

London Borough of Bromley

Empty Homes Review – Consultation Report

18th December 2020

1. Empty Homes Premium for unoccupied dwellings

Bromley Council is keen to explore ways of bringing more empty homes back into use. This consultation is asking residents for views on whether Council Tax charges should be increased for owners of long-term empty homes.

There are currently around 300 homes in Bromley which are liable for Council Tax and are recorded as having been empty for 2 years or longer. Long-term empty properties are a wasted resource. For their owners, they are not earning any income and may be depreciating in value due to deterioration. For the local community, these properties can be an eyesore and a nuisance as they often attract vandalism and fly-tipping and, if homes are neglected, the value of surrounding properties tends to be reduced as a result of the neighbourhood not being perceived as a good place to live.

In many areas where there is a high demand for housing, empty homes brought back into use could become an important source of homes for households who need them. This could be either affordable homes, such as social rented housing, or market housing, such as homes for private rent or sale.

The Council is seeking residents' views on changes to the Empty Homes Premium for unoccupied dwellings from April 2021. This is a sum that would be payable in addition to the Council Tax liability should the property be unoccupied.

2. Consultation

A public consultation exercise was undertaken for recommending the changes on the premium being applied for the 2021/2022 Empty Homes Premium Scheme during a period from 30 October 2020 until 13 December 2020.

The survey was available through a variety of channels:

- A paper copy was issued to 1,049 residents or representatives of empty and occupied properties (comprising of 299 empty properties over 2 years, this being all such properties at the commencement of the consultation, 250 properties empty less than 2 years and 500 occupied properties)
- A link was available on the Council website
- The consultation was advertised on the website
- A paper insert enclosed with all Council Tax bills issued during this period directing the link on the website to complete the on-line survey

In total there were 202 responses received, 99 being via the website and 103 received by post. Of the total responses, 67 were owners of empty properties, 128 were of occupied properties and 7 has answered as owners of both empty and occupied properties.

The consultation exercise was based on 1 simple question to residents of the Borough

3. Outcomes.

Details of the full consultation question and analysis responses, both overall and broken down, are detailed below.

Q1 The Council's recommendation is that the Empty Homes Premium be applied at the rate of 100% for properties empty between 2 & 5 years, increasing to 200% after 5 years and 300% after 10 years?

	Yes	No
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Do you agree with the above recommendation?

If you disagree please write your answer here:

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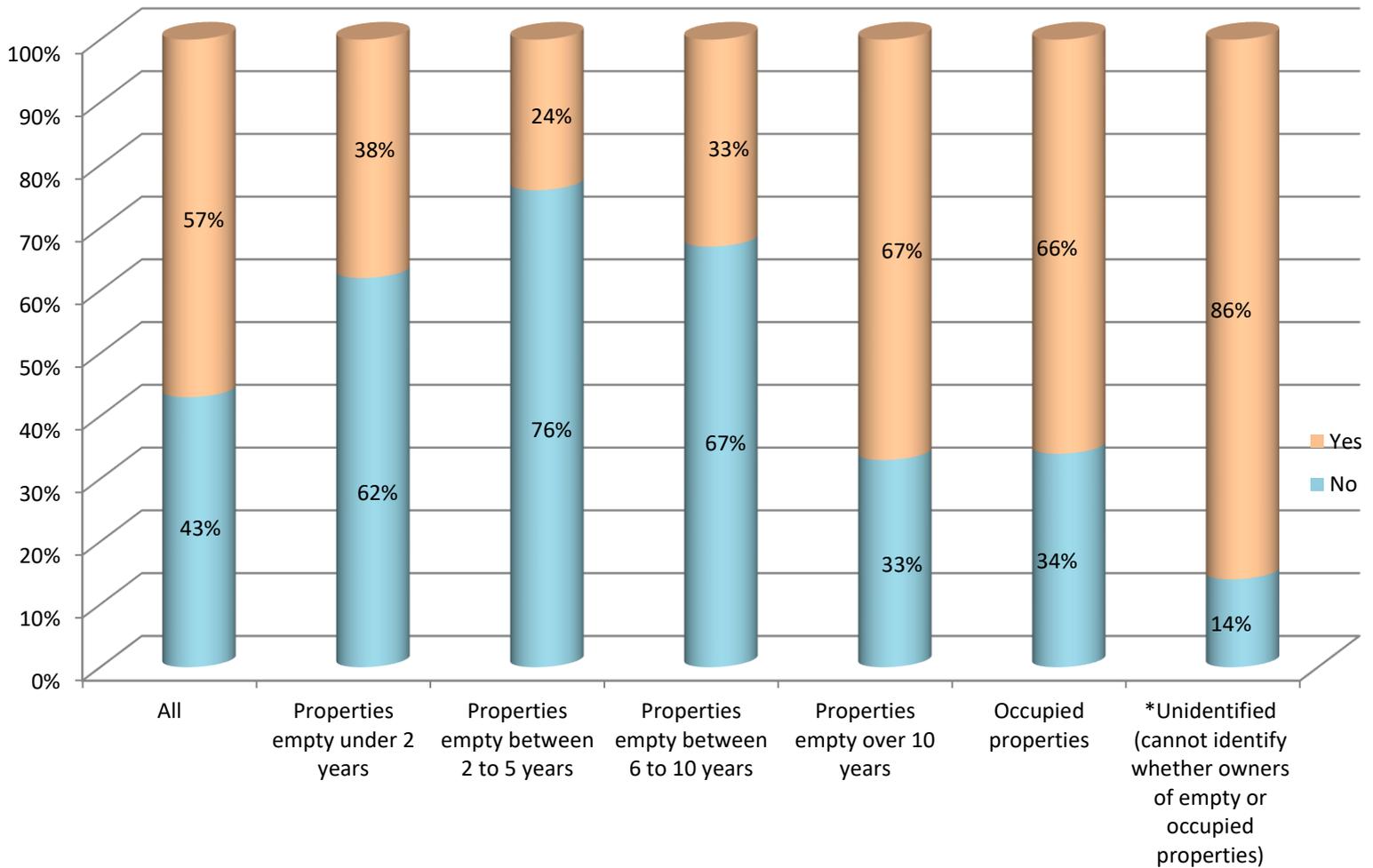
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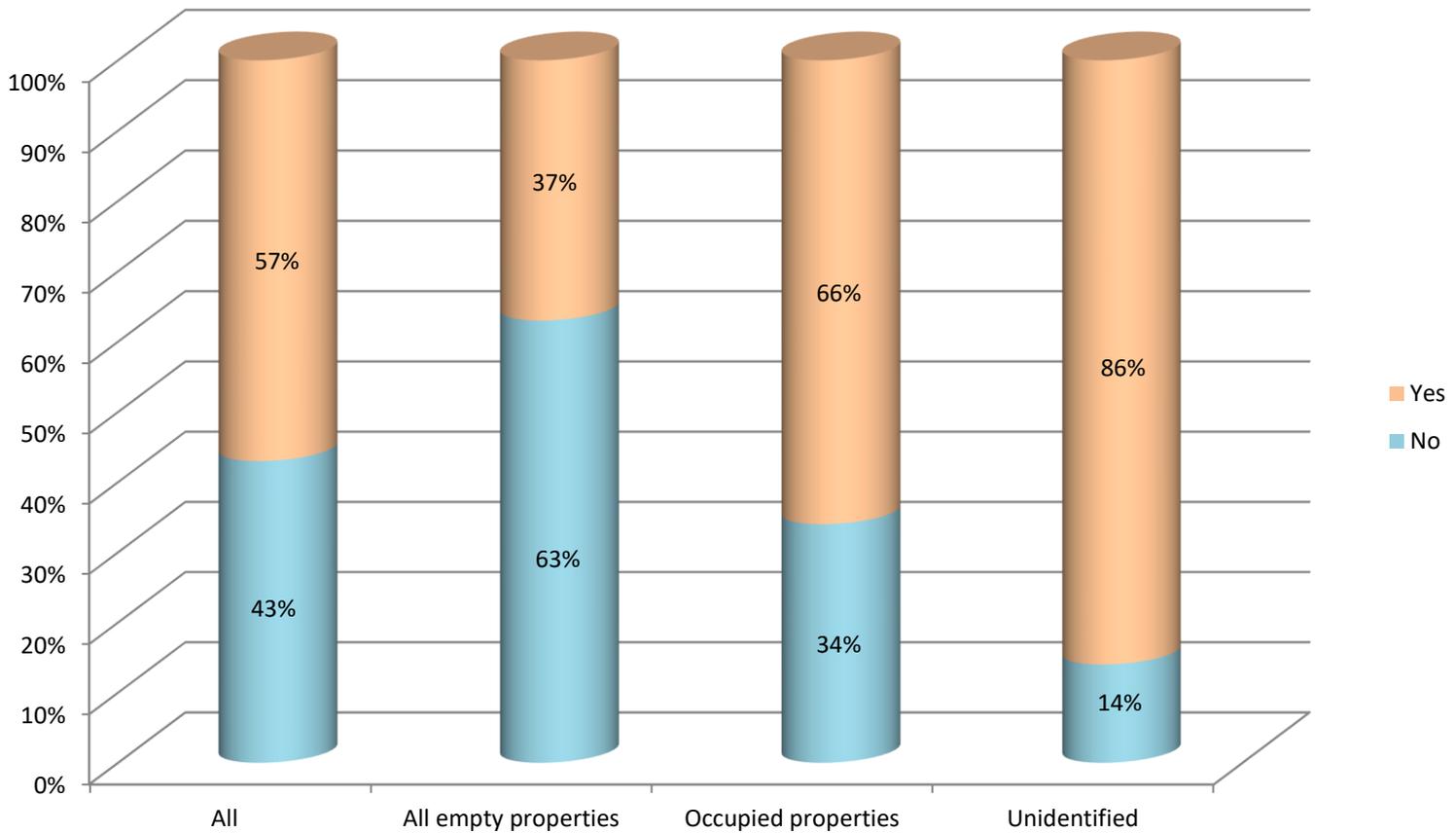
Overall response of total respondents

Of those who responded the *overall* outcome of 57% were in favour of Empty Homes Premium being applied at a rate of 100% for properties empty between 2 & 5 years, increasing to 200% after 5 years and 300% after 10 years.

Total respondents: Do you agree with the recommendation that Empty Homes Premium be applied at the rate of 100% for properties empty between 2 & 5 years , increasing to 200% after 5 years and 300% after 10 years?



Total respondents analysed by all empty and occupied properties: Do you agree with recommendation of the Empty Homes Premium being applied?



Overall response analysed by all empty and occupied properties

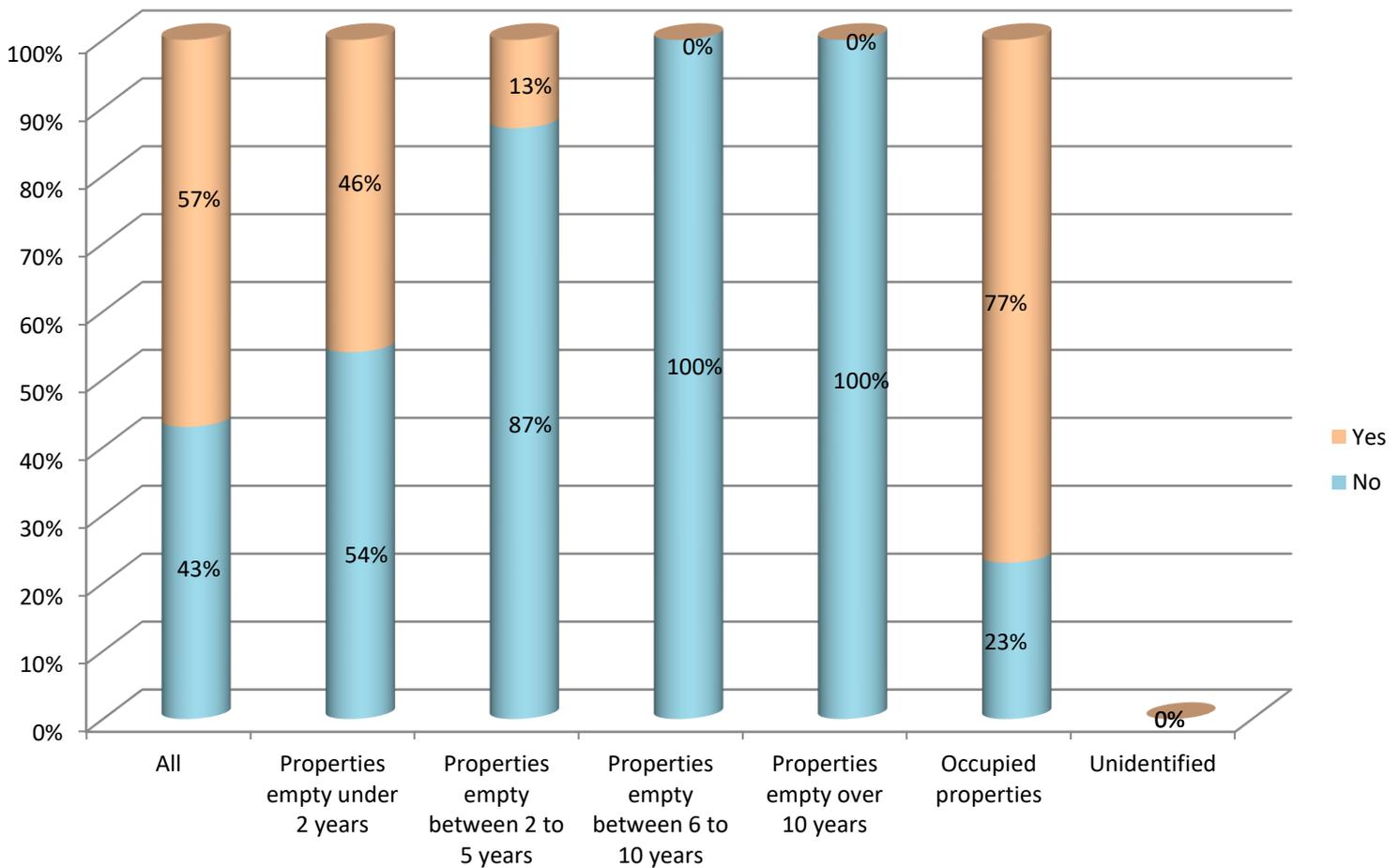
Although overall 57% were in favour of the empty homes premium being applied at the rate of 100% for properties empty between 2 & 5 years, increasing to 200% after 5 years and 300% after 10 years, 63% of owners of empty properties were not in favour of this premium.

Analysis of Respondents by Postal Survey Type

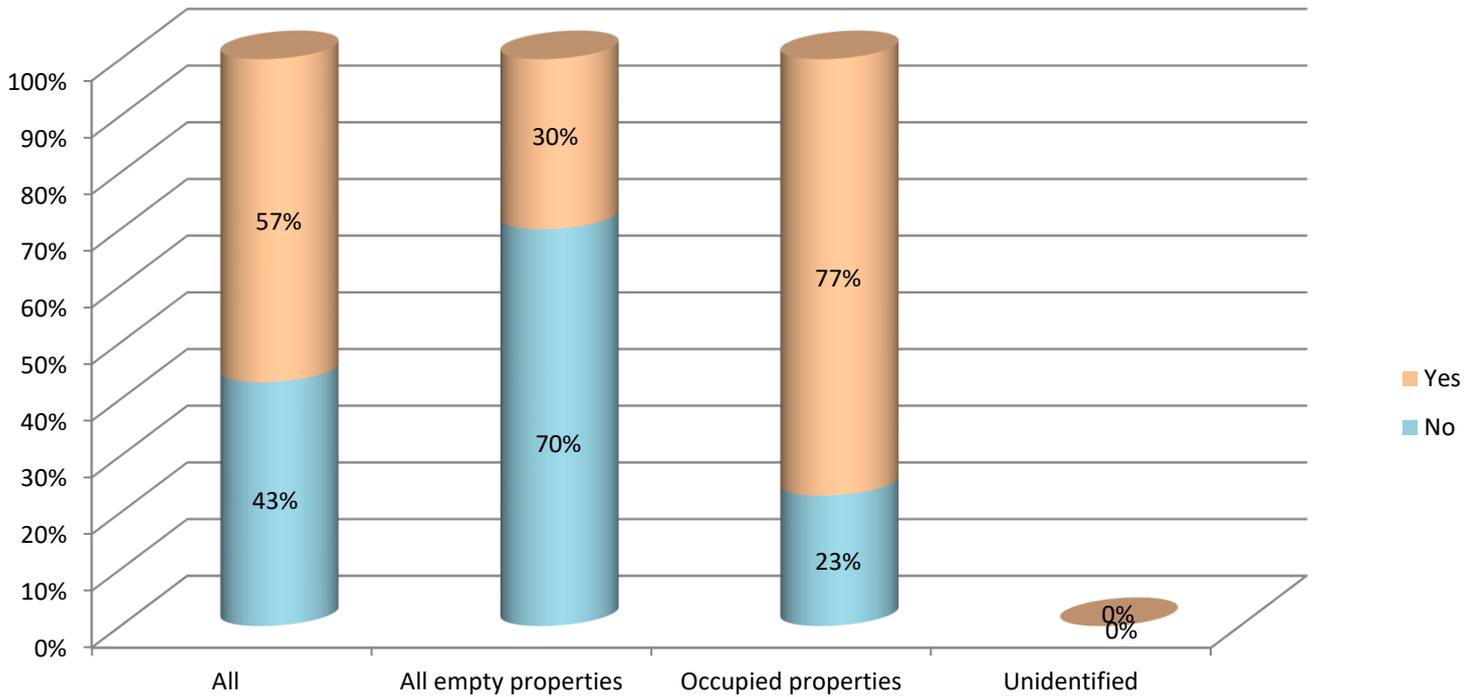
Of the postal responses received, overall 57% were in favour of the empty homes premium being applied at the rate of 100% for properties empty between 2 & 5 years, increasing to 200% after 5 years and 300% after 10 years, whilst 70% were against this scheme from owners of empty properties.

From the respondents there was a total of 103 responses of which 60 responses were from owners of occupied properties which equates to 58% of the respondents.

Postal Respondents: Do you agree with the recommendation of the Empty Homes Premium being applied?



Postal Respondents analysed by all empty and occupied properties: Do you agree with the recommendaton of the Empty Homes Premium being applied?



Analysis of postal respondents by all empty and occupied properties

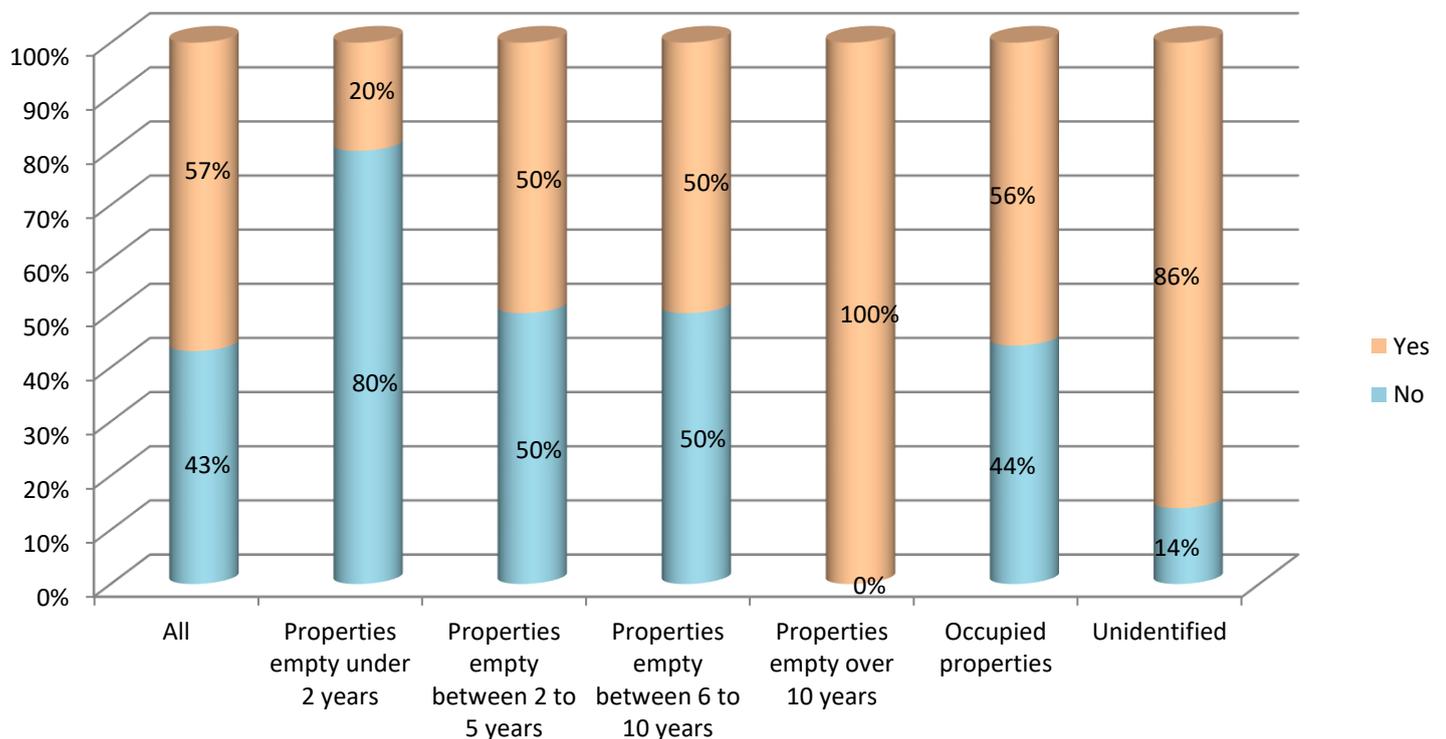
Of all responses received, overall 57% were in favour of the empty homes premium being applied at the rate of 100% for properties empty between 2 & 5 years, increasing to 200% after 5 years and 300% after 10 years. Some respondents felt that the proposed premium should be higher to encourage the best use of the borough's housing stock. However there were also opposing view from respondents expressing that there are many reasons for the property being empty and should be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Analysis of Respondents by On-line Survey Type

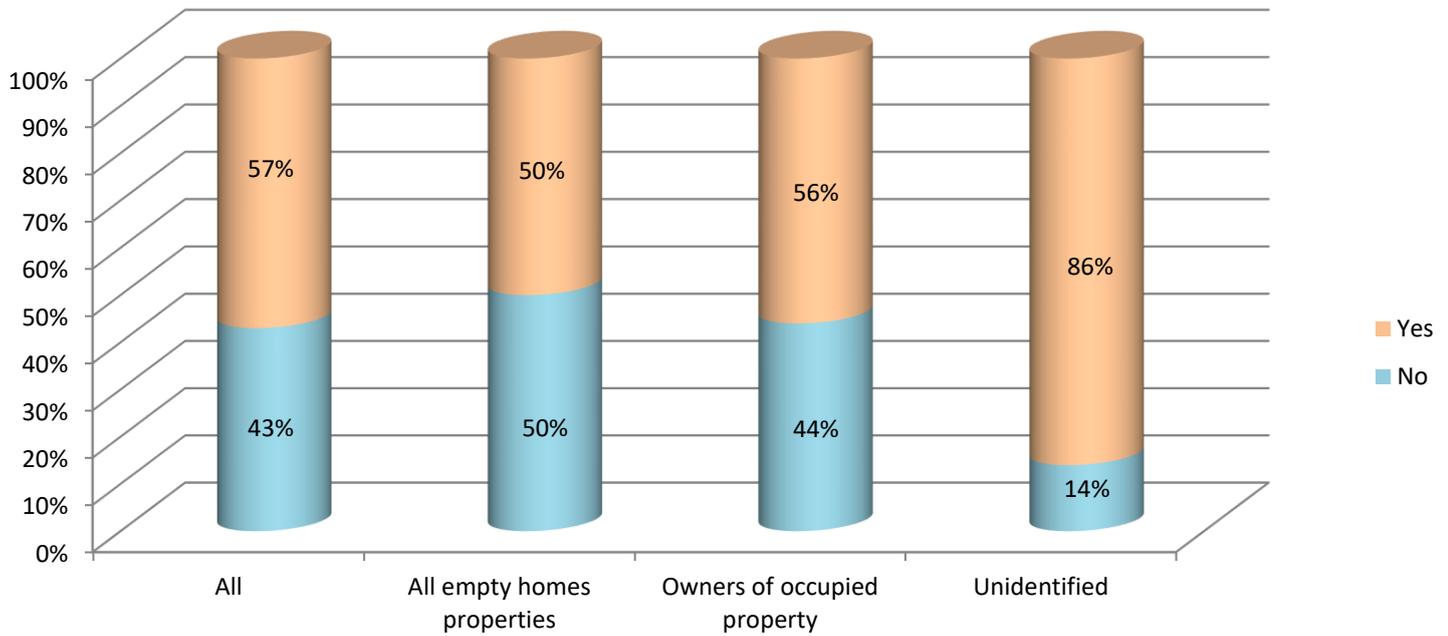
Of all responses received, overall 57% were in agreement with the empty homes premium being applied at the rate of 100% for properties empty between 2 & 5 years, increasing to 200% after 5 years and 300% after 10 years.

From the respondents, there were 68 responses from owners of occupied properties which represents 69% of all on-line respondents.

On-Line Respondents: Do you agree with the recommendation of the Empty Homes Premium being applied?



On-Line Respondents analysed by all empty and occupied properties: Do you agree with the recommendation of the Empty Homes Premium being applied?



3. Timetable for Implementation

The proposed new scheme will commence on 1st April 2021.

4. Appendix 1 – Narrative responses.

I own the leasehold property and after falling into a dispute with the freeholder, the property became uninhabitable. This property which I would very much like to rent out or sell, cannot be and I still have to pay council tax at 100%. I find I am now having to take the freeholder to court and try to obtain compensation for lack of availability to the property. I have sought assistance from the council with regards to this property, but to no avail. Increasing the empty homes premium would not be helping customers.

What happens if a new buyer comes along after, say 2 years and renovates the house so it is ready for selling or renting? It might take a year to get a dilapidated house up to standard. He will have to pay the premium? What if it is after 10 years brought empty. Will the new buyer want to pay 4 x council tax?

If the council is serious about wanting empty properties to be used then this tax must not be carried over. Let's think about this. The new buyer will be helping the council by putting the property back on the market.

In your consultation paper, which steers the reader into ticking "yes" it talks of dilapidated properties that are deteriorating. How many of the owners are paying council tax on these? I suspect no one is paying.

Your proposal hits the new buyer. I disagree with the proposal.

The property is unfit for purpose at the moment due to ongoing problems with securing a suitable design. I have spent 5 years and a small fortune not getting very far. I have even employed a planner but we only ever seem to hit a brick wall. If the council was only a little more forthcoming in this matter the property would have been finished sometime ago and occupied.

I disagree as it is penalizing owners who through no fault of their own cannot sell or let the property. They are not using council facilities so should not pay extra council tax. I would urge you to think of a fairer way to help owners.

Totally disagree if properties are being renovated there are always many unforeseen problems arise, especially the unprecedented circumstances of the entire year of 2020.

- Suppliers not being able to meet orders

- Dealing with the loss of my parent (Covid Related)

- Self-employed so financial position 2 struggle. I personally am already being penalized as the property has been empty for 2 years, but I haven't even owned it that long.

I strongly disagree people don't choose to leave their property empty

Every property that is empty has a different reason for this. My apartment is fully maintained and looked after. I am unfortunate that I have a huge court case pending in my current property as I have subsidence. This is taking longer than anticipated and costing a small fortune. I'm under immense stress and hopefully this will all be resolved in the new year.

I am more than happy for someone to come and view my apartment to see for themselves it is in immaculate order.

I think properties should be treated on a case to case basis. This is especially true in this period of Covid 19 when circumstances can mean properties are vacant longer than desired by the owner. It does not mean that the owner is not trying to seek tenants/residents in the near future. Individual owner should be contacted before being penalized on a blanket basis.

I think you need to consider the reasons why a property is empty and there needs to be a system that takes into account circumstances re probate sorting out family finances after a death or hospitalization. Not every empty house is just left with no one caring about it. Also selling houses can take time. It should be enough that you pay normal council tax is paid.

Not all houses are left empty deliberately as there can be various reasons. In our case we brought the house to renovate but after long consultation with architects it was confirmed the best thing is demolish and rebuild. It takes a long time to consider and design a new build and thereafter too long to obtain council planning permission and please note in a conservation area you don't demolish until you have permission. Delays are caused for many reasons beyond our control i.e neighbor objections, availability of builders and trades and a reason or excuse of Covid 19 !!!

P.S Please consider it is a massive step designing a house for self occupation and should not be rushed !!

I would agree to pay a premium on the council tax which should be refunded if the house was built for self occupation and proved to be so.

We have already paid and now lost the extra 3% stamp duty levied when we purchased!!!"

Hello, While agreeing with the motivation behind the proposal I would like to make one point. We are a family company who buy run down properties, renovate and sell - on a small scale. I believe this contributes to the housing shortage as the houses are often practically uninhabitable when we get them and nice slightly large houses when we sell them.

We recently had a house in another area which already operates the proposed scheme. We had to pay double council tax as under the previous owner the house had been unoccupied for over 2 years. This period is fairly common as often there is a combination of probate process and a poor quality property. We bought, renovated and sold in 12 months so producing an occupied house.

My suggestion is the change of ownership should be taken into account to allow a new owner a period to sort the problem out without being disincentivised from doing so. This would be verifiable via land registry and I doubt it would be worth people artificially buying and selling to avoid the increased tax.

However you need to communicate these terms clearly at the beginning, when you know that the house is empty.

In our case we lost our father, needed to pay the debt from deferred payment of his care and tried to sell the property asap but had 2 buyers pull out at the last minute. This recommendation should be for those willfully keeping properties empty

consideration and understanding as to why properties are not being sold should be considered for example the sale of retirement flats have contain restrictions like the rules that the management company set, like age, and they also "vet" the buyers to make sure they will fit into

the community through the last year because of Covid people in the age group who would be buying a retirement flat have been very cautious so have not been looking to move property

I think that consideration should be given to those inheriting property in a poor condition/uninhabitable/needing renovation so that they just pay basic rate & no premium for up to 5 years. This is because people in this position don't necessarily have the resources to fix a property within a short time frame.

I agree to a point and maybe not quite as much as said, but for someone like myself I am an OAP and was left the property by my uncle. The problem is that the property a retirement property can only be sold to someone over 55 so a very niche market. It has been on the market with Foxtons and although it has a lot of viewings in the last 4 years with a totally new interior it still has not sold. So as you say I feel I would be penalized through no fault of my own

Obviously every body's circumstances are different, ours are we inherited a house in need of renovation which we do whilst working and raising our own family. Increasing tax slows this progress down for us so counter productive we requested help from the council they offered us tenants but could not guarantee rent or help in eviction if tenants proved unable to pay rent

My mother lived alone before she died and the property has over the years had new flooring, new kitchen, new fireplace, new central heating and completely refurbished. The gardens are regularly treated therefore the property is not an eyesore or attract vandalism. I have a sister in the USA and she and her family stay at the property when visiting but the property would still be closed as empty. I think it wrong to be penalized for not renting it out I inherited an adjacent, empty and dilapidated property. A subsequent professional survey concluded that refurbishment was not a viable option.

The property is currently utilized as storage and retained for future redevelopment, together with my current dwelling, as part of a larger site.

As a pensioner and already paying a surcharge, the imposition of these punitive charges may well prove prohibitive, forcing me to leave my lifelong home.

Before the council decide to put yet another charge on empty properties, they should assess the properties in question. Having inherited a property during updating for rent or sale ill health - cancer & heart operation so delays have occurred.

Council tax is charged at 1 1/2 times the full tax, also all utility bills & expensive empty homes insurance all paid in full. The property is not an eyesore, and during these Covid times it would not be hard to assess to find out why such properties are left empty.

There are a number of reasons why properties are left unoccupied - plans to move back in/renovation prior to moving in/renting. Owners shouldn't have to pay a premium if there are valid reasons the property is unoccupied and/or the properties are being adequately maintained

Local council should repossess the properties. The properties should then be offered to people 35+ who still live with parents due to not being able to get a home of their own, Any person who knows a builder should be given priority. That way the properties will be brought back to living standards quicker.

To apply the rate at 100% is fair. Anything above that I think is not reasonable for whatever time the property is left empty. I don't think there are a lot of properties left empty for more than 5 years.

my husband and I both agree empty properties is not acceptable and owners should pay

Why are you wasting council tax payers money with this heavily boiled questionnaire? Are you going to waste money on postage for every difficult decision that you have to make? How much did it cost to send out this letter?

with reference to your letter dated November 2020, I write to say that I feel there is unfairness with a blanket additional charge on empty house.

Re the above property, which I bought in January 2018, there are facts which I believe should exempt us from the additional charge. We waited a very long time for the Bromley Planning Dept to turn down our original planning application. We then waited another considerable time to get planning permission for our revised plans. Work began on the house around May 2019. The work is major. In March 2020 the Covid 19 crisis stopped work. When work resumed and in order to be compliant within the 2 metre rule we reduced the work force for their own safety. Having half the work force has naturally slowed the job down.

Although I have paid the additional Council Tax on this property I feel it is totally unfair and should be refunded.

I am sure there are properties in Bromley that may well fall into a category that should be charged for being empty but mine does not. We are in the middle of developing an old and outdated home into a beautiful high quality dwelling and not one point in paragraph 2 of your letter applied to us.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter at your earliest convenience

This Contradicts the ostensible reason for the tax. Namely to pay for the services used at the property. They are using zero services while empty. You are turning a service charge into a penal charge to use for social engineering that is not the business of a council

you make no effort or distinction around Why the empty

Thank you for really trying to engage your constituents' you are a good council who always tries their best to look after us all. thank you stay safe

I don't think that each family is responsible to pay an amount of money for house that are not theirs. The Council Tax is already increased enough, The owners of these houses should pay and the council who probably took them over.

Theres no good excuse for property to sit empty

"I have recently asked my tenant to leave my flat. As ive been disappointed with the type of person the council install. if you would like to call me on xxxxx I may consider re-letting but with very high resections attached.

Ive a two bedroom flat in hayes very close to the train station.

The property right should be respected in particular this it is a huge investments to a family. Given the current situation it is very hard to match appropriate tenants. Owners may be forced to have further suffering or exposure to default payment. On the other hand certain property may mean special to owners eg for family memory their right in this regard should not be deprived or even penalized by imposing premium, inappropriate tenants may do cause tension and disputes with community & more community problems

I am in the process of trying to let out an ex-council flat, on behalf of an aunt who has moved into a nursing home. I am unable to let it until the council fix an outside leak which is making the bedroom damp. (not Bromley council). They were informed of the leak, two years ago and still not fixed.

Charging a premium would make Bromley Council no better that the XXXX in the 60's who charged protection monies and supplied very little. If the council impose this premium it would be taking money from the easy target who have no choice but to pay up or be taken to court. Bromley Council should be ashamed of themselves for even considering this policy

However we have been prevented in completing the work on our cottage as our 1st smaller planning application was refused - but we have been allowed a larger extension than we wanted but not the less intrusive smaller one as this shape is allowed under green belt but we will be concreting over a larger area - VERY GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT!

Also we have been paying 100% council tax on a house which had a roof on the bathroom which allowed rain water in so was uninhabitable but to try and talk to anyone is impossible everything is via email - not suitable for everyone

councils be appreciative it takes time to sell a property: even more so during covid restrictions with lockdowns. Also Grenfell Tower Cladding new regulations imposed by government have slowed down sale of flats, for examples some would argue to remain private property should be for what private owners could encourage & offer incentives to private owners- see example below:-

Councils could charge less council tax when private property is rented out

councils could speed up eviction & rehousing tenants who renege on paying rent

Councils could help with privates landlords insurance

Councils actively offer advise & support to private landlords

Some homes owners have work or family circumstances or health issues with their loved ones that necessitates them being away for large periods of time or even occupying other locations. Sometimes houses don't sell or family needs mean additional living options are prudent. These taxes would be unfair to impore without reasonable exemptions

we disagree with your recommendations for empty homes premium because:

you have to consider each individual case on its merits and there should not be a blanket fee for all owners of empty homes.

there used to be exemption for no council tax for empty homes which is not applicated anymore.

the owner is already paying the appropriate council tax.

there could be a valid reason why the property is empty. no owner would be happy to pay council tax for a vacant property, especially when there is no return from the property. there are other costs applicable for some owners, for example maintenance of the property and grounds, energy supply, private estate fees etc. it will be unfair for the council to penlise owners who do not neglect their empty properties.

the council should investigate the reasons why houses are currently vacant or not in use by

owners (by surveys) and can then work together with residents to resolve these issues to bring these houses back into use as opposed to using monetary penalties to motivate this charge.

This catch all approach does not take into account those, who through no fault of their own are experiencing difficulties in finding a buyer for their property. In this instance the property is in a good area. Has been refurbished and the asking price dropped on three occasions.

if also does not address the situation where the terms of a lease prevent a property being let.

There are many reasons why a property may be empty may of which may be outside of the owners control. Such measures put additional pressures on a person that may face financial difficulty say somebody is ill in hospital for a long period of time. Or serving our country overseas or worse still imprisoned unfairly overseas i.e Nazonin Ratcliffe in Iron. This in contract to Iron a free county and ownership of property should not be penalized. Are you going to tax the national trust too.

We worked hard for 40 years + to have been able to afford to buy a second home. paying numerous taxes along the way. Why should we be expected to pay at these incredible rates 100-200-300 y. if we chose or circumstance dictates the house remains empty. In the UK middle classes are targets of constant tax increases and new taxes to pay for. I strongly object to this idea

the stated aim is to bring empty homes back into use as empty homes are a waste of resources- this must undoubtedly be true as of July 2020, Bromley had about 3000 households on their waiting lists, with about 1700 in temporary accommodation with a potential budget of £10,000,00.

a further reason for action is that there is a believe that there will be increased vandalism and fly tipping.

According to the paper there are about 300 homes in the borough which have been unfurnished and unoccupied for more than 2 years. The proposal is to add 100% premium to council tax for any property left in such condition for between 2 and 5 years increasing incrementally thereafter.

The most common Council Tax band in Bromley is D giving the average Council Tax value 2020/2021 C £1504.05. Under the proposal the annual revenue raised could amount to an extra £451.500. Certainly a reasonable amount but a drop in the ocean considering the actual extent of the issue or indeed any administration costs which might arise.

However it does not sound like an unreasonable proposal, but it does beg several questions How is this of itself going to bring homes forward and available for those requiring them - if some of these properties were usable, what mechanisms does the Local Authority use to bring them back into actual use. Even if they are up for sale or in Probate does the Local Authority consider negotiating with owners for short term lets or indeed actual purchase for social housing. How much difference did the revocation of the 6-month vacant exemption make to the issues of homelessness in the borough and how much did it rise.

whilst the 300 odd properties are now currently paying normal rate council tax, one must assume that the call on services is small compared to that of an occupied property.

is this not a penalty/fine - where there may be a very reasonable reason (certainly in the 2 to 5 year period suggested) e.g unable to sell, or a property going through a protracted probate so are exemptions going to be available if a valid and provable excuse.

I do not agree with the suggestion as laid out but do agree that a Premium should be applied if a property is empty and unfurnished for say 3 years plus unless a valid excuse can be provided.

I do also consider that the rationale provided for this penalty is poor- given the potential monies to be raised. The Local authority, if they are seriously considering the housing issues in the borough really need to consider other options talking to those empty properties for instance. I hope I haven't wasted my time giving this some serious thought

You haven't specified the size of the premium, which is material to whether we support it. If it is tiny, it is unlikely to have the intended effects but we would not support an EHP that was so large that it became really punitive (eg 10x the standard Council Tax)

But please note that I am of the opinion that empty properties between 0 and 6 months should be allowed a nil rate, and from 6 months to 12 months should have a 50% rate

but please note that I am of the opinion that empty properties between 0 and 6 months should be allowed a nil rate and from 6 to 12 months should have a 50% rate

this is a probate and the property is empty because being renovated

in regards to my address which by the way is not a second property. it is ,my only house on property. my son rented this house and paid his council tax until October 2019. I retired from nursing and this fitted in with the death of my father at 97years. I came to look after my mother who was on her own house had to be evacuated and since has been uninhabitable no utilities have been used. please see attached information building is almost complete. please see copies of further repairs

I disagree as empty properties may only be an eyesore and are not using resources of the council. If a person wants to leave their property empty and receive no income from it its up to them.

I appreciate the reasoning behind the empty homes premium, but I don't think you can group all empty homes in the same category there may be certain reasons why the property remains empty. Perhaps if properties remain empty for say 5 years or more, then the council should offer to purchase into property.

As a person trying actively to sell a retirement flat which I inherited, still having to pay service charges on the flat and Council Tax when the flat is vacant, hence paying for services that are not being used. Being in the middle of Covid-19 pandemic which has affected the elderly, whom seem not wanting to move at present, which you cannot blame them, I would be really annoyed to having to pay yet another charge on the flat when I already live in the borough and so paying two lots of Council tax, which is something I really could do with not paying and I would be able to afford any further charges. I think at the present this is not the right time with the pandemic to be considering this.

On another note, if you are concerned about the retirement flat I have inherited being empty and wish to make me an offer to purchase the property for you to be able to rent out etc. please feel free to contact me on xxx

I believe this is grossly unfair. Currently we pay full council tax for unoccupied property where we receive little or no benefit of services e.g rubbish collection is not required. A discount would in fact be more equitable solution.

You mention that unoccupied properties are not maintained and are suggesting using this increased charge as a sort of ""fine"" on property owners. This is clearly wrong and many occupied properties are poorly maintained with overgrown gardens etc. Are the council planning to fine them? I currently pay gardening and maintenance charges for my property to ensure it is in good order and the neighbor's have no concerns. If I have additional charges to pay to the

council I may not be able to afford the maintenance charge for the property and therefore it is more likely to become poorly maintained.

on a more board note, surely if I own the freehold of a property it should be my choice, within reason, to use it as I am in no hurry to clear my mother's house and think it is wholly inappropriate for the council to try to force me into this by effectively fining me when I have done nothing wrong. All this bills for the property including the council tax are up to date and perhaps the council should look to penalize those who are not contributing or maintaining their properties.

Further as the stated goal is to make more property available for rental I do not believe this additional charge will be effective. Clearly if the owner wanted this source of income today they would be renting, I do not think this charge will change their mind and it is more likely to make an owner think about ways to make the property uninhabitable.

My own intentions are probably to complete renovate the property and then offer for rental, however, I want to do this in my own time and complete the emotional journey of clearing the family home.

This is only acceptable if there is clarity of objectives with planning committees. Recently a planning committee concluded that there was sufficient housing, turning down an application to convert a large single dwelling into flats. The property will remain empty until a sensible planning decision is made. Penalty enough without additional council tax.

I agree

I agree with the proposal

Its not for the council to dictate what a person does with there property.

Why not go to 200% after one year and 300% after two. There is no excuse for this. Bromley needs the money, people need the housing and these places attract crime, antisocial behaviour etc and it needs a real penalty not a slap on the wrist

I agree.

Not applicable- strongly agree with proposal.

I agree with the proposals

I agree

I agree

I agree. Submitting the survey again as I misread the following questions previously.

As this is only for residential properties and not business/office properties.-

Firstly I would caution that the property is legally owned by someone and it is their right to use (within legal/ethical constraints) as they wish. But if the property is attached to another property, then maintenance to ensure no damp or dangerous structure should be enforced.

This is also not a simple process and needs safeguards, because the reasons for lack of occupancy will be varied.

The property may be owned by an elderly person now living in care or being rehabilitated to move back in (although I assume the two-year base is to try and minimise this issue?) and may also not be mentally able to deal with this, whilst at the same time the persons' family may not have the legal authority to sell or the financial means to maintain on their behalf, so adding further costs through increased council tax could add financial distress to all concerned, especially if the elderly person is paying large care home bills.

There may be other issues to consider such as preventing family fraud if the property was forced into being sold by rules imposed such as this.

Therefore there would have to be a strong and transparent process to support and understand the reason for the lack of occupancy and even to encourage basic maintenance

Alternatively, the owner may be living/working abroad and does not want to rent the property as whilst that provides an income it is not without its problems of having to deal with tenants.

I would instead recommend creating a local legally enforceable maintenance obligation on unoccupied properties, and in that respect charging an additional council tax fee for council tidy up of the front of the property would be more reasonable, but simply charging more for non-occupancy is not fair especially as there is no-one in the property using local resources whilst already contributing council tax.

The increase will rather render the cost of rent and council tax unaffordable to the low income and the unemployed/homeless.

While the overall objective may make sense, no justification is given as to why 100%, 200% or 300% are the correct thresholds. People may need to be away from their home for a protracted period, either for care or work and there should be no obligation to occupy, provided it is maintained and upkeep maintained - and they are also not consuming more services.

Because if you are stuck with a property you are trying to sell which you are not permitted to sublet you then get caught out, like me! I am already paying service charges for a property I can not get occupied. Its a retirement flat. I will sell at any reasonable price. Its not in disrepair. It is furnished. Maybe you can create a better definition that excludes this type of situation. It is financially difficult enough!!!

Your assumptions are unfounded without evidence. This is just a revenue raising exercise.

I believe it should be higher than this and kick in earlier say 100% after 1 year, 200% after 2 and 300% after 3 and so on. That would also be easy to understand.

It is purely a money making exercise, having to pay council tax for a vacant property is wrong when none of the council services are being used, this proposal just makes it worse.

There are no LB Bromley services being used at an unoccupied property, such as domestic waste collection as there is no one living at the property, so there should be no additional charge to the property owner. There should be a discount if the house is unoccupied, not an additional charge.

These time periods are too long. The 100% premium should be applied for 1 to 3 years, 200% premium for 3 to 4 years, and 300% after 5 years.

After two years the properties should be compulsory purchased by the council. There are so many vulnerable residents who are forced away from everything that's familiar and all their support networks because of the affordable housing crisis.

Council tax should not be profit-making, and any council tax collected from empty property should directly reflect the council's costs and services directly related to their stock of empty properties. In a democracy it would also help to canvass the views of the owners of empty property as well to discover why their property is currently empty! Many will undoubtedly be in financial difficulties or will be forced into financial difficulties if they let their empty property due to the current income tax treatment of rental income for people, especially those with a mortgage. Many probably cannot sell due to the potential CGT liability it would trigger - that might have a domino effect, leading to bankruptcy. The council always retains the ultimate right to requisition property, and this should be considered as an alternative to fleecing the owners, which is verging on bullying tactics. An alternative to collecting a premium might be to defer the collection until the property is sold (eg on an owners death).

There may be any number of reasons for home owners leaving a property empty, it seems wrong to effectively 'fine' a property owner for the choice they make about their property. It is clear there are occupied properties in the borough that are neglected thereby potentially devaluing neighbouring properties and making the area appear run down and unappealing as a place to live. I suspect these will out number unoccupied properties.

taxing property owners more for different use than business use either ? really

its great from a tax raisers perspective why not raise ever ones...

taxing people more so they are less able to progress with updates on the property raising the barriers to completion.... great policy and forward thinking. we can as well all move out and migrate right, its some what draconian and extreme. in fact a labor type policy

Why penalise people for how they wish to use their home or due to their circumstances

Because someone else owns the property not the council. So who gives you the right to charge them. The only premium that should be paid is the council paying the public for your incompetence

Home owners maybe in financial circumstances which the council may not be privy too. If a person has inherited a home and cannot maintain the running costs this could a reason for it to be empty, before asking for money within these times this should be a priority to be investigated. If a home is empty the council does not need to carry out its normal regular duties for example disposing of waste so why increase a price on a service which isnt needed.

If you wish to leave your property empty, Bromley council should see that this is an investment in the borough, generating more demand to live in the area. As a home owner it gives you the right to do with a property as you wish, it has no impact on neighbours or society if one owns a home which isnt vacant for a while. If the council wishes to work with residents a buy back scheme should be offered if it's that much of an issue which could support the owner and the community. I feel it discriminatory to target home owners. Empty home owners are not generating waste that council tenants produce, the shortfall should fall with them.

I am a home owner and I live in my property however I fit the bill for council tenants on my estate for all the waste they produce. Its unfair and we chose to own homes because we are not legible to have a chance to have a council property and I for example have had to work very hard to get to where I am. Its discrimination. Charge people who are impacting at first hand daily not those who have paid solicitors, estate agent fees, stamp duty tax and the property price to own a property in your borough.

The council needs to recognise that to bring a neglected house back into circulation requires significant time and investment which can take longer than two years to complete. It may require planning permissions to be sought and building works to be undertaken to upgrade the property to improve it, which take considerable time and processes outside of the owners control.

The current COVID pandemic shows that delays can be caused beyond the property owners control and applying this in April 2021 would show a distinct lack of sensitivity and support from the council at this time of National and Global crisis.

By increasing council tax charges in this way will deter new owners, who are seeking to improve the property and the local area, from taking on previously occupied but neglected properties because of these higher charges.

By currently paying full council tax charges on an empty property in return for no council services already serves as a deterrent to leaving a property empty. The council should instead consider applying an unoccupied discount as no services are provided.

The incremental increases seem exorbitant to me. Personally I believe the regular council tax to be on the steep side too and don't think residents get much value in this regard especially when you consider that household waste and recycling are collected on a fortnightly basis. I understand the intention but there are far worse London Borough for unoccupied properties and therefore I think a 25% increase would probably be reasonable.

The council needs to recognise that the refurbishment of previously occupied but poorly maintained dwellings takes a considerable time and investment to bring back to a habitable condition. This can involve requiring planning permission, building control and undertaking major structural building works where many processes and timings are outside of the owners control. The current COVID pandemic shows that activities can be outside of an owners control and are significantly delayed. I would also say that it is in owners interests to return a property to market at the earliest opportunity without having additional punitive and unfair charges levied.

It would be counter-productive to dis-incentivise owners from taking on and making significant investment in returning poorly maintained but previously occupied properties back to a good condition for occupants and local residents. Properties need to be renovated well to return them to market in a safe and good condition and it needs to be recognised that this can take time and investment to complete.

Owners are already incentivised to bring properties back into circulation through the current mechanism of charging full council tax in return for no services being provided and the council should review the current unfair policy.

I find it hard to understand that the council should seek to introduce such dis-incentive measures during the COVID-19 National and Global crisis, it demonstrates a lack of sensitivity and support by the council at such a difficult time for communities."

homes can be left empty for a variety of reasons and why should people have to pay an additional council tax premium just because that's what they choose to do. Sounds like the council are just looking for ways to collect extra revenue from people.

From April 2021, we are proposing to increase council tax by adding a 100 per cent premium for any property left unoccupied and unfurnished for between 2 and 5 years, increasing to a 200 per cent after 5 years and 300 per cent after 10 years. While I understand and appreciate Bromley Council wanting to find a way of bringing empty houses back in to use, I do not believe this is the most viable or logical way to approach raising tax revenue to aid housing shortage.

In the first instance the circumstances of a house becoming empty is a major consideration. In the case of our family home which has been owned since 1978, our father passed away in April 2019. The siblings are all grown and have their own homes therefore, residing in the property is not an option. We are in the process of selling however, the two lockdowns have severely affected the market category the house sits in. According to all the agents we approached to sell this house, the average time frame in a economical market would be 12 months, for this size of property. We have also approached several housing associations. None were interested in taking on this type of conversion project or did not have the budget (due to Covid 19 situation). It would be unfair to penalise the family for a situation which is out of our hands, causing further financial stress by increasing the yearly running costs.

The house is kept to the best maintenance as we are all proud of the family home and would never let it go into a state of disrepair.

Secondly, we looked at converting the property or renting out however, after consultation with experts both options mean significant outlay. The return did not warrant the outlay due to costs and taxation, even with the grants offered by Bromley to bring a property to rental standard.

Thirdly the amount of revenue raised verses the cost to implement the scheme, does not seem value for money or the most advantageous combination of cost, quality, and sustainability to meet the boroughs requirements. According to the council's calculations published in the News Shopper Nov 19, net additional income £87,000 is being generated. The predicted cost £59,000 a year based on one full-time equivalent member of staff covering the tasks of billing, recovery, visiting and customer services.

While every penny counts, justifying raising taxation in this way, for an additional £28,000 does not seem realistic or sustainable. If currently 300 houses are empty, this equates to just £93.33 per house.

I hope these points are taken into consideration to not raise council tax in this way. At the very least ensure the wrong people are not financially penalised by individually assessing the reasons for a property being empty.

the homes should be filled sooner

You want to increase people's council tax for a load of empty old buildings? Is this a joke. We already have to pay TOO much council tax for ABSOLUTELY nothing and now we're expected to pay more for some derelict buildings? If you want them to be nicer pay your own money and not people's. Plus we all know the money wouldn't really be going to these buildings but used for something secret of course. How about suggesting you raise people's council tax for actual causes. Like better local nurseries more money into better teaching in schools, or more money into raising awareness about this corrupt council!!!

There can be many reasons for empty homes. A common one may be the lack of funds to renovate and make property habitable. Incentives to make properties habitable would be much more appropriate than excessively taxing people who have empty homes.

I understand that in certain instances empty properties can become a nuisance and can attract vandalism, fly tipping etc., however, given that the property owners have to pay council tax on the property is empty this should offset some of the costs to rectify any issues. I believe that empty properties which are causing difficulties should be dealt with on a case by case basis rather than a blanket approach. People have worked hard throughout their lives to own their properties and if they are complying with keeping their property in good order and paying their council tax each month then this new approach seems rather unjust, another example of greed. It is not down to individual property owners to solve the issue of lack of properties/housing within the borough, it is down to the government. This persistent attack on people that do the right thing and contribute to society by trying to make an honest living through letting property etc is an absolute disgrace.

Punitive and manipulative tax. Quite unreasonable. Some estates take years to resolve following a death and this proposal would put excessive stress on families and executors.

Ownership in dispute via crt. Probate of deceased owner complex so time required to search for known heirs.

I think the amount should be higher but it would be a step in the right direction
Instead, compulsorily purchase the property and make it available as social housing.

Firstly, the council does not explain what it will do with this additional funding? Would it be ring-fenced for social housing, building new council homes or assisting with the homeless in Bromley?

The council already receives money from these houses and if the council wants to use these houses for its housing stock, the council has to ask themselves why these empty houses have not been offered to the council for rental? Is it the council existing policies are wrong and the contempt it shows private landlords that needs to be considered first before introducing this policy.

This is none of council business what do homeowners do with their property. As for flytipping, install cameras as in other boroughs and put online pictures of people and cars for shame of flytipping, after correct court decisions. No need to charge more money from poor people for nothing, where everything can be done with more organisation and adequate management.

People should be allowed to do what they want with their own property without Bromley Council penalising them and attacking them through the tax system. Bromley Council should look to be making cuts to the waste they preside over rather than upping tax all the time.

I am surprised that a Conservative Council would consider imposing this levy. A property may be empty because the owner wishes to sell and cannot find a buyer. Even when a sale is agreed, the process is taking over 9 months to complete (as solicitors and surveyors are on furlough). Further, an owner may be reluctant to rent his property because of the government's draconian rules preventing evictions. It appears that, unlike any other asset, the government believes it is perfectly acceptable to deprive an owner of the right to use and control his own house.

First of all that approach is akin to Mafia style blackmail. If this approach worked all the closed shops in Croydon with gift center and high street in UK could be used, but that approach is very naive and unfounded and not well thought out plan. Absolutely ridiculous. Just because the council doubles and triples the tax does not mean the landlord has a flood of income or the problem preventing letting is resolved. It in fact makes it harder for landlords of money they need

to bring property in good state.

Every property owner with an empty property would benefit if they could rent the property, they have not gain in keeping property empty, so the council should ask WHY they prefer to lose money then rent.

The council doubling tax does not change the reason why the properties are empty. I can tell from firsthand experience that property my family used for years was rented and the tenants trashed the place where we need to now spend 3 times more than 20 yrs rent worth and nearly 40p in legal fees get property back and to put property back. In good order.

Laws favors tenants and when tenants trash the property and walk away, the landlord has no recourse as the landlords have not way to recoup the cost. Bromley council needs to setup a register and tracker of bad tenants and help landlord regain money from tenants no matter where they go.

Council needs to install laws that make eviction of bad tenants quick and easy.

Also with Covid a lot of impact of getting skilled tradesman and material impacts getting back the property in rentable state. Laws have been passed making it hard for landlords to rent typical box rooms since the planner decided they need to be minimum xyz size, ignoring the fact that the properties are old, those laws should only be applicable to new construction. Also the council failure to provide easy and regular pickup of waste encourages public to trash things like mattress and other items on the street or vacant properties, the landlords are not the problem. Planning department are too strict and prevent landlords from easily improving older properties to a rentable state. We have a property that has NO back access - thanks to planning approval over 30 yrs ago and to make it worse the city put a pedestrian crossing and streetlamp post in front of the row of shops to very difficult to renovate and improve property. But most important if the council want property back in market, instead of black mailing with increasing tax, how about giving grants to landlords. Tenants constantly damage the properties, the laws is very one sided, it takes years and lots of legal cost to terminate lease and or get tenants out. Its easy to say you want properties rentable but it ignore the extensive damage tenant leave behind. This take time to fix, plus in this bad economy most shops in Croydon high street at being vacated so why does the Bromley council think the economy and revenue for landlords is great. Please improved trash collection for ALL areas of Bromley, Look at way to give grants to improve properties, find ways to terminate lease quickly in case of bad tenants, and help landlord get recourse in collecting unpaid rent or recover damage from tenants. Ask you planning department to be more lenient for improving older properties.

Once again, the landlord has NO gain in leaving properties vacant an there are reasons why they are vacant, if doubling tax worked every council would do that and every shop in every high street would be occupied but the real world does not work mafia style. - so please do not proceed with this ides - it is a badly thought our approach

Whilst I agree in principle to those empty homes that are left neglected and empty for years causing issues for neighbours, the neighbourhood and could be used to assist in meeting the need for homes. I currently have my property empty which with personal circumstances and Covid I am not able to complete the renovations within the property to let out or to move back at this time, but I would like to strongly point out that with my property being empty is not neglected and doesn't affect any neighbours or the neighbourhood so there should be a criteria and procedures in place to assist to deal with on the individual property's owner circumstances and not to be hit further financially when some are supporting other vulnerable family members in the current times and maintaining their property as well as their own.

I disagree, it depends on the size of the property, it may be very small. Many people live on their own in very large houses and yet they are not charged a premium.

The council already charges full council tax on empty properties and this already serves as an incentive for them to be occupied when no council services are provided in return. Charging a higher amount is disproportionately punitive and will stop people from taking on and renovating properties that have been poorly maintained by the previous owner occupier.

While 2 years sounds like a long time it is not sufficient to renovate a badly maintained property which may require other Council approvals like planning permission and building control as well as engaging builders for major structural works which are outside of the owners control.

The current Covid-19 crisis is also a big factor in delaying works at this time and it is terrible that the Council is considering introducing these measures now when the community needs support not new penalties.

Perhaps a period of at least 5 years would be more appropriate to the Councils long term concern.

Another point to consider is properties that are in the process of being actively renovated and not just being left empty, perhaps the Council should look at if work is taking place rather than the property simply being left standing empty.

One: I was only received this in the post today (the 13th of December 2020 which is the deadline). That is not an appropriate amount of time to consider and I believe this is a tactic to push through a motion without due oversight.

2) I do not believe that the money will be used for affordable homes/ housing options. as the letter itself never proposes what the increased funds will be used for.

3) This sounds like an easy fee to get around, by simply putting furniture in a home and still not occupying it. It is ill thought out and sounds suspiciously like a way to just increase council tax takings without providing additional services/improving current services ... which are already extravagantly price already for what we receive.

For the record, I am not even a home owner; I privately rent. I would love to see these homes available for occupation and would welcome the ability to get on the proper ladder myself, with sufficiently sized, reasonably priced homes. Sadly that is yet to exist in Bromley.