

Appendix 1 - Responses to the Council Tax premium consultation survey

Please note: some percentage figures on this report are rounded up or down to the nearest decimal place and therefore some consolidated percentages may not total exactly 100%. For example, 50.44 would be shown as 50.4% and 50.45 would be shown as 50.5%. Also, where more than one answer was possible to a question, the total percentage may add up to more than 100%.

If you require this information in an alternative format e.g. Large Print please contact council.tax@swansea.gov.uk or ring us on 01792 635382

Council Tax: Have your Say

The Council is seeking views on proposed changes to Council Tax charges for owners of long-term empty properties and second homes in the city. There are currently around 2,200 empty properties in Swansea at a time when there are 4,000 families and individuals seeking good quality accommodation. There are also around 1,800 second homes in Swansea.

One of the ways to address this problem is for the council to introduce a premium on Council Tax for such properties, the proceeds can be used to help privately-owned property owners bring empty homes back into use and meet local housing needs.

At present the council has used its discretion to award all long-term empty domestic properties a 50% discount on Council Tax. If the new proposals are introduced, this will change and there are details of how this would look below. The changes being proposed should not affect people who own more than one property if the house is occupied by a tenant, as the tenant would normally be liable to pay the Council Tax. Nor does it affect those who offer homes for holiday let where the holiday home is subject to business rates.

Have your say on the proposals by taking part in this short survey, the consultation closes on Friday 9th August.

Long-term empty properties

Swansea Council wants to help reduce the number of long-term empty properties in the city. These properties, which have been unoccupied or unfurnished for at least one year, have a negative impact on communities and on the availability of housing.

In Swansea there are approximately 1400 long-term empty properties at a time when more than 4,000 people are on the council housing waiting list. We want to work with property owners to reduce the number of these empty properties and bring them back into use.

Do you agree or disagree that the Council should put measures in place to reduce the number of long-term empty properties in Swansea?

178 (39.5%)	Strongly agree	161 (35.7%)	Tend to agree	37 (8.2%)	Tend to disagree	75 (16.6%)	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------------------	----------------	------------------	-----------	---------------------	------------	----------------------

Review of the 50% Council Tax Discount

Properties which remain unoccupied and unfurnished after any period of statutory exemption has expired, receive an ongoing 50% discount on their annual Council Tax bills. Over 2,200 properties currently receive this discount in Swansea and more than 360 of them have been receiving this discount for five years or more.

We want to review this discount and consider whether it should continue to be available.

Our proposal is to remove the 50% Council Tax discount on long-term empty properties. If agreed this change would take place from April 2020. This would apply from the end of any statutory period of exemption from Council Tax (which varies depending on the specific exemption class).

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to remove the 50% Council Tax discount on long-term empty properties as outlined above?

218 (39.9%)	Strongly agree	157 (28.7%)	Tend to agree	51 (9.3%)	Tend to disagree	121 (22.1%)	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------------------	----------------	------------------	-----------	---------------------	----------------	----------------------

If you disagree, please tell us why

170 (100.0%)

Are there any alternatives that you think the Council should consider?

180 (100.0%)

Long-term empty Properties - introduction of a premium

If the Council removes the 50% discount, it can also charge a premium to an owner of a long-term empty property. The premium would be added to the annual Council Tax for that property. The premium could be up to an extra 100% of the Council Tax due on that property.

The introduction of a premium could encourage the reduction of long-term empty properties in Swansea. Funds raised from this premium could also be used to help bring long-term empty homes back into use.

Our proposal is to introduce a Council Tax premium of 100% on properties that have been empty for over 12 months from April 1, 2020. This would mean that certain properties that have been unoccupied and unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year, and do not qualify for an exemption, would in effect pay 200% in Council Tax. For an average Band D property in Swansea, based on 2019/2020 charges, this would mean that the Council Tax due for the property for a whole year would be approximately £3,200.

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to introduce a Council Tax premium on properties that have been empty for over 12 months?

158 (30.3%)	Strongly agree	131 (25.1%)	Tend to agree	70 (13.4%)	Tend to disagree	163 (31.2%)	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------------------	----------------	------------------	------------	---------------------	----------------	----------------------

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal that the level of premium should be set at 100% (as described above)?

128 (25.3%)	Strongly agree	102 (20.2%)	Tend to agree	69 (13.6%)	Tend to disagree	207 (40.9%)	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------------------	----------------	------------------	------------	---------------------	----------------	----------------------

If you disagree with the above please tell us why.

257 (100.0%)

Are there any alternatives that you think the Council should consider?

198 (100.0%)

If our proposals for long-term empty properties are agreed, we would use any income gained to help bring long-term empty homes back into use and meet local housing needs.

Do you agree or disagree that the income should be used in this way?

204 (40.2%)	Strongly agree	140 (27.6%)	Tend to agree	55 (10.8%)	Tend to disagree	109 (21.5%)	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------------------	----------------	------------------	------------	---------------------	----------------	----------------------

Second Homes

We estimate that there are around 1,800 second homes in Swansea. These are properties which are not a persons sole or main home and are substantially furnished. Just over half of all second homeowners live outside of Swansea.

In Swansea, 67% of all second homes are located in Gower, Swansea West and the Marina areas. The remaining properties are evenly spread throughout Swansea.

A higher percentage of second homes tend to be in rural areas where there is often a shortage of affordable housing. There are fewer properties built in rural areas and, as a result, there are fewer affordable homes available for local people.

Do you agree or disagree that the Council should put measures in place to reduce the number of second homes in Swansea?

109 (19.7%)	Strongly agree	62 (11.2%)	Tend to agree	80 (14.5%)	Tend to disagree	301 (54.5%)	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------------------	------------	------------------	------------	---------------------	----------------	----------------------

Second homes - introduction of a premium

Second homes in Swansea are currently subject to a full Council Tax charge without any discounts.

The Council has the discretion to charge an extra premium of up to 100% of the standard rate of Council Tax on second homes.

Our proposal is to introduce a Council Tax premium on second homes from April 1, 2021. The level of premium we proposed to introduce is 100%. This would mean that second homes, which do not qualify for an exemption, would in effect pay 200% in Council Tax. For an average Band D property in Swansea, based on 2019/2020 charges, this would mean that the Council Tax due for the property for a whole year would be approximately £3,200.

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to introduce a Council Tax premium on second homes?

108 (19.5%)	Strongly agree	44 (7.9%)	Tend to agree	42 (7.6%)	Tend to disagree	360 (65.0%)	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------------------	-----------	------------------	-----------	---------------------	----------------	----------------------

Do you agree or disagree with our proposal that the level of premium should be set at 100% (as described above).

90 (16.3%)	Strongly agree	39 (7.1%)	Tend to agree	41 (7.4%)	Tend to disagree	381 (69.1%)	Strongly disagree
------------	-------------------	-----------	------------------	-----------	---------------------	----------------	----------------------

If you disagree with the above please tell us why

382 (100.0%)

Are there any alternatives that the Council should consider?

280 (100.0%)

If our proposals for second homes are agreed, we would use any income gained to help bring long-term empty homes back into use and meet local housing needs.

Do you agree or disagree that the income should be used in this way?

136 (25.8%)	Strongly agree	96 (18.2%)	Tend to agree	79 (15.0%)	Tend to disagree	216 (41.0%)	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------------------	------------	------------------	------------	---------------------	----------------	----------------------

Do you have any other comments in relation to this consultation?

272 (100.0%)

Do any of the proposals outlined within this consultation impact you directly?

377 (69.0%) Yes

169 (31.0%) No

If yes, please tell us how?

- 59 (15.5%) I am the owner of a long-term empty property in Swansea
- 253 (66.4%) I am the owner of a second home in Swansea
- 87 (22.8%) Other (please write in)
- 129 (100.0%)

About You

These questions are optional, but we need to ask them to understand if our consultation has reached the right people and to understand how different groups may be affected by the proposals allowing us to address this if we can. In accordance with Data Protection law, any information requested on the following questions is held in the strictest confidence for data analysis purposes only. For further information about how Swansea Council uses your personal data, please see our corporate privacy notice on our website.

Are you...?

- 272 (54.8%) Male
- 224 (45.2%) Female

Is your gender the same as that which you were assigned at birth?

- 449 (97.6%) Yes
- 11 (2.4%) No

How old are you ...

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 0 (0.0%) Under 16 | 149 (30.0%) 56 - 65 |
| 4 (0.8%) 16 - 25 | 134 (27.0%) 66 - 75 |
| 26 (5.2%) 26 - 35 | 28 (5.6%) 76 - 85 |
| 45 (9.1%) 36 - 45 | 3 (0.6%) Over 85 |
| 87 (17.5%) 46 - 55 | 21 (4.2%) Prefer not to say |

Would you describe yourself as...

Please mark all that apply

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 272 (56.4%) British | 2 (0.4%) Other British (please write in at end) |
| 249 (51.7%) Welsh | 6 (1.2%) Non British (please write in at end) |
| 23 (4.8%) English | 0 (0.0%) Gypsy/traveller |
| 4 (0.8%) Irish | 0 (0.0%) Refugee/Asylum Seeker (please write in current/last nationality at end) |
| 8 (1.7%) Scottish | |

Write in here

- 15 (100.0%)

To what 'ethnic' group do you consider

- | | |
|--|---|
| 450 (94.1%) White - British | 0 (0.0%) Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi |
| 17 (3.6%) Any other White background (please write in at end) | 0 (0.0%) Any other Asian background (please write in at end) |

0 (0.0%) Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	0 (0.0%) Black or Black British - Caribbean
2 (0.4%) Mixed - White & Black African	0 (0.0%) Black or Black British - African
1 (0.2%) Mixed - White & Asian	0 (0.0%) Any other Black background (please write in at end)
0 (0.0%) Any other Mixed background (please write in at end)	0 (0.0%) Arab
6 (1.3%) Asian or Asian British - Indian	2 (0.4%) Other ethnic group (please write in at end)
0 (0.0%) Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	
Write in here	
24 (100.0%)	

What is your religion, even if you are not currently practising?

Please mark one box or write in

183 (40.4%) No religion	0 (0.0%) Jewish
252 (55.6%) Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant, and all other Christian denominations)	1 (0.2%) Muslim
5 (1.1%) Buddhist	0 (0.0%) Sikh
1 (0.2%) Hindu	11 (2.4%) Other
Any other religion or philosophical belief (please write in)	
14 (100.0%)	

Do you consider that you are actively practising your religion?

132 (33.1%) Yes
267 (66.9%) No

What is your sexual orientation

9 (2.1%) Bisexual	59 (13.6%) Prefer not to say
5 (1.2%) Gay/ Lesbian	5 (1.2%) Other
356 (82.0%) Heterosexual	
Please write in	
24 (100.0%)	

Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh?

Please mark all that apply

93 (20.8%) Understand spoken Welsh	27 (6.0%) Write Welsh
46 (10.3%) Speak Welsh	69 (15.4%) Learning Welsh
58 (12.9%) Read Welsh	259 (57.8%) None of these

Which languages do you use from day to day?

Please mark all that apply

455 (99.3%) English
32 (7.0%) Welsh
7 (1.5%) Other (write in)

Please write in
14 (100.0%)

Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?

By long-standing we mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over time.

This could also be defined Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as: "Having a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities."

83 (17.6%) Yes

388 (82.4%) No

Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?

68 (17.6%) Yes

319 (82.4%) No

Thank you for your participation