

Cabinet – 17 December 2014

Council Tax Empty Property Discounts 2015/16

Portfolio: Councillor D Coughlan - Social Care
Councillor Chambers - Personnel and Business Support

Service: Money, Home, Job

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

1.1 As from 1 April 2013 the council has the power to determine the discounts applied to empty properties for the purpose of council tax liability.

1.2 On 7 January 2013, Council approved the following council tax discounts for empty properties

- 100% discount for the first 3 months that a property is unoccupied and unfurnished;
- 50% discount for the first 12 months that a property is unoccupied and either requires major repair work or is undergoing structural alterations;
- 0% discount for properties that are furnished but no one's sole or main residence;

1.3 In this report, Cabinet is asked to carefully consider the response received during consultation in relation to potential changes to the first two of the discounts outlined above.

1.4 The report has been issued late to Cabinet following instruction from the Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer, that in accordance with the constitution, the Cabinet is required to make a recommendation to Council. The Council must make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, no later than 31 January in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The report recommends that Cabinet carefully considers the feedback received during the consultation period before **recommending to Council:**

1. Adoption of their preferred options for council tax discount on:

- a) Unoccupied and unfurnished properties;

- b) Unoccupied properties which require major repair work or are undergoing structural alterations.

2. That the Chief Finance Officer be delegated authority to amend the discounts applied to reflect any changes required by legislation and/or government guidance, in consultation with the portfolio holder.

3. Report detail

3.1 As outlined earlier the current scheme for council tax discounts for empty properties are

- 100% discount in council tax for the first three months when a property is unoccupied and unfurnished.
- 50% discount for the first twelve months that a property requires major repair or is undergoing structural alteration.

3.2 The breakdown of properties currently receiving the discount is

Band	100% for the first 3 months	50% for major repair or structural alterations
A	388	30
B	168	24
C	89	27
D	30	10
E	28	11
F	6	5
G	5	0
H	0	0

3.3 For 2014/15 approximately £1m will be awarded in discount for the first 3 months that a property is unoccupied and unfurnished and £80k in discount for those requiring major repair works or undergoing structural alteration. Throughout the year there has been a reduction in the number of properties receiving the discount.

3.4 For the purposes of the consultation process a number of options were chosen to ensure that there is a simple and understandable discount scheme for empty properties. It ensures that there is a constant approach and the costs associated with administration of the scheme are kept to a minimum allowing for the maximisation of income. The options are:

For properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished the proposed options are:

- Option 1 – completely remove the discount for empty and unfurnished properties.
- Option 2 – retain the 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties but reduce the period of the discount to the first 7 days.
- Option 3 – retain the 100% discount and 3 month time period.

For properties requiring major repair or undergoing structural alteration the proposed options are:

- Option 1 – completely remove the discount for these properties.
- Option 2 – retain the 50% discount and 12 month time period.

3.5 The financial impact of the options is:

Current discount: 100% for first 3 months property unoccupied and unfurnished			
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Period of discount	none	7 days	3 months
Total Increased Council Tax Billed (including police and fire precept)	£908,169	£813,195	£0.00
Increase in council tax for Walsall Council	£818,107	£732,551	£0.00

Current discount: 50% for first 12 months property requires major repair work or undergoing structural alteration		
	Option 1	Option 2
Period of discount	none	12 months
Total Increased Council Tax Billed (including police and fire precept)	£79,197	£0.00
Increase in council tax for Walsall Council	£71,343	£0.00

- 3.6 Public consultation on the options is still taking place and is due to end on 24 December 2014. The interim results of the consultation are shown in Appendix B.
- 3.7 The council tax collection rate is currently around 98.5%. It is envisaged that these changes should not alter the overall collection rate significantly. It is however acknowledged that low council tax bills created by a small number of days liability could be disproportionately costly to invoice. Accordingly, Option 2 proposes that the 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties is retained for the first 7 days.
- 3.8 Registered social landlords will not be affected by the proposed changes to the council tax discount on empty properties. This is because they qualify for Class B exemption under the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 (as amended). The above exemption applies for the first six months that a property is unoccupied and unfurnished provided it is owned by a body established for charitable purposes, and only in circumstances where the property was last occupied in furtherance of the objects of that charitable body.

4. Council priorities

- 4.1 If the Council continues to award the same level of council tax discount on empty properties, extra money will have to be found by changing, reducing, or ceasing other important services which could have a significant negative impact on the delivery of a number of the Council's key priorities. The implications will vary depending on the level of discounts awarded and which services are cut to meet any shortfall in the Council's overall budget.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 Due to changes to local authority funding there is a projected shortfall of over £85m in the next 4 years. As the council will have less money, it won't be able to do as

much in the future. If the Council does not reduce the amount of council tax discount awarded to empty properties, the extra money will have to be found by changing, reducing, or ceasing other services. Cutting other services disproportionately could pose a greater financial and reputational risk to the Council and may also have a greater impact on vulnerable people.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 If the discounts on empty properties were amended this would generate additional income for the Council (the potential income is reflected in each of the options outlined in this report).
- 6.2 The Council's overall financial outlook is of course highly challenging. The latest projections are that there is a gap of over £85m for the council to address over the next 4 years. Any decision on the council tax reduction scheme will have an impact on other requirements for financial savings. If the Council makes no change to the existing scheme, the extra money will have to be found by changing, reducing, or ceasing other important council services which may have a detrimental impact on vulnerable local people.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 Section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 introduced local discounts for empty properties from April 2013.
- 7.2 The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) Regulations 2003, as amended, contains definition of classes of empty properties that the Council can determine the level of council tax discount awarded.
- 7.3 The Council must make any revision to its discount scheme no later than 31 January in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect. In accordance with due process, Cabinet must make a recommendation to Council based on their preferred options.

8 Property implications

- 8.1 There are no property implications.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

- 9.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications.

10. Staffing implications

- 10.1 None.

11. Equality implications

- 11.1 The council holds data on the liable person for the empty properties but no records that might identify any disadvantaged groups from this data. In order to better understand the implications to those affected, the Council wrote out to every taxpayer that had received the discount in the last 12 months to ask their view on the proposed options and the reasons why.
- 11.2 From the responses, it is clear that the majority of respondents who highlighted that they would be negatively impacted by proposals to reduce discounts were landlords concerned about incurring additional costs. A few responses were also received from families of bereaved relatives who had been left to organise disposal of their family member's former home and did not want to incur additional costs.
- 11.3 If the changes to council tax discount are not adopted additional money will need to be found by changing, reducing, or ceasing other council services or raising council tax overall. It is likely that cuts to other Council services, or raising council tax, may have a greater detrimental impact on vulnerable groups than this proposal.
- 11.4 A full copy of the Equality Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix A.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 Consultation started on 12 November 2014 and is due to close on 24 December 2014. The public consultation being carried out consists of:
- A controlled postal survey; and
 - An online questionnaire
- 12.2 The postal questionnaires have been mailed to all taxpayers who currently received the discounts under review and a random sample of the same number of taxpayers (who do not receive the discounts). This was to ensure that sample included residents who would be directly affected and those that would not. The result of the responses received so far are included in Appendix B.
- 12.3 The interim figures show that 119 taxpayers returned the postal questionnaire or 7% of the overall sample. The results indicate that most respondents felt that the Council should not change the current level of discount. Of the returns 53% (63) were from taxpayers not receiving the discount and 47% (56) from those that do receive discount. The top line breakdown of the interim responses is as follows:

For properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished:

- **27 % (32) selected Option 1** – completely remove the discount for empty and unfurnished properties.
- **13% (15) selected Option 2** – retain the 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties but reduce the period of the discount to the first 7 days.
- **60% (72) selected Option 3** – retain the 100% discount and 3 month time period.

For properties requiring major repair or undergoing structural alteration:

- **30% (35) selected Option 1** – completely remove the discount for these properties.
- **67% (80) selected Option 2** – retain the 50% discount and 12 month time period.
- **3% (4) did not select an option / left blank.**

12.4 There is circa 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of almost 113,000 (which means the proposal impacts upon less than 1%). The objective of the postal research was to understand the views of taxpayers currently receiving the discounts and those who do not:

- 39% of taxpayers who do not receive the discount on a property that is unoccupied and unfurnished, supported Option 3 (no reduction to the discount). In contrast, 96% of taxpayers currently receiving the discount preferred Option 3 (no reduction to the discount);
- 49% of taxpayers who do not receive the discount on a property requiring major repair or undergoing structural alteration supported Option 2 (no reduction to the discount). In contrast, 91% of taxpayers in receipt of the discount preferred Option 2 (no reduction to the discount).

12.5 As outlined in section 6.2, due to changes to local authority funding, there is a projected shortfall to Council budgets of over £85m in the next 4 years. As the Council will have less money, it won't be able to do as much in the future. If the changes to council tax discount are not adopted, additional money will need to be found by changing, reducing, or ceasing other council services or raising council tax. It is important to acknowledge that the decision about empty property discount is integrally linked to other decisions regarding the Council's overall budget.

13. Background papers

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment, Council Tax Empty Property Discounts 2015/16

Appendix B – Interim Results of Consultation on Council Tax Empty Property Discounts 2015/16

Rory Borealis
Executive Director
Resources
16 December 2014

Councillor D Coughlan
Portfolio Holder
Social Care
16 December 2014

Author: Mark Fearn

Project Lead, Money, Home, Job

☎ 01922 658983

✉ fearnm@walsall.gov.uk

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for Policies, Procedures and Services

Proposal name	Review Council Tax Empty Property Discounts		
Directorate	Resources		
Service	Money Home Job		
Responsible Officer	Sharon Tait		
EqIA Author	Sharon Tait		
Date proposal started	02.09.14	Proposal commencement date (due or actual)	01.4.15

1	What is the purpose of the proposal?	Yes / No	New / revision
	Policy	Yes	Revision
	Procedure		
	Internal service		
	External Service		
	Other - give details		
2	What are the intended outcomes, reasons for change? (The business case)		
	<p>As from 1 April 2013 the council has the power to determine the discounts applied to empty properties for the purpose of council tax liability.</p> <p>From April 2013 the Council approved the following discounts for empty properties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% discount in council tax for the first three months when a property is unoccupied and unfurnished • 50% discount for the first 12 months that a property is unoccupied and either requires major repair work or is undergoing structural alterations <p>For 2014/15 approximately £1m will be awarded in discount for the first 3 months that a property is unoccupied and unfurnished and £80k in discount for those requiring major repair works or undergoing structural alteration. Throughout the year there has been a reduction in the number of properties receiving the discount</p> <p>There is circa 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of almost 113,000 (which means the proposal impacts upon less than 1%).</p> <p>We now need to decide whether to reduce the level of council tax discount on empty properties or find money from within our budget to continue at the same discount level..</p>		
3	Who is the proposal potential likely to affect?		
	People in Walsall	Yes / No	Detail

All		
Specific group/s	Y	In 2014/15 Walsall Council will grant just over £1m in discounts to taxpayers liable to council tax on empty properties. The proposals could directly impact them.
Council employees	N	
Other	N	

4 Summarise your evidence, engagement and consultation.

Consultation started on 12 November 2014 and is due to close on 24 December 2014 with interim findings reported to Cabinet in December 2014 and the final findings for a Full Council decision in January 2015.

The public consultation being carried out consists of:

- A controlled postal survey; and
- An online questionnaire

The postal questionnaires have been mailed to all taxpayers who currently received the discounts under review and a random sample of the same number of taxpayers (who do not receive the discounts). This was to ensure that sample included residents who would be directly affected and those that would not. A total of 1642 questionnaires were sent out.

The survey sought to find out whether participants believed that the Council should reduce the level of council tax discount given on empty properties in 2015/16, or find the extra money, by changing, reducing, or ceasing other Council services.

The consultation asked for preferred options on both of the discounts.

For properties that currently receive 100% discount in council tax for the first three months when a property is unoccupied and unfurnished the options were

- **Option 1** – completely remove the discount for empty and unfurnished properties
- **Option 2** – retain the 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties but reduce the period of the discount to the first 7 days
- **Option 3** – retain the 100% discount and 3 month time period

For properties that currently 50% discount for the first 12 months that a property is unoccupied and either requires major repair work or is undergoing structural alterations the options were

- **Option 1** – completely remove the discount for these properties
- **Option 2** – retain the 50% discount and 12 month time period

The interim results of the consultation are

As at 12th December 2014 119 returns had been received with 53% from taxpayers not receiving the discount and 47% from those that do receive discount

For properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished:

- **27 % selected Option 1** – completely remove the discount for empty and unfurnished properties
- **13% selected Option 2** – retain the 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties but reduce the period of the discount to the first 7 days
- **60% selected Option 3** – retain the 100% discount and 3 month time period

For properties requiring major repair or undergoing structural alteration:

- **30% selected Option 1** – completely remove the discount for these properties
- **67% selected Option 2** – retain the 50% discount and 12 month time period
- **3% did not select an option / left blank**

From the responses, it is clear that the majority of respondents who highlighted that they would be negatively impacted by proposals to reduce discounts were landlords concerned about incurring additional costs.

The common concerns and comments made about the proposals and options were:

- Increase the costs of landlords
- Landlords not able to re-let in a short period of time
- Empty properties do not receive council services
- Does not give time to repair property after damage caused by tenants

When asked if there are other options for making the required savings the following were the common suggestions:

- Chase up unpaid council tax
- Reduce other services to sustain this service
- Small increase in council tax

5	How may the proposal affect each protected characteristic or group? The affect may be positive, negative or neutral.		
	Characteristic	Affect	Reason
	Age	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on the impact against any particular age group as the current council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either
			Action needed Y or N
			N

		of the discounts from a total property base of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. From the results of the consultation the age of people affected ranges between 18 and 66 years old. If the discount was reduced the additional money collected could be used to fund services that help vulnerable groups.	
Disability	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on the impact against disability groups as the current council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. From the results of the consultation only 13 % report to have a disability. If the discount was reduced the additional money collected could be used to fund services that help vulnerable groups. We have facilities to offer braille or large print documentation and bills. In addition we have hearing loops in the civic centre and staff that can offer sign language support. We also have a type talk facility. All public buildings are accessible to disabled people.	N
Gender reassignment	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on the impact against those with gender reassignment as the current council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. From the results of the consultation there is no evidence to suggest that this group will be impacted due to their gender.	N
Marriage and civil partnership	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on the impact against individuals who are married or in a civil partnership as the current council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. From the results of the consultation there is no evidence to suggest that this group will be impacted due to their marital status.	N
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on the impact against individuals who are pregnant as the current council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base	N

		of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. From the results of the consultation there is no evidence to suggest that this group will be impacted due to being pregnant.	
Race	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on the impact against any particular age group as the current council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. From the results of the consultation 79% of those impacted are White British 19% are Asian, 1% are Black African Caribbean, 2% reported to be from another race which was not specified. We have access to interpretation services and officers who can speak a selection of languages. If the discount was reduced the additional money collected could be used to help fund services for vulnerable and minority groups.	N
Religion or belief	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on individuals religious beliefs as the current council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. From the results of the consultation there is no evidence to suggest that any religious group will be impacted disproportionately due to any proposed change.	N
Sex	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on the sex of individuals as the council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. Consultation suggests that 64% of people impacted are male, 36% female. From the results of the consultation it appears that males may be impacted slightly more by a reduction in discounts. Current service delivery does not differentiate between sexes.	N
Sexual orientation	Potentially Negative	We have limited information on the sexual orientation of individuals as the council tax system does not record this characteristic. There are only 820 properties at any one time receiving either of the discounts from a total property base of 113,000 which means that the proposal impacts on less than 1%. Current service delivery does not differentiate based on sexual orientation. All members of staff do receive regular	N

			diversity training to ensure that all customers receive fair and equitable service.	
	Other (give detail)	Negative	From the responses, it is clear that the majority of respondents who highlighted that they would be negatively impacted by proposals to reduce discounts were landlords concerned about incurring additional costs. Registered social landlords will not be affected by the proposed changes to the council tax discount on empty properties. This is because they qualify for Class B exemption under the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 (as amended). The above exemption applies for the first six months that a property is unoccupied and unfurnished provided it is owned by a body established for charitable purposes, and only in circumstances where the property was last occupied in furtherance of the objects of that charitable body.	N
	Further information	N/A		
6	Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative affect on particular equality groups? If yes, give details below.			(Delete one) Yes
	Yes, it links to all proposals related to the overall Budget Consultation			
7	Which justifiable action does the evidence, engagement and consultation suggest you take? (Bold which one applies)			
	A	No major change required		
	B	Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality		
	C	Continue despite possible adverse impact		
	D	Stop and rethink your proposal		

Now complete the action and monitoring plan on the next page

Action and monitoring plan

Action Date	Action	Responsibility	Outcome Date	Outcome
17/12/14	Update EqIA with final results of consultation	Elise Hopkins	07/01/15	
17/12/14	Undertake publicity to raise awareness of any changes	Elise Hopkins	01/02/15	
17/12/14	Proactively identify individuals likely to be impacted and make direct contact to raise awareness and offer assistance.	Elise Hopkins	01/02/15	

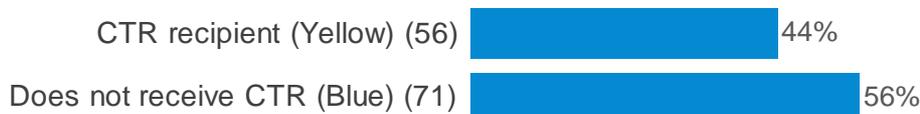
Update to EqIA

Date	Detail
16/01/14	Updated EqIA with interim results from consultation.

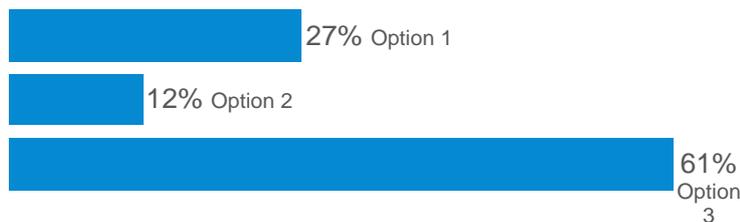
CT Discount Consultation 2014

This report was generated on 12th December 2014, giving the results for 127 respondents.

Receive CTR or not?



Regarding council tax discount for a property that is unoccupied and unfurnished, which of the following options do you prefer? Tick one only.



- Option 1** – completely remove the discount for empty and unfurnished properties.
- Option 2** – retain the 100% discount for empty and unfurnished properties but reduce the period of the discount to the first 7 days.
- Option 3** – retain the 100% discount and 3 month time period.

Why do you prefer the option you ticked in Q1? Please tell us.

Why do you prefer the option you ticked in Q1? Please tel...

Landlords have costs of repair and advertising and can send them heavily into debt - especially when tenants damage property which in turn can cause major financial hardship.

when a tennant leaves without notice (and they do) it is impossible to relet in a short period first more than likely you have to redecorate then advertise the property to find a suitable tenant who may have to give notice to their previous landlord it all takes time.

Properties need not be empty for extended periods there requirements are always there whether commercial or residential. Financial implications are usually the cause.

equitable arrangement give that one is not residing in the proeprty. therefore why should council taxes be paid.

There is no one occupying the property who require any council services - it is unfair to charge for nothing.

this covers a period when a property is empty between tenants, but gives the property owner encouragement to make sure the property is not left empty

Like in my circumstances I am paying poll tax on my own property and having to pay out on the empty property which my mom lived in, sadly now passed away. the 3 month leeway helps with other things you have to pay out.

As the owner of 3 let properties in the borough it is impossible to re let with todays 3 months is completely reasonable

As an owner of a rental property I already pay council tax on my own home. When trying to find a new tenant it takes longer than 7 days

because the property could be re let or sold in 3 months

this gives sufficient time for owners/occupiers/family/landlords to furnish - re rent or sell

if gives owners of the proeprty time to do what they need - also it gives people a chance to spend what money they have doing the repairs

because when a property becomes empty people need time to refurbish the property and shouldn't have to pay Council Tax for this period

Fair option die to letting processes

Why do you prefer the option you ticked in Q1? Please tell us.

Why do you prefer the option you ticked in Q1? Please tel...

if someone leaves a property empty it still requires certain services i.e. fire brigade police - may be bins emptied.

it gives incentive to buy empty and decapitated properties

property ownership equals responsibility for caring for the property or arranging for another to dwell and accept responsibility for care maintenance - paying council tax

gives enough time for work to be carried out before occupying

when a property becomes empty, I don't always get the keys back straight away and also the property will always require some sort of work to make it lettable again this takes time

because I do not own this property by choice and am trying to sell it

because 3 months (option 3) is too long but 1 week is too short. why not 4 weeks - landlords may not have a tenant ready to move in when someone leaves at short notice

to encourage re-letting of the property

I carried out major work on one of my properties no one gave me my tax reduction

Landlords do not leave properties empty by choice. Walsall needs to attract (not discourage) investment. Removal of the discount unfairly penalises landlords

why are properties empty with a housing shortage? this will encourage wiser use of property

allow time to make arrangements after a death

Eases financial pressures drastically

because some properties are an eyesore and have been neglected. some people buy these properties just to make money

It is not possible to re-let a property in 7 days given the many regulations landlords have to comply with. if we lose the discount, rent will increase and be less affordable

Property possibly empty for only a short period of time while major repairs and refurbishment takes place

Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this council tax discount (for properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished), if any, could be applied? Please tell us.

Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this coun...

I believe the discount should be increased to a 12 month period

no

although I think the above is good, in cases of a bereavement of a relative I think a longer time should be allowed.

give 6 months 100% discount

It could be applied for 3-6 months for those on low income.

1 week 100% next 3 weeks 50% chance to repair

Do not pay the living wage and use the money on the deficit.

Empty homes list to be put on line on Council website so potential buyers can buy them and put them back into housing stock

other alternative is when the property is empty we pay nothing as soon as it is let get in touch with you.

council buy back scheme time limited repairs

I do think if it needs a lot of work when you buy you should have 12 months to do this.

Empty properties should be discounted throughout as un-occupied period as long as they provide proof of building and contents insurance

yes 100% discount for unoccupied time. This is an unnecessary tax only justified through legalised robbery

even 50% for 1st 12 months would be good

as a landlord and experienced the problems of social tenants that leave the property in appalling condition it requires considerable time to refurb

Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this council tax discount (for properties that are unoccupied and unfurnished), if any, could be applied? Please tell us.

Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this coun...

As above, people in the process of selling a property of a parent that has died should receive the discount. People buying houses for profit & personal gain should receive no benefits.

0% council tax for 12 months! = if property is empty what "services" are the paying for?

pay housing benefit direct to the landlord (as before) tenants often receive housing benefits don't pay landlord on time and even dont pay for several months then leave without paying. I know it has happened to me more than once.

step down in increments over a longer period of time 75%, 50%, 25% etc

100% discount if unoccupied / unfurnished for an unlimited period, not just 3 months, not really

tax discount for 30 days

no

retain the 100% discount for the 1st month reducing in increments of 25% for the second and third months. (100% first months, 75% second month, 50% third month)

N/A

reduce the time as 100% discount to 2 month

As a compromise give a 50% discount for 3 months

continue 100% discount until occupied

no

Perhaps cut to 2 months at 100% discount. It takes average 6 weeks to do tenant search and referencing and immigration checks

Regarding council tax discount for a property that requires major repair or is undergoing structural alteration, which of the following options do you prefer? Tick one only.

Option 1. Completely remove the discount for these properties (35)  29%

Option 2. Retain the 50% discount and 12 month time period (86)  71%

Why do you prefer the option you ticked in Q4. Please tell us.

Why do you prefer the option you ticked in Q4. Please tel...

makes the most sense

property not liveable

if property requires refurbishment and not obtaining any services from the local authority they should have as long as possible to get property completed.

answered in q2

Neither ticked above - my option 50% discount for 6 months. 6 months is long enough to complete such works especially as its probably being undertaken by a developer.

landlords with no income and costs for repairs often face serious financial hardship they will be less likely to provide homes for let and everyone loses out.

often major repairs are due to tennants misusing the proeprty i.e. boiler and radiators removed doors taken off damage to sanitary wear causing water flood it has happened to me.

Would ben used as an excuse - for properties to be unsafe etc to enable them to be demolished, to enhance the land value.

equitable arrangement

see 2 above

the discount encourages the owner to undertake repairs as quickly as possible.

Why do you prefer the option you ticked in Q4. Please tell us.

Why do you prefer the option you ticked in Q4. Please tel...

to help financially

6 months is reasonable to carry out MOST repairs and renewals

if you are unable to occupy a property, you are not using the services

because I as a landlord would prefer that option but option 2 would make sure the was done quickly

Th housing market needs people to take on empty run down derelict etc and an incentive will help, to renovate to a habitable standard

as in q4 by paying 50% of rates the owner has a chance to spend money on necessary work

Again if a property is going through refurb work the person shouldn't have to pay

better option for landlords

hoping after rebuilding property will be occupied

Again to give some sort of incentives to get the property in a habitable condition

This allows a good time for renovation work to be carried out. no services are being used

major work takes time and resources. having to pay council tax will just add to the burden and a s a result it may take longer to set the proeprty back into use

i didnt think either option is reasonable. some homes undergoing alterations are uninhabitable. in many cases the work drags on for months or even years

to encourage bringing the property back into use asap

The council should encourage repairs and redevelopment in Walsall which has notoriously high levels of empty properties (particularly retail) there should be a discount for a limited period

why should i subsidise the profit of a developer? the market price will adjust

eases financial tension

everyone should be paying council tax on all properties whether they live there or not. no one should be exempt

If a property needs major repair to put it back in the housing market. Why penalise landlords as long as they are repairing it

Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this council tax discount (for properties that require major repair or are undergoing structural alterations), if any, could be applied? Please tell us.

Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this coun...

Perhaps where major repair is needed to make a house safe and habitable, a reasonable period of discount could be applied by the council for that work only.

no

Reduction while persons are actually working on site some timesheet arrangements?

period of time given - example 6 months

same as before

not at all

I believe the discount should be 100% discount for 12 months

no

I think the discount for this should be retained as the works improve the look of the area. If they weren't done the buildings could become rundown. possibly give the discount but for say 6 months instead of 12 months to make some savings.

Discounts could be given/ retained for those on low incomes

no

Make cuts in the wages

Reduce period of discount from 12 months to 3 or 6 months max, This would force people to do major work quicker.

Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this council tax discount (for properties that require major repair or are undergoing structural alterations), if any, could be applied?

Please tell us.

Do you have any alternative suggestions for how this coun...

discount applicable for council supervised repairs council buy back scheme

6 month minimum but prefer 12

I think it should be 12 months or at least 8

if the structural alterations mean the occupants have to move out due to health and safety reasons there should be no charge at all

zero taxation for zero occupancy

do not charge for services not received

As above again, why is there no box to tick for "none of the above"?

last time major work was required I did not have funding for the repairs the property stood empty for 10 months if funding was made available we could make speedy repairs and re let soon

see 3 above

no

apply the discount only to empty properties that are being renovated/restored major repairs etc and not to home owners living on site while they have an extension (per say)

50% discount for 3 months if someone is having more than 3 months work done they can afford to pay council tax

let owners pay

A period for building works should be agreed with the owner (based upon the event and the work) this will avoid abuse and generate a fair compromise

continue 50% discount if not more.

none

Make sure landlords are repairing properties

Can you think of any other ways of achieving the £1m savings needed? Such as reducing other services to the public, if so what services and / or increasing the level of council tax.

Can you think of any other ways of achieving the £1m savi...

much more stringent on doctors give out discable benefits such as mobility and charge for parking for mobility vehicles.

Do not pay the living wage and make cuts in the pay for local councillors.

get rid of over zealous traffic warden who plague Walsall town centre. Its a no go area for me.

as tax payers we receive very little detail on how the council spends its money. our elected councillors should have access to the detail of how the money is spent and therefore where savings can be made

stop paying council tax for those who do not work, stop hitting the working class people who pay enough tax. cap benefits bring in food vouchers

A small increase in the council tax

re assess properties that have been extended or have additional buildings in their gardens!!!!

Increase council tax slightly. However I heard on the news that police authorities are looking to increase their precept significantly because similar budgetary cuts so I am worried the council tax will increase by unaffordable amounts if we aren't careful and with the discounts available for those.

consider the management structure - cutting out unnecessary levels

yes make sure tenants who don't work contribute like other people.

thats easy - stop paying expenses and cull the high wage earners because if they were any good we would not be in this mess.

reinstate speed cameras - safely and you can make a small fortune from the idiots who are on the roads.

Can you think of any other ways of achieving the £1m savings needed? Such as reducing other services to the public, if so what services and / or increasing the level of council tax.

Can you think of any other ways of achieving the £1m savi...

Tell the government to print more money - this has seemed to work through history and lead us to now!

Senior directors to be paid much less in line with other public sector workers facing pay freezes and pension cuts!

Reduce number of traffic wardens - having negative impact on town centre reducing customers into town due to excessive car parking charges (which do not cover costs of wardens)

offer to buy properties to increase housing stock. cut the amount spent on public transport buses always empty

Cut some Benefits to people who don't deserve them

Remove all parking restrictions from town centre and encourage new tax paying businesses

check on your in house spending i.e. turn lights off. In office buildings try and reduce temp when no one is in office and anything else which common sense tells you.

increase TOP band significantly

reduce the level of council tax benefits

no

not enough space provided

Cut down trees in certain area this will save money for council as they wont have to always maintain them or sell off lock up garages.

make sure the council worker do not have too many days off and get paid (private sector is much less) Why should the council worker get paid when absent. Stop this and you will save.

make the council more efficient and effective in its role. it wastes a lot of money on commissioning reports and failing to apply best practice

closer and more effective monitoring of household refuse to reduce contaminated recycling or garden waste

A reasonable increase in Council Tax and close scrutiny on days taken off by council staff!

every household bins only need a collection every 2 weeks as if you recycle properly there is hardly any rubbish to throw away and people would have to recycle instead of being lazy

Cancel expensive roundabouts with silly flashing lights that waste electricity. Cancel flashing zebra crossings. Cancel all flashing road signs - reflectors do the job!

Are you...?

Male (77)  64%

Female (44)  36%

Your age, please write in.

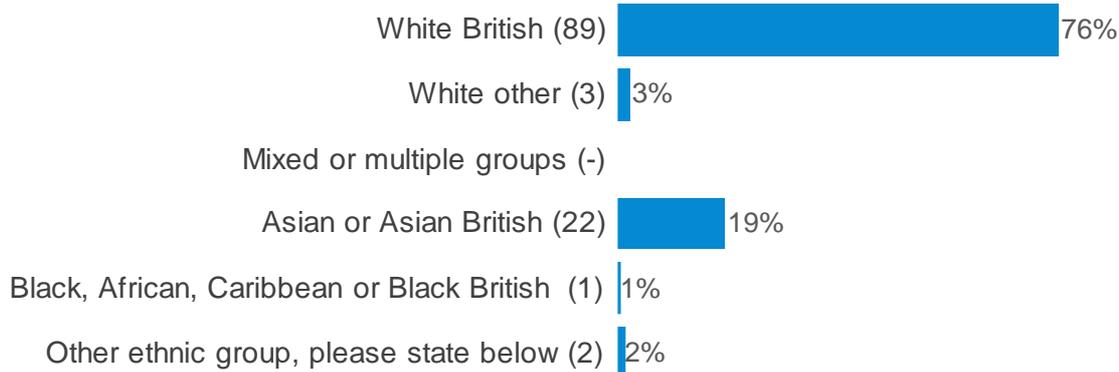
	Count	Sum	Mean	Sample Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Range
	114	6158	54.02	16.41	18	84	66

Do you consider yourself disabled? Tick one only

Yes (15)  13%

No (98)  87%

What is your ethnic group? Tick one only. (Ethnic background)



Other ethnic group please state

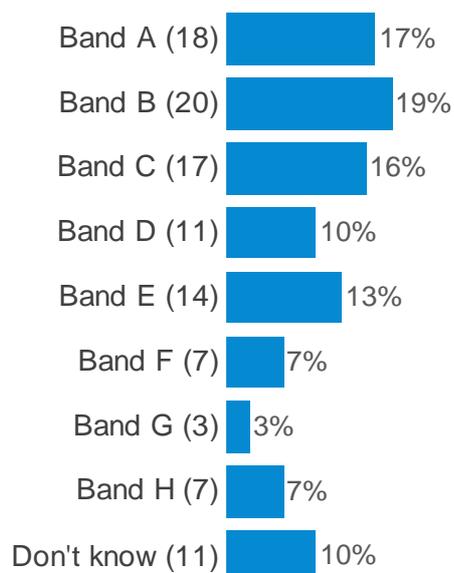
Other ethnic group please state

- Italian
- White Asian
- English
- White English
- Sikh
- chinese

Your home postcode, please write in.

Your home postcode	Your home postcode
WS3 3RG	wv13
WV13	b74 3pa
ws10 9jl	ws5 3nq
WS12 0QA	b74 3es
WS3 4LW	ws3 3sq
WS5 3JN	B21 0HJ
ws1 7ds	b43 7qr
MK8 9DR	ws9 8nh
ws2 0ja	
b74 3da	
ws3 3ds	
ws3 1hs	
WS3 4LR	
ws3 4ee	
WS9 8BA	
ws2 9as	
WS2 7JP	
b73 6cc	
WS9 0DW	
WS5 3NH	
WS10	
WS3 5DZ	

What council tax band is your current home? Tick one only.



Do you currently receive a council tax discount for a property or properties in Walsall? Tick all that apply.

