرة أو بالشريط المسجل فالرجاء الإتصال 'بدايرستي تيم' على هاتف رقم 528830 01642

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