

Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment – Initial Screening

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| Assessor(s) Name(s): | Sharon Betts |
| Directorate: | Corporate Services |
| Date of Completion: | 30 November 2018 |

Name of Policy/Strategy/Service/Function Proposal

Increase in council tax long term empty property premium

The Aims, Objectives and Expected Outcomes:

The council tax empty property premium, being 50% of the charge, is currently applied to properties which are empty for more than 2 years.

The Government has amended legislation (Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018) so that from 1 April 2019 a premium of 100% can be applied to a domestic property which has been empty for 2 years or more, from 1 April 20/21 properties which have remained empty for five years or more can be subject to a 200% premium and from 1 April 2021/22 properties which have remained empty for more than 10 years, a 300% premium can be applied.

It is anticipated that the introduction of these premiums will really encourage property owners to return their properties to occupation.

Please delete as appropriate:

- This is a proposal to increase the premium on long term empty properties from 50% to 100% from 1 April 19 for properties that have been empty for 2 years or more, to 200% from 1 April 20 for properties that have been empty for 5 years or more and to 300% for properties that have been empty for 10 years or more from 1 April 21.

Key Questions to Consider in Assessing Potential Impact

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| Will the policy, strategy, service or council function proposal have a negative impact on any of the protected characteristics or other reasons that are relevant issues for the local community and/or staff? | Yes/ No |
| Has previous consultation identified this issue as important or highlighted negative impact and/or we have created a “legitimate expectation” for consultation to take place? A legitimate expectation may be created when we have consulted on similar issues in the past or if we have ever given an indication that we would consult in such situations | Yes/ No There is no requirement to consult as this is a legislative change. |
| Do different groups of people within the local community have different needs or experiences in the area this issue relates to? | Yes/ No |
| Could the aims of these proposals be in conflict with the council’s general duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not? | Yes/ No |
| Will the proposal have a significant effect on how services or a council function/s is/are delivered? | Yes/ No |
| Will the proposal have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? | Yes/ No |
| Does the proposal involve a significant commitment of resources? | Yes/ No |
| Does the proposal relate to an area where there are known inequalities? | Yes/ No |

If you answer **Yes** to any of these questions, it will be necessary for you to proceed to a full Equality Impact Assessment after you have completed the rest of this initial screening form.

If you answer **No** to all of these questions, please provide appropriate evidence using the table below and complete the evidence considerations box and obtain sign off from your Head of Service.

| Protected Characteristics | Positive | Negative | No impact | Reasons |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|--|
| Age | | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given. |
| Disability | | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given. |
| Gender Reassignment | | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given. |
| Marriage & Civil Partnership | | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that |

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| | | | there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given |
| Pregnancy & Maternity | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given |
| Race | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given |
| Religion / Belief | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given |
| Sex (male / female) | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given |
| Sexual Orientation | | | A decision was taken in 2013 to introduce a premium on properties which remained empty long term at which |

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| | | | point all council tax payers affected were written to advising of this change. As a result of this change there was no impact to any particular group within the definition given. Given that a further change to the premium rate is being suggested it is anticipated that there will again be no impact (positive or negative) to any particular group within the definition given |
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| Are there aspects of the proposal that contribute to or improve the opportunity for equality? | Yes/No |
| <i>If answered Yes, describe what these are and how they may be promoted or enhanced</i> | |

Evidence Considered During Screening

The change to this policy will only affect those property owners whose properties remain long term empty who can access the statutory appeals process which allows Council Taxpayers to ultimately appeal to a Valuation Tribunal.

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| Head of Service Sign off: | <i>Claire Grand</i> |
| Advice sought from Legal Services (Name) | Samantha Rogers |

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| Date | 5 December 2018 |
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A signed version is to be kept by your team and also an electronic version should be published on the council's website (follow the link from the EIA page on the intranet)