

# Consultation Questions

## Appendix 3

### **Empty Homes Strategy, including changes to Council Tax Exemptions & Discounts.**

Harborough District Council is currently reviewing its Empty Homes Strategy and welcomes your views on our approach to bringing private properties back into use.

The Council regards empty homes as a wasted resource particularly as there is such an acute demand for affordable accommodation in the area. The Council wants to improve how we work with the private housing sector to improve the availability of affordable and suitable accommodation across the district.

So, whether you are a local resident, landlord, local business or owner of an empty property we would like to hear your views. The questions should only take a few minutes to complete and are split out between the general Empty Property Strategy and some specific questions around the changes to the Council Tax Premiums and discounts we are considering.

#### **General Comments on the Empty Property Strategy**

- 1. Do you think the draft strategy clearly explains why empty properties are a priority for the council?**

**RANGE FROM 'STRONGLY SUPPORT' TO 'STRONGLY DISAGREE'**

- 2. Do you agree with the Council's approach to identifying and prioritising empty properties?**

**RANGE FROM 'STRONGLY SUPPORT' TO 'STRONGLY DISAGREE'**

- 3. Do you agree with the Council's approach for providing help and assistance to owners of empty properties?**

**RANGE FROM 'STRONGLY SUPPORT' TO 'STRONGLY DISAGREE'**

- 4. Do you agree with the Council's approach to enforcement when appropriate to deliver the strategy?**

**RANGE FROM 'STRONGLY SUPPORT' TO 'STRONGLY DISAGREE'**

**5. Do you have any other comments on the Councils draft empty property strategy?**

**Council tax discounts, exemptions and premiums and Second homes**

As part of this work we are looking at council tax discounts and exemptions, which reduce what our income could be in some areas. We're also looking at where we can charge extra council tax in some areas. By giving discounts to second and empty home-owners, and avoiding premiums, we miss out on around £550,000 in additional money in year one that could be used to invest and protect important public services not just Harborough District Council but Police, Fire and Rescue and the County Council.

We also know that, over time, circumstances and needs within our community can change and our policies need to reflect these changes accurately. Our goal is to for our council tax system to be fair, transparent and equitable for all residents.

This set of proposals would remove discounts and exemptions for second home-owners and increase the amount of council tax paid by owners of long-term empty properties.

As well as increasing our income, we hope that these proposals would reduce the number of properties that stay empty for a long time.

**Proposals**

**PROPOSAL 1 - EMPTY PROPERTIES**

Harborough District Council currently gives a 100% council tax discount on empty, unoccupied and unfurnished properties for one month. This means owners of empty properties pay no council tax for one month. We are proposing to remove this discount and charge full council tax from the point of ownership.

**1. Are you the owner of an empty, unfurnished property?**

**YES / NO**

**If you answered yes to question 1**

**2. Are you in need of or currently carrying out major repairs to the property?**

**YES / NO**

**3. Do you support or disagree with this proposal?**

**YES / NO**

**4. Are you the owner of a furnished, unoccupied property?**

**YES / NO**

**If you answered yes to question 4, is your property:**

- **Subject to probate**
- **An emergency situation**
- **Owner in hospital or residential care home**

**5. Do you support or disagree with Proposal 1?**

**RANGE FROM 'STRONGLY SUPPORT' TO 'STRONGLY DISAGREE'**

**6. Do you have any further comments about Proposal 1?**

**PROPOSAL 2 - LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES**

Harborough District Council currently charges one and a half the standard council tax rate (150%) if a property has been empty for between two and five years. We are proposing that council tax on long term empty properties will be charged as follows:

- Empty 1-5 years – double standard council tax (200%)
- Empty 5 – 10 years – triple standard council tax (300%)
- Empty 10 years or more – four times standard council tax (400%)

**7. Do you support or disagree with this Proposal 2?**

**RANGE FROM 'STRONGLY SUPPORT' TO 'STRONGLY DISAGREE'**

**8. Do you have any comments about this Proposal 2?**

**PROPOSAL 3 – SECOND HOMES**

Second homeowners currently pay the standard rate of council tax on those properties in Harborough District. We are proposing that these property owners would pay double council tax (a 100% surcharge) from day one.

**9. Are you the owner of a second home within Harborough District?**

**YES / NO**

**10. Do you support or disagree with this Proposal 3?**

**RANGE FROM 'STRONGLY SUPPORT' TO 'STRONGLY DISAGREE'**

**11. Do you have any comments about Proposal 3?**