

Public Document Pack

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To: All Members of the Council

7 December 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, 13TH DECEMBER, 2022 at 2.00 PM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Council Chamber, Flintshire County Council, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire or on a virtual basis.

The meeting will be live streamed onto the Council's website. The live streaming will stop when any confidential items are considered. A recording of the meeting will also be available, shortly after the meeting at <https://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team on 01352 702345.

A G E N D A

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 **MINUTES** (Pages 5 - 24)

Purpose: To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 27th September 2022 and 18th October 2022.

4 **CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

Purpose: To receive the communications as circulated.

5 **PETITIONS**

Purpose: This is an opportunity for Members of Council to submit petitions on behalf of people in their ward. Once received, petitions are passed to the appropriate Chief Officer for action and response.

PRINCIPAL ITEMS OF BUSINESS

6 **COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM SCHEME FOR SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES** (Pages 25 - 148)

Report of Chief Officer (Governance)

Purpose: For Council to set the Council Tax Premium scheme for 2023-24 following a public consultation

7 **ELECTORAL REFORM IN WALES** (Pages 149 - 184)

Report of Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Governance)

Purpose: To provide an update on Electoral Reform taking place in Wales.

8 NOTICE OF MOTION (Pages 185 - 186)

Purpose: This item is to receive any Notices of Motion. One has been received and is attached to the agenda.

FOR INFORMATION

9 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Purpose: This item is to receive any Public Questions: None were received by the deadline.

10 QUESTIONS (Pages 187 - 188)

Purpose: To note the answers to any questions submitted in accordance with County Council Standing Order No. 9.4(A): two were received by the deadline and are attached to the agenda.

Councillor Bernie Attridge: (1) Connah's Quay Sports Centre; and (2) Privatisation of Direct Labour Organisation in the Housing Revenue Account.

11 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Purpose: To consider any issues raised by Members arising from the Minutes of the Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and other Committees, together with any questions raised under Section 4.20 of the Council's Constitution. Copies of the Minutes of the various meetings that have taken place since the last ordinary meeting of the Council which have been approved and published on the Authority's website, can be obtained, if required, via the Committee and Member Services: None were received by the deadline.

Please note that there may be a 10 minute adjournment of this meeting if it lasts longer than two hours

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FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
27 SEPTEMBER 2022

Minutes of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Tuesday,
27 September 2022

PRESENT: Councillor Mared Eastwood (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Glyn Banks, Pam Banks, Marion Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Gillian Brockley, Helen Brown, Mel Buckley, Teresa Carberry, Tina Claydon, David Coggins Cogan, Geoff Collett, Steve Copple, Bill Crease, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Adele Davies-Cooke, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Chrissy Gee, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Ian Hodge, Andy Hughes, Dave Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Alasdair Ibbotson, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Simon Jones, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Gina Maddison, Roz Mansell, Allan Marshall, Hilary McGuill, Ryan McKeown, Billy Mullin, Debbie Owen, Ted Palmer, Andrew Parkhurst, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Carolyn Preece, David Richardson, Ian Roberts, Dan Rose, Kevin Rush, Dale Selvester, Jason Shallcross, Sam Swash, Linda Thew, Linda Thomas, Ant Turton, Roy Wakelam, Arnold Woolley and Antony Wren

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Mike Allport, Bernie Attridge, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, Ray Hughes and Michelle Perfect

IN ATTENDANCE: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure, Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Social Services), Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy), Commissioning Manager, Deputy Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services team

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Leader of the Council expressed his thanks and praise to the Chair for her presentation, leadership and delivery of her speech in Welsh at the Proclamation of the Assession of King Charles III. He also praised all Council employees who were involved at short notice supporting the event on the Sunday 11 September ensuring it was a success. Special thanks were also given to the Northop Band whose presence added to the ceremony. The Chair and Members of the Council thanked the Officers involved.

28. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair reported that two questions had been received and invited Mr Colin Randerson to present his question to Council. Mr Randerson thanked the Chair and Council for the opportunity to attending the meeting and read out his question.

“Given that the Council proposed changes to policies relating to affordable housing numbers on the basis of pressure from a small number of private developers, but has made no meaningful changes to the LDP as a result of the public consultation, where some sites received over 200 individual objections, do you believe this demonstrates a process which values the concerns of its residents and represents them accordingly?”

Councillor Bithell responded by saying that at the outset, it was important to stress that the changes that had been made to the Plan following the Examination hearing sessions known as Matters Arising Changes (MACs) had **not** been made by the Council but were proposed by the Inspector and had been agreed to by the Council in July of this year, in order to facilitate a public consultation on them. **No** changes had been proposed to original percentages for the delivery of affordable housing, and the only change to the affordable housing policy wording was to reflect a change requested by the Inspector to clarify that the percentages sought were a target, rather than a starting point.

The central purpose of the Examination was for the Inspector to consider the soundness of the Plan as submitted and it was not the remit of the Inspector to improve the Plan, or to change it simply based on the volume of objections to it or a particular site or policy. Part of the Inspector's assessment would be with reference to the Council's evidence base to support the Plan policies and proposals. This applied equally to representations made by objectors where the responsibility on objectors was to submit objections supported by evidence which questioned the plan or a site's soundness. It was for the Inspector to judge and the rationale for how she had considered these soundness issues would be contained in her report, which had yet to be received.

Both the Council and the Inspector were required to consider what objectors had said when representations were made, but they were not required to simply accept what was said. This was a matter of planning judgement which had been applied both by the Council and then separately and independently by the Inspectors. That was the present Development Plan process as prescribed by Welsh Government's Development Plans Manual. In part the question posed invited the Council to comment on aspects of this process that were not in its control, and it was not appropriate therefore to expect the Council to comment on how the Inspector had conducted the examination.

The questioner submitted written representations at the Deposit consultation stage which were considered by officers and where the Council agreed to recommended responses which did not alter or change the plan. As with the response to question 2 which followed, this questioner then submitted written evidence to the LDP Examination and also appeared in person and made his points to the Inspector. This evidence should also have been focussed on addressing the soundness of the site in question as that was the relevant matter for the Inspector to consider. If no change to the site's allocation came from the Examination in the form of a Matters Arising Change (MAC) relating to the site, then the clear inference from that was that the Inspector also considered that the issues raised did not challenge the plan or site's soundness. In contrast where the Inspector did have concerns about the housing element of the Warren Hall site, she had made a change.

Finally, this site was also considered to be a sustainable allocation at the UDP public Inquiry where the inspector then recommended its allocation. The site had been reconsidered through the LDP process and Examination, and no evidence had been presented to counter this view, either for this site, or the others allocated in the LDP.

Mr Randerson said his question raised concerns and asked a supplementary question as to why no changes were made, no matter how many objections were received, following the consultation. What was the point of the public consultation, which cost a lot of money, if no attention or changes were made to any of the responses from the residents? He asked were no changes made due to pressure from developers.

Councillor Bithell felt that this had been covered within the response but would respond to Mr Randerson in writing.

Mr David Rowlinson read out the following question: -

“The Local Development Plan (LDP) is now seven years late. A public consultation took place which involved the planning department considering and rejecting a huge number of public objections over 200 at some sites). No meaningful changes were made to the plan. There has been a detailed inspection resulting in impassioned hearings but resulting in only minor technical changes to the plan, partially driven by Inspectors being powerless to suggest improvements to the plan. Since the posting of the LDP several years ago, there has been no opportunity for elected council members to influence the outcome of the plan despite the repeated concerns raised by their constituents. How much has the LDP cost since the plan was initially shared as part of the public consultation; and does the council feel this represents an optimised and good use of public funds, given the reluctance of the planning department to make changes or improvements to the LDP?”

Councillor Bithell responded saying that it was important, at the outset, to remind the Council on some of the key reasons for preparing the Local Development Plan in the first place:

- The Local Development plan was a statutory plan. **The Council had to produce one;**
- The LDP would provide an up to date policy framework in order to make informed decision on planning applications;
- The LDP would support economic ambition and growth and deliver jobs in line with Flintshire’s National Growth Area status;
- The LDP would provide housing in sustainable locations to meet the needs of this growth, including a significant amount of affordable housing;
- Adoption of the LDP would prevent the continued stream of planning applications for speculative housing development where any Member’s ward was vulnerable due to not having an up-to-date adopted development plan in place.

The LDP was in its final stages approaching adoption. It was common practice for LDPs to be adopted into their plan period and the plan could only become operational once adopted.

The LDP had been through all of its statutory stages including those that were the responsibility of the Council prior to its submission for Examination, and then those that were under the sole control of Planning and Environment Decision Wales (PEDW) and the appointed Inspectors. It was the Council, as a whole, who made

decisions on the progress of the development plan up to submission, informed and advised by the recommendation of officers.

The Council had considered and agreed to progress the Plan on two separate occasions – firstly when it agreed to publish the Deposit LDP for consultation on the 23 July 2019 - no Members voted against; and then when it agreed to the recommended responses to the public representations received, and to submit the plan for public Examination, at its meeting held on 22nd September 2020 – no Members voted against.

Welsh Government (WG) advised that a Council should not submit its plan for Examination unless it considered the plan to be sound and capable of being adopted as once submitted, control passed from the Council to the appointed Inspectors.

The role of the appointed Inspectors was to consider whether the plan **as submitted** was sound and capable of adoption – their role **was not to seek to improve the plan**. This was made clear at the Pre-Hearing Meeting and was reflected in the Inspector’s note of the meeting. That meeting was attended by 120 participants including the questioner.

Simply because a number of people made objections to a site did not mean that the Council had to either automatically accept those objections or make a change to the Plan. The key requirement in objecting was to show, with evidence, how the plan or any specific site was not sustainable or sound. Representations submitted following the Deposit LDP consultation were considered by officers and the recommended responses agreed by the Council – in the Council’s view these did not raise issues that challenged the soundness of the plan.

Further representations were submitted as written and verbal evidence to the LDP Examination in relation to this site (and others). These should also have been focussed on addressing the soundness of the site in question as that was the relevant matter for the Inspector to consider. Indeed, the hearing sessions held were not solely to hear objectors as the Inspector heard from all interested parties including those promoting sites allocated in the Plan. If no change to the site’s allocation came from the Examination in the form of a Matters Arising Change (MAC), then the clear inference from that was that the Inspector also considered that the issues raised did not challenge the plan or site soundness.

Whilst the full cost of the production of the LDP would be calculated once the Plan was adopted, the main cost elements to date were as follows:

- Policy Team annual staffing costs (from 2022/23 budget) £318,698.00
- Evidence base preparation (whole process to date) £374,000.00
- Examination Inspectors Fees to date £53,122.87
- Examination Programme Officer costs to date £29,812.50

The main point for Members to acknowledge was that the Council had no option but to produce a development plan as it was a statutory requirement, meaning that it **had** to expend public funding to resource the process. The Council had budgeted for that but had actually saved a considerable amount from holding the

Examination in an entirely virtual way, which had also had the benefit of allowing greater public involvement and participation. The savings had been to the extent that the financial reserves to support the LDP adoption would be returned to the corporate centre, thereby assisting the Council's overall budgetary position.

The plan was at such an advanced stage now that all that was awaited was the Inspector's report, whose recommendations in respect of plan soundness and adoption were legally binding on the Council. There was no option to debate any specific aspect of the plan at this stage – **adoption was of the plan as a whole.**

Mr. Rowlinson appreciated the lengthy response and agreed with many of the points made on the purpose of the LDP and the thorough way in which it had been carried out, especially allowing people to join virtually to contribute. He asked a supplementary question on clarification he was seeking on a breakdown of the numbers between the preparation of the plan, prior to the public consultation, and the cost excluding the actual examination costs since that point. It seemed that there would be significant costs with going through the motions on the plan when there hadn't been any actual changes to the plan which would indicate that it was poor value. He felt that the response focused on the soundness rather than the ability to improve the plan or make it an optimized plan for the public. The fact that no meaningful changes were made to the plan following the public consultation would suggest that it did not represent good value on appropriate process. What was the point of carrying out that public consultation if the views expressed would not form part of shaping the plan? For clarification he asked what costs were incurred since the publication for the public inspection minus the actual examination costs which he accepted were part of the process.

Councillor Chris Bithell agreed to respond to the supplementary question in writing.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 May 2022 and 26 July 2022 were received.

Minutes of 24 May 2022 - Accuracy

On page 18 and 19 Councillor Antony Wren asked that the misspelling of his Christian name be amended. This was agreed.

Minutes of 26 July 2022 - Accuracy

Councillor Richard Jones referred to page 28 and the debate around the national definition of fuel poverty and the re-defining of the wording to be used locally

and asked if there was any information on this. In response the Deputy Monitoring Officer said a response would be provided following the meeting.

The minutes of the meetings held on the 24 May 2022 and 26 July 2022 were moved and seconded as correct records.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of 24 May 2022 and 26 July 2022 be approved as a correct record.

31. PETITIONS

Councillor Hilary McGuill presented a Petition, containing 300 signatures, on behalf of residents of the Heol Fammau and Moel Gron areas of Mynydd Isa. The residents had requested that urgent repairs be carried out because of the poor condition of the roads. This had been requested for quite some time and Councillor McGuill said that during a 60-year period the roads had only been patched and were now desperately in need of a proper resurfacing.

Councillor David Coggins Cogan presented a Petition, containing the signatures of 315 residents in his ward for the Council to urgently review the safety of the roads in his ward. An overview was given on the dangerous conditions encountered on these roads which had resulted in several deaths. There was also a lack of pavements and warning signs. In addition, the speed limit on that road was 60-mph. The Council was aware of the problems, and he pleaded for urgent action be taken

32. CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

The Deputy Monitoring Officer referred to the Annual Meeting of the Council, when it was agreed to establish a Climate Change Committee and said the Terms of Reference for this Committee were located at Appendix 1 of the report. Clarification on a slight amendment to the Terms of Reference was provided together with confirmation that it was a non-statutory committee, but that Council had agreed that it would be politically balanced. The first meeting was scheduled for the 22 November and Council was required to appoint a Chair for the committee, to agree if the Chair should receive a remuneration for the role and to agree the Terms of Reference.

The Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) provided an overview of the commitment made by Cabinet in 2019 that the County Council would be carbon neutral by 2030 following Welsh Government (WG) advice. He provided information on the appointment of the Climate Change Co-ordinator, Alex Ellis, and outlined the work undertaken by the Climate Change Programme Board. He said the Committee would be an advisory committee to inform Cabinet on the actions required to reach that target of carbon neutrality by 2030. The Action Plan and Strategy were agreed in February 2022, and he explained how this committee would work collaboratively across the council and with other business partners to achieve that aim of carbon neutrality by 2030.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure moved the Terms of Reference recommendation, as amended. He also moved that the Chair of the Climate Change Committee was remunerated. He nominated Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson as Chair the Climate Change Committee. He felt confident that with Councillor Ibbotson as Chair, together with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy, that they would be able to drive forward the important work that was required to be done. The was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services (including Health and Safety and Human Resources).

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst asked for an amendment to the terms of reference recommendation. He read out a statement from the Liberal Democrat Group. His proposed amendment to recommendation 1 was “to approve the Terms of Reference of the Climate Change Committee subject to a review during the next municipal year”. This amendment was proposed in the spirit of supporting the aims of Flintshire County Council to seriously address climate change.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure accepted the amendment. The Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services (including Health and Safety and Human Resources) as seconder also accepted the amendment.

The Chair then referred to the third recommendation to appoint the Chair of the Committee saying that one nomination of Councillor Alistair Ibbotson had been received. The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy fully supported the nomination of Councillor Ibbotson.

Councillor Helen Brown nominated Councillor Allan Marshall for the Chair of the Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Richard Jones

Upon voting for each nomination, Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson was appointed as Chair.

The Chair asked if there were any speakers for recommendations 1 and 2.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Mike Peers, the Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed the wording at point 9.15.4.2 of the terms of reference was correct.

Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson firstly expressed his gratitude to Members for supporting his nomination. He said the terms of reference were very broad and followed the Cabinet net zero decision in 2019 and the Climate Change Strategy. The Strategy was required to be incorporated into every aspect of the Council’s business and he outlined the pathways within the Strategy to ensure the terms of reference were met to enable the Council to achieve net zero by 2030.

In response to question on providing impartial advice to residents, the Chief Officer (Planning Environment & Economy) felt that this was covered at point 9.16.5.13 of the terms of reference which could include advice on energy provision.

Having been moved and seconded, the recommendations were put to the vote which was carried.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Terms of Reference of the Climate Change Committee be approved;
- (b) That the Chair of the Climate Change Committee be remunerated; and
- (c) That Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson be appointed as Chair of the Climate Change Committee.

33. NORTH WALES MARKET STABILITY REPORT

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing presented the North Wales Market Stability Report.

Welsh Government (WG) had asked that local authorities and local health boards work in collaboration to produce a Market Stability Report alongside the Population Needs Assessment. The Market Stability Report would provide an assessment of the sufficiency of care and support required when meeting the needs and demand for social care as set out in the Population Needs Assessment and the stability of the market for regulated services providing that care and support.

A single Market Stability Report must be produced for the North Wales region and approved by Full Council for each of the Local Authority areas and the local Health Board as a requirement of the Social Services and Well Being Wales Act 2014. The final Market Stability Report must be published on all Local Authority websites, the Health Board websites and the Regional Partnerships Board's website in both English and Welsh with a copy of the report submitted to Welsh Ministers. Both the Population Needs Assessment and the Market Stability Report documents would be used to inform local and regional delivery plans and service development going forward. Therefore, she asked that Council approve the North Wales Market Stability Report for 2022.

The Chief Officer (Social Services) thanked the Contract and Commissioning Manager and her team for their work in completing the report. The report had been presented to the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and he was proud of the work undertaken in the development of services, such as the Children's Homes in Mold and the expansion of the facility at Marleyfield in Buckley. The latest Market Stability Report outlined the partnership working with partners in North Wales within the Regional Partnership Board and included the regional footprint and he highlighted the Flintshire themes.

An overview of the elderly population in the county was provided with the over 65 predictions during the next 20 years higher in Flintshire than the regional average. The Authority had to plan to ensure all services were resilient to provide the best quality services with the report providing excellent information not just for Health and Social Care but other services too.

In response to a question on the closure of care homes from Councillor Peers, the Chief Officer (Social Services) outlined the close working relationship with the care home partners but said that because of the pressures they had experienced some had stopped operating but this did not happen often. The sensitivities of working with care homes, families and residents was understood to ensure that all were supported and settled in other homes. Referring to the overall capacity he confirmed that this had reduced and highlighted that the Authority needed to provide its own good quality care provision, which was why Marleyfield had been completed and plans were ongoing to extend Croes Atti in Flint and for options to be considered for Llys Gwenffrwd in Holywell.

In response to a question from Councillor Bateman on day care at Croes Atti, the Chief Officer (Social Services) explained that Croes Atti was used for day care support for younger people with dementia prior to the pandemic. Day care remained part of the Council's provision and when it was safe to continue it would be provided in the existing Croes Atti facility and at the new Croes Atti facility when it was developed in two years' time.

Councillor Thew commented on the importance of day care for people who remained in their own homes. The Chief Officer (Social Services) agreed saying day support was very important and he would feed back to the appropriate team. He said there were issues in recruiting staff to cover all services which was why residential care was prioritised.

In response to a question by Councillor Ellis on the demand and need for the resumption of day care services, the Chief Officer (Social Services) outlined the alternative community settings used, such as memory or dementia cafes which had reduced some of the demand. He agreed that for some people day care was a highly valued service and that it was intended to provide these wherever there was the demand and workforce to facilitate it. Workforce recruitment was an issue and he asked for Members support in encouraging constituents to consider health and social care roles which included day care, extra care services and residential care services. These staffing pressures were limiting the authority's ability to deliver all services. He fully understood the comments made around day care saying that it was an important part of this document.

In response to a question from Councillor Hughes on the severity of Covid and moving forward, the Chief Officer (Social Services) agreed but said that Covid had also impacted on staffing levels.

The Chief Officer (Social Services), in responding to a question from Councillor Brown, confirmed that there were staffing pressures, similar to every department in the country. Day care had not been prioritised because of public health advice but also the demand had decreased. There was a commitment for continuing to provide day care, but staffing was a key factor. The service had responded to local demands within its services at Marleyfield and at Croes Atti in the future.

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing explained that there were 8 memory cafes across Flintshire supporting

not only people with dementia but any elderly person who would like to visit. They had been hugely successful with residents spending the morning or afternoon at the café and had reduced the need for day care. She suggested that an item on day care be included on the forward work programme for the Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Referring to Croes Atti she explained the attendance had decreased because people were using these other settings. During Covid staff had worked in extremely difficult circumstances and it was distressing for residents, but Covid was still present, and the service had to be managed carefully.

Councillor McGuill referred to the warm hubs saying the premises were ready and heated but that there was a shortage of staff to run them and asked if the third sector could assist. She referred to her local community centre which provided a place for a variety of groups to hold meetings which could replace the need for day care centres.

In response to questions from Councillor Richard Jones, the Chief Officer (Social Services) said he would welcome a discussion on day care at Social and Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee as it was an important part of the service provision moving forward. The service was not just for older people but for people with disabilities and other needs too with a lot of valuable support provided.

The Commissioning Manager provided an overview of the commissioning provision and how it had changed since the Pandemic. Information was given on the Commissioning Carers Scheme, Bridging the Gap Scheme, Direct Payments and Micro Care Project which enabled people to access different opportunities moving away from the traditional day care service.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried.

RESOLVED:

That Council approved the North Wales Market Stability Report 2022.

34. CO-OPTED MEMBER OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report and explained that Council must appoint people who were not Councillors to the Standards Committee so that it was seen to be more independent and apart from the internal politics of the Council.

The term of office for one of the co-opted members would come to an end in December. That member was eligible to be reappointed for a further term.

The co-optee was the current Chair of the Committee and she had worked hard in the role and had made a beneficial contribution to the governance of the Council. She was willing to serve a further term if re-appointed.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried.

RESOLVED:

That Julia Hughes be reappointed to the Standards Committee for five years.

35. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report and explained that the Local Government and Election (Wales) Bill became an Act in January 2021. This was a large wide-ranging Act, and a Working Group was established to ensure all aspects which related to the Council were implemented.

He referred Members to the Appendix which highlighted how the Council had responded to the key parts of the Act. Outlining some of the key changes he confirmed that the largest change was holding meetings remotely, which had been in response to the Pandemic but was now law. On the Appendix, he clarified that the areas shown in green had been fully implemented with the areas shown in grey not currently enacted and the 5 areas shown in amber being work in progress.

The recommendations were moved and seconded.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the briefing report be received, and Council be assured;
- (b) That the constitutional and other implications of the Act be noted;
- (c) That the Officer Working Group be stood down until and unless any powers not yet exercised required implementation; and
- (d) That the Constitutional and Democratic Services Committee, supported by the Chief Officer (Governance) see the final aspects of the implementation of the Act to conclusion.

36. NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion had been submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group.

“This Council recognises the extreme hardship residents are suffering under the Cost-of-Living Crises. Growing numbers of residents, especially those using domestic heating oil (not protected by the domestic energy price cap) are entering a period of fuel poverty and will not be able to afford to heat their homes this winter. Even now, before winter, many residents are already in fuel poverty.

“Warm Hubs” are warm and friendly environments in which to enjoy refreshments, social activity, information and advice and respite from social isolation. Warm hubs can be based in civic and public buildings, which are already heated and open to the public such as libraries, in community asset buildings, church and village hall and other businesses such as cafes that may be happy to sign up to be scheme.

This Council acknowledges the Warm Hubs are unlikely to generate revenue and will not expect visitors to buy teas, coffees or otherwise spend money to stay in the warmth. Warm Hubs are community resource, recognising that if someone is in fuel poverty, they should be helped to conserve their financial resources and not feel pressured into spending money in order to stay in a warm, public environment

Therefore this Council resolves:

1. To liaise with partner organisation and provide Warm Hubs throughout the County of Flintshire
2. To work with Members and Town & Community Councils to identify suitable premises in each ward; and
3. To provide advertising materials for Members and Town & Community Councils to raise awareness of Warm Hubs within their communities.”

In speaking to the Notice of Motion, Councillor Coggins Cogan said that it was horrifying that, as one of the wealthiest countries in the world, the Council was having to consider “Warm Hubs”.

He felt the assistance from the UK Government would not make a difference as further increases in energy bills were predicted. He expressed disbelief at the tax breaks given to high earners but the vulnerable were being left to fend for themselves. Because of this his group was proposing the establishment of Warm Hubs utilising premises which were available in the county with the support of third sector organisations.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure accepted the Notice of Motion on behalf of Cabinet. At a meeting held the previous day, Cabinet actioned most of what was contained in the Notice of Motion, and he echoed the sentiments of Councillor Coggins Cogan that the sixth largest economy in the world had to provide Warm Hubs for its citizens. He also wished to be associated with the comments made regarding the tax breaks for high earners.

Councillor Richard Jones felt confident that all Members would support the principle and intent of the Notice of Motion. He queried the words “Warm Hubs” and asked if an alternative name could be used.

Councillor Ibbotson expressed his concern on what was facing residents this winter. He confirmed that during the previous months a huge amount of work had been undertaken by the Liberal Democrat group, Cabinet, Officers and his colleague Councillor Simon Jones. He commented on the impacts of high inflation, increase in energy bills, increased food prices and the cost of fuel would have on residents. It was recognised that the hubs could not be provided everywhere and that there were economic pressures on Council budgets but called on everyone to ensure that each person in the county had access to the support they needed this winter

Councillor Ellis said that she had written to Group Leaders and Senior Officers in September asking what support was being provided to the most vulnerable residents of Flintshire. She agreed with the comments made on a possible

alternative name, and the use of libraries or community centres as they were available in most towns and open to all residents. She asked if written information could be provided to assist with responding to residents questions.

The Vice Chair of the Council fully supported the Notice of Motion and thanked Councillor Ibbotson for his comments and concurred with the suggestion of renaming the hubs.

Councillor Peers supported the Notice of Motion in principle but also had reservations around the name and how it would be delivered and advertised, .

Councillor Owen also supported the Notice of Motion but asked how the hubs would be staffed and would the costs for refreshments be provided by the Council.

Councillor Chris Dolphin agreed with the comments made and did not have an issue with the name. Homelessness was always a problem which was unfortunately likely to get worse. He wondered who would administer the hubs and felt it was not feasible to have one in every community with churches and villages halls requiring to turn their heating on which was a major problem. He asked if the Chief Officer (Social Services) would be able to provide a response.

Councillor Simon Jones confirmed that he had been working with various groups across the country and said the name "Warm Hubs" was a UK standard name for this type of service. The focus should not be on the name but providing this service as quickly as possible with winter fast approaching.

Councillor Bibby paid tribute to the work undertaken, thanking the Senior Manager (Benefits) for the work she had done and agreed with the comments made today

The Chief Executive explained that this was being co-ordinated through the Senior Manager (Benefits) and her team. The third sector community groups had a major role to play with the Council to ensure its success. He thanked Members for their support on the Notice of Motion and provided reassurance that the work already being undertaken by the Senior Manager (Benefits) and the team which would continue.

Councillor Wakelam provided information on the way volunteer groups ran in Penyffordd and said it was important to engage with all groups in the community.

Councillor Crease also supported the Notice of Motion which was something meaningful for the whole county of Flintshire.

Councillor Coggins Cogan expressed his gratitude Members for their supportive comments. He understood why the name caused concern and said in his ward it would be called the "Gwernaffield Community Café". He reiterated the importance of working with the third sector to provide the support that was required.

The recommendation was proposed Councillor Ian Roberts and on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Notice of Motion be received and supported.

37. QUESTIONS

The Chair advised that three questions had been received and responded to. These had been circulated to Members.

RESOLVED:

That the questions and written responses be received and noted.

38. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS ON COMMITTEE MINUTES

None were received

39. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2pm and ended at 4.22 pm)

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Chair

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
18 OCTOBER 2022

Minutes of Flintshire County Council held as a hybrid meeting on Tuesday, 18 October 2022

PRESENT: Councillor Mared Eastwood (Chair)

Councillors: Mike Allport, Bernie Attridge, Glyn Banks, Pam Banks, Marion Bateman, Sean Bibby, Chris Bithell, Gillian Brockley, Helen Brown, Mel Buckley, Teresa Carberry, Tina Claydon, Geoff Collett, Steve Cople, Paul Cunningham, Rob Davies, Ron Davies, Chris Dolphin, Rosetta Dolphin, Carol Ellis, David Evans, Chrissy Gee, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Ian Hodge, Ray Hughes, Dennis Hutchinson, Alasdair Ibbotson, Paul Johnson, Christine Jones, Richard Jones, Simon Jones, Richard Lloyd, Dave Mackie, Gina Maddison, Roz Mansell, Allan Marshall, Hilary McGuill, Ryan McKeown, Billy Mullin, Debbie Owen, Ted Palmer, Andrew Parkhurst, Michelle Perfect, Vicky Perfect, Carolyn Preece, David Richardson, Ian Roberts, Dan Rose, Kevin Rush, Dale Selvester, Jason Shallcross, Sam Swash, Linda Thew, Linda Thomas, Roy Wakelam, Arnold Woolley and Antony Wren

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Adele Davies-Cooke, David Coggins Cogan, Jean Davies, Andy Hughes, David Hughes, Mike Peers, and Ant Turton

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Governance), Chief Officer (Planning, Environment & Economy), Chief Officer (Social Services), Chief Officer (Housing and Community), Corporate Finance Manager, Head of Democratic Services, Corporate Manager – Capital Programme and Assets, Strategic Finance Manager, and Democratic Services team

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that a personal interest would be recorded for all Members on item 7: Schedule of Remuneration for 2022/23, and on item 8: Amendments to Clwyd Pension Fund Constitution

41. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair referred to her communication which had been circulated prior to the meeting and listed the events she had attended between 27 July - 18 October 2022.

42. PETITIONS

None were received.

43. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22

The Chief Executive presented the Annual Performance Report for 2021/22. He provided background information and advised that the Annual Performance

Report reviewed progress against the Council's Priorities as detailed in the Council Plan 2021/22 and supporting measures document (Part 2).

The Chief Executive drew attention to the performance indicator out-turns as detailed in section 1.04 of the report and explained that performance against the Council Plan measures was positive with 73% of the performance indicators meeting or exceeding target for the year, compared to 67% the previous year. Referring to Regulation, Audit and Inspection activity the Chief Executive reported that the Auditor General had not made any statutory recommendations with which the Council must comply so far.

In moving the recommendation in the report Councillor Ian Roberts said it was important to note that the Council's achievements within the Improvement Plan 2021/22 were gained as it had emerged from the impact of the Covid pandemic and the implications of economic turmoil in world markets. He reiterated that despite the challenges performance within services had been positive with 73% meeting or exceeding targets. Councillor Roberts spoke of the "good" work which was delivered in local communities in Flintshire and said the Council would continue to strengthen and improve systems overall during the current financial year. He applauded officers and staff for their work during recent unprecedented and difficult years.

Councillor Ian Roberts was seconded by Councillor Billy Mullin.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst raised concern that insufficient weight was given in the Annual Report to those areas which were known to need improvement and cited the Corporate Contact Centre and completion of action following Risk Management Assurance reviews as examples. The Chief Executive acknowledged that some areas required further development and said he had given a commitment to follow through on progress and would continue to do so.

In response to the comments made by Councillor Parkhurst concerning the Corporate Contact Centre, the Chief Officer (Governance) provided background information and context to explain the reasons for performance.

Councillor Richard Jones expressed concern that 19% of performance measures had missed target by a significant margin and said this was the highest level in the last 5 years. The Chief Executive explained why some of the measures had not achieved target and commented on the challenges presented by the UK economic situation, and changes to Welsh Government policy (citing delivery of the Quality Partnership as an example), which had impacted on performance measures. In response to the further comments raised by Councillor Jones concerning the 11 performance measures referred to in the report which had significantly missed target it was agreed that this figure would be cross-checked against the portfolio improvement areas which were identified in the Annual Performance Report.

Councillor Sam Swash raised a point of accuracy on page 14 of the report and said the reference to social value and the target of £2854 was incorrect and should read £2,854,266 as stated on page 27.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Performance Report 2021-22 be approved.

44. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Corporate Finance Manager presented the Treasury Management Annual Report 2021/22. He advised that as required by the Council's Financial Procedure Rules, the Annual Report was reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee on 27 July 2022 and Cabinet on 26 September 2022. There had been no significant issues raised. The Corporate Finance Manager reported on the main points as detailed in 1.05 – 1.09 of the covering report.

In moving the recommendation in the report Councillor Paul Johnson thanked the Corporate Finance Manager and his team for their work on producing the Annual Report. This was seconded by Councillor Ted Palmer.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Treasury Management Report 2021/22 be approved.

45. SCHEDULE OF REMUNERATION FOR 2022/23

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report on the Schedule of Remuneration for 2022/23. He advised that each year, the Council was required to produce a Schedule of Remuneration for elected and co-opted members. The Schedule was appended to the report and following approval would be published and sent to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

The Head of Democratic Services drew attention to an amendment to be made to page 73 of the report and said that Councillor Alasdair Ibbotson had since been appointed as Chair of the Climate Change Committee and the appropriate remuneration would be added.

Councillor Bernie Attridge moved the recommendation in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Ian Roberts.

RESOLVED:

That the completed Schedule of Remuneration for 2022/23 be approved for publication.

46. AMENDMENTS TO CLWYD PENSION FUND CONSTITUTION

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented the report to review and update the Delegation Scheme for the Clwyd Pension Fund. He provided background information and advised that the report outlined the proposed changes to the Constitution and the Pension Board's Protocol to:

- reflect the proposal that the Head of Clwyd Pension Fund is the senior

- officer with responsibility for operational delivery of the Pension Fund, rather than the Chief Executive; and
- ensure that the Constitution is fully reflective of the status of pension fund management as a non-executive function.

Other incidental changes were included in the Appendix.

Councillor Ted Palmer moved the recommendation in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Rob Davies.

RESOLVED:

That the changes outlined in the appendix to the Clwyd Pension Fund Constitution and the Pension Board Protocol be approved.

47. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report to seek approval to the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference for each of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees. He provided background information and said the proposed changes to the terms of reference were shown in appendix 2 of the report.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that the new proposed terms of reference were considered by each of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees at their meetings in July 2022, where specific changes were presented. In response to questions around matters that fell within the remit of one or more Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members were advised that the decision as to which Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider it would be resolved by the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee, but that it would be possible for Members of both Committees to take part in consideration of a relevant report. Following consideration of the report each Overview & Scrutiny Committee supported the proposed amendments to its terms of reference.

Councillor Rob Davies moved the recommendation in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Bernie Attridge.

Councillor Richard Jones referred to page 123 of the report and proposed that the reference to Clwyd Pension Fund, under the heading Corporate Resources, be amended to read 'as an employer/member of the Pension Fund' to give clarity around the Council's role. The amendment to the recommendation was agreed by Councillors Rob Davies and Bernie Attridge.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference for each of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees be approved: and
- (b) That the reference to Clwyd Pension Fund, under the heading Corporate Resources, be amended to read 'as an employer/member of the Pension Fund'.

48. RECRUITMENT OF A TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented the report. He provided background information and advised that all Councils had been asked whether they wished to nominate candidates. Six were nominated and each prepared a pen portrait which was sent to all Town and Community Councils. Councils were asked to select their 1st preference candidate. The candidate with the most 1st preference votes would be chosen. In case this produced a tie they were also asked to nominate their 2nd preference candidate, which could be used to choose between any candidates with an equal number of 1st preference votes. Councillor Ian Papworth, Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor Community Council, had a clear majority of both 1st and 2nd preference votes.

Councillor Billy Mullin moved the recommendations in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Helen Brown.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That candidates be thanked for their interest; and
- (b) That Councillor Ian Papworth be appointed as the Town and Community Council representative to the Standards Committee until the elections in May 2027.

49. QUESTIONS

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that none had been received by the deadline.

50. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that none had been received by the deadline.

51. NOTICE OF MOTION

The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that none had been received by the deadline.

52. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 2.45 pm)

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Chair

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FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 13 th December 2022
Report Subject	Council Tax Premium Scheme for Second Homes and Long-term Empty Properties
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Governance and Corporate Services including Health and Safety and Human Resources Corporate Management and Assets
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local authorities in Wales have had discretionary powers since 2017 to charge a Council Tax premium of up to 100% above the standard rate of Council Tax on certain classes of second homes and long-term empty properties.

From April 2023, local authorities in Wales will also have the autonomy to charge, or vary, a Council Tax premium rate of up to 300% above the standard charge which could result in individuals paying an overall charge of 400%.

The Council introduced a premium scheme from 2017 and established a premium rate of 50% on both second homes and long-term empty properties. This rate has applied each year since 2017.

Following a public consultation that was undertaken in November 2021, and at the request of Cabinet, this report now sets out the key considerations for the Council Tax Premium Rates, to reflect an up-lift in premium from 50% to 75% for Long Term Empty properties and an uplift to 100% for Second Homes from April 2023.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	For Council to consider the current rate of premium of 50% on second homes and long-term empty properties and determine whether the rate should remain the same or be varied to 75% for Long Term Empty properties and 100% for Second Homes from April 2023.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM SCHEME
1.01	Following the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Cabinet and Full Council in March 2016 agreed to introduce a Council Tax premium from April 2017 and to charge a premium rate of 50% for dwellings designated as being periodically occupied (usually referred to as second homes) or long-term empty properties.
1.02	Since then, Council has resolved each year to continue with the scheme but with no change to the premium levels of 50%. Following a recent public consultation that was undertaken at the request of Cabinet, this report sets out the key considerations and options if Council consider it appropriate to vary the levels of the premium from April 2023. In summary, Cabinet is recommending proposed changes to the Premium Rates as detailed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 75% for Long Term Empty properties, and• 100% for Second Homes.
1.03	Welsh Government recently introduced further regulations so that from April 2023, local authorities in Wales will now have the autonomy to charge, or vary, a Council Tax premium rate of up to 300% above the standard charge which could result in owners of long-term empty properties and second homes being responsible for an overall charge of 400%.
1.04	Section 12 of the Local Government Finance Act says that before decisions are taken to vary or increase the rate of the Council Tax premium, Councils must also have regard to the guidance issued by Welsh Government. The key element of the guidance is set out in section 1.12 of this report. Consultation with the public also forms a key part of the decision-making process around future options for the Council Tax premium scheme.
1.05	At the request of Cabinet, an extensive public consultation was undertaken from 8 th November 2021 to 6 th December 2021 to canvass the views of the public on the current Council Tax premium scheme, its effectiveness and impact on the local community and the use of the scheme to incentivise owners to bring properties into full use to support the supply of local housing for local residents. The consultation also explored opinions on alterations to the premium rates and the perceived benefits and risks to adopting any alternative or amended scheme.
1.06	504 consultation responses were received from a broad range of people with many different interests and differing views. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those resident in Flintshire who pay Council Tax who are not second home or Long-term empty property owners.• Those residents in Flintshire who are second home or long-term empty property owners.• Second home and long-term empty homeowners in Flintshire who also are resident in the county.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents of Flintshire who do not pay Council Tax and also do not own a long-term empty property or second home.
1.07	<p>A comprehensive breakdown of the full results of the consultation is set out in Appendix 1 and the comments made in free text responses is detailed in Appendix 2 to this report.</p> <p>In summary, the consultation revealed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly two thirds of those responding felt long-term empty properties have a negative impact on their local community compared to only 3.5% feeling they had a positive effect. Almost half of those responding felt that second homes had a negative impact on their local community. Over 55.3% of those responding consider that the impact of long-term empty and second homes is to decrease availability of affordable housing. 50.4% felt the premium rate for second homes should be increased above the current 50% rate. Only 33.7% considered it should be reduced or not charged. 50.9% felt the premium rate for long-term empty properties should be raised above the current level. 58.4% of respondents felt introducing the premium rate after 12 months was the correct timescale. 40.1% of respondents considered that if the premium rate was reduced it would lead to an increase in second homes and long-term empty properties in Flintshire. If the premium rate were to increase, of those who are liable to pay the premium rate many said they would sell the property, followed by no action and pay the premium, refurbish and rent it out, and move into the property themselves. 42.3% of respondents felt an increase in premium above 50% would have a positive impact on their local community
1.08	<p>The results of the consultation demonstrate there is the opportunity for change with some support for a potential increase in the current level of premium on either, or both, long term empty properties and second homes.</p> <p>However, the consultation results also clearly demonstrate that there are occasions when taxpayers become liable for the premium where it may be difficult for them to sell, renovate a property or rent it out due to perhaps inheriting a property or it forms part of a complex estate.</p> <p>Similarly, purchasers who buy a property that has been empty for over 12 months may also become liable for the premium making it more difficult financially to carry out the works required.</p>
1.09	<p>Using the results of the consultation, Cabinet is now suggesting changes to the premium scheme to reflect an up-lift from 50% to 75% for Long Term Empty properties and 100% for Second Homes from April 2023.</p>
1.10	<p>A careful balance therefore needs to be struck to encourage owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use with the financial</p>

	burden and affordability issues that may result on those parties such as new owners or existing owners who do not have the option or the funds to take immediate steps to bring the property back into use.
1.11	<p>When considering whether to amend the premium rates, the discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure, and affordable homes; and • Increase the supply of affordable housing and enhance the sustainability of local communities.
1.12	<p>If Council support a variation in the rate of the premium, other key considerations should be based on local housing needs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers and percentages of long-term empty homes or second homes in the area. • Distribution of long-term empty homes or second homes and other housing throughout the authority and an assessment of their impact on property values in particular areas. • Potential impact on local economies and the tourism industry. • Patterns of demand for, and availability of, affordable homes. • Potential impact on local public services. • Potential impact on the local community. • Other measures that are available to authorities to increase housing supply. • Other measures that are available to authorities to help bring empty properties back into use.
1.13	<p>Not all long-term empty properties and second homes are subject to the premium and there are circumstances where a premium does not apply, or only applies after a specified period, and this is designated by 'exception classes' as detailed below. Class 1-4 applies to both long term empty homes and second homes, but Class 5-7 applies only to second homes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class 1 – Properties being marketed for sale (time limited exception for a period of up to 12 months) • Class 2 – Properties being marketed for let (time limited exception for a period of up to 12 months) • Class 3 – Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of the main property • Class 4 – Properties which would be someone's sole and main residence if they were not residing in Armed Forces accommodation • Class 5 – Occupied caravan pitches and boat moorings where the caravan or boat currently has no resident but when next in use will be a person's main residence • Class 6 – Seasonal properties where all year-round occupation is prohibited by planning conditions • Class 7 – Job related properties where a property is left empty because the person in relation to the dwelling is now resident in another dwelling which is 'job-related' (as defined by Regulations)

	<p>There is currently no exception from the Council Tax premium for properties with a planning condition specifying its use as holiday accommodation or restricting the occupancy of that property as a person's sole or main residence. From April 2023, Welsh Government are intending to amend Class 6 of the exceptions. The proposed change will affect Council Tax premiums for dwellings occupied periodically by including properties subject to a planning condition which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specifies a dwelling may only be used for short-term holiday lets; or restricts occupancy of the property to prohibit use as a person's sole or main residence. • Such properties would be liable for Council Tax at the standard rate but could not be charged a premium.
1.14	<p>Flintshire is one of eleven local authorities in Wales to levy the Council Tax premium. 7 councils (including Flintshire) set the levy at 50% (or lower) for second homes for the current year (2022/23). Three councils with significant numbers of holiday homes levy a higher premium on second properties.</p> <p>For long term empty properties 11 councils set a premium of which 4 are above 50%. An analysis of the premium rates across Wales is attached in Appendix 3 to this report.</p>
1.15	<p>To strike the right balance, and using the results of the recent consultation, Cabinet considered a range of options, including retaining, as a minimum, the premium rate at the existing level of 50% or increasing the premium rate on both long-term empty properties and second homes to a rate no higher than 75%. In view of increasing budget pressures and the need to reduce the number of unoccupied properties, Cabinet now recommend changes to the premium rates as set out in paragraph 1.02 of this report.</p>
1.16	<p>Setting the premium rate above the current levels would ensure the Council continues to increasingly incentivise owners to bring properties back into full use, but at the same time, set a premium rate for 2023-24 which, as far as possible, does not cause undue hardship to those who are liable for the premium.</p>
1.17	<p>Using the Council Tax system to incentivise owners to bring properties back into permanent use helps to mitigate limited capability to address local demand for housing. The premium scheme also provides additional Council Tax income to meet the demand on services or to use any additional revenue generated to help meet local housing needs, in line with the policy intentions of the premium scheme.</p>
1.18	<p>Solving housing problems and meeting demand remains a complex strategy involving national and local government. Local demand for affordable housing shows high levels of need with 2,289 applications on the SARTH common housing register for social/affordable housing. Increasing the level of the Council Tax premium is not a 'silver bullet' to resolving supply but it is one of the tools that the Council can use.</p>
1.19	<p>There is evidence to indicate that the implementation of a Premium encourages owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use. In 2016 (prior to the introduction of the premium) there were 888 long</p>

	term empty properties in Flintshire. This figure in 2022 is now 605, a reduction of 283 (32%).
1.20	<p>There are examples where owners choose not to bring properties, especially long-term empty homes, back into full use. Equally, it is also important to recognise that there are also many reasons why properties are left long term empty or are only periodically occupied and therefore subject to the premium. These can typically fall into several categories:</p> <p>Long Term Empty Properties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estates of deceased owners where other Council Tax exemptions have elapsed, and ownership has not transferred. Currently 11% of all Long-Term empty/Second home premiums are issued to Executors of estates. • Beneficiaries of long-term empty properties that they have inherited. • New owners/tenants who purchase a property that has already been empty for 12 months and do not move in straight away due to works being required to the property or adaptations to meet the needs of a disability or for other reasons. • Properties that remain empty for over 12 months whilst obtaining planning permission for alterations/improvement/demolition • Homes where renovations cannot be completed within 12 months due to the scale of works, lack of available tradesman or where they are being completed by the owners in their spare time. • Long term empty properties where renovations are delayed by the owners due to financial constraints – including the imposition of the premium. • Properties that cannot be sold due to there being negative equity in the property. • Homes that remain empty over 12 months due to Covid-19 restrictions limiting progress of works, access to the property or the availability of building materials and trades. <p>Second Homes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties that are secondary residencies and used as holiday homes. • Properties that are the responsibility of estates of deceased owners, but which remain furnished thereby not counting as long term empty (11% of all Second Home/LTE Premium charges are addressed to Executors on behalf of estates).

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Following the public consultation, if Council decide to raise the level of the premium on long term empty properties and/or second homes, there is a possibility of increasing the Council Tax yield and to use any additional revenue generated to help meet local housing needs, in line with the policy intentions of the premium scheme.

2.02 The additional revenue generated to support services will depend on the revised level of the premium rates but would typically consist of an additional £101k for every additional 10% levy above 50% on long-term empty properties and an additional £28k for every additional 10% levy on designated second homes. This can be illustrated as:

Second homes – 167 homes in total

%	50%	60%	70%	75%	100%
Value (£)	139,847	167,817	195,786	209,771	279,694
Increase (£)	-	27,969	55,939	69,924	139,847

Long Term-empty properties – 605 properties in total

%	50%	60%	70%	75%
Value (£)	508,969	610,763	712,557	763,453
Increase (£)	-	101,794	203,588	254,484

3.00 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

3.01 A full integrated impact assessment (IIA) has been undertaken to ensure the Council has properly understood and assessed the potential impacts of the proposal to potentially vary the premium rates. The IIA is set out in Appendix 4. There are no negative impacts to consider with regard to protected characteristics of particular groups.

Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact

Long-term	Positive: Access to affordable housing remains, as well as bringing empty homes back into full, use remains a strategic long-term priority for the Council to enhance the local housing market and improve local communities. The premium scheme is designed to encourage owners to bring empty homes back into use ensuring that we maximise the use of our existing resources prior to exploring the possibility of encouraging new developments.
Prevention	Positive: The premium scheme is designed to encourage owners to bring empty homes back into use. Reducing the number of empty homes will in the long term tend to reduce housing disrepair. Empty homes can also have a detrimental impact on local communities and the majority of the respondents to the consultation. Nearly two thirds of those responding felt long-term empty properties have a negative impact on their local community

Integration	<p>Positive: There is a close alignment with Welsh government priorities of the refurbishment of empty properties into homes.</p> <p>One of the Councils key objectives is 'Developing affordable and accessible housing' and specifically bringing empty homes back into full use to enhance the local housing market and improve our local communities.</p>
Collaboration	No change
Involvement	<p>Positive: A full public consultation has been undertaken and the majority of responses support the continuation of the scheme, with many responses also supporting an up-lift in the premium rates. The summary of the consultation is set out in Appendix 1 to this report.</p>
<p>The introduction, and continuation, of the Council Tax premium scheme for long term empty properties and second homes is intended to help to bring properties back into full use, to improve the supply of affordable housing and to support the sustainability of local services and communities. The policy will continue to positively contribute to the well-being objectives.</p>	
Prosperous Wales	Positive impact – the premium scheme helps to incentivise owners to bring properties back into full use, thereby helping to develop resilient and sustainable communities.
Resilient Wales	Positive impact – the premium scheme helps to incentivise owners to bring properties back into full use, thereby helping to develop resilient and sustainable communities.
Healthier Wales	Positive impact – adequate provision and availability of housing is recognised as a key enabler to good health.
More equal Wales	Positive impact - The premium scheme is designed to ensure empty homes are brought back into use and enable local residents to secure homes. This will create fairness in the system as we know that housing issues tend to be more acute for younger people who often find it difficult to secure homes.

	Cohesive Wales	Positive impact - Pressures in the local housing market are such that people who live and work in the County are increasingly find it difficult to get on the property ladder and secure a house. The premium scheme could have a positive impact by encouraging owners to bring empty properties back into use and thereby helping to develop strong and cohesive communities by addressing housing needs.
	Vibrant Wales	Positive impact: the policy disincentives properties being left empty or being periodically occupied and instead encourages properties to be lived in full time as a primary residence. Having a higher percentage of properties being permanent residences will encourage the uptake, maintenance of the Welsh language in the community. It will also provide more opportunity for local residents to have access to housing stock when they require in order to stay living local and contribute to the local culture of the area rather than migrating away.
	Globally responsible Wales	No impact

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	At the request of Cabinet, a full public consultation was undertaken in November and December 2021. The feedback from this consultation is set out in Appendix 1 and 2.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Results of the public consultation Appendix 2 - Free Text Responses of the Public Consultation Appendix 3 - Analysis of premium schemes across Wales Appendix 4 - Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Appendix 5 - Analysis of Long-Term Empty Properties and Second Homes

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing (Wales) Act 2014 • Local Government Finance Act 1992, sections 12A and 12B • Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) Regs 2015 • The Council Tax (Long Term Empty Dwellings and Dwellings Occupied Periodically) (Wales) Regulations 2022 • Welsh Government Guidance on the implementation of the Council Tax Premium scheme https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-06/council-tax-on-empty-and-second-homes.pdf • The Council Tax (Exceptions to Higher Amounts) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (the draft regulations).

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: David Barnes, Revenues & Procurement Manager Telephone: 01352 703652 E-mail: david.barnes@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Council Tax Premium: an additional amount of Council Tax of up to 300% (a premium) can be charged from April 2023 by local authorities in Wales for property defined as either being second homes or long-term empty property. There are some exceptions from the Council Tax premium, some of which are time limited.</p> <p>Long Term Empty Property: is defined as a property which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a period of six months or more, but to be liable for a premium, it would be unoccupied and unfurnished for a continuous period of one year or longer.</p> <p>A Second Home: is defined as a property which is not a person's sole or main residence and is substantially furnished.</p> <p>SARTH: is a process used to allocate social housing across Flintshire to eligible applicants. The Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) is a single housing register, shared by all social housing providers in the County of Flintshire and is used to assess applications and only those with recognised housing need in a banding system can go on the housing register. This means applicants have one point of contact and one application process to complete and be considered for all available social housing in Flintshire.</p>

Public Consultation

Consultation on Reviewing the Council Tax Premium Scheme for Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes in Flintshire

Page 35

December 2021

Introduction

The public were invited to submit their views on the current premium scheme and the level of premium.

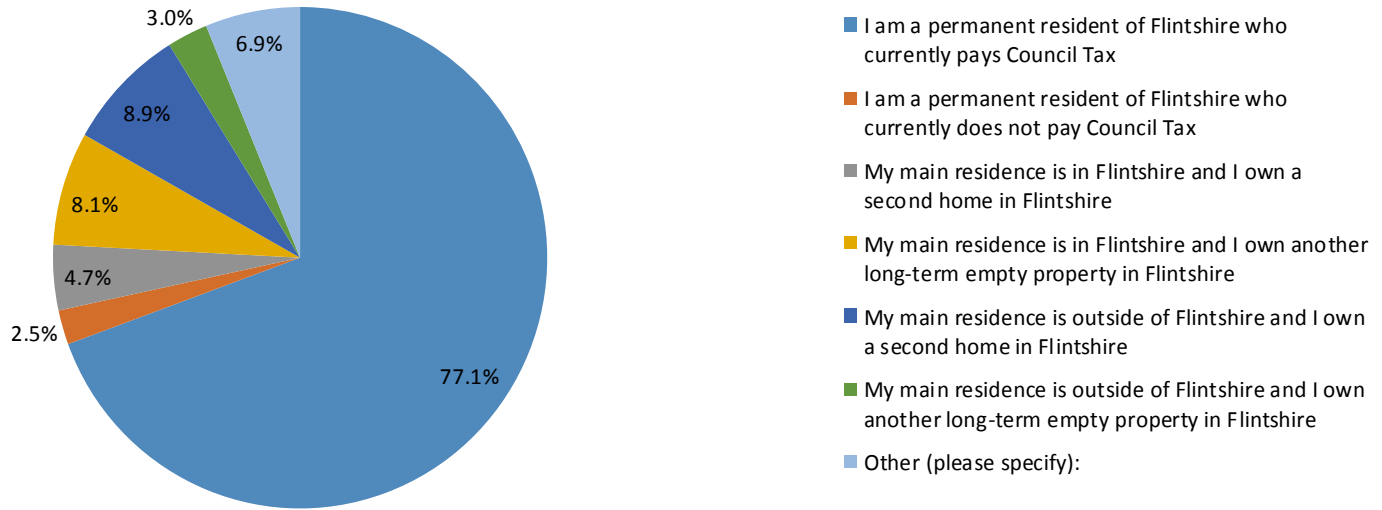
Page 36 The consultation was formed of 13 questions and was live from Monday 8th November 2021 to 6th December 2021.

522 full or partial responses were received across the English and Welsh Consultation submissions.

The responses are documented over the coming pages.

Q1 From the list below please select the option(s) which best describe you.

From the list below please select the option(s) which best describe you.
Please tick all that apply to you

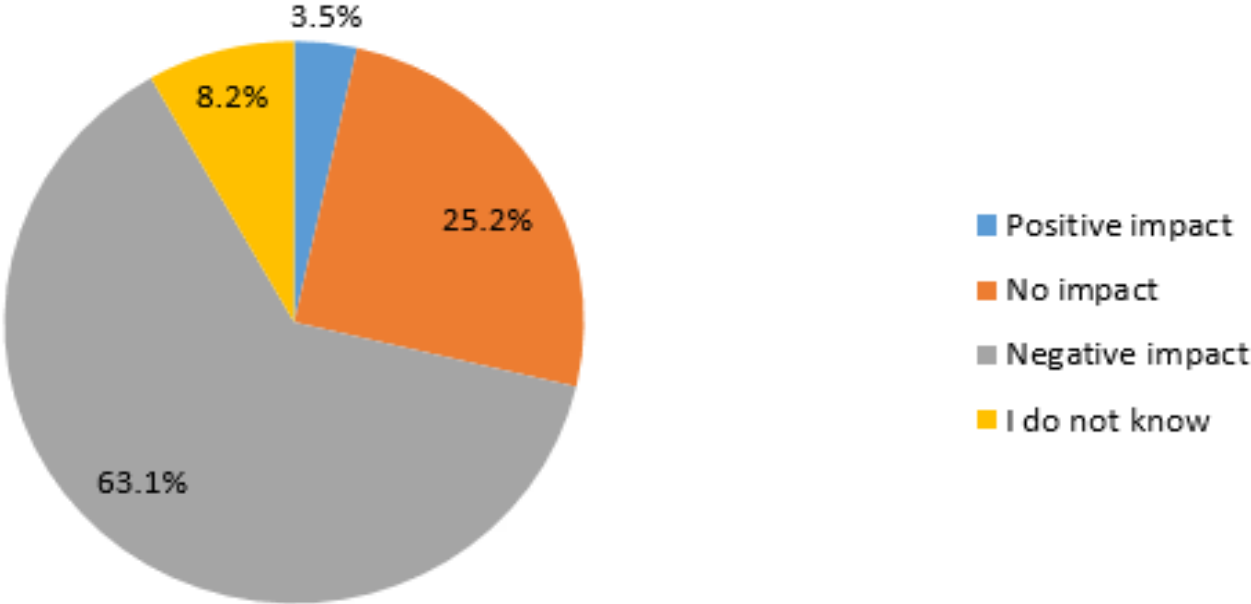


Page 37

Over three quarters of those that responded are permanent residents of Flintshire who currently pay Council Tax

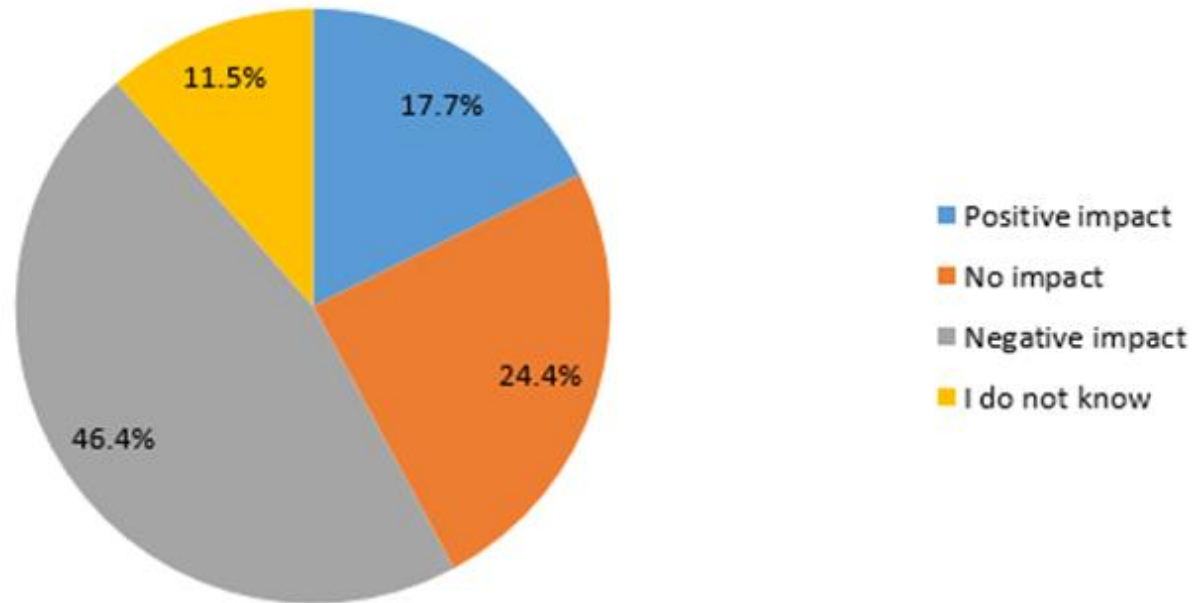
Q2. In Flintshire there are currently 605 long-term empty properties subject to the council tax premium. In your opinion, what overall impact do long-term empty dwellings currently have on local communities?

Page 38



Nearly two thirds of those responding felt long-term empty properties have a negative impact on their local community.

Q3. In Flintshire there are currently 167 second homes subject to the council tax premium. In your opinion, what overall impact do second homes currently have on local communities?

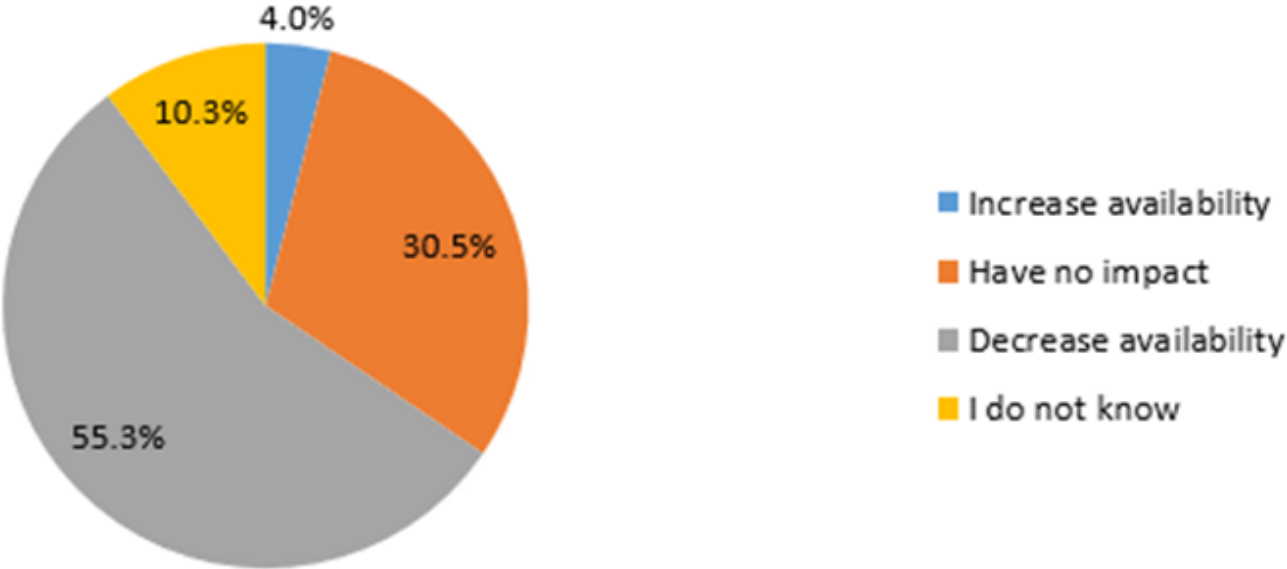


Page 39

Almost half of those responding felt that second homes had a negative impact on their local community. This is significantly lower than the 63.1% who in the previous question felt long-term empty properties had a negative impact on where they live.

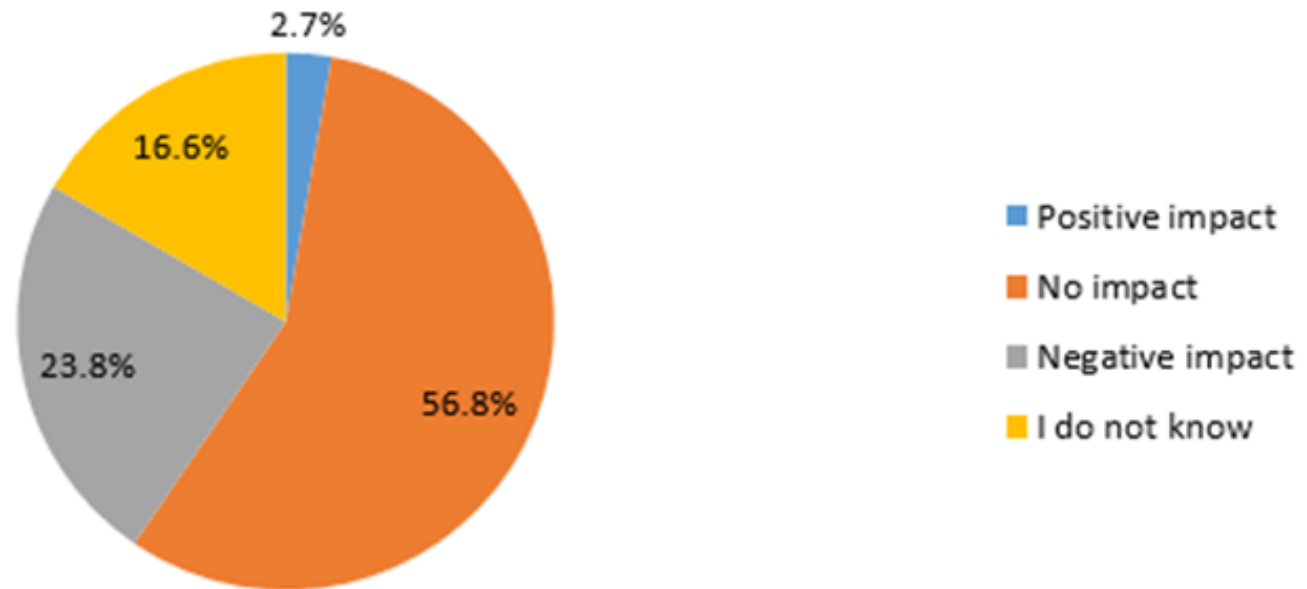
Q4. In Flintshire there are currently 2,120 people on the waiting list for social/affordable housing. In your opinion, what impact do long-term empty dwellings and second homes currently have on the availability of affordable housing in Flintshire?

Page 40



Over 55% of those that completed the consultation considered that the impact of long-term empty and second homes is to decrease availability of affordable housing in Flintshire.

Q5. In your opinion, and thinking about the opportunities for people to use Welsh and to ensure the Welsh language is treated no less favorably than English, what impact do the current number of second homes and long-term empty properties have on the Welsh Language?

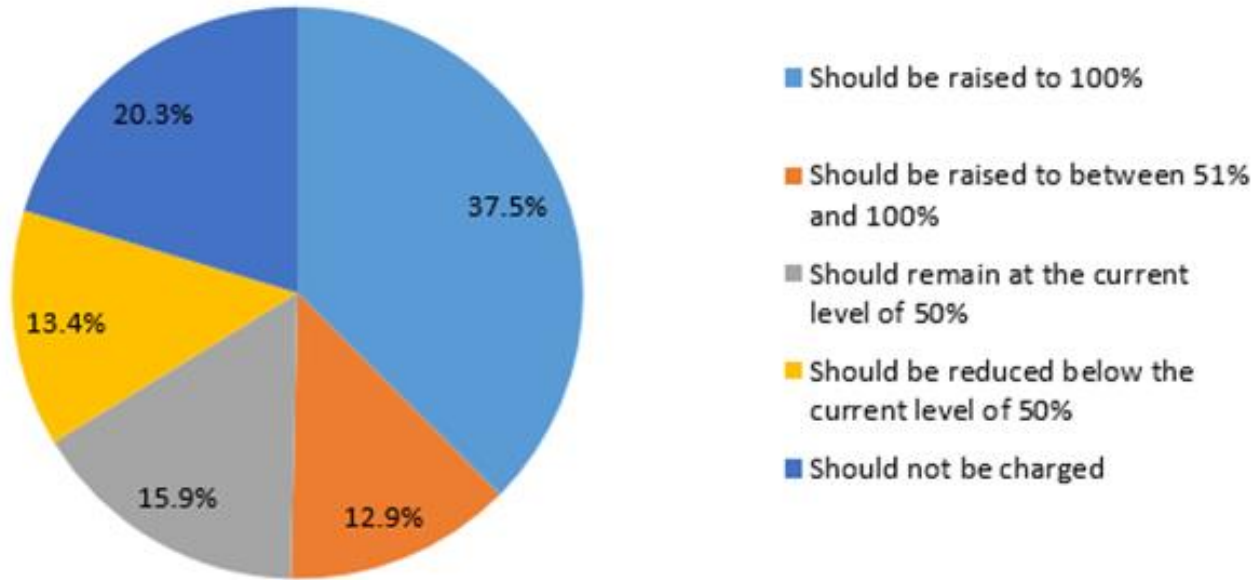


Page 41

A majority of respondents expressed that long term empty properties and second homes have no impact on the treatment of welsh language.

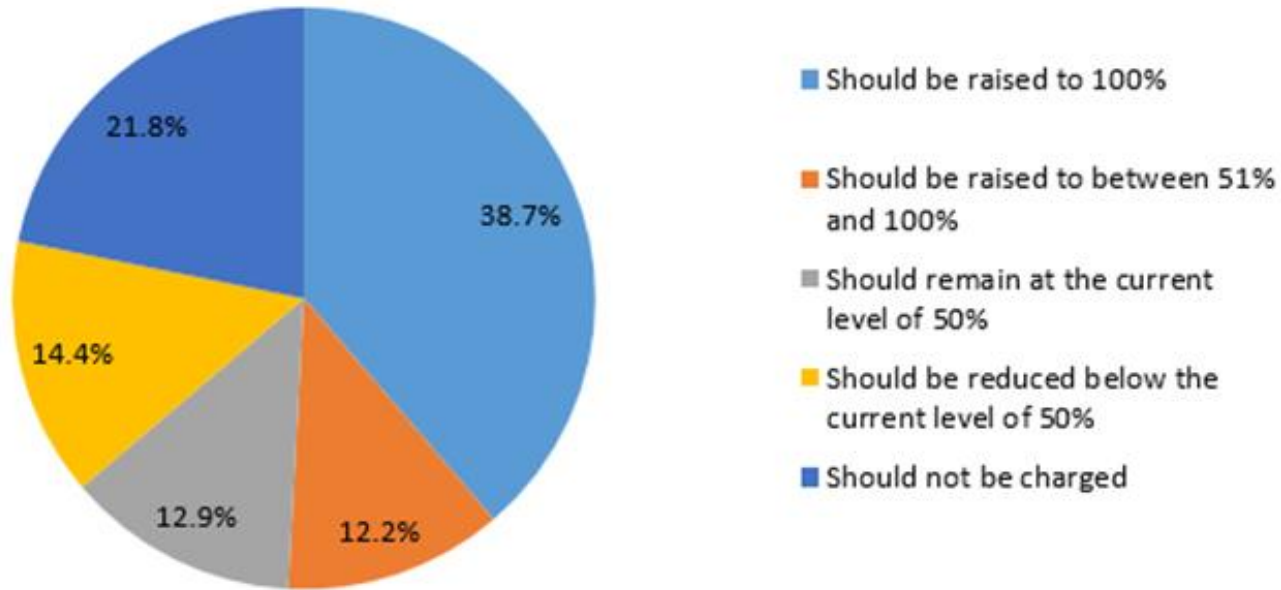
Q6. The Council is currently reviewing its premium scheme of 50% on second homes. In your opinion what should the proposed level of premium be in Flintshire?

Page 42



Over half of respondents felt the premium for second homes should be raised above the current level, with 37.5% considering it should be raised to the maximum 100%. This contrast with only a third of responses considered that the premium should be reduced or not charged at all.

Q7. The Council is currently reviewing its premium scheme of 50% on long term empty dwellings. In your opinion what should the proposed level of premium be in Flintshire?



Page 43

Over half of respondents felt the premium for long-term empty properties should be raised above the current level, with 38.7% considering it should be raised to the maximum 100%. This outcome is similar to the views expressed for premiums on second homes.

Q8. Please briefly explain the reason for your selections in Q6 and Q7

Various reasons were provided to support the opinions provided in the previous two questions on the level of the premium. Those in favour of increasing the premium raised the points which included:

- The current level is not enough of a deterrent;
- Second homes and long term empty properties should be discouraged to provide homes for families that need them and increase the number of properties available to let;
- Second homes and long term empty properties should be discouraged to reduce new developments, reduce blight on communities and protect the planet;
- Empty homes are an eyesore and negatively impact communities.

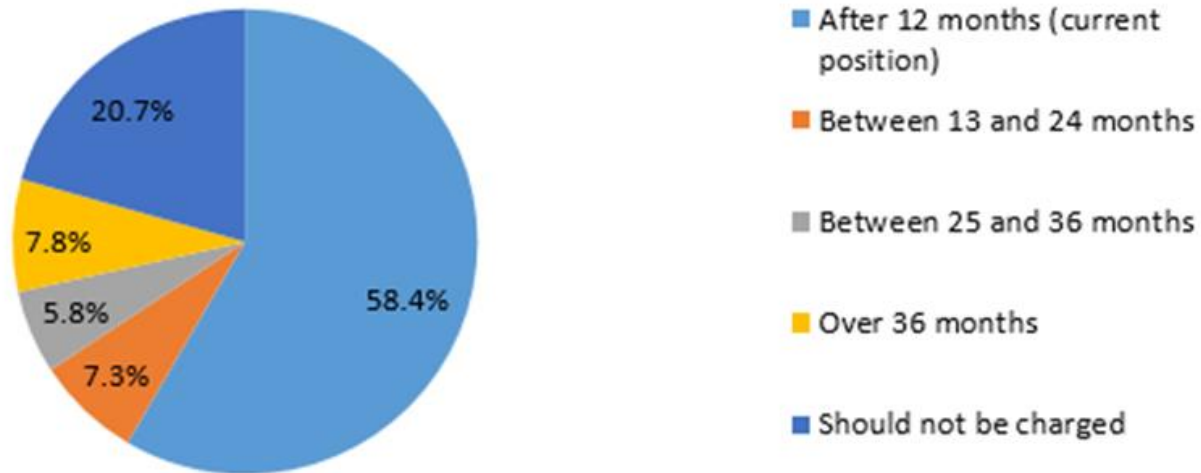
Q8. Please briefly explain the reason for your selections in Q6 and Q7

Those in favour of a reduction in the level of premium or not charging a premium at all raised the points below:

- Empty homes are not using any facilities, why should they pay?
- Some people end up paying the premium through circumstances outside of their control including inheritance or new home owners;
- How can repairs be afforded to make long –term empty properties habitable when a council tax premium has to be paid?;
- The premium discourages investment in Flintshire;
- The premium discourages tourism in the county.

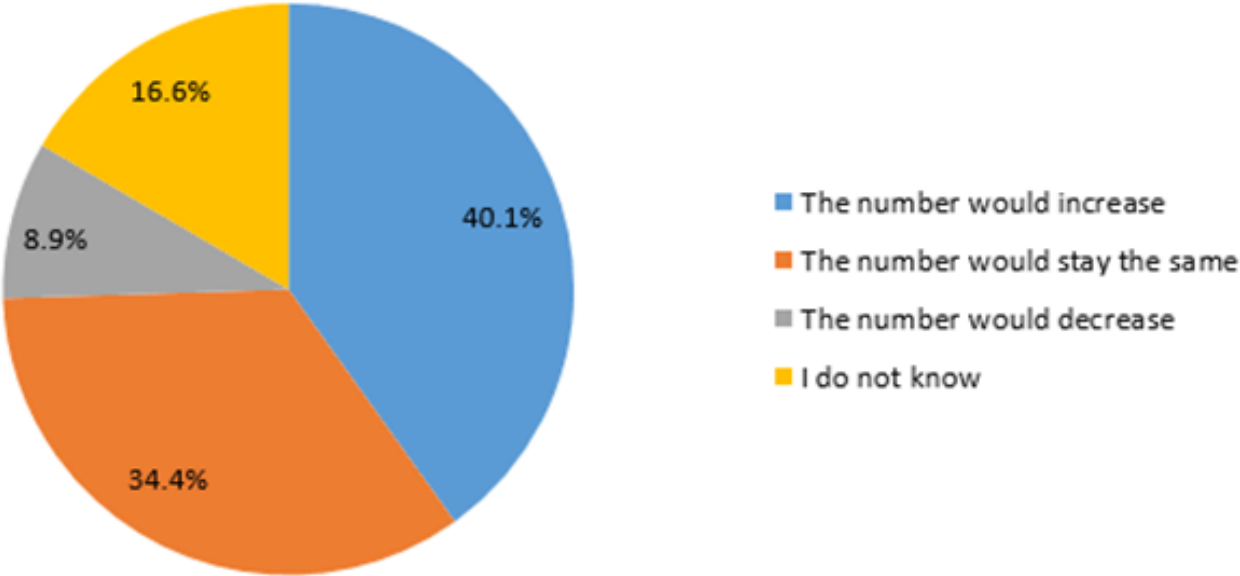
Q9. Currently a premium becomes payable after a long-term empty property has been vacant for 12 months - unless it qualifies for an exception. What length of time do you feel a property should be empty before becoming subject to a premium?

Page 46



A majority of respondents 58.4% confirmed they felt that introducing the premium after 12 months for a long-term empty property was the correct timescale.

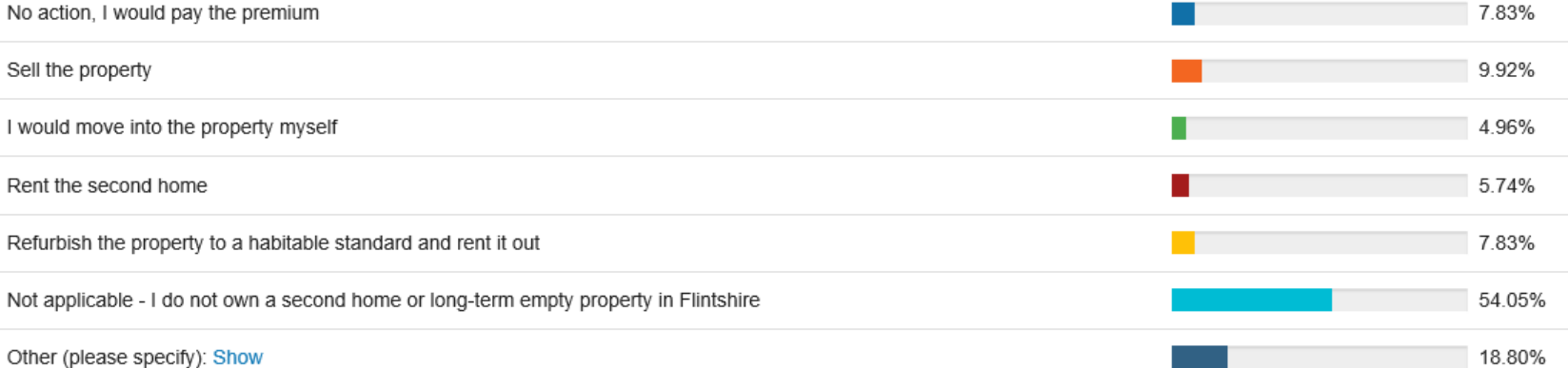
Q10. If the premium were to be reduced, what impact do you think this would have on the number of second homes and long term empty properties in Flintshire?



40.1% of respondents felt a reduction in the premium would increase the number of second homes and long-term empty properties in Flintshire compared to only 8.9% who thought they would decrease.

Q11. If you are the owner of a second home or long-term empty property in Flintshire, what action would you be likely to take if the premium was to be increased.

Page 48

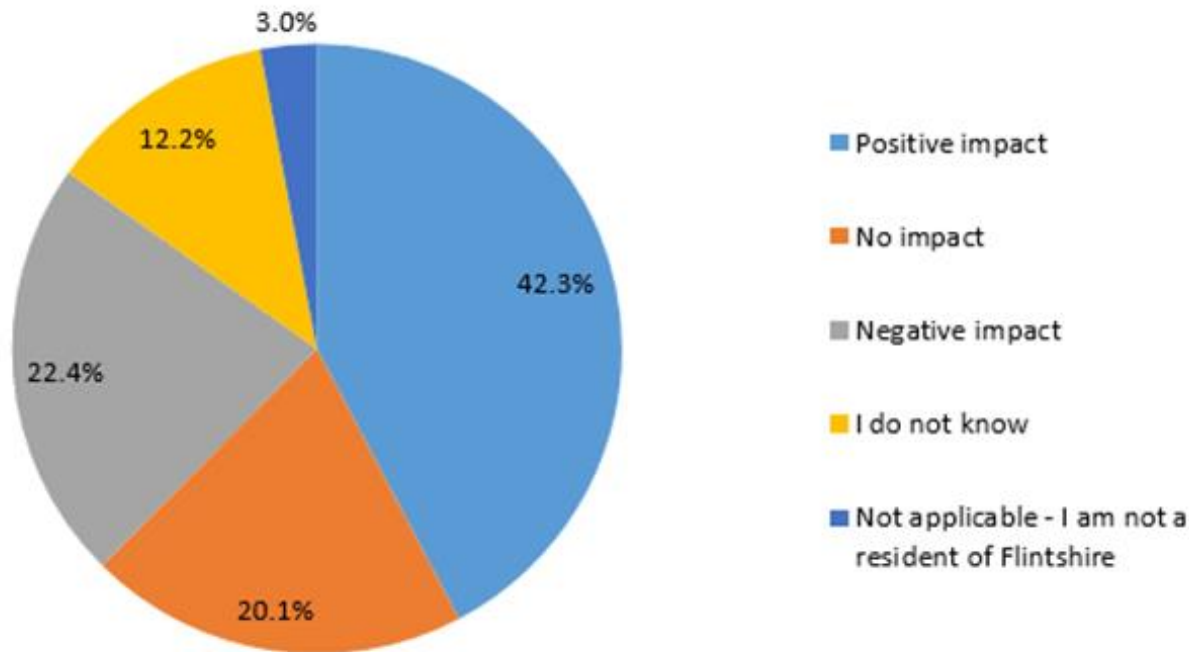


Of those that own a second home or long-term empty property in Flintshire, the most chosen response was that they would sell the property if the premium was to be increased, closely followed by taking no action and paying the premium and refurbishing the property and renting it out.

For the 67 respondents that answered “other” in question 11, they provided further detail on what actions they would take as summarised below

- Use the premises as a business;
- Use the premises as a commercial holiday let;
- Would continue with renovations but the additional charge would hamper the speed of renovations;
- Already trying to sell property;
- Demolish or merge with an existing property;
- Press planning for a quicker decision;
- Sell and invest somewhere else;
- Challenge or lobby the decision;
- Cause financial stress;
- No single answer can be provided.

Q12. In your opinion, what impact would an increase - above the current 50% premium level - have on your local community.



Page 50

Of those that are resident in Flintshire an expressed an opinion (84.8%), almost half (42.3%) felt that an increase in the current level of premium would have a positive impact on the local community.

Q13. We welcome any other comments or suggestions you may have regarding council tax premiums on long term empty properties and second homes.

185 respondents completed this free-text section with very individual circumstances and observations. Some extracts from their feedback is detailed below:

“As stated above it is an unfair charge as people sometimes take longer than anticipated to refurbish a property, why do you think you should decide how long it should take? Some people refurbish properties as a hobby, on a weekend or evenings and sometimes things crop up that take more time or cost more money than you thought and you are penalising people for that, the money you are charging could be used to finish the property off”

“No allowances are given for genuine home owners who have purchased/inherited property and are renovating to make the dwelling habitable and which will become the main residence. Also given the fact that any building works have been greatly impacted by Covid-19 I think the current system is unfair. Councils would be aware of anyone who is genuinely make home improvements as plans/building regulations would have to be approved by you. “

Q13. Further suggestions/comments

“The County Council themselves need to act on there own properties and not have any type of property empty for long periods.”

“Why are properties left empty for years? If you don’t live in the property- let someone else have use of it. Especially if it’s run down and blights the area. If you can afford a second home - you can afford the council tax. We need to restore village communities where neighbours look out for each”

“I purchased this property in 1986. As I had to move away for work my mother moved into the property and lived there until she passed away. I have spent a great deal of money refurbishing the property. I do not wish to rent the property as it is intended for my retirement. It might prove difficult to get a tenant removed. We use the property for visits to see family . Paying 100% would have a massive impact on my salary as we are also paying to keep the electricity and heating costs so it doesn’t fall into disrepair.”

Q13. Further suggestions/comments

“The focus should not be on long term empty property but on the building of actually affordable homes by developers.”

“As a second home owner we are contributing to the economy of Wales”

“In my case any increase in council tax premium would reduce the amount of money I would have available to spend in local shops and for local services”

“the property was left to me for my children, I have paid the increased charge for the last two years and it is crippling! The property is uninhabitable, no heating, no kitchen, no bathroom and an outside toilet, it is literally a shell yet still I had to pay the increase the council”

Q13. Further suggestions/comments

“Instead of diverting the attention onto a sector, where people are paying their Council taxes and contributing to the local community, the Councils should be looking at their own Buildings and assets to provide affordable housing.”

Page 54

“A relative recently died although leaving a will it was with the solicitor who had gone out of business, it took a long time to sort out not helped by the thought of council taxes being paid on the property”

“People who buy property and land as investments to make themselves richer should pay more ..property developers are pushing up house prices. .And local young people have virtually no chance of getting on the property ladder , we have seen this happen all over the country and it’s not right”

Appendix 2 - Council Tax Premium Free Text Responses

Q 8 the Council is currently reviewing its premium scheme of 50% on long term empty dwellings. In your opinion what should the proposed level of premium be in Flintshire Please briefly explain the reason for your selections.

335 respondents answered this question, the responses are grouped below into themes.

Q8 Response to Why Chose Level of Premium
I think that in times of climate emergency, when it behoves us all to use and re-use the earth's resources carefully, the concept of second homes and empty dwellings is becoming an anachronism. We should use what we have; it's wrong to build further when an existing house could have been freed up onto the market.
Second homes should be discouraged and owners of long-term empty dwellings should be incentivised to make them available for families needing homes.
Long term empty dwellings have a negative impact on the local community and would be better utilised in improving better availability of housing
The additional premium has no impact whatsoever, serving only to alienate visitors/tourists to the county. The small number of houses used as holiday homes has no impact on the use of welsh, in fact, in many parts of the County one doesn't hear Welsh spoken at all. It could also be viewed as anti-English by people from over the border.
Because we live next door to a property that will have been empty for four years in march 2022. We have reported it and spoken face to face with a member of the empty homes team who have basically told us that they have seen worse and that there is nothing that can be done unless property actually falls apart. Why should normal council tax payers pay council tax when properties next door are deteriorating and lowering the value of other people's properties?
I have, for a very long time been worried about the number of long term empty houses across the UK As a whole and was disappointed to learn the number for Flintshire was so high! At a time when young and disadvantaged people are desperate for a decent place to live, Surely this situation is totally unacceptable? My own daughter and small granddaughter are currently in a let property, and she has been told she's not even eligible to be put on the Council list because it's a privately owned property? There are many many empty, run down properties in cities, towns and villages which could be retrofitted instead of more houses being built, even on flood plains!
To have empty homes in Flintshire is an absolute disgrace and increasing council tax in respect of empty homes will be an incentive for the owners to sell or let their properties.
Should help to deter people from owning properties used as 'second homes' or from keeping properties empty.
How can 2nd home owner bring these houses up to standard if they are paying 150%+ council tax rates. If they want them back available in the system. then a reduction in council tax would help for the first 12-18 months then maybe 150% rising to 200% after this time.
Second homes/empty dwellings have little or no positive impact on local communities, so should be subject to higher levels of tax.
It's obvious that current level of tax on empty property is not having the required effect of bringing these back into use. Perhaps a punitive level of tax will force owners of these properties into action as regards bringing them into the private rental sector.
Local properties should be for the indigenous population not for affluent non-residents

Occasionally people purchase a dwelling with the intent to demolish it and seek planning permission for a larger amount of smaller homes on the same land. This is very unjust and leads to properties remaining unused for many years. These tend to be vandalised and even set on fire. I feel that more should be done at the point of sale and contracts signed to show that the property will be lived in for at least 11 months out of twelve. Local young people cannot afford to live in our towns as they are priced out of the market. I feel that increasing the long term empty homes tax should be to 100% to deter this kind of speculative buyer.
Not enough houses for sale or to let. Think holiday home buyers who use as holiday let also have a negative impact I know many people who used to rent are now changing to this as it gives them more income and they don't pay council tax.
Sometimes the reason for unoccupied is not the owners fault
I was the owner of an empty property, approx. 3 years, having to pay the council tax did not help me get it renovated quicker, and it hindered me.
Need to make it more expensive to keep property empty than occupied or to sell it
It makes me sad to see properties sitting empty, especially when they become neglected. There is a housing shortage but houses are being built rather than using those we already have. It is wasteful.
People who can afford a second home or able to leave their property empty should pay a premium so that local residents are not put at a squeezed out of the market when trying to find good quality housing
The questions asked do not consider many other aspects & ways people live and pay for their accommodation. Or how efficient the management of collecting it is, what enforcement is carried out to recover outstanding debt
Do not reference the unpaid taxes and percentage recovery of unpaid debt
Do not consider local and incoming travellers. , People who sometimes pay one set of taxes yet have multiple homes occupied on 1 rate paying location with Chalets & Caravans also occupied
Do not consider itinerants who dwell in caravans, homes, chalets and pay no rates
Do not consider multiple occupations of many families in one dwelling
Do not consider larger homes under-occupied
Do not consider the lack of businesses in the area for locals to acquire the wealth to purchase and sustain housing
Do not consider other ways rather than increasing costs. Instead of resolving difficult issues.
Getting people to do their job and enforcing rules and regulations.
Empty homes need to be used, there are a lot of people on waiting list with Local Authorities and Housing Associations
I think you need to apply the 150% charge after 18 months so 100% after 12 months and then 150% after 18 months as owners may try to sort out the house.
Second homes- reduces the number of properties available for purchase/rent by local residents inflates home prices/rent in popular rural/coastal areas potentially reduces money spent within the community on local goods/services owners would still expect refuse collection/policing/fire services/local initiative communication improvements to be provided
Long term empty - depends on reason. Should have ability to set premium on reason
Those who can afford more, should pay more, especially when their actions have a negative impact on the community. It's a way to restore a bit of balance and fairness.
The pressures above also have an effect on the housing prices which are pushed up due to the current demand. This leads to challenges to first-time buyers and residents of Flintshire.
The private housing market needs properties at all levels. Long term empty properties attract anti-social behaviour/ give a negative view of an area/

<p>The number of second homes in Flintshire is low - where they exist, visitors use and enhance tourist facilities and create upmarket communities. This is different in areas with huge numbers of second homes which do impact the dynamic of the neighbourhood.</p> <p>There should be the ability to apply higher CT charges to long-term empty properties with maybe an element of discretion to reflect the varying reasons of why they are empty. Sometimes there are properties that few people want to buy, or probate issues etc. For other properties, incentives to use the property such as signing it over to a RSL for a set period of time, who will upgrade the facilities, should be introduced alongside higher CT charges.</p>
<p>please see comments in section 13 box</p>
<p>The impact of the 50% since 2017 started off working well as a number of empty homes were realised and this benefitted people waiting for homes, recently the emphasis has waned and there is no immediate deterrent to these empty homes owners to comply, so the action to raise the 50% should have the effect on them to renovate and let these homes to Flintshire residents</p>
<p>I firmly believe that empty properties should pay 100% duty on council tax. I also think that if a property has been empty for more than 5 years and not up for sale, the council should have the power to “compulsory purchase” that property at market value. These properties become an eyesore for future possible investment in a town. Also if tourists visit a town and see these properties, what will they think? Buckley town has this problem! Derelict property on Liverpool road by the Texaco Petrol station (been empty 20 yrs. plus) eyesore, Chester road near the station, vacant land left to overgrown, Mold road a derelict cottage by the Esso petrol station on the Wilf’s. These properties will surely discourage any future investor in the town of Buckley!!</p>
<p>Buckley for one is under pressure for housing of all sorts, shapes and sizes. However, scattered around the town there are properties of high potential which have been empty and unused for years. They are owned by persons far away who are simply holding on to them as capital assets which appreciate in time. We also have a number of second home properties, which appear to be used only intermittently.</p>
<p>As I have already stated there are currently 2120 on a waiting list. These second homes delay these people on the waiting list an opportunity to get a home</p>
<p>Second homes imply that when in use the people who are there use FCC facilities. Long term empty dwellings have little need for FCC facilities, but there should still be deterrents to having empty dwellings and financial penalties are a way of managing this.</p>
<p>They are not using any of Flintshire’s services for which the council tax is there to pay for.</p>
<p>Empty properties in particular, but second homes additionally, reduce the availability of social housing, and houses available for first time buyers wishing to stay in the area. Owners of empty houses, and of holiday homes should be prepared to contribute more. Perhaps a 75% initial levy rising (with notice) to 100% in 2 years</p>
<p>Long term empty homes are a waste of resources when people are homeless. Ditto second homes.</p>
<p>Increase council tax to 100% above normal rate to induce home owner and landlords to give desperate families somewhere to live.</p>
<p>In my view FCC should take all possible steps to make more affordable housing available and to eliminate homelessness as far as possible. I can see no excuse for unoccupied property which could be used. While second home ownership would appear to be less of a problem in Flintshire than in other parts of Wales, increasing the premium would make a small contribution to wealth redistribution and help to finance local services.</p>
<p>Probate and renovation work can often take some time If it can be seen work is in progress charge should not be made even if long term. Why are bins not emptied when paying 50% extra charge - Not getting any services for full council tax paid then 50% on top for nothing.</p>

There is only a small number of 2nd homes in Flintshire but these are mainly based in one area of Flintshire - around Talacre which impacts on the availability of homes for local people.

Empty properties should be made to be brought back into use after a certain length of time. An increase in council tax will push these owners to put them back in to use

Empty homes - It is not fair to group all empty homes into one basket from a Council Tax point of view. Some home will require refurbishment, some possibly major refurbishment. Increasing the tax on these properties is NOT going to help the owners with the associated costs of doing this work. Have you cross-referenced the property addresses with current planning applications or planning approvals? In my view increasing, or imposing a premium tax on empty properties is totally counterproductive to solving any housing needs in the County of Flintshire.

Second homes - I can imagine one argument being that someone buying a second home has deprived that dwelling being available for affordable housing in Flintshire. However, in the real world, housing market prices have risen over the last two years. The desire for people to buy and own their homes is stronger than ever and it is the market is driven by demand. This has raised the living standard in the communities, brought in a new income stream to the community and kept existing businesses open. The influx of people moving into an area has been attributed to retirement and commuting to present the most significant demand in rural housing markets. It has been reported (see the Welsh Government report on second homes - <https://gov.wales/research-second-homes-evidence-review-summary-html>) that local communities prosper as a direct result of 'new wealth' brought in to a community.

If there is a requirement for affordable housing - build new affordable houses which meets that criteria. Imposing a Premium Tax on second home properties will not solve the affordable housing issue.

Welsh language - I am a welsh speaker and I am proud that I have learnt the language, however, the exclusion of English speaking home buyers in Flintshire is not going to encourage more people to speak Welsh. This needs to be encouraged at the 'grass root' level through our schools. The proportion of adults wanting to learn Welsh is minimal compared to a strong education system in our schools, where even in English speaking schools Welsh should be a compulsory subject to GCSE level.

All Councils need to raise money - but in my opinion the main issue you are trying to resolve (local affordable housing) will definitely not be achieved by a higher tax on long term empty houses or second homes. If you think it is, you will not resolve the county's housing issue, but will create an even bigger problem with the local housing market.

In question 10, you have grouped two questions together which have differing answers. The number of second homes and empty houses are not linked. Therefore, the possible answers do not make any sense!

Second homes receive income to cover additional costs.

Owners of empty homes need to either sell them or rent them out. Empty homes can often look neglected. Increase in council May persuade owners to sell

I have said "no impact" for Questions 2-4 above as I believe that the current 50% enhancement negated any financial negative effect.

With regard to Q5 above, I have assumed that this question (like Qs 2-4) relates to Flintshire and I have answered as such. I believe there is a negative impact in primarily Welsh speaking areas of other Welsh counties.

For further comments see box below.

We purchased our property as a retirement home and spend a few days every week there until we retire in a few yrs. We spend our money in the community helping small businesses so feel it's unfair to pay the premium.

I think it's fair to charge council tax if you use a property as a second home because you are using council services for that property but I don't think it's fair for empty properties as long as you can prove the

property is empty and up for sale because in that case council services are not being used and the property is available to someone who might need a home to buy.

Due to bereavement of my late mother, I am being charged full rate of Council tax on the property that I am trying to sell. In spite of the Coronavirus pandemic that is still ongoing, Flintshire County Council have insisted on me paying the full rate of council tax on the property, that because of lockdown measures that have been in place reducing the chance of selling the property. I think in all honesty I think this is disgraceful, I am not a second property owner trying to make money, I am simply trying to sell the house and move on and yet FCC have been no help whatsoever, sending myself letters asking for money that I simply have not got. I think that due to the current global crisis with the pandemic, people trying to sell an empty house should not be penalised with the full asking rate of council tax.

There is an empty home on my street, it needs repairs and gets worse each year. It makes the whole street look unkempt. Whoever own these empty homes should be made to manage their upkeep or be persuaded to sell them on. There is no excuse for keeping a house empty long term.

If people can afford a holiday home they can afford to pay extra tax, a few hundreds of pounds will not make any difference to someone who can afford a second home, which are usually large and luxurious houses. Holiday homes do not contribute to local life and economy.

There are many reasons once occupied dwellings are now empty long term. A major reason could be that they are now no longer economically viable to refurbish and because of location virtually unsellable.

Some empty properties are used for other uses such a hosting local events, the grounds being used for charity purposes etc. Not all 'second-homes' should be considered equal and they can't be used as affordable homes so would not alleviate the housing problem. The extra taxation takes away from being able to use these funds to invest in the area and pay wages

My property is inherited. My family has owned the property in Flintshire since 1954. It is correctly classed as a second home but is neither long term unoccupied nor a holiday home. I inherited the property in 2003 and my family regularly use it, myself included since I am now retired. I am Welsh and grew up in the local community. It seems unreasonable and disproportionate to charge any premium for inherited properties which are regularly used. The Council should make an effort to distinguish between (a) long term empty properties (b) holiday homes and (c) inherited properties which are in regular use. Charging a premium for inherited properties has no relevance to bringing more properties into occupation. It is seen only as a cash raising opportunity.

And a distinction needs to be drawn between an inherited second home and one which was bought solely for holiday use. The former have ties to the community, the latter usually not.

As explained above, the two small barn conversions on my property have always and continue to supply accommodation needs. They cannot be defined as empty. I hence think it unjustifiable to charge any more for them than the 'normal' rate.

To consider doubling normal rates is an unjustifiable abuse of power, and irrational, illogical and wholly subjective.

If a property is classed as 'long term empty' it is probably due to financial restraints and imposing a further burden though Council Tax is counterproductive. An extra £1,000 is half the cost of a new kitchen or bathroom, the Council should be helping to bring houses back into use not hindering.

In my case, I have inherited my late parents' house and am in the process of preparing it for valuation and sale. This has been a lengthy process, mainly due to COVID-19, the lockdowns and restrictions on the collection and disposal of furniture and other items by various charities. My bill for both properties is rising from £383 to £619 per month which is massive and I believe unfair in the circumstances. I will inform you as soon as the property goes on the market as I understand that this should effectively lower the amount I am due to pay. I appreciate that an increasing number of second homes/empty properties in Wales is a

<p>problem and does have consequences but my case is different. The property is empty because it is currently being prepared for valuation and sale.</p>
<p>I have been trying to sell my home for the last 4yrs after moving out, and I am asking less than market value for the property, and yet I am being told by potential buyers that it is still too high. I have had it with several different estate agents, with no joy, and I am now having to spend another £10,000, that I have had to borrow, to completely renovate it to try again to sell it.</p> <p>During this time, it has cosy me hundreds or even thousand's in extra council tax for something I have NO control over, and this should not be allowed. If it was left empty deliberately, and left in poor repair, then this might be a different issue, and would have made me do something about it, but this has never been the case, and so I have been punished by the council all this time, even though they have been kept informed that it is up for sale, and have been given proof of this on several occasions.</p>
<p>It is grossly unfair. My business suffers accordingly. The premium pre-supposes that the property is appropriate to be placed on the market when it is unsuitable for this due to its connection to my office premises.</p>
<p>Properties used as holiday homes bring regular visitors to Flintshire to boost the economy and use of the Welsh language whilst having hardly any effect on Council facilities- e.g. non regular use of bins, no education requirement etc. They are usually well kept and regularly visited, a benefit t neighbours.</p>
<p>The long term empty property is not using any of the statutory facilities that the council provides.</p>
<p>To encourage the owners to use or sell their dwellings</p>
<p>Increasing the council tax charge on long term empty properties provides no incentive at all to the home owner. They will be paying extra costs for services that they don't actually use. It would be far better to provide alternative incentives to encourage people to either sell or rent their property.</p>
<p>The circumstances as to why a property is long term empty aren't taken into consideration, Someone chooses to own a second home.</p> <p>From my own experience as a first time buyer, renovating a property for myself,</p> <p>If a property is empty due to needing work, especially in the light of the pandemic, 12 months may not be enough time to complete it, especially on a limited budget,</p> <p>The premium won't convince someone who's property is in negative equity due to its condition to sell it, they're stuck paying up to twice as much for council tax (as in my case, single occupancy)</p> <p>Using me as an example, I'm living with my parents, I'm not taking up another property, I plan on living in my house that's empty.</p> <p>The premium is reducing my available income, forcing me to work more hours to pay for materials for work I haven't got time to do.</p>
<p>I have a holiday home. When I and my family visit we put money into the shops, pubs and all local facilities including restaurants and cafes. We do not use the bin collection service all rubbish including garden rubbish we take home with us. I therefore feel it is so unfair of the council to think as you obviously are thinking of raising the council tax even higher. My husband and I worked long hours at a very hard job to acquire this property we aren't wealthy so to increase the charges will hit us very hard to the point of having to sell the house. In our area there are many properties for sale so the usual "we are keeping a house off the market and depriving local people of housing" is way off the mark. We will be very upset to have to sell up but will have no other alternative but to do so.</p>
<p>Some properties are empty for very different reasons and the council treats these houses all the same which is wrong</p> <p>a second holiday home is very different, if a person can afford to purchase a second home then they are quite likely to be able to afford the council tax premium</p>
<p>We originate from Mold and this property is our planned retirement house. Today we really do spend 50% of our time in Wales. We will likely move permanently in the next year or so. We totally agree properties in</p>

<p>Flintshire should not be left unoccupied long term but there should be some recognition where 2nd homes are frequently used which ours is. That said we would agree premiums are necessary but would also like to know if many property owners are not paying the premium when they should be.</p>
<p>To be fair to everyone in the local community</p>
<p>Long term empty dwellings are a real issue and I do feel owners of such properties should be taxed accordingly.</p> <p>I do feel that properties of a certain band, say A-D are more likely the type that are in demand or social/affordable housing - higher rate tax bands are unlikely to be affordable for most, so I think the tax on second homes that are in the higher brackets is fine, the 50% should be the max in my opinion (on 2nd homes).</p>
<p>I currently pay council tax on a property that I live in. I have an empty house on my land in poor state of repair which I pay a premium. I don't think that I should be forced by any council to have to make a decision on an empty property that I own. It will either be demolished or a member of my family will take over ownership. I think the council should get their own house in order to make affordable housing for residents in Flintshire not rely on others and penalize them for not doing so</p>
<p>No charge if being updated this has been difficult this year to get trades and materials due to Covid</p>
<p>The situation at the moment is HEATING OR EATING, the way things are going, and it's only going to get worse. Increasing the premium, only makes life more difficult.</p>
<p>I understand the principle of charging extra for second homes and empty properties, but think it would be unfair to increase the percentage. As second home owners we contribute to the local economy when we visit the area and our use of the council services is minimal.</p>
<p>It takes longer for an empty property to be brought back into use when council tax is charged more. It decreases the monthly budget to renovate and bring the property back into use. Flintshire should be encouraging of bringing the homes back into use rather than penalising.</p>
<p>The flat I own is above my shop and is being used as a stockroom.</p>
<p>I am currently renting a property, which I pay full council tax on, but I have recently inherited my late mother's house, which I also pay full council tax on, even though it's empty.</p>
<p>Our second home was obtained when we were unable to sell it when my mother moved Family and friends stay in it which brings tourists to the area and therefore income It would not be part of the local homes available for those in social housing as it did not sell I am updating my Welsh language skills as a result of continuing to return to wales</p>
<p>I live abroad, my Flintshire house is where I grew up, part of my identity. For the past 2 years I have been unable to visit, due to Corona and I am currently using my inheritance from my parents to cover running costs. I would like to rent the house out to friends to help me financially and to give foreigners the chance to discover this little known part of the country. This has been impossible, because of Corona.</p> <p>During this period, the house has been occupied by young local people, „housesitting “in return for rent free accommodation- the house has been making its contribution to socially affordable accommodation. I am happy to pay normal Council tax to support the community I grew up in, but feel strongly that I am being unfairly penalised by your proposed action.</p>
<p>I would agree that long term empty property is contributing to a lack of affordable accommodation, but holiday homes attract business from outside and bring money into the county.</p>
<p>There are too many buy to let landlords who do not vet the tenants - When I first moved to my house a block of 6 houses - 5 were owner occupiers now that is down to just 3.</p>
<p>You have not disaggregated LT empty homes from second homes in your policy making. 2nd homes make up only 20% of the total and have a different impact on local communities and the housing issues you are seeking to address. You have not given a breakdown of LT empty homes by privately owned versus social housing. I assume there are LT social empty stock held by the LA and RSLs.</p>

You haven't given me an analysis of the impact of the 50% surcharge on housing in Flintshire since 2017. By now you should have a view of the impact of your policy and whether it has discouraged 2nd home ownership.

You give no separate figures for holiday homes/air bnb properties which from my local knowledge are far more numerous in my area of Flintshire than 2nd homes used by one family. Surely if you're going to have policies to prevent the housing supply scarcity in local communities you must address this issue too. From media reports in popular tourist destinations such as Cornwall locals are selling out to bnb landlords or doing it themselves. Local estate agents are encouraging this trend and pushing up house prices.

Recent research by Swansea University for the Welsh Government makes it clear that the impact of 2nd home ownership varies massively across Wales and that it is currently affecting 3 or 4 localities to the greatest degree. These are the traditional holiday areas including SW Pembrokeshire, Gwynedd, Anglesey and parts of Ceredigion. It is not a significant issue in other areas - including Flintshire.

2nd Homes

From your figures, 2nd home ownership in Flintshire affects about 0.2% of the county's housing stock - which is negligible. For this reason I don't see it having an adverse impact on local communities and on Welsh language speaking in Flintshire. For the same reason I also don't see it having an impact on housing availability.

If there are over 2000 families on housing waiting lists, obviously one key policy should be to increase the supply of new housing. This is constrained by government funding admittedly. But putting waiting list families in private rented accommodation encourages private landlords to buy more houses crowding out prospective home owners.

2nd home ownership isn't of a single type - for instance I grew up in Flintshire, have family locally and may well live here when my wife has retired. I use my 2nd home over 40% of the year. I contribute to local life and spend money locally. I don't speak Welsh fluently but most people in my village speak less Welsh than me! Flintshire is not a big Welsh speaking area.

Not all 2nd home owners are urban families who flit in and out of their rural retreat for a few weekends a year.

Keeping the 50% surcharge or increasing it becomes factored into the cost of ownership for families thinking of buying a second home. Only owners at the margins will be discouraged from owning a 2nd home. Bigger societal forces such as growing wealth disparity and the growing attraction for many people in access to rural living following the COVID pandemic are more important drivers of 2nd home ownership. In this context, council tax surcharges are not that significant. For the same reasons reducing it won't lead to a significant increase in 2nd home ownership rates. Creating a national park out of the Clwydian hills and Dee valley will encourage 2nd home ownership much more by altering people's perception of Flintshire as having beautiful countryside to be enjoyed.

Long Term Empties

Long term empty properties are by definition a negative influence on local communities and an inefficient use of resources and all measures should be used to bring them back into use. They can be a blight on local communities. A financial penalty through a council tax surcharge is one tool but Flintshire should use all the tools at its disposal to reduce these empties.

Second homes are looked after and lived in, the owner's bring income into the local community. Second homes are not necessarily holiday homes, In my case I'm Holywell born and bred, I inherited my mother's modest family home, that give me a place to frequently stay when coming home to visit family and friends which is at least twice a month.

Properties that are long-term empty will go to ruin and deteriorate, I can see how that has a negative impact on the area.

Long term empty homes and second homes are a blight on most communities. They deprive others of housing.

I moved two years ago from a Housing Association flat in Mold which I owned as a Leaseholder to an Almshouse Charity flat in Surrey. If I had moved into full time care I would not have been required to pay Council Tax. However, because of the technicality of my being a Charitable Almshouse Resident and not a Care Home Resident I have been required to pay Council Tax plus the 50% Premium for two years. Since my income is limited I have gone into debt through continuing to pay Council Tax (and Housing Association Maintenance Charges) without receiving any benefit from them whatever. At last I have managed to find a buyer for the flat, and completion is due this week. All proceeds from the sale will go to pay off the debt I have incurred in making payments in respect of the flat over the past two years. I am sure that this was not what the premium scheme was intended to achieve, and I hope that it will cease so that others in my position will not be unfairly penalized in the future.

I am a serving soldier and currently posted down south, I bought my first home July last year in Flintshire I am now being charged a 50 premium for having a second home I do not own a second home and been told by the tax office I am in a loop hole I cannot get out of

You have 2000 people waiting for housing yet the property I bought had been derelict for a number of years, because the people waiting for housing cannot afford to buy, I have currently spent £20,000 renovating my property over the last year, people waiting for affordable housing do not have this money that is why there is empty homes...

There needs needs to be an incentive for people with second homes to want to rent them out a reasonable price rather than a tax increase which is surely going to push them the other way?? There is no logic behind the tax premium

Second homes provide additional income to the area. Meals out, retail sales in the area and maintenance on a property which looking at the statistics may well be empty if it was not a second home. An empty property provides none of the above.

The present system is not flexible enough. The property I inherited was never going to be a long term empty property. The sale was held up for 3 years due to legal reasons but this was not deemed a reason for not paying a premium. Sometimes sales may not go through within a year which makes it unfair that the seller is penalized when they are actually trying to sell the house.

I do sometimes query why the council should have the right to interfere with private property but if they do, the circumstances involved should be taken into consideration.

Also, if the seller does not live in the area, they are not using the services paid for with the Council Tax so are paying huge sums of money for nothing.

Once again, it seems the easy targets are hit - the ones who are trying to act responsibly and are given further bills to meet.

I do not think the issue is as simple as using financial penalties to discourage long term empty or second home purchase with the assumption that stock could be released back to the local community to solve social or affordable housing waiting lists. The issue is having appropriate stock for the waitlist that can be managed within the budget of any resident that may take it on.

Tourism is a key economy within Wales and the Welsh culture (of which language is part) is central to that. Everything should be done to protect and grow that culture because of it's commercial and emotional value. However I find the inference behind question 5 a very dangerous one. It seems to assume that by allowing non-Welsh speakers to own property within Flintshire they may be having a detrimental impact on the growth of the Welsh language. For cultures to thrive they need to interact with other cultures.

In my opinion when you have worked hard all your life you should not be penalised for having more than the next person, in life we all make choices, some good some bad, but why should I who have worked all my life pay for someone who wants to lie in bed all day on their PlayStation or CHOOSE to take drugs, not everyone has mental health, but this now is the new bad back and the government need to get a grip on the situation

Stop punishing people for trying to get on in life, I will hazard a guess most of these empty properties are owned by people who work hard and try to improve their quality of life, I know because I am one of them my second property used to be my main residence it lay empty while I tried to renovate it (very awkward during covid pandemic) but all the time the council punishing me with this ridiculous premium

I have lived all my life in Flintshire and pay Council Tax. However, I find the whole system of taxing second homes very, very unfair. If it is to continue then each case should be subject to a mandatory review by another person not employed within the Council Tax department.

I am currently trying to clear out and renovate a property which I inherited, and I have also paid a substantial amount of Inheritance tax on the property. The house has huge sentimental value to me and my family and we do not want to sell it.

Finding the time to do this work whilst also employed is difficult, and I don't have the capital to pay tradesmen to do the work on the property, so the house has remained empty for a long time. The burden of the extra 50% Council tax has made the situation worse, and has contributed to the length of time the property has been empty. I intend to let the property in 2022. I don't think the local community has been hugely negatively impacted by my property remaining empty, and I hope to bring it back to permanent occupation soon.

I do feel that having a large number of second homes can adversely affect a community, especially outside of the holiday season, when properties are empty for several months.

Property on market for sale following a death, property sold subject to contract. property sold subject to obtaining planning consent to develop site to increase housing stock there is long delays in Flintshire planning department

In my opinion, long term empty houses would be more attractive for repair /returning to sale or letting if there less restraints on repair especially on listed buildings owners should be encouraged to refurbish and re-let.

There are empty houses and people needing homes, this is just a reasonable financial incentive to push the owners of vacant properties in the direction of using them. Failing that presumably the additional funds provided by this can be used to benefit communities?

Second homes bring in additional income into the county via the owners contribution to the community taxes. Tourism should be embraced and supported as it offers additional income streams to local businesses. As Flintshire is not a 'seasonal county' like Gwynedd, then the use of holiday homes supports the local economy all year around. This is one of the benefits of developing a tourism sector in Flintshire, which until fairly recently has been side-lined in place of industry in around Deeside.

In relation to empty properties - there needs to be a better look at why those properties are empty, rather than a carte blanche charging policy. In some cases empty houses will require planning permissions to upgrade, replace or extend to make the property worthwhile and fit for human habitation. Properties that sit along rivers and streams, in a time of climate change, need to have support from Flintshire to upgrade so that they can then be offered for rent. The age of the property needs to be taken into account with some lateral out of the box thinking could actually bring the property back into the housing market. This should involve a much more transparent discussion with property owners who would welcome help in making it easier to renovate and develop properties that are fit for habitation again. Often finances will be the biggest hurdle to overcome in trying to bring old vacant properties that have damp issues back into the housing stock. Without discussions with empty property owners on what options and financial support there is for helping restore properties to meet the stringent Landlord and Tenant Act regulations - properties will remain empty. In the advent of less council owned properties, all help should be made available to support property owners (advice and financial) to get the properties fit for the rental market. This would be a more supportive role and preferable to berating the owners of empty properties which is the current system by charging extra council tax. In addition empty shops in high streets should be viewed

as potential housing stock that offers life blood to the High Street. There are many empty buildings in town centres crying out for renovation/upgrade/change of use for residential opportunities which in many cases will be more appropriate, taking into account accessibility and community interests instead of pursuing owners of empty rural properties far away from amenities.

In other words Flintshire should consider how they work with different empty property owners on a case by case merit basis, taking into account location and what assistance can be provided to bring the empty property back into the rental arena or not. The process should be easy and understandable with easily explained options. Not all property owners have a choice as to why a building is empty - these are the issues that need to be analysed on a case by case basis. Although Flintshire has 605 empty properties on their books - in reality how many of these would be worthwhile (financially and location wise) in bringing them back into Landlord and Tenant occupation.

It shouldn't be a case of Flintshire thinking - we can charge more and get more, because not everyone can afford it and in many cases they may not be saleable either.

My property was charged premium for long term empty home straight away after I bought it because previous owner use all the exemptions for empty properties. It was not my fault that the house was empty for 2 years so why I have to pay premium council tax when I do not own it long term. Besides I bought it to rent not to keep for myself. Because of the pandemic I had to wait 6 months for planning department (that is Council) to make a decision to refuse my application for change of use from C3 to C4. Now I struggle to find builders to do just basic work to the house again because of the pandemic. Everything takes so long starting from the Council decisions to finding people to do the work, and then the same Council deciding to put premium on empty property. I think that Council does not care about personal circumstances, we are all put into the same basket

My late mum's property I now own. This is not going to be used as a second home in my case

I can only speak for my own family and my answers to the questionnaire reflect this. The property we have, in Talacre, is very small and would not accommodate a family. Initially we had a static caravan but, for several reasons, this no longer met our needs. We had many friends in the area and did not want to move far away. We were aware that second properties were becoming a problem in some Welsh towns and villages so we sought a property which we thought would not add to this problem. Our property is leasehold and we pay our ground rent to Talacre Holiday Homes. These properties were built as holiday homes hence the small size and when we initially started to look in the area they did not have residency throughout the year. The road is not adopted by the local authority so our lighting, road repairs etc. have to be paid by the residents. These costs, together with our ground rent, amount to over £1,000 per annum which could be prohibitive to many. In fact these properties can take some time to sell, the property next door took 3 years to sell and, in the end, was not purchased by a resident of Wales. They are not really suitable as social housing nor is it possible to use them as a holiday business. We have a contract with the freeholder which prevents us from letting our property other than occasionally to immediate family, neither are we allowed to sublet. We are retired and are at our property for about 2 weeks per month with the exception of December when we don't visit and July when we are there for the whole month. We are very much part of the community and help with events which take place at our local community centre. I am learning the Welsh language (some of my family originally came from Anglesey and I feel this is part of my heritage) I can't comment on any detrimental impact on the Welsh language as I don't know how many of the properties in question are owned by people from other parts of Wales. Additionally we always support local businesses so I don't think that our presence is reducing the property pool or detracting from the community. I understand, however, the reason for the premium and the need to raise money for social/affordable housing. In my opinion the current "one size fits all" is flawed and should be reviewed, although I realise that this would cause more work. Our property, and it's usage, is very different from a 3/4 bedroom property which, when built, was intended as a family home or is in a remote area where

<p>young people cannot get a foothold in the property market and such properties are standing empty for months at a time. We don't really want to pay any premium at all but, given the situation, feel that up to 50% is reasonable in our case.</p>	
<p>House was inherited in 2019 due to parental death, but Covid, lockdowns, closure of Wales to travel from England has made emptying house and getting it on market very slow. Also means that period of grace due to inheritance expired and Council Tax was increased on property because we weren't allowed into Wales. Hope to get on market soon, half-way through trying to recycle/donate everything to charities rather than just taking it to the dump.</p> <p>Fully appreciate that empty dwellings detract from an area and community, and are antisocial when there is a shortage of property on the market.</p>	
<p>It is the responsibility of the Council and the Welsh government to build more affordable social housing. Not all second home owners wish to rent out their home (which they may have inherited) to families etc. They may wish to sell.</p>	
<p>As I was left the property after my father's passing and then Covid hit, so I could not get up to the property as I live in the Midlands, I am yet to decide what to do with the property</p>	
<p>There are many and varied reasons as to why dwellings become and remain long term empty. It may be family/personal circumstances or, as in my particular case, a requirement for the property to be modernised to today's standard of living. This can require investment of a considerable amount of time and money. From experience, the 12 months exemption from Council tax (+50% premium) is helpful but sometimes the project involved cannot be satisfactorily completed in that 12 month window of opportunity. WAG and the Local Authorities need to take on board the complete distinction between second homes and long term empty properties. If I owned a second home as a property I spent some considerable part of my time living there (e.g. Holiday home) then I would expect to pay double the Council Tax compared to my main residence. I say this because I believe the impact of second home ownership in Wales on local communities is serious and well catalogued. That is not to say that Long Term Empty Properties do not also have an impact, albeit somewhat different in nature. Local Authorities would do well to incentivize rather than penalise the owners of this type of property to restore them as residential properties as quickly as is possible. The current system, as it stands, in my opinion, does not achieve this and, instead, has left Council Tax payers like myself, feeling let down.</p>	
<p>Fairness for all</p>	
<p>If people are already paying 100% they shouldn't be charged more for the pleasure of owning a second property.</p>	
<p>If a property is empty for any reason then there is no drain on public services so why charge a premium on council tax? If it is a second/holiday home then the owners spend money in the locality when they visit, this helping local businesses.</p>	
<p>If somebody can afford a second home they can afford to pay a premium for the privilege. Some long term empty properties are in a very poor condition and require a considerable amount of work and therefore finance. Making the owners pay a premium on top of normal council tax just increases the finance required to put the property into a habitable condition. The recent pandemic has also restricted the ability to continue work on many properties.</p>	
<p>Second homes do not have a negative impact on the services that council tax pays for (you don't collect bins any more frequently). I would suggest that holiday goers have a positive impact on the services paid for by council tax. They bring revenue to Talacre.</p>	
<p>While house is renovated council tax should be same as normal. House could then be let out. renovations take time ,covid has had impact on work .plaster hard to get etc.</p>	
<p>We have been charge this twice for two separate dwellings.</p>	

The first was as we lived in a caravan while our house was being built. Once we moved into the new house, the caravan was sold. Unfortunately, because of Covid, the caravan was delayed being taken off site, so we were charged 150%. It was never going to be a home for anyone else to live in at the property, so it did not affect local housing and we were penalised because of Covid. I think that where the 'home' is never going to be used as an extra home in Flintshire because it is obviously an annex, then there should be no charge. The second time was because we bought a house to rent out. This house needed serious renovation and had been empty for some time. The previous owners had claimed the empty property relief but had done no work to make it fit for habitation. When we bought it we started renovation works straight away, but was still charged 150%. This was not fair as we were doing our best to make the house fit for the local rental market and maybe you should penalise the previous owners for claiming relief with no intention of renovating.

Maybe charge the same owners a long term empty property charge after 12 months, but if the house is sold, then the new owners should get the exemption again.

This will give better opportunities for local people who live and work in Flintshire to purchase properties

The use of second homes reduces the number of visitors staying in hotels and other tourist accommodation.

Presumably long-term empty homes are not those whose owners have recently gone into residential care or owners who have moved out of their home for extensive renovations of say not more than 18 months? On that basis, longer-term empty homes should be returned to frequent use, if not for the owner then for someone locally who needs a home.

I consider that the increase would make people consider whether it is viable to maintain a second home or keep an empty property and possibly make more homes available for the local population.

There is a need to reduce second homes and also to improve occupancy of empty properties in my opinion

People with second homes are reducing the number of houses available for local people.

Long term empty dwellings may go on the market sooner if the owners have to pay full tax on them and this would in turn make more affordable housing available.

There can be very valid reasons for empty dwellings and second homes. People should not be tarnished because of this. I think your question regarding impact on Wales's language is wrong as it is very leading - like you want people to say that it is detrimental. I'm Welsh and proud of that but unfortunately, even though I have tried I am unable to speak and read more than a few words - do I negatively impact my country? You should just have left people to make comments if they wanted to.

Empty homes/second homes reduce the availability of affordable homes to people in need and have a negative impact on local communities. Increasing the level of council tax on such properties would prove a disincentive to such property owners and increase the council's income for local services

To have unoccupied property in any area for a long term is severely detrimental on the basis that they attract anti-social behaviour and their upkeep is not always what you might want. To have empty or rarely used property in this area where we have a housing shortage beggars belief and therefore I feel at least full council tax should be paid and I would even prefer an extra charge for long term unoccupied

As long as second homes are well maintained I can't see it has an adverse effect on the community but the owners should pay a proportion of tax for the council services.

Long term empty does have an effect on the community as not maintained the same, gardens overgrown, trees overgrown and looks untidy next to well-maintained properties.

People who own second homes probably overall contribute positively to the local economy, however, long term empty houses and their owners probably don't.

<p>Vacant properties have an impact on local shops as revenue is only for certain periods of the year instead of throughout the year. There is also an issue of vandalism if a property is left vacant for long periods and if derelict can encourage vermin. I feel there is no impact on the Welsh language as there is a large population of migrants that do not speak English and therefore would not learn Welsh.</p>
<p>Second homes should pay more council tax to discourage people taking properties from those looking for housing. Owners Long term empty dwellings should be penalised for council tax BUT it does depend on a) the reason for the long term b) what period defines long term</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make those that afford second homes pay for the privilege. 2. Apply more financial discipline to the present outmoded system of property ownership payment.
<p>A very high premium would negatively penalise owners of properties that are empty through no fault of the owner.</p>
<p>I don't believe that owning a second property has a negative impact in this particular area where house prices are generally fairly low for the UK. As an accidental landlord who has tried to sell their 2nd property I feel it very unfair to have to pay a council tax premium on an empty property that I've been attempting to sell for less money than I bought it for just because it's been on the market for too long.</p>
<p>Houses which are left empty need to be forced back onto the market either through sale, or renovation and rented or sold. There are fair to many properties left empty and in states of disrepair that could be purchased by someone and renovated and put back into the market. Holiday homes are purchased by people from out of the area and taken from the market for locals, this pushes up housing prices in certain areas.</p>
<p>In an age when there are too many people waiting for housing, it really upsets me to see empty homes. If these were available to purchase it may lead to those currently in social housing to consider buying homes and it may free up more social housing for those who need it. Those with second homes really should be paying for the privilege of stopping locals from buying homes in their area. I would prefer to see a 500% council tax surcharge on second homes.</p>
<p>Any empty home is an opportunity lost for a local person in need to have a place that they can call home. If the property is vacant without a valid reason I see no reason why the owner should not pay a large premium. Second homes and holiday homes have a place in any area where tourism is part of the local economy. It is fair to assume that anyone who can afford to own such property also has the means to pay a premium to help support the communities that they enjoy visiting.</p>
<p>You assume those with 2nd properties in Flintshire are habitable and have an effect on housing waiting lists but when planning is asked to convert the property into homes you reject it....short sighted as there are only 167 then you should merit each circumstance individually without a "one size fits all" approach.</p>
<p>Given the numbers, the impact would appear to be minimal. The money raised would not appear to be meaningful either. There should be a process where long term empty houses could be brought back into use. I disapprove of second homes in principle.</p>
<p>Young generation are struggling to get local housing and forced into rental market</p>
<p>The Welsh economy relies heavily on tourism and people from other areas spending their hard earned cash in Wales. We need to attract new visitors into Wales and encourage them to invest in Wales. Putting a premium tax on second homes does nothing towards this and implies discrimination which is illegal. Please stop this discrimination and show a much more neutral position</p>
<p>Second homes: in a county where so many do not have a proper first home it seem unreasonable that a small minority of people who presumably are not residents in the county (?) are able to use all our facilities</p>

when they stay here. Charging this amount might also cause the second home owners to sell up and make their property available to those who need them more.

Empty homes: others need these homes. Charging this rate of tax would be a significant incentive to sell up and make them available to those who need them.

Second homes reduce housing available for local residents ,many young families cannot afford a house where they have been brought up

Everyone who wants to own their own home should have opportunity to do so. Empty homes and second homes reduces this opportunity. The greater the number of homes not paying full council tax, the less money available to local authorities to provide important services. For all these reasons, empty homes and second homes should pay their full share of council tax. There can be time limited exemptions for homes which are going through probate or sale.

There are too many empty properties in the area, either because the owners do not use them as dwellings or because they are in need of renovation and the work is not being done. They become an eyesore and reduce the attractiveness of the area for other residents and potential residents.

Second homes and empty dwellings do not help local people onto the property ladder. But I don't think a charge should be made on property that is unoccupied and for sale as they are not using any amenities

Council tax has become disproportionate, a secondary taxation system to be topped up from instead of performing efficiently. A top up that not every working person contributes towards. A single person paying 75% is taxed disproportionately higher than a couple in the next door semi-property only paying 100% [at a rate of 50% each].

Society has changed since the Poll Tax, we now have a far higher proportion of working taxpayers living in the same property, and this needs to be addressed in order to address the disparity of council tax "top-up" not falling equally.

Yes keep the property banding, but set a rate for all, "X"% per working adult in each property, so a single person would pay 50% of a band D, two would pay 100%, three 150% etc. spreading the banded charge equally.

Rather than concentrating on empty properties, think laterally, within the changed society there are adults who are escaping from contributing towards council tax, which if calculated could reduce the overall per person percentage rate and generate greater income.

Simply taxing empty property's and second homes could well lead to more going on the market out of reach of the persons waiting on lists and reducing the rental stock at the same time.

The empty homes do not have an impact on services or facilities so if empty and not being used what is the rationale for charging for services which are not used?

Long term empty properties and second homes add nothing to the social coherence of local communities. Whilst I should not want them to be made "illegal" I do believe that they should be seriously discouraged and carry a heavy social premium to okay for the privilege.

The proportion of 2nd homes in Flintshire is distinct from long term empty properties and should be treated differently.

Exemptions should continue to apply for properties for sale and to let.

These empty homes could be sold or used for social housing and second homes should be discouraged where there are long waiting lists for social housing

Increased council tax on currently empty homes should make the owners think harder about what to do with the property. The council used to have a compulsory improvement/short term rental scheme for empty properties and I would like to see this introduced to help people into affordable housing.

I feel that if someone can afford a second home they should pay full council tax charges. Otherwise they are taking from the housing pool without contributing to the local economy.

A higher premium on long term empty dwellings might increase pressure on owners to resolve long term emptiness more quickly. This does not apply to second homes.
In my opinion if someone can afford to have more than 1 property then I think they should pay more taxes on all properties above their main one and I think it should be 100% above the standard rate for that band of property.
Because there are over 2,000 people on the waiting list and over 600 empty and not being lived in properties, I think the council should have powers to commandeer these property's or at the very least charge 100% council tax.
Make more cash available for social housing and reduce the waiting lists for social housing
People have different reasons for their property being empty, it's their property to do what they want with not the Welsh Government
With so many people in need of low cost housing every empty property should be brought up to standard and let.
The cause of people being on a waiting list for housing is the very poor record of the council and housing associations failure to build enough new homes. If you wish to get the list down then build more houses. If people have enough money to have a second home then they will just pay the extra with no benefit to the local community except a few extra pounds in the kitty, and the waiting list will be just as long. Perhaps the council should offer to buy long term empty homes from their owners at a fair price or get their fingers out and build more housing. Also they shouldn't write off council tax debt, and rent debt and instead they should chase debtors for what they owe, if they don't pay up then evict them and let the house to others who will pay their rent. The trouble at the moment is that some people think that the world owes them a living, I for one am fed up of paying to feed others kids, paying for their transport, and paying higher council tax whilst many others pay nothing at all.
I am not sure what you mean between Positive impact and Negative impact, but I do know that while we have all the empty property`s the waiting list for people is going to get longer.
Because of the negative impact.
Long term empty dwellings are no benefit for anyone who needs a home. If they are kept empty so the owners can make money as the empty home increases in value then they can pay a premium. If people can afford second homes then they can afford to pay a premium. There should be an appeals process for empty homes, e.g. if someone is working abroad and intends to return when the work is finished or in the armed forces based elsewhere then there may be some grounds for not charging the full premium, it would depend on the individual circumstances.
Next door to me property has been empty for over eight years garden overgrown, property in poor disrepair, outside boundary wall down, bringing house prices down in area ,talked to owner about wall he knocked down with jcb while clearing trees from front garden over a year ago no response from him
Difficult to define positive & negative impact as long term empty houses deteriorate & therefore neighbouring properties can be affected as well as reducing availability.
Second homes can have positive impact by bringing some income to local businesses but also negative impact in that reduce availability of housing stock for local people particularly if buying lower priced houses & therefore lower more affordable "tax bands
If can afford 2 homes should pay increased tax
Why should people who own second properties be penalised due to the local councils Flintshire (Labour) government inept councillors (Mark Tami) & co to provide housing for local people and ex veterans who are having to live on beachside benches they really need to get their act together when approving planning to make sure there are sufficient first time buyer low cost properties rather than approving planning to big building firms to build 4/5 bed properties that are selling in excess of £400,000 pounds

<p>A premium should not be charged on 2nd homes as the owners make minimal use of council services, so the council is already gaining. The amount of 2nd homes in Flintshire is so small so as to not make any impact on the waiting list for affordable homes.</p>
<p>I have experienced a council levying a 200% premium on empty properties, most recently during the pandemic, when my tenant vacated the property of his own volition and compelled me by default to a deal of maintenance to restore the property to good order. I had let the property only because of difficulties in previously trying to sell it and being let down by a potential buyer.</p> <p>Recently after a protracted period when all involved parties seemed to drag out the process I have successfully sold the property and am in the process of purchasing a replacement nearer my main residence.</p> <p>I would live with a premium after a property has been vacant for 12 months , as long as there is a reset if the property becomes occupied once again</p>
<p>I feel the current charge is more than enough to charge people</p>
<p>The UK, including Wales is in a housing crisis. Encouraging people to give up second/empty properties will help this.</p>
<p>Anybody with a vacant property (and no valid reason for it to be empty) or with a second home can afford the increased Council Tax and the extra money can be put to good use by the Council.</p>
<p>The Welsh Government and Welsh local councils are trying to blame someone other than themselves for not investing in the basics for Welsh people, education, housing, the health service and jobs, do more to move Wales out of poverty and stop blaming others !!!</p>
<p>empty homes kill communities</p> <p>We need Wales to be a vibrant living country, not a theme park.</p>
<p>Why should empty homes exist when there is a shortage of available homes? Total waste of houses.</p>
<p>Anybody who owns second/empty homes should be able to afford 100% premium. This may provide a stimulus for the owners to sell empty properties.</p>
<p>Second homes bring revenue to the local area. I suspect the increased spending in local businesses is more than revenue generated by a second home surcharge. Therefore I suspect that increasing the premium would in fact have a negative effect on the revenue spent in the local community, thus I don't believe a premium should be charged for a second home.</p>
<p>There is a desperate shortage of housing so any measures to discourage properties being left empty or being used as 2nd homes should be put in place.</p>
<p>If you can afford a second home you should be able to afford full council tax.</p> <p>Hopefully it would encourage owners of empty dwellings to rent them out.</p>
<p>To me, dwellings are rarely empty long-term without good reason. The current level of 50% incentivises those that can to get a move on but above this amount could be penalising people unjustly. Although empty dwellings and second properties obviously have a negative effect on housing stock, this is by no means, the sole thing responsible for the waiting time for affordable housing.</p>
<p>I own a property that you currently class as a second home, as my main permanent residence is in Luton. However, the house in Flintshire is fully furnished and always has been since my mother's death three years ago. It is not an investment property or a holiday home. It has never been empty. It is not something that I will ever profit from in that sense. I accept that there are higher costs for insurance, but I object to the higher costs for council tax when I am not here all of the time. It is my second home, my family home, that I am intending to move back to and that I have always been clear with you that I would return to. COVID has delayed me selling my house in Luton, but that is currently on the market and as soon as that is sold, my house on Flintshire will be my only home.</p> <p>I always object to the fact that second home owners are not a part of the community. I am very much part of this local community, I go to church here and I volunteer here. I do most of my food shopping here and</p>

buy at least 50% of my fuel here. I go on holiday to other parts of north Wales more often than I holiday in other parts of the UK, so I hope that I have a positive impact on the local community and wider. As I am not here every weekend I also struggle to get my bins collected regularly, as drivers often don't bother to drive a few metres into our lane when I am here. Paying extra for an occasional and unreliable service is not good.

I understand that you have to charge more properties that are long term empty or hardly ever used, but I have never believed that I fitted into those categories.

I seem to have been caught out by the probate process - whilst even though you are generous in allowing free council tax periods during that time - you have penalised me for wanting to keep my family home ever since.

I only pay 75% of the full rate in Luton as a single person and had expected to do the same here as I divide my time quite equally as I work from home.

Some of these second homes may be able to be rented out if they are not used on a regular basis by the owners thus reducing the housing waiting list

If the council tax on second homes is made higher it will deter people from renting a property or the owners renting them out. Our area is a desirable one which borders England with very few people speaking Welsh therefore this will have no impact on the empty properties

I believe people are entitled to have as many homes as they can afford but should pay full rates on them. Holiday homes are limited as to the effect they have on the economic prosperity of an area. Towns can look miserable in areas where there are many second homes in winter. They receive the same services as everyone else when occupied so they should pay the same when unoccupied as the cost to the council doesn't go down because they are not there and using the property.

Many long term empty properties are the result of a family member dying and often the issue of probate takes several months before a property can be put up for sale. My family have had reason to look at purchasing housing in the last few months and many of the properties seem to need a lot of remedial work before the property can be lived in - or before a mortgage is granted. The premium may hopefully encourage the legatees to improve the property and perhaps rent it out or put on the property market. I do not have an issue with second homes requiring an additional premium but neither am I in an advantageous position of being a second home owner so this may come across as sour grapes. Be that as it may, I do believe that in many instances second homes remove the availability for local folk to purchase properties and in doing so keep the local housing chain moving.

Having a 2nd home is a luxury! Having an empty dwelling when people brought in the county are struggling to find houses where they have grown up is a disgrace!

Also it's killing the Welsh language! Place names and house names are being anglicised!

On this subject it's time for the council to propose all new builds use Welsh names!

If they are not up for sale or sold the council is getting no income so the rest of us have to pay extra

If these people can afford to buy holiday homes that are driving up the price of housing in Wales so locals cannot afford to buy or live in the area as the rental pricing goes too high to so they should pay for the full cost of leaving the house empty or profiteering by holiday letting it. Long term empty houses should pay in full as it is the owner's choice to leave empty as is most cases they do not want to spend. Money on them make them pay or if not sell to council to re home homeless people

In terms of second homes, it deprives people of purchasing their first home at affordable prices and secondly, owners of second homes do not contribute as much to the local community. We believe long term empty properties in the main, leave their property to become unsightly and in some cases affecting the value of homes nearby. Again there is a lack of contribution to the local businesses.

If people can afford a second home then they can afford to make a larger contribution to local services

<p>Long term empty properties can be empty for many reasons - the criteria should not penalise anyone for whom it is their only dwelling e.g. they may be ill and away from home for some time.</p>
<p>It is wrong to have homes standing empty, when so many people are on the waiting list for a home in Flintshire.</p>
<p>Also, it is better to use housing stock that is already here, rather than build more.</p>
<p>I think that people who have second homes here, should pay more into the local economy. I would rather local</p>
<p>People had homes than visitors. I think that young people are competing with second home owners for homes, and several</p>
<p>houses in the village where I live (Sychdyn) are now rented properties (also for holidays) , rather than being sold to young people who are trying</p>
<p>To get onto the housing ladder. There is also an impact on the Welsh language and culture.</p>
<p>We are short of accommodation in Flintshire. Empty property should be used. Any empty property needs to be taxed fully and get it used.</p>
<p>Empty homes can sometimes spoil the appearance of a road , not always I agree , but I can think of one in my area where the house owners each side of it must be absolutely fed up as they are working really hard on their own properties and gardens.</p>
<p>Need for diversity (of housing occupiers) to prevent static entrenched communities.</p>
<p>Housing is needed for local communities. Holiday homes should be limited as they inflate house prices out of reach of local workers.</p>
<p>Empty houses are a blight and remove housing stock.</p>
<p>If property (second home or empty dwelling) is not used then owners should be encourage to sell property or offer property to council as long term rent to support council with social housing scheme.</p>
<p>An increase in council tax will help council to offer support to those families waiting for social housing.</p>
<p>At present 167 isn't a big impact but this could increase causing problems for future first time buyers around the county who wish to stay local.</p>
<p>Holiday properties already pay a premium on top of council tax, but also encourage holiday spending that may be spent elsewhere if they are priced out of the county.</p>
<p>The exceptions for long term empty appear to be acceptable but, not knowing the state of the property or the reasons why they are empty, make it difficult to comment in any meaningful way</p>
<p>Empty houses are an eyesore and pal need houses. Houses get left for too long then they just get torn down.</p>
<p>Housing is at a premium. Those who can afford a second home in the area can afford to pay the 100% premium. Long term vacant property should be used to house those in need.</p>
<p>The type of empty homes are most likely for holiday purposes and unlikely to meet social housing needs. Why should owners pay an extra premium? They are not using most of the services that are available for many weeks of the year and if they are then they should pay the same as everyone else.</p>
<p>Why penalise second home owners just because they own a second property. Does it deter people from owning second properties or is it a money raising opportunity?</p>
<p>I live in a select area of Flintshire where there has been a 4 bedroom detached house empty for over 10 years. I have seen the negative impact this has on all the neighbouring properties and the occupants. What a crying shame!!! It's about time things changed.</p>
<p>Housing should be for the benefit of local people. Second home owners should pay more and long term empty property should be returned to the housing stock quickly.</p>
<p>Local residents are unable to buy properties due second home owners and property investors increasing the price of properties. First time buyers and local government workers unable to buy.</p>

<p>I do not believe second homes cause issues for the community. I do feel that long term empty properties do. This denies other people the opportunity to live in the local area.</p> <p>How is a second home that is well kept an issue?</p> <p>When there are plenty of rented homes which are of poor upkeep but being paid for by the disabled.</p>
<p>I feel that second homes and long term empty homes are a blight on local communities for many reasons and the number of such properties should be reduced.</p>
<p>My main property is in Blackpool but I have a second home in Ewloe. The sole purpose of this second home is because I work at Airbus. During the week it is fully occupied by myself and only empty of a weekend. I do not believe that I should pay a premium because it is a work related second home, it is in constant use during the week throughout the year and I'm bringing money into the area.</p> <p>I would imagine that most second homes and long term empty dwelling, if made available, wouldn't fall under the affordable housing bracket so increasing the premium wouldn't help this situation.</p>
<p>I believe that people that have lived in a village/town in Wales for some time should have the right to buy a property that is vacant or for sale - in preference to a buyer wanting to use it as a second home or holiday let</p>
<p>Not sure what should be done for empty properties. I suspect there cannot be a single answer as there will be different reasons why they are empty.</p>
<p>My main reason is that hopefully council tax could then be reduced from it's at present unacceptable high rate.</p> <p>Giving ordinary working class people and pensioners who have only one home scraping by, to have a stress free life worrying where the funds are coming from to subsidise these people. Rant over!!</p>
<p>There is a shortage of affordable housing</p>
<p>Flintshire is not subject to 2nd or holiday homes that effect the local community as much as other Welsh areas. It is an excuse to raise Council Tax and I have no 2nd property or other connection/interest in this scheme that affects me.</p>
<p>Increased taxation level is an unimaginative attempt to solve a problem that will only eventually be solved by engaging with the property owners.</p>
<p>If people can afford a second home, then they can ensure they provision for the full council tax cost.</p>
<p>Reduced because empty houses and households are not utilising the services provided by the County - bin collections, schools etc.</p>
<p>I was born in Flintshire 75 years ago and was educated here and I have worked here as a teacher for all of my working life. Even though I live in a small rural village some 15 miles from the English border I rarely hear Welsh being spoken. Because Welsh is very much the minority spoken language I can see little reason why the presence of unoccupied properties should affect the prevalence of the language. Sad though this is it is nevertheless a fact of life. I learnt Welsh as a second language but rarely get the opportunity to practise my Welsh.</p> <p>I am more concerned about those properties used solely as holiday rental businesses when such use can avoid the payment of council tax at all. Those used as second homes are contributing to the local economy via council tax and supporting local shops and the hospitality industry. Empty properties contribute nothing except council tax.</p>
<p>It is unfair that houses should remain empty when there is a shortage of accommodation for people who need somewhere to live.</p>
<p>These properties damage local communities and make it harder for local people to find housing, either because it is not available or because it has become too expensive. The council's first duty is to its residents.</p>
<p>Empty homes should be sold or made available to rent. Hopefully, a large increase in council tax would persuade owners to do this.</p>

<p>The problem of long term empty dwellings and second homes is nationwide (UK). There is an acute housing shortage in Wales (including Flintshire) and these long term empty properties could be put to positive use if they were put on the market for sale. An increase in Council Tax will encourage that - and produce more income until they are sold. Second homes are often in picturesque or popular locations. These distort the property market as they are bought at premium prices which puts them beyond the reach of local people.</p>	
<p>Those with second home have the financial ability to pay full council tax. If you can afford another property, you should pay the same fees as you are receiving the same facilities as everyone else. Empty homes, again long term empty home those have them have made the choice. Therefore should be charged 100%</p>	
<p>The number is relatively low.</p>	
<p>This would be incentive second home ownership and leaving properties empty for people in most income brackets. These properties should be available for local people to buy and live in permanently. This would also benefit the environment by fewer new homes being built losing less land to development and maintaining habitats.</p>	
<p>I am a sole home owner/occupier and dutifully pay my council tax via D/D. An empty property that could be occupied is a waste of vital residential resources and the community might benefit if brought back in to use. Not just any use, but say for a family who can add to the overall wealth of the community and our council area.</p>	
<p>The premium should be abolished. To relate it to opportunities for Welsh speakers or affordable home seekers is a complete non sequitur. It is a tax of envy. Second home owners bring much needed economic activity to the area connected to both the fabric of the property and their everyday requirements whilst they are here. As second home owners they much more likely to be better off and will spend a greater amount in both maintaining their second home and feeding and entertaining themselves when they are here. Flintshire will be missing an opportunity for advancing its cause if this tax continues for the sake of political doctrine.</p>	
<p>Long term empty properties are likely to be subject to estate or probate considerations in many instances - do you really think it just or appropriate to tax these bereaved owners? Instead, why not rebate Council Tax paid for properties which are quickly returned to the local stock, say within two years of probate being granted. If property is being held back for planning reasons deal with it by improving the planning process. For the record, I don't have a second home and never had, I don't have a long-term empty property, and never had.</p>	
<p>If you can afford a second home you should have to pay full council tax. This tax should be considered when buying a second home. If you can't afford the council tax, don't buy a second home. If empty dwellings have to pay full council tax it hopefully would encourage owners to let out the dwellings.</p>	
<p>If people can afford to buy second home then they can afford to pay full rates for services</p>	
<p>The purchasing of second Homes reduces availability for local people to live in their localities especially in rural settings. Those who wish have the privilege/benefit of a second home should be prepared to pay a "premium ", the money from which can go to help providing affordable homes for locals.</p>	
<p>If I have to pay an additional 50% or more on a building that requires work on, then I won't be able to afford to do the work so the building will remain empty longer.</p>	
<p>A second dwelling that is occupied should not be charged more whilst an empty dwelling is a property that could be occupied by someone and perhaps should carry a slightly heavier premium.</p>	
<p>Make owners consider making use of empty property</p>	

<p>Second homes are a luxury, and people should pay a premium to help offset the reduced housing stock they create. There is also no reason to own a house and it remain empty for long periods. Again, a financial disincentive is really the only way without special powers to CPO these properties.</p>
<p>We need to maximise the income and people with second homes it empty homes can obviously afford it. With empty homes it could make landlords let them out or sell them hence increasing the supply. I think an exemption should be made for people who have to go into long term care. The empty home period should be reduced to something like 6 months (or less) where the person lives elsewhere- abroad</p>
<p>Dwellings not occupied represent a reduction in the availability of homes for the community. We need to only build sufficient homes to house everyone and second homes and empty houses puts pressure on the Council to ensure more homes are built than are needed. We need to retain as much open space as possible and not turn them over to unnecessary building, something that also increases the effect on the environment and the climate...</p>
<p>At present the empty property is up for sale at an affordable price. If the council need more affordable housing why not buy properties like this or help those in need to buy. I rented to council tenants for many years and think it's unfair to now charge extra tax when we want to sell. Maybe the tax system should be reviewed for circumstance of property being empty.</p>
<p>Q3 Second homes have a positive impact as they bring additional spending to the County. Second homes have a negative impact as they increase the value of homes above what is affordable by local residents. Q5 With 2120 residents on a waiting list, their families will be using/learning Welsh in school which has no impact. The 167 holiday homes would have a limited negative impact if they only use English.</p>
<p>I have a house that is for sale. The council could buy the property or help someone in need of affordable housing to buy it. I rented the house to council tenants for many years and don't think it's fair to charge me extra tax while on the market.</p>
<p>Second homes bring income to the county with increased revenue to spend. Empty home do not bring income into the county.</p>
<p>IT IS MORALLY WRONG FOR HOMES TO LAY EMPTY WHEN SO MANY LOCAL PEOPLE NEED A HOME. SECOND HOMES HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITIES AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE. WALES IS BESET WITH THE PROBLEM OF SECOND HOMES AND LANDLORDS WITH LARGE PORTFOLIOS PURCHASING THE SMALL TERRACED PROPERTIES TO RENT OUT, WHEN ONCE THESE WERE AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.</p>
<p>I understand the reasoning for applying a council tax premium on many long term empty homes, to encourage them to be put back into the housing stock. However properties should be assessed and the premium applied when appropriate. I was in the position of leasing a pub in Flintshire but because the flat above the pub was not large enough for our family, nor was it in a suitable state of repair, we decided not to live at the pub, but to remain living in our existing home. Under the terms of the pub lease we were not allowed to sub-let the flat and the layout meant we couldn't use it as a B&B. After 12 months the flat above the pub was deemed long term unoccupied and we had to pay the CT premium. We were already paying an extortionate amount of business rates and after a while both these charges together contributed to us giving up the pub because it just wasn't profitable. Please consider the property and the circumstances and consider if the premium is fair before imposing the extra cost.</p>
<p>150% council tax after 1 year is incredibly unfair when planning is taking over 1 year and paying extra council tax has delayed the project due to more money spent on tax and less money spent on renovation. financial pressure encourages people to work much faster putting more pressure on in safe practices</p>
<p>The question is, why are these long-term empty properties empty? Do you know who the owners are and are they local?</p>

Long-term empty properties (as opposed to second homes) should be taken into council ownership and used for social housing.

I fully support the principle of discouraging people from using or disposing of empty properties but the premium should not apply if a property is being actively marketed for sale.

I have recent experience of trying to sell a retirement flat (as Executor for the deceased owner and not in Flintshire) and was shocked at how difficult it was to sell, even at a vastly reduced price. No doubt other properties would present similar challenges and the owner/seller should not be penalised through a Council Tax premium

Second homes are a luxury and in our area not contributing to the health or wealth of our county. They remove housing from the grasp of local people seeking to stay and work within the locality they were brought up in.

Empty homes are often held by families with deep local connections.

Many generations have been brought up in the area and very often since the building was first lived in. The current owners may well have a desire to assist their family members achieve affordable housing within their locality.

If a local resident leaves their property to a relative with a view that the building should provide housing for their relative's offspring, thereby providing family continuity within the area and providing affordable housing for the youngsters then the family looking after the property shouldn't be penalised.

I had to move from Sir Fon to Flintshire back in the 70's when property was quickly being bought up as holiday homes and the areas I was brought up in have very few locals left. I have family left on the island who have no choice other than to pay heavy rent or leave their home area.

We have a responsibility to look after our local residents and their offspring both with regard to housing and work availability.

It is incumbent on our leaders in the local society, wherever that is, to help as much as possible to achieve this.

Those people who can afford to purchase second homes for holidays or occasional use bring nothing to local communities. Occasional use of local shops perhaps but they still enjoy the provision of council services. I believe that an increased contribution to 100% would enable increased support for council services for schools and full time residents.

We Moved from the area just over 12 months ago, however, it has taken the 12 months just to get plaster on the walls due to a national shortage of materials. This has been affected by Covid-19 and brexit.

We have not allowed the property to stand empty for any other reason, We told the council that it was being renovated, if as stated above, if there is a genuine attempt to sell the property but the renovations are taking longer than the current 12 months there should be a review if its realistic to charge an extra 50%-100% of the council tax.

As soon as we have the property in a good standing to be sold we will sell.

I am classed as having a second home but this is not really the case. Sadly my dad passed away in which 2019 and I was left the house.

We applied for planning permission to put an extension on so we could move in to it and sell the home I am living in now.

Due to Flintshire Planning been so slowly and then us going in to lock down with COVID it was only February this year 2021 that we had our plans passed.

There is no kitchen or bathroom in the house and no gas or electricity so why should be paying council tax?????

I am now having to pay two lots of Council Tax through no fault of my own and it is crippling me I am not on a massive salary and it is a struggle.

All the reasons listed above. There is a housing crisis in the UK which is due to a number of factors, but the large number of housing units that are unavailable to those who need homes has to be a significant factor. I personally would like to see that nobody owns a second home while there are people who are homeless or forced to live in inadequate accommodation, but I realise that this is untenable. I also see increasing acres of green land being swallowed to build new homes in areas where good quality houses are sitting empty for much of the time. I recognise that this is less of a problem in Flintshire than in other areas, but the figures provided for this survey show that second homes and in particular long term empty properties are a significant factor here too. The least the owners of these properties can do is to make an increased contribution to the costs of housing local residents, and if it helps to discourage the ownership of these properties so much the better.

When a house has been bought and paid for by the occupant, who then passes that property on to a family member, it should not have to pay extra council tax. As the property is empty, it is not even getting the services for which council tax is being paid at the fixed rate.

Higher tax would encourage productive use of property.

I do not feel empty or second homes have a positive impact upon the community. It will also be a way to reduce empty properties as well as raise more funds for essential services.

Long term empty dwellings do not help anyone so By charging extra Council Tax it will deter owners from keeping them empty. Some investors may just be hoping to make a quick profit.
But I do think that the Council should consider specific circumstances for a property remaining empty and make due allowance in genuine cases.

You are going on about Social Housing. People who have worked hard and purchased private properties do not want Social housing near them

You are also aware that arrears are mostly from Social housed people so put your house in order and make sure people pay their debts and stop trying to subsidise your inadequacy by trying to get more money from people who pay their bills

Second homes are a luxury and should be treated as such.

Empty homes should have rate increased over time up to the max 100% over time

Prices have risen making it impossible for Welsh people to buy houses as others are offering more money.

2/ Long term empty usually poor condition, encouragement required to bring them back into use, rental or sold, and rental could be via council intervention.

3/ so few second homes not to be an issue, usually kept in good order, renovations by locals bringing extra money in area, don't use full range of services i.e. bins, health care, schools etc. but pay into. Many of the cheaper places have been for sale a long time, locals haven't bought them despite being keenly priced so don't believe it's an issue

4/ Question worded poorly, should be split into long term then second homes. Long term empty isn't good, hence no repeal when Law of property act updated re adverse possession, council should make contact with owners encouraging selling or rental or lease to council for some of the homeless. Again second homes are not high in number, many in holiday areas that were cheaper but people can't buy no matter how cheap if they have no regular job, investment needed for jobs so locals can afford houses plus more council housing needs to be built

5/ Don't see either as an issue in Flintshire, many locals don't continue the language, however if long term empty back I. Use it'd give families homes so kids will do better at school. Second home users will often try and learn the language if their neighbours speak it as neighbours are genuinely friendly , it's certain aspects of news on second homes that stirred up hatred, i.e. Governments blaming second home owners on their policy failings on house building and jobs. Abandoned property owners aren't there to get the hate message. It doesn't go down well when locals aren't housed when needed yet councils bear the cost of looking after immigrants as locals see this as they've been forgotten and are on the street when

immigrants get housed and looked after, yet Governments blame it all on second home owners, some areas may have issues but Flintshire has such a low number it surely can't be an issue.

6/ Extra charges for very little service seems unfair but most would probably be ok with a small charge, if too high it will make owners change to business rates and pay nothing to council and little to Government, the lady close to me isn't rated for council tax in her let bungalow, most second home owners are not rich, some inherit a family property, others save very hard and go without to afford their second home, using locals for works required.

7/ Long term empty really needs to be brought back into use so continue to charge and if not got one already get an empty homes officer on the case!

If you can afford a 2nd home, you should be able to pay for its up keep and the associated costs. That includes council tax, council tax is not just about collecting bins, the money is also for the local area, schools, and the local environment etc. It is not fair that those who live permanently in the local area have less money coming into the area through council tax due to it being someone's second home.

Long term empty properties should also not disadvantage the local community by bring in less money into the area. Those houses would be better used to accommodate people on housing waiting lists.

There is no evidence to suggest that charging second home owners an additional premium is likely to free up stock for rent or purchase (as first homes). In addition the additional monies provided are not adequately ring-fenced for creation of new affordable property, nor are the sums of money thus provided likely to make any significant impact on the need for same. Frankly it appears to be merely a political device by the Welsh Government to pretend that it is doing something about the housing crisis and is effectively just a tax.

No interest has been taken on why people own second homes and how they use them. There may be very good reasons on an individual basis for this and to impose this tax retrospectively is particularly unfair. More effort should be placed on identifying where local housing needs are particularly acute and needing attention, with a view to working with those communities to free up land at agricultural land values (plus a small premium) for the creation of new affordable housing and facilitate planning consent. To fail to do so merely underlines that this mechanism is simply a cash cow for local authorities.

The situation regarding long term empties is different, although the understanding of why the situation exists is equally missing. At least there is time for such individuals to prepare to meet the costs or make other arrangements. Since there MAY be evidence that empty homes are a source of disrepair and unsightly in the community, some 'encouragement' to get the owners to rectify this may be useful

Depending on the reason for the empty property - they should be let out to help reduce the waiting list for affordable housing

I currently pay a premium rate on an empty property of £243 which I have to pay until the property is sold. It is not a 2nd home so I get no benefit from the property. 2nd homes can recover their bills by renting out properties and so should be charged more to balance out the payments for people like myself that has no choice but to pay this premium.

These homes are depriving local people the chance of acquiring a home. Empty houses can bring the area down and if not maintained can attract vermin etc. and also squatters

I believe that second home or holiday homes bring much needed money into the community.

Is not fair to charge additional money for a second home, our boy is disabled and need adopted holiday house. To find one in UK cost a fortune why is much easier for us to have a second home close to our main house.

With regard to second homes, to be able to provide an accurate answer to the impact they have on affordable housing in Flintshire it would be useful to have a breakdown of the council tax banding of these properties. If they are the lower type banding, i.e. affordable to purchase and rent, then they will have an impact on affordable housing, however, if they are in the higher bands I do not think they would have an

impact as someone on a low income would not be able to afford to buy or rent them. For the higher bands, this would be an opportunity for the council to receive additional income in the form of council tax payments, but the people using them as a second home would probably not be using Flintshire's services, such as schools, waste collection etc.

With regard to empty homes, it depends upon the reason why they are empty. Some may be empty due to death of a relative but due to legal problems, they may be unable to sell or rent the property and by increasing payments for these people it may cause them to become destitute. Some may be empty due to long term sickness, for example previously occupied by single person who has a stroke and needing to go into respite care, again this would cause significant distress having additional expenditure on top of any fees for care. If however the property was empty out of choice then the owner should be made to pay council tax on it. It's not just privately owned houses though that are empty, I have seen such houses boarded up on council housing estates in Holway and the strand) and so Flintshire need to get their own stock in order too!

167 properties in Flintshire are second homes out of a total housing stock of approx. 70,000 - this equates to a mere 0.24%. Such a tiny proportion, perhaps one home in this village and two homes in another village for example, can have absolutely no impact on the sustainability of local communities. This is unlike some Welsh counties, such as Gwynedd, where over 10% of the housing stock comprises second homes and Long term empty properties are in many cases, neglected and poorly maintained and are a blight on the local community. Second homes tend to be far better maintained and cared for. The two groups of properties should be treated quite differently for taxation purposes.

Keep the English 2nd home owners out of Wales and allow Welsh locals to buy affordable properties in their own villages/towns similar to policies adopted in the Lakes.

Stop penalising people who are genuinely trying to make and improve a home for themselves by adding an additional % to further slow the process of completing i.e. apply common sense not greed

second homes raised to 100% as they are using the facilities available bins etc. - reduce empty dwellings as they are not using facilities available

Second homes may be used for people who work locally where their families live or work further afield. I think it would be unfair to discriminate against hard working people.

Owners of long term empty properties need the encouragement to sell or renovate and rent out. They don't benefit anyone whilst being empty and long term become derelict and hotspots for squatters and vandals

Given the social housing crisis at the moment and the number of families on the waiting list to be housed; it is sickening that there are a wealth of empty properties and second homes sitting empty for the majority of the year. People using Wales as a holiday destination should be supporting the community and the Welsh economy by utilising hotels and local guest houses rather than buying up property and stopping young Welsh people getting on the property ladder. This is more of an issues in more "touristy" parts of Wales but the outcomes are the same and they are negative for the people of Wales.

I feel that in the present housing shortage to have properties left empty is unfair to local people who cannot find or cannot afford accommodation. Empty properties, which are often not well maintained make towns and villages look rundown.

We own a small terraced cottage in Holywell. This has been repaired and renovated using local craftsmen and materials. The property is tiny and has steep twisting stairs. It is not a property that would be suitable for families or accessible or anyone with mobility problems. Our main home is in Nottinghamshire, our daughter married a Welshmen and they have two children who are fluent Welsh speakers. We bought this property in order to spend time with our grandchildren. It is not a holiday property. We spend money in the local area and support local schools. We do not however use any great amount of local services yet we

pay more in Council tax for this property than we do for our main property where we spend a larger part of our time. This does not seem fair to us.

This property has never been vacant for 12 months. I do not regard this as a second property or holiday home. Indeed this is my family home where I was actually born. The longest this property has been vacant was during the pandemic lockdown when I was not allowed to enter Wales.

Before applying the premium have to be checked the reasons why the property is empty.

There are hardly any houses for people to buy who are local.

Renting out homes as holiday let's also needs looking into.

Owners of a second home in areas of the country where it negatively impacts the local population (increased house prices and less availability of housing to the indigenous population) should generate a higher contribution to that area. Long term empty accommodation deteriorates which has negative impacts (from a health and safety perspective as well as aesthetically not to mention the waste of housing space)... a higher rate of contribution from the owners should prompt them to either do something about it or at least penalise them for not doing anything about it.

Not all long term empty are second homes, if a property is attached to a business and would not be used as a house again why you would have to pay the premium. If you inherit a home due to bereavement and it doesn't sell you have the premium added.

Should not be charged....IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. There needs to be clear distinction between habitable second homes lying empty and homes, such as mine, which are quite uninhabitable, having been extensively vandalised over the last few years. The bungalow, built c.1925, was already quite unsuitable for letting when we inherited it on the death of my father and it is some years now since I first instructed an architect with a view to rebuilding as the property has a major structural fault and underpinning the foundations is prohibited by a TPO on an oak tree whose canopy extends partially over the building. Several sets of plans have been drawn up in discussion with FCC Planning Department and a full Planning Application submitted over a year ago. I realise that the Covid19 pandemic can reduce the operational efficiency of public bodies but, as a pensioner mostly reliant on basic State Pension, I already struggle to meet the monthly Council Tax fee of £262. Hence my suggestion that the levy on uninhabitable properties should cease once real steps have been taken and continue to be made to bring a property to habitable status.

if a person through no fault of their own inherits a property for e.g. from their parents it is disgraceful that they should have to pay such a high premium simply because the property is empty it appears to me that the councils in wales see this as a money grabbing exercise in order to fund their incompetence in their management of housing issues and are simply taking the easy option

Long term empty properties need to have a reason for being empty. If they are not used at all, they should be considered for residency.

I am proposing to purchase a flat which will be used to help our family, who now have a small child. They live in a small cottage and both work to make ends meet. We need somewhere to be able to come from southern UK to be able to help them at times.

A second home needs to have a purpose, or let out. If our needs are met, we would certainly aim to let it for local people.

People should have the right to do what they want with a property they own. Not tax on tax on tax.

I inherited my property when my mother died. My father built it and I grew up in it. The neighbours all watched me grow up there. I have a great deal of affection for the property and the area, and I am usually at the property once a month, work permitting. For all the Council Tax I pay in Flintshire, I don't even get my bin emptied.

It's not my fault it was decided to sell off Council Houses. That's the problem.

The pandemic has changed our mobility. For almost two years it has been impossible for next-of-kin of a deceased Flintshire resident to travel there safely to clear an empty house and put it up for sale. This is not the time to make things even more difficult by imposing unnecessary fees. The ordinary council tax should suffice, especially since empty houses are not using the facilities supplied by the council such as rubbish collection. In my case, a friend of my late brother's has been staying at the house on a regular basis to mow the lawn and check on the house, so it is not long-term empty.

It is the property that is being taxed not the people that live in it or their circumstances, so why should anyone property be taxed more than another in the same band.

This format does not allow for individual circumstances so I have responded as it applies just to us. It does not even differentiate between second home owners who profit through rent and those like us who don't. There is a big difference between second homes in Flintshire and those in coastal, holiday areas in Gwynedd and Anglesey. There is also a difference between long term empty properties that may be in poor repair and 'second homes' that are not. In our case we have kept my late mother's bungalow in Hawarden for the time being. It is not rented out and the time will come when we will sell, even though we might prefer not to. It is already unfair to charge us a 50% premium as we only use refuse collection services occasionally. To charge a further 50% would be immoral. Clearly we would not be prepared to continue as a "cash cow" for the council. 605 long term empty homes need a different approach to 167 'second homes', quite a small number across the whole county. As things stand, the fact that we continue to own this property makes no difference to the amount of Welsh spoken in the area, has no bearing on 'affordable' or social housing and does not affect the character of the community. Trying to make all properties and areas fit into these categories is unacceptable.

It is not fair on council tax payers who are financially supporting owners of second or empty homes. Lost revenue could be utilised for the benefit of Flintshire residents.

Mitigating circumstances should be rigorously investigated

If we are fortunate to invest in an empty property which is unoccupied and neglected, surely whilst undergoing improvements both externally and internally, why we should be penalised by paying 50% over and above any council tax whatsoever!

If the external works are dealt with in the first instance surely this is for the better of the Flintshire area and maybe I would highly recommend the following;

0 % in year 1, then 50% year 2, to an absolute MAXIMUM 75% year 3 to year 5 as the property is NOT using local authority services then more interest would be given to these empty properties.

Second homes are used by people who can afford to have a second home in North Wales for personal reasons such as Welsh roots and the intention to return to Wales.

Second homes are rarely in the category of affordable houses.

I live next door to a property that has been empty for almost 4 years and has fallen into a state of disrepair. Its appearance is a blight on the neighbourhood and presents an environmental hazard as rats from the property have encroached onto my own property.

Also, there is a large tree in the front garden, the roots of which are lifting my block-paved drive and also present a danger to the stability of my property's foundations.

We have tried to get some action on this problem but so far nothing seems to get done.

Our late mother left our family home, in Hawarden, to my sister and me. We both lived there full time until our 20's, visited and stayed regularly over the last 40 years. We have owned the house since 2018. All the family spoke Welsh. Hawarden remains a largely non-Welsh speaking area. Our home is not a 'second home' in the sense of a holiday home, we don't allow anyone else to stay, nor do we raise income from the house. Nor is it long-term empty. Due to the pandemic, and the restrictions on travel at certain times, we have been unable to visit or stay as long as we would have under normal circumstances. There is no rationale for applying a premium to a home of this kind which does nothing to negatively impact on the

area or the community, doesn't help with increasing affordable homes, or support the Welsh language. The council has discretion to vary its thinking on this and should consider far more nuanced categories of property and should consider far more nuanced exemptions.
2nd homes and empty properties remove needed properties for local communities. This can lead to inflated house prices as availability is less.
Second homes are fully furnished. Long term empty - I can't afford to bring my property up to standard, saving hard as can't get a lone. Sadly the council tax is eating into my savings setting me back.
Second home owners bring revenue to Flintshire and Very often improve run down properties. Whereas long term empty properties are very often a flight on the community in which it is situated.
long term empty do not access CC infrastructure, whereas second homes do when occupied
It would deter home Indra from leaving their properties sensory for long term nd normally thee re ones that end up in disrepair and Na eye sore on local communities s I don't think Flintshire second home sis bad of. A problem as other local neighbouring authorities
Still awaiting a response from my letter dated 6th July 2021 Acc Ref 800363621 with regards to your second home policy
The charge is limiting available funds to bring the properties back into use. You are frustrating the property owner by applying this charge. How much additional revenue has the Local Authority made by charging this 'tax'? What has the Local Authority used this money for and has it made a difference to the issue?
I would recommend consultation with the owners of long term empty properties to establish the reasons why, and the forward plan as in many cases they are undergoing renovation, it could financial, or illness or recently the pandemic causing supply difficulties. I would also class long term as over 10 years. As for second homes there are ready for use at any time. Long term empty and second homes are a total different entity. The council class them the same when they're not. I would also suggest if the properties have been abandoned they should be auctioned off as they stand.
Whoever owns the property and if it has been empty for a long period of time obviously has no intention of either renting or selling it should pay the very top premium council tax if not more in my opinion.
An increase will provide extra revenue for local use
The welsh government have repeatedly failed to build affordable housing across Wales, question 4 illustrates this... "4. In Flintshire there are currently 2,120 people on the waiting list for social/affordable housing. In your opinion, what impact do long-term empty dwellings and second homes currently have on the availability of affordable housing in Flintshire?" The impact is negligible, The reason for people waiting to be housed is government failure to build affordable housing, if they are going ahead with this Charge anyway, will they spend the proceeds on affordable housing? Probably not.
If the properties are low value they need to be used, if possible for social purposes. If they are very high value the owners should not escape paying. However if the properties are remote or would suit the tourism business further consideration should be used.
Long term empty homes and second homes are skewing the housing market and making it more difficult for locals, especially younger locals, to remain here.
Greedy second home owner's hoards properties when there aren't enough to go around. Tax them till the pips squeak, 100% is not enough.
Flintshire Council need to sort themselves out and address the issue of how long it takes to fill a vacant council house.

<p>Flintshire need to urgently address the circa £5m they have failed to collect in Council Tax arrears. Flintshire need to engage in addressing the issue of creating more affordable housing stock (private and Council) instead of blaming or targeting so called second home owners. Flintshire need to publish how much Council Tax they have lost and include in this survey by introducing the premium and property owners moving their property out of domestic rating.</p>
<p>Many reasons for owning second homes its unfair and greedy to charge more than local residents</p>
<p>I think 50 per cent premium on 2nd homes and empty homes is sufficiently punitive to prompt these owners into feeding such homes back onto the market to house those in need of a roof over their heads.</p>
<p>If people can afford the luxury of a second home then they should also expect to pay a premium towards the wider community to which they only stay in part time, because if the property was a permanent residence the wider economy would benefit year round and this needs to be compensated for. Empty properties should incur a premium to incentivise owners to bring them back into use or sell them on.</p>
<p>Rich vs Poor Pay the same as we all do</p>
<p>If you can afford a second home, you can afford to pay full council tax, why should a second home owner be treated differently?</p>
<p>Empty properties empty for over 12 months unless for sale, could house the people on the waiting list.</p>
<p>Why has there been two council houses empty for nearly 6 months on Inglefield Avenue in Conchs Quay</p>
<p>Second home owners have the opportunity to use all services offered, including parks, refuse services, medical emergency services, etc. The local authority needs to raise funding from all of the residents, if we choose to buy property here, we should contribute.</p>
<p>Too many young people are being driven out of the towns and villages they grew up in due to the affordability of housing. The building of new housing estates is not least the solution.</p>
<p>Charging for empty buildings only removes funds from their owners and does not get the buildings back in use.</p>
<p>Second home ownership shouldn't be a penalty or seen as a social evil or penalised. People work hard to own second homes. They are places of retreat and needed income for some. Why should they be penalised for being fortunate or working hard. The council should release more land for affordable homes to be built. The council should legally define a value in pound sterling for what is affordable and it should legally require developers to provide at least 20% of their developments at that price or lower. NOT charge private owners more money.</p>
<p>The 163 or so second homes in Flintshire are not going to fill the housing shortage... at all. It's a tiny proportion of the number of luxury houses built each year... Not even 2%. So why are they being targeted. These bring in jobs in tourism where used as summer lets and holiday lets. They bring people to wales to enjoy the culture and the country. All targeting second homes is doing is pushing people away from wales.</p>
<p>FCC should reduce council tax on empty property. To allow the owners to invest in their property and not in paying the bills.</p>
<p>There are not enough affordable homes, and even people that can afford nice ones struggle to find one</p>
<p>The single person allowance is only 25% and some struggle to pay it as not everyone receives benefits. If a home is empty - it should attract the full tax. If it is a second home - the owners will be better placed to contribute the full amount of council tax. Especially if they rent it out we should think more about the people who live in and contribute to the local economy</p>
<p>Empty houses should be used to facilitate bringing down the high level of people on the waiting list for affordable housing.</p>

<p>Premium on second homes is allowed to be charged on chalet properties where planning permission says they cannot be used as a residential property but can be occupied any time through the year. Such holiday properties should be excluded from second home premium (as static caravans are) as they could never be part of housing stock.</p>
<p>I have an empty property in Flintshire with it being long term empty. I am struggling enough as it is and to pay the tax that is double I am leaving my family with no heating and less food in order to pay it. It's in a dilapidated state as it is.</p>
<p>I live in a tiny village which has at least 4 holiday lets/ 2nd homes. These properties are taking affordable rental properties off the market so there is limited availability.</p>
<p>Both these subjects have a negative impact on the ability and opportunities for young people especially together onto the housing ladder and remain in their place of birth close to family. Second home ownership in particular will impact on cost of housing in some localities again to the disadvantage of local residents and can impact on the viability of local services.</p>
<p>Case by case basis. Not all homes are empty by choice... delays in probate resolution for example.</p>
<p>Your questions are leading questions to fit an agenda/ narrative of inadequate social housing of your making. Perhaps you shouldn't have sold off your stock all those years ago and especially at below market value rates. First refusal for sitting tenants yes, but at market value. Hence why you now have a major problem.</p>
<p>We have a 2nd home in Flintshire and it has remained empty a lot longer than usual due to Covid, lockdown etc. preventing works. The whole property has needed a total strip out to renovate and again, as this takes time, coupled with lockdown, we feel the 50% should not have been charged and waived. The extra tax is crippling those who want to get an empty home up to a saleable standard.</p>
<p>The premium merely serves as a financial penalty rather than encourages properties to come into use etc.</p>
<p>Long term empty properties have no influence on affordable housing. There are also many reasons why a property may remain empty which the current system makes no allowance for.</p>
<p>Rather than penalised long term empty owners should be incentivised to make them available. If the true aim is to reduce the no. Of empty properties then incentivise this. For example if brought back into use with 12 months Council Tax refunded</p>
<p>PLEASE SEE SECTION 13</p>
<p>We bought our present property some 47 years ago and spent many enjoyable times there. The property was derelict and condemned and the only living things were some sheep. We spent 3 years modernising the cottage and the surrounding area without altering the appearance or size. We have improved the area and everybody is extremely friendly.</p>
<p>The couple next door had always lived in the area and we asked them if they cared us being there. They were delighted to have us live next door.</p>
<p>For many years we spent every weekend and holiday there until you stopped us going to Wales due to Covid.</p>
<p>We always use local labour, bought all the furnishings and carpets and always shop locally for all our food and other requirements. Therefore we are giving to Wales and not taking away. We have many friends in the Area, in fact our daughter's main friends. Are in Wales as she grew up with them.</p>
<p>some empty properties are been renovated by the owners and an increase of 50% after the first 12 months is a lot of money that could be used on the renovation the people who use homes as holiday homes should pay at least 100%</p>
<p>I don't believe that a premium charge should be made as the facilities are not used 50% more than other households.</p>
<p>Unlike local authorities in West Wales in Flintshire we do not have the number of second homes that they have so they do not present the same problems they do in those areas e.g. where many or most of the</p>

houses are holiday homes which are unoccupied for much of the year and young local people are priced out of the market by those from more prosperous areas who are able and willing to pay inflated prices for a second home.

Similarly with only 6% of Welsh speakers in the county, the presence of holiday homes occupied by mainly English speakers does not dilute or adversely affect the Welsh language except in a few village locations in the county where the proportion of Welsh speakers is higher.

Obviously, those who buy and own second homes are wealthy enough to run two homes and are therefore wealthy enough to afford paying additional Council Tax on their second home and are obviously quite prepared to do so. In addition they receive local services when they are in residence and because they are not in residence 24/7 they are not making any substantial contribution in support of other local businesses and services. A 50% premium has been applied in the past and I think that this should be increased no but not to 100% here. 60 or 65% would be more appropriate.

Many are bought as holiday homes and are let on that basis the owners do not pay Council tax at all because they are part of the hospitality business and not subject to Council tax at all which cannot be right since the owners and occupiers are not paying anything towards the provision of the local services those using them benefit from such as road repairs and maintenance, street lighting, refuse collection etc.

We have lived for some 47 years in the same property in Flintshire and the original property had been empty for some considerable time and was derelict and in extremely poor condition, the only inhabitants being a few sheep.

We spent 3 years repairing the cottage and maintained its style, size and appearance

We bought all our furnishings, furniture, building materials and goods locally helping the local community and Wales.

We asked the Welsh couple who lived next door (semidetached) if they minded us living next door as 2nd home owners and they were delighted to have some company/neighbours and we help each other...

Our daughter grew up there and has many friends who she keeps in touch with and visits.

People should be allowed to own a home for whatever reason they want it is a free country and not up to yourselves what they should do with something that they have bought with their own money, in particular the charge for an empty home being refurbished is completely wrong. If a property takes longer than 12 months to be refurbished there are usually circumstances causing this most people want to have an income for their property or to occupy but you charging ridiculous amounts of money for council tax where services are not even being used at that property is wrong, that money could be used to bring the property into use sooner.

Holiday homes are often bought by well off people who only stay in them for a small part of the year. I think this is a bad thing as the part time occupants contribute only for a short time in the year to the local area. And as there is a housing shortage in the country any housing should not be for holidays for people that can afford 2 houses!

Homes are to be lived in

Why penalise people for whatever reason their house is empty. If its holiday home money into the area will be lost it's none if council business did privately owned homes and they not using services I'd they not here and as more empty homes why should they be charged down or using services. There could be many reasons the houses are empty. Go charge big house builders more money.

As my wife and I have only our NHS pensions and my Wife also in receipt of her DHS (OAP) pension. Currently we find it difficult to afford our renovation program and to suggest increasing our current 50% "Premium" to 100% will only cause us further personal hardship and delay in completing our renovation program and thereto delaying/preventing our move into our bungalow in Caergwrle.

It has always annoyed me to have to pay. My Flintshire home is the ONLY one I own. If I lived there, I would have a reduction on my Council Tax. I am not using facilities all the time, Police etc. so why should I pay so much more? I get so cross about it.

Questions 2 and 4. Over the past three years or more there have been several long-term empty Flintshire County Council owned properties locally to our property. Perhaps FCC can begin by assessing how the empty properties they own impact on communities, the housing waiting lists and the affect the general appearance the of their empty properties and the unkempt area around the property has on the locality and house prices!

Question 5. The Welsh Language must be protected and promoted at every opportunity. Why it is that new property developments within Flintshire are designed by, constructed and managed by companies from outside Wales and those new properties are not restricted to the SHARP Scheme, but will be offered to applicants outside of the local area and Wales? What evidence can Flintshire County Council provide that they are actively contributing to limiting the impact on the loss of the Welsh language?

Question 6. An increase in premium for Second Homes would help to make their purchase a less attractive option and would help to prevent the "swallowing up" of affordable homes for our young local people.

Question 7. The case of each Long-Term Empty property should be considered on an individual basis, with an assessment of the circumstances and reasons why the property has remained empty being made prior to the charging of an additional poll tax premium. Sometimes there are circumstances beyond the property owner's control which can delay, hinder and prevent the property from being offered for sale or rent. When modernisation and renovation is required to make the property an attractive sale or rental option and a substantial amount of money is being invested by the property owner in such works, the charging of an additional premium on the Poll Tax is not helpful and counterproductive in assisting a property owner in their endeavours to bring onto the sale/rental market a up to standard, ready to move into and comfortable family home.

Long-term empty properties can often be the subject of probate, which can be a lengthy process with a timescale outside the beneficiary's control and until such time as probate is granted the beneficiary/new property owner's hands are tied. Following Granting of Probate it may be that the new property owner will retain the property to offer on the rental market and in doing so will renovate and modernise the property and it may be necessary to employ tradesmen to carry out all the necessary works. The sourcing of good, reliable trades people can be a lengthy process in normal times, however, over the past two years due to the Coronavirus Lockdowns, both national and local, large sections of our working calendar has been lost, with scheduled start dates for works to be undertaken having to be reviewed and delayed. Not only has this had an impact on the timescale to complete necessary works, but so too has the lack of available materials and the considerable price increase for such materials.

All the above matters are relevant in establishing why a property is still empty and should be taken into consideration if the local authority is prepared to demonstrate sympathy for a home owner with a genuine desire to endeavour to provide a comfortable family home. The additional Premium only serves to penalise those who have a genuine desire to provide accommodation of a high standard and a home in which it is hoped a good tenant will wish to live for many years. The charging of this additional Premium not only hinders property owners financially, but must surely promote and encourage the hurried introduction of properties onto the rental market, which may lack the approved standard of accommodation, as property owners hope to avoid the increased premium charges.

- The questionnaire appears to be carefully crafted in keeping with the Council's own policies.
- The questionnaire almost implies that second-home owners, etc. are exclusively responsible for the area's possible housing problems, which could just as easily be owing to previous ineffective Council policies.
- It may be helpful if the Council defined more clearly the relationship it sees between housing policies and linguistic ones. (See 13.)

My main property supports three businesses each of which access the main drive. Yard, outbuildings and land of the property. Our insurance company insists the property is inhabited at night. This has happened without fail. Because my husband has Alzheimer's disease and is unsafe in an isolated property he lives at Brookside Farm which is a long term rental property owned by ourselves. However, his condition is deteriorating and it will necessitate twenty four hour care in the foreseeable future which creates a problem for me for which as yet I have not found a solution. It is my intention, eventually to live, full time at the Galchog and re rent Brookside Farm.

My husband's diagnosis coincided with the fact that Brookside Farm could not be let out because we discovered it was possible to touch the unearthed cable that feeds the top end of Village Road, Northop Hall from a bedroom window. Despite being prioritised by Scottish Power for replacement it took nearly three years to happen.

Galchog is unsuitable for family occupation because it is dangerous and requires a comprehensive renovation scheme. It is too isolated and difficult and unsafe to access by foot.

Sometimes people have specific reasons for not selling or renting out their long term empty property, if the property is in a good state of repair and does not devalue or have a negative impact on the street it is located on by being in a poor state of repair as is sometimes the case with occupied properties with scruffy tenants who dump rubbish why should they pay any more than the normal council tax rate.

If a property is not a second holiday home it is not depriving anyone of an affordable home especially if it is not in a desirable holiday location and located in a normal town, also if it is long term empty it has not been used for profit through rentable income which could justify the extra council tax charge

The premium is unfair as it discriminates against local Welsh residents and penalises them for owning a property in a village where they grew up as a child, attended the local village school and remained in Flintshire for secondary education.

If a home owner lives within Flintshire and also has a second property within Flintshire, they are already paying council tax twice to Flintshire County Council. It is therefore unfair for Flintshire residents to be charged further. It is understandable if home owners that have their primary residence in another county or country are charged the premium to a certain extent as Flintshire County Council does not receive a primary home tax payment.

My property band would not come within the affordable housing bracket and therefore unfortunately would not be of benefit within any affordable housing schemes.

Older properties cost more to maintain, with wages lower in Wales, it is a further penalisation to local residents that own a second property. The premium therefore reduces the amount of money that can be spent on the property to maintain it resulting in a negative impact to the local economy and small businesses within it.

There may be good reasons why a property is long term empty, extensive rebuild due to a fire being one. This is the case with my property. After a fire on September 21st, 2020 the property required an extensive rebuild, including new back door and all windows to the rear, extensive redecoration due to smoke damage and extensive re plastering. This work could not be completed in the twelve months allowed, due primarily to the dilatory efforts of the builder and to their own incompetence.

This house is not a second home for me or anyone else, but an investment property to provide me with extra income, which I need as an O.A.P. Details follow in a letter.

FOR HOLIDAY HOMES AND LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN DIFFERING COUNTIES TO THE MAIN RESIDENCE, THERE MAY BE AN ARGUMENT FOR A PREMIUM ON HOLIDAY HOMES. BUT FOR LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES IN THE SAME COUNTY ANY PREMIUM IS RIDICULOUS. I AM ALREADY PAYING TWO FULL COUNCIL TAXES AND GETTING NOTHING EXTRA IN RETURN REGARDING SERVICES. IF THE COUNCIL WERE REALLY SERIOUS IN REDUCING EMPTY HOUSES PERHAPS THEY COULD LOOK TO PURCHASE THEM

My long term empty dwelling will be lived in by a family member when they move back permanently to North Wales from South Wales, which is where they currently work and live.

The answers to some of the questions above with regards to long term empty properties all depend upon the location of the properties, the category of housing stock into which the property(ies) fall(s) and the circumstance surrounding the individual property; some long term empty properties may need to be redeveloped and modernised; not all long term empty properties may be suitable for social / affordable housing.

Second Home properties may also not be appropriate for social / affordable housing.

I was born and brought up in Flintshire, went to school in Flintshire, and have since moved away to attend university and take up subsequent employment some distance away. I am now part self-employed with business interests in Flintshire which provide employment for a number of local people. Although my main residence is outside Flintshire I have inherited property in Flintshire and stay in Flintshire when attending to my business interests there. As I work in two places it makes sense to have accommodation in both places, and I should not be penalised for such. I provide employment in Flintshire and I spend money in Flintshire, which should be encouraged, not discouraged. If council tax costs on property in Wales increase as indicated and ownership becomes more prohibitive then running a business in Wales becomes less viable. This would damage the prospects of investment and employment in the County and Principality. Council tax is supposed to be a tax for services provided by the council – not a stick to punish the householder with. Empty properties and second homes use fewer services than main homes, so cost the council less to serve – so should have less council tax levied, not more. All premiums for these properties should be scrapped. Council tax should be removed altogether and indefinitely from empty properties which are undergoing, or waiting for, renovation.

The proposals to charge any premium, let alone 100% premium for second or empty homes is a disincentive to investment and employment in the Principality and would be damaging to its growth prospects. This is an attack on the business and visitor economy. These homes are unlikely to become available to those requiring affordable accommodation, so would not help the county or country's housing concerns. The Principality should concentrate on building more affordable accommodation, not attempting to pursue an undemocratic policy which was not voted for by the Welsh electorate.

My property had a tenant for 8 years they left and since then due to COVID I have not been able to get another tenant although one is expected soon. My property is available to rent for local people, and whoever is renting the property is contributing to the local community. Therefore I find the financial penalty unfair.

I think the issue around affordable housing is to do with how local and central government prioritise and plan their strategic budgeting and priorities especially in relation to affordable housing.

I feel that second homes are a problem for local people who are looking for an affordable property as it's quite likely that a number of second homes will fall into this category. Although it should also be taken into consideration that waste and recycling removal will be less as the property is not occupied 100% of the time. I do also appreciate that a lot of people with second homes bring all their supplies with them and this obviously affects the local economy. But I don't feel that they should be charged above the band that the property falls into.

As far as long term empty properties are concerned I think these are a different matter. I do own a property that falls into this category. Again the property is not producing waste that needs collecting and also the property does not generate vehicular traffic in the surrounding area. I feel that this type of property should be inspected to ascertain its potential prior to a levy being imposed. In my own case the property is in need of a total refurbishment which I intend to do in the future, The property is not now, and after refurbishment, certainly would not be in the affordable housing bracket. A feel that a fair rate to charge would be 75% of its band.

Individual circumstances should be taken into account as to why someone needs or uses a second home. I was born and brought up in Flintshire and, although I now live a considerable distance away, for many years until recently I was identified by Flintshire County Council as the primary carer for an elderly widowed and childless relative who was housebound and needing care. On their behalf I liaised with social services and care and health agencies, and did shopping and attended to various needs. My relative's house was too small to accommodate me on my frequent visits, and it was appropriate for me to stay in a property which was identified as a second home. Under these circumstances it is wholly unfair and inappropriate to apply a penalty of any premium to the council tax.

If a second-home owner has a genuine reason for needing a home in Flintshire, such as providing care or having business interests locally, then no council tax premium should be levied.

There are not enough council dwellings in Flintshire that's because they decided to sell those years ago. So now anyone else has a second dwelling gets penalised. The council have spent thousands on things like the band stand etc. that never gets used only by people who choose to sit there at night and drink!!

Weithiau mae tai yn wag am fwy na 12 mis oherwydd bod y preswylwyr efallai mewn cartref gofal ac yn methu mynd yn ôl i'w tai am gyfnod. Mae gwahaniaeth rhwng eiddo gwag hirdymor ac eiddo gwag am resymau dilys. **Sometimes houses are empty for more than 12 months because residents may be in a care home and are unable to return home for a while. There is a difference between long-term empty properties and empty properties for valid reasons.**

Q 11 If you are the owner of a second home or long-term empty property in Flintshire, what action would you be likely to take if the premium was to be increased. Those 67 that selected "Other" included

Use it as a business	4
Use as holiday let	4
Would continue renovations but extra charge will hamper the speed	8
No single answer	4
Already trying to sell the property	6
Demolish the property/merge with existing	5
Cause financial stress	3
Press planning for quicker decision	2
Sell and invest somewhere else	1
Challenge/lobby the decision	3
Miscellaneous	27

Q13 We welcome any other comments or suggestions you may have regarding council tax premiums on long term empty properties and second homes.

185 people provided various additional comments

I am not aware if this premium also applies to commercial property? If not, I think it should. Also, personally, I think the premium should only apply to EMPTY property and NOT second homes.

"A family member of mine bought a house last year, applied for a 12 month council tax exception due to major work required to be carried out, which was accepted.

The 12 month exception has now elapsed, due to COVID the major work was not completed, until the 13th month now the council have placed the 50% premium on the council tax. Which I think is not acceptable."

Where was the money from council house sales spent?

A lot of second homes are left vacant most of the year, these could be lived in by people desperate for a home. Empty properties are liable to deteriorate and either be broken into or end up with vermin problems.

As I said above. A premium might work in the short term but owners need to be encouraged to retrofit their properties and /or sold to the councils concerned. Surely grants could be made available?

There should be a premium of 50% after 6 months increasing to 100% after 12 months especially since property sell very quickly at present.

"What help is available to 2nd home owners who rent out these properties and the tenants don't pay. I have had a disgraceful service from the Flintshire County Court..." "Due to covid" usual excuse for poor service.

I understand you're trying to raise more money and you have run out of options because you have cut services beyond belief but seriously, get someone with an entrepreneur's mentality to run that council or you destined to fail. "

"I agree with the exemption period for empty properties - people often need time to deal with a property they may have inherited for example, or may have recently moved out of due to a new relationship. They may need to clear the property or make repairs to the property prior to marketing or renting out. Usually a 12 month period would be sufficient for them to make a decision on what to do with the property and to carry out the necessary work. These could be looked at on a case by case basis to allow for difficult cases (egg legal issues, vulnerable owners) to be given additional time if needed.

For second properties/ holiday homes - the area could benefit from the additional council tax income to make up for the loss of income usually generated by a permanent resident (spending in local shops/ pubs restaurants etc.)

I am not sure that empty properties and second homes have a direct impact on Welsh language. The implication is that the property owners are non-welsh speakers, which is not necessarily true. "

"This is another additional tax.

Change the rules. Fail to pay and there are consequences that are enforced.

Double the Council Tax on empty properties

No thanks

Doesn't matter what rate is set if the owner of the property cannot be traced. Take ownership of property and rent it out yourselves

The County Council themselves need to act on their own properties and not have any type of property empty for long periods. Example is 10, New Shop Parade, Greenfield. Disgraceful, the Council have not refurbished if unable to sell. Make it more attractive to buyers or for rental.

My personal experience is as a single person who purchased an uninhabitable empty house in Flintshire in a very poor state of repair with the intention of refurbishing and then moving into it as my main residence (and selling my current home). I am on a tight budget and therefore will be doing the majority of the work myself which I estimate will take in the region of 2.5 - 3 years. My thoughts are that, for people in my situation, the premium is actually hindering / delaying my attempts to bring the property back up to a habitable standard. I pay council tax at my current main home + will now have to pay an additional 150% council tax on renovation property. I feel this is overly harsh especially as I am single and not even using any of the service that the council tax fund. I feel the premium is in fact a barrier that may put others in my situation off the idea of trying to renovate empty properties. Additionally, I feel properties that are being renovated to be used as main residences should be treated very differently to holiday homes (for which I think the premium is reasonable). My suggestions are that the premium should not apply to people in my situation for up to 3 years. In fact I feel that you should consider extending the class an exemption to people in my situation as long as we can demonstrate that works are still ongoing. A final suggestion regarding the class A exemption is that the current rules seem totally unfair - If the class A exemption has already been used on the property prior to purchase then any new owner does not qualify, surely they deserve a 'clean slate' and full exemption term to help them take on required works

My thoughts are described in question (8)

I think after 5 yrs. the council should have the right to Compulsory purchase empty properties at market value, if the owners are not prepared to improve them for rental or sale.

Second homes and empty houses are disliked by most permanent residents and deeply resented by those seeking a home of their own

Ask first why it is empty? Has the property become too big to handle? Will it cost too much to bring up to rental standard? If it is not going to be for sale then look at helping get it back onto the rental market? If an older resident owns the property they probably

do not want to update it but also don't want to sell it, help them to bring it up to rental standard and supply tenants then no one will be on our housing list.

Persuasion is always better than compulsion: can FCC find ways to encourage owners of empty properties to bring them back into occupation?

Bins should be emptied. If work is being carried out should be checked then no premium. Reasons for being empty should take into consideration circumstances better and be more lenient

In my opinion you are trying to resolve an issue from completely the wrong end. You have wrongly focused on a negative and inappropriate solution, rather than a positive one, in which you are trying to raise additional money for the County by proposing to apply an increase to the housing tax. This is wrong and very short-sighted.

"I give our reasons for and comments about our owning what we believe is a second but not a holiday home in Flintshire. I am of Flintshire stock & was born and raised there. All my family & most of friends still live in the county. Our 2nd home was my mother's home on a small estate near Queensberry where she lived until her death a few years ago. Until she died I spent 50 % of my time there. While I spend less time there now (this has been affected by Covid) we still spend considerable amount of time in the bungalow & I have hopes of returning to live there as a permanent home at some time in the not too distant future. During my frequent visits to Flintshire I visit and help to care for infirm relatives and friends, this is a significant reason for keeping our Flintshire property. We have been honest in classifying our property as a 2nd home. We have been advised that we should register the bungalow as a business (for letting out as a holiday home to family and friend 'paying' to use the property) as this would confer financial benefit to us rather than incurring the penalties of paying enhanced council tax. We have not done that.

We accept that in general, second and, more especially holiday homes, have a detrimental effect but this is primarily but not exclusively due to the detrimental effects on the Welsh language and the driving up prices in popular tourist locations. We believe our circumstances are completely different. Our modest property is not in a tourist area, we believe we are not depriving locals of the opportunity to own their own home and, as far as the Welsh language issue is concerned, we have considerably more Welsh (written & spoken) than virtually anyone in the area where our 2nd home is situated. We feel that the current 50% premium is fair. It should not be raised or reduced."

As stated above, there are exceptions that are not currently taken into consideration, I feel this is poor on FCC behalf. I do not want to hold onto my late mother's property, yet I am being penalized by FCC because of the pandemic that has slowed the whole house selling process.

It would be a help to understand if and how a change of use could be made.

The Council should explain more clearly how it justifies charging any premium for second home inherited properties which are regularly occupied. Why should families be penalised for continuing to occupy homes which they have inherited?

Continue present level of premium on long term empty second homes.

"If a property is classed as 'long term empty' it is probably due to financial restraints and imposing a further burden though Council Tax is counterproductive. An extra £1,000 is half the cost of a new kitchen or bathroom, the Council should be helping to bring houses back into use not hindering.

More effort could be made to check on empty properties to see if the council could assist in bringing them back into use."

Thank you for asking for my response. I am concerned about the premium and the effect it has had on me personally. I will inform you immediately when the property is put on the market as I have been lead to believe that this should mean that I will have to pay less going forward.

"I believe it would have a negative impact on the owners, as they would have less money to try and either sell or maintain the property while it is empty. The idea of taking more money off people for things out of their control is beyond the joke, but this seems to be how the local council's like to screw people over, be hitting them when things are already hard.

The true housing shortage in Flintshire does not provide any justification for the premium. In truth the premium is seen as merely Flintshire attempting to increase its revenue with the premium being directed elsewhere than the homeless.

"Just because people own a second home does not mean they can afford an increase- I am keeping my family home, which my mother paid council tax on throughout her life, for the continued use of my family so that we can all continue to benefit from my Welsh heritage and culture and to keep open the option of returning to live there in future.

I use a fraction of the services used by my neighbors and so save the council money, and yet pay through the nose for the privilege.

The number of properties being discussed will hardly raise significant extra funds and smacks more of taxing those who might appear to be better off rather than significantly increasing social housing."

With the current Welsh legislation that all Landlords and their agents are required to be licensed there is an increased burden on them to ensure all the i's are dotted and all the t's are crossed. At present this costs in the region of £280 for courses and licenses. Therefore there is no incentive for landlords or agents to rent out properties at the lower end of the market where there would be no profit and end up most of the time when a tenant leaves it ends up as a loss making enterprise. My last tenant left with damages equating to just over £1000 of which I managed to recoup £400.

"We have been charged for long term empty properties while renovating a house. We had the 12 month council tax holiday but this was in the height of the pandemic.

The Main reason for the project being delayed was due to the very slow (12months) decision and correspondence from Flintshire conservation officer because the property is listed.

Seems a very unfair way of raising revenue on a young family with 2 children under 2 living in a house with 1 bedroom and 1 box room. It's not as if we did not want to live in the property. The only reason we were not in was because of the conservation officer and we are then finically penalised for his in ability to do his job! "

I have voiced my opinion earlier in this survey!!!!!!

Our home needed substantial refurbishment and we used lots of trades and suppliers in North Wales. We'd like it recognised we have made, and continue to make, a good contribution to the local economy in North Wales.

I have stated previously around why I think you should not charge a premium around second homes that are in a bad state of repair it is up to the individual what they do with their property. I'm sure we live in a society where freedom of what we want to do with our own property is up to the individual and should not be led by a local council

Sometimes it takes a while to get planning and building passed!

Depends on the individuals circumstances

I was disappointed that no concession was made to second home owners when we could not use our property for 7 months during the recent pandemic and were, therefore, not using any council services.

If it was rented out where would keep some of my stock. Access is through the shop which would be impossible.

"There is no evidence the cost of property is rising and that empty property or second homes add to the lack of social housing. Indeed property remains hard to sell

It appears this policy is just a way of councils adding to their income unjustly"

Corona times have been difficult. I have been denied access to my house and charged a premium for unused services. I have accepted this as socially necessary. To choose this time to threaten me with even higher costs, makes me feel angry and helpless. I can understand that people leave homes empty especially if you have neighbor harassment - we have thought out that we leave the property, take the roof off and then fill it with concrete so it is not habitable

"Flintshire should separate out the 3 connected but distinct issues in the supply of housing of

1. 2nd home ownership levels

2. Private landlords - especially air bnb/holiday lets

3. Long term empty properties

You need to clearly understand the drivers behind each issue and use a variety of tools to manage and influence them. Council tax surcharges are a blunt instrument which work better in the case of long term empty properties than 2nd homes.

Beware the law of unintended consequences- the surcharge of 2017 led a neighbour whose parents had owned their 2nd home since the 1960s to sell the house. It sold to a couple from outside Wales. How did that help the local community wanting local homes and to protect the Welsh language?

I saw the 2017 surcharge decision as opportunistic - it wasn't needed then or now. And it raised very little for the general fund.

A second home currently pays more council tax than residents. Yet it brings income into the local area. But costs the council far less, for example- fewer refuse collections. Less traffic damage to roads.

People might need at least up to 2yrs to complete renovation, as not everyone can afford few thousand every month to complete the property, and have it completed in 12 months.

I will state my own case. I have lived in my current property for twenty-six years. My wife and I extended the house so that my wife's elderly parents could live with us. My father-in-law lived with us for eighteen years. Before he died we were visited by a surveyor from the Council Tax department, who decided that we were occupying two homes, being our house and a 'flat'. The result of this is that we have had to pay a second-home premium tax on the 'flat'. This is despite the fact that the 'flat' can only be accessed by first entering our house via a single lockable external door; the bedroom of the flat is one of the rooms within our own house (which it has been for two-hundred years). If we turn off our water, the flat has no water; similarly, gas. The electricity meter for our entire property - house and 'flat', is within the flat itself so that, technically, if someone were to turn off the power in the flat we would have no power in our house. Within our house the entrance to the 'flat' is from our own utility room. The surveyor classed this as the flat kitchen because it once had a gas-ring fitted. This was rarely used by anyone and was removed several years ago because it was dangerous when in the proximity of people with dementia. But, we are still paying Council Tax. The situation is further complicated by the fact that my wife and I are now in our seventies. We have bought a bungalow to move into next year, when building modifications have been carried out. In order to avoid a second-home premium on this property also, we have allowed friends to live in it temporarily, otherwise we would have had to pay two second-home premiums. We have appealed our Council Tax assessment for the 'flat', but the matter seems to drag along very slowly. So, our current situation requires an answer to a very appropriate question - How do we go about selling two properties, with

two amounts of Council Tax, rather than one? Who is going to want to buy 'two' properties?

"I answered 'I do not know' on questions 10 & 12 as I feel empty properties and second homes should be treated differently.

Second homes used for holidays are a luxury, and their owners should pay a premium for the privilege of owning one.

Empty properties remain empty for different reasons, and owners should be helped and encouraged to bring their property back into permanent habitation, not burdened with increasing Council Tax bills."

This Premium Tax is a "Political Tax" introduced by the Welsh Government and it is wrong. Welsh speakers can't abide the English wanting to live in Wales, they only accept the English when they spend money in Wales.

Property owners should be encouraged to refurbish and relist or sell. However properties owners should be allowed to refurb in a cost effective manner. I know of a couple of properties in another county that have been listed grade 2 this has discouraged the owner from refurb as the cost would be well in excess of £100k and considerably more than the end value.

Tax them till the pips squeak.

"Pandemic makes much more difficult to make long term empty houses habitable.

People's circumstances differ so not everyone with empty house does not want to rent it,

Affordability issues to make the house rentable."

As previously mentioned I would review the current "one size fits all" situation. Second homes can fall into different categories (some are simply not suitable to be family or even retirement homes) and empty properties can take a long time to sell through no fault of the vendor. I would also look at "loopholes" for example people who let their property for the minimum amount of time to avoid a premium. Additionally some people avoid the premium as it is their only property in the UK but they spend over half the year in a property abroad.

What qualifies for an exception? We didn't get one during a pandemic & access ban !It's a different situation if you're a landlord and making money, as the property was left to me in a will, I feel I shouldn't have to pay as I'm not making any money

On a personal note, given that I have paid the premium 150% Council Tax on my Long Term Empty Property for the last 2 years following the 12 month exemption period, I would carry on paying Council Tax on this property whether it stayed the same, increased or decreased. I feel that the current system is not fit-for-purpose and I respectively suggest that WAG and the Local Authorities end the conflation and

confusion around Second Homes and Long Term Empty Properties. I want to modernise the long term empty property that I own in order for a family to live there - I never had a time limit for this work to be completed and the imposition of the Council Tax 50% premium has not changed my approach in any way. It has just annoyed me as it has many other people in the same position as myself. I see it as a tax grab, nothing more and I doubt whether it has helped speed up the system. In that sense it has been counter-productive.

I would leave rates as they are and chase up arrears in other areas.

An empty property has no impact on anyone other than the owner and therefore the owner should not be penalised. The council should only intervene where a property falls into disrepair and could become dangerous.

Maybe use the money from Council Tax premiums to give grants to people attempting to repair and refurbish empty properties.

I can't afford the cost of refurbishment of the long term empty property.

"I think that you need to keep an eye on people claiming exemptions for renovations and if they are not renovating then the exemption should be taken away from them.

I also think that caravans should not be included."

Housing is scarce at this time and empty homes and second homes has a negative impact on local people who live and work in Flintshire

N/A

This is a sensible move and should be implemented as soon as possible. There is an urgent need to increase the availability of affordable homes to rent in all communities and I believe that appropriate action should be taken to discourage second homes and properties remaining empty for longer than a relatively short period without good reason

We have a couple of properties that have remained totally unoccupied since they were built in my village. The property was presumably purchased as an investment. This does nothing for the local area and quite frankly I feel that compulsory purchase should be an option when perfectly good houses are left empty for long periods.

Increased premiums could be put back into the community to ensure local shops and amenities stayed open.

Unless the money raised from the council tax premium can be shown to have demonstrable effect on the community it will naturally become unnoticed.

"Question 9 should be chargeable by the owner immediately.

Houses should not be able to be left to rack and ruin"

There are far too many empty homes in the whole of North Wales, and too many locals being priced out of the housing market. I think a more concerted effort is required by local government to stop so many second homes being purchased, by making sure that there is a very heavy surcharge on buying a second home. These second homes do nothing to help a community and local services.

You cannot include empty homes and second homes under the same banner, they should be dealt with as two separate issues. Second homes are a much needed tourism boost and should not be the subject of political bias.

"This is a good initiative. I can see no downside in it for Flintshire council taxpayers who do not own an empty or second home or for the homeless in the county. It should lead to more homes becoming available to those who most need them

Is there any way the money raised could be used to assist those without a home to afford to buy or rent one in the county? This would also show that the initiative is a principled one, not one simply aimed to raise more money for the council (Although I know you need more money for essential services.)"

People who buy property and land as investments to make themselves richer should pay more...property developers are pushing up house prices. .And local young people have virtually no chance of getting on the property ladder, we have seen this happen all over the country and it's not right,

See item 8

"Because a house is empty - what makes you think you could make use if it as part of local authority housing???"

It might be unsuitable and not owned by the local authorities so how will it help you rehouse anyone???"

Just do it

"There are only 772 empty properties of which a mere 167 are holiday homes. This seems such a small number to make much difference at all to the number of affordable homes which are available.

I am concerned that this has simply turned into a way for the local authorities to bring in more money, without causing any change.

How, in fact, have these numbers changed since 2017? Has the 50% premium actually made a difference to the numbers of properties involved?

Alternatives? A licence to own a second home with a limit on numbers of licences available and a lower premium is a possibility. Note that second home owners still pay gas, electricity and water standing charges and pay council taxes for all other services.

Perhaps also, more 'affordable homes' might be built, with a restriction on sale only to permanent residents, might be part of the answer.

Second home owners will simply pay any excess and it will cause resentment among owners and possibly competition between authorities as to where might be cheapest to buy a second home.

A relative recently died although leaving a will it was with the solicitor who had gone out of business, it took a long time to sort out not helped by the thought of council taxes being paid on the property.

It will not make any difference to waiting lists

I think the increase of council tax premiums on us old age pensioners for what we get back is a rip off.

There will be some circumstances when an empty home should not incur an extra premium, see above.

Revenue from Increased premiums could be offered to long term empty homes as loans or grants for incentives to restore/renovate properties which could then be offered as rental properties to people on waiting lists

get a grip, totally political to blame someone for the poor direction the Welsh government

Static caravans are second homes, those who let them out make a huge amount of money. They should pay full council tax too.

"I think that you need to consider the different nature of second homes.

Someone like me trying to hold down a full time job and run two properties, in order to eventually move back to Wales after a family death, is not the same at all as someone keeping a vacant property empty or using it for profit as a holiday home, or a very occasional holiday property for their own use only. "

If you put charges up too high it will deter both the owner from renting/refurbishing a property with the extra cost in many cases being passed onto the renter who cannot afford to pay it as well as the rent therefore the property will stay empty

The long term empty houses option should include not a minimum of 12 months empty but one to pay 100%fee straight away if it is cost g them money they will either do up the property and rent it do up the property and live in it or will not spend the money and sell it all are the most beneficial for the area the longer there e. Pty the faster they look a mess

We do not see any negative points, only positive for local people who currently cannot afford properties in their local community. We believe it should never have got to the point we are at.

"I think that empty properties make an area look uncared for. If homes are lived in permanently, the owner is more likely to

Invest in the upkeep of the property. "

There needs to be collaboration with other 21 local authorities all agreeing the same policy. We value the tourists and they have a place in our community if they have a positive impact. Increase in empty or second home could lead to job losses, school closure, and lack of suitable properties for new first time buyers if current situation become unmanageable.

With the relatively small number of properties involved I don't think that making them pay more would make any meaningful difference to the finances for Flintshire CC

I don't however agree with your policy that if you buy a house that was empty you are still charged these premiums. That's what happened to me and it's not my fault the previous owner left the property empty. Also council has too many house that are in disrepair and people are waiting a year to get in them because they have needed work and they just sat empty. This is happening to s friend of mine now

Should be the same as occupied properties

It all depends on how wisely the money is invested or is it likely to be frittered on unnecessary councilor's expenses.

I feel increasing the premium will impact the area and force some local people who have owned second homes for 30+ years to sell.

Re Question 9, I bought a derelict house in Flintshire in 2013 as a permanent home and requested a suspension of council tax whist refurbishment took place. This was refused as it had already been claimed once. I was very angry, as I felt the previous reduction had nothing to do with me. This needs to be reviewed

There may need to be different council tax rules for long-term empty properties as compared to second homes. Second homes inflate house prices and decrease the housing stock available for local residents or people who wish to move to the area permanently (egg for employment reasons).

Scrap them for this county. They do not affect any community in Flintshire and just a money making excuse.

I think that new buyers should have a set time to bring the property up to standard from the date they purpose the property and the clock reset for them. So even if a property has been empty for 2 years if it is sold on the new buyers should be given the time and opportunity before the costs increase.

"The questions in this survey are not easy to understand and could be more clearly explained.

The council needs to take as much action as is legally allowed to force second home owners to make their properties available for those who need them. Empty second homes are not acceptable."

Please support your residents. Houses are for living in. They should not be used as an investment, nor as a means for getting richer.

"There wasn't an option to reduce the length of time before empty dwellings were required to pay the 50% premium. I think it should be 6 months.

Counties such as Gwynedd are bringing in 100% council tax on second homes, you risk second home owners buying in Flintshire if we are not in line with neighbouring scenic counties. "

We all need public services and the council has a duty to all its tax payers to spend wisely but also generate income wherever legally possible.

I have answered 'Negative impact' to question 12 because to have this tax at all, let alone increase it, will discourage investment and spending within the county - instead it will be spent elsewhere in the UK or overseas. We should be encouraging this inward private investment.

Why should full rate payer's subsidies second home owners especially if they live outside the area?

The premium should be required as a lump sum payment at the beginning of the financial year so as to increase its impact. There should be no facility for the 10 months payment scheme

I feel any money raised by extra premium should be allocated towards funding new affordable housing and also find it unrealistic that there are only 172 holiday homes in Wales

Long term empty properties decline in their standard as they are often not being looked after - this is a particular problem if the property is attached to another as this can affect the neighbour. Houses not lived in can also be a target for vandalism though thanks fully this is rare where I live.

Tax should maybe looked at on more of a case by case basis.

SECOND HOME PREMIUMS SHOULD BE INCREMENTAL - (YEAR ON YEAR INCREASE)

Please just humanely consider each individual situation before applying an additional charge like the CT premium, consider the circumstances and the reasons for a property being unoccupied. Yes there are exceptions but they are not wide enough.

The present loophole where owners can avoid the payments should be closed. They should all pay.

The two categories are completely different and should be treated as such. No premium should apply to a property that is being marketed for sale, although I appreciate this may not be a straightforward matter to assess.

"Increase second homes tax premiums to very high levels, at least 100% above current tax level.

There should be no increase on empty homes owned by families residing in Flintshire. They should only be required to pay the normal property tax designated to the building as if it was occupied."

Long term empty properties could be reviewed on an individual basis. We upgraded a 1950s ex-council house to contemporary standards and the project took five years. To pay extra council tax whilst we were using our savings to improve the property would have been difficult.

"I don't know how you can expect people to pay out all this money, people are not made of money.

I wanted to be living in my 2nd house with in twelve months of applying for planning and selling the home I am now living in, That would then take me away from being a 2nd home owner"

A few holiday homes in a thriving village are ok, a lot of holiday homes in a small village kill off village life and services egg schools shops.

Please see above answers

By increasing Tax premiums it would certainly encourage owners to let / refurbish or sell the property but genuine exceptions to me should be fairly considered.

"For long-term empty, compulsory purchase after 5yr.

For second home's 50% of sale gains go to local government. "

"Again second homes and long term empty have been lumped together, I had a long term renovation, the local trades were slow and took ages, it was an absolute nightmare to get trades, 12 months wasn't enough and that's with me wanting to move in as soon as, extra payments would have been most unwelcome given it's probably cost more than the bungalow is worth to bring it up to standard as everything is so expensive, too high could deter empty properties being bought back into use. Re 11, I would not be happy but pay, I had no choice to move into my property unfinished because local trades hadn't finished, messed up the wet room and had to take it out and redo, still not right but because of the extra charge I could afford to wait so living in an unfinished property and the wet room isn't safe as it should be, it was fitted as I'm disabled, so I think 12 months isn't enough for renovation for some people. In South Derbyshire they give 3 months from empty (12 for major renovation) but 3 isn't enough to sort a property if selling or renting so people are unfairly being charged through no fault of their own.

Charging over 50% would put most second home owners into difficulty and force them into business rates, empty long term (as in years) I'm guessing won't care as if they've abandoned a house long term letting it deteriorate they probably have enough to pay, if not this is where the empty homes officer comes in. Communication, fairness and common sense on individual peoples circumstances is a must, remembering rules are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of the wise.

With second homes if charges are increased they may not be used as much or spending in local shops maybe cut, less pub dinners , drinks and general shop spending, for those that don't go onto business rates. Also other maintenance maybe hit so the properties become less well maintained and look tatty and tired, not good for the area.

The second home is only empty whilst work is being undertaken on this to bring it up to a standard to rent out. Once ready our second home is rented out. Additional charges may slow this work down

It is clear that other Council areas in Wales are approaching this subject from a heavily political angle to deflect from their own poor performance in terms of serving the affordable housing needs of their communities. I hope that Flintshire resists the temptation of apparent 'easy' money.

The increase would help support the local communities where people struggle to find places to live and allow building on land suitable for affordable housing. People who are making money out of communities as 2nd homes should pay extra as they are already able to afford to purchase in 1st place. Empty properties that are for sale should be exempt as I have had 3 buyers drop out just as sale was about to proceed and it make it difficult to maintain all the bill and Council tax after 12 month at a premium rate. The internet allows properties to be searched to see if they are on the market.

I believe that listed building in particular should be exempt from the premium as the owners are already spending money on maintaining these treasured buildings.

"It's important to define second homes. To me these are properties which are not used as a business, but a property purely used as a home for the owner to visit whilst on holiday.

Properties such as holiday lets which are used purely as a business, (some only have planning permission to use for holiday accommodation and not residential) should NOT be included in the definition of a second home as it is a genuine business and should be treated the same as other businesses.

I think it is also important to have a varied housing stock, rather than purely concentrating on affordable housing. More expensive housing will bring in income for the council, and allow people to move up the ladder enabling affordable housing to become available."

"In the context of second homes in Flintshire, the imposition of the council tax premium is unfair and unreasonable.

As previously mentioned, there are only 167 second homes across the county and as such, are most unlikely to have a negative impact on the communities in which they are situated.

Therefore, owners like ourselves, who have improved and continue to maintain their properties should only have to pay the standard rate of Council Tax like everyone else. Other, than the benefit of street lighting and refuse collection, we do use any other Council services. We, like others, see ourselves as being used as a cash-cow for another income stream."

I CAN ONLY COMMENT ON LONG TERM EMPTY THESE QUESTIONS ARE APPLIED TO BOTH EMPTY AND SECOND HOMES WHICH ARE SO FAR APART SO THIS DOES NOT GIVE A FAIR REPRESENTATION TO LOCAL. SECOND HOMES IN WALES ARE A BONE OF CONTENTION

Perhaps if Flintshire county council sorted out their planning that would probably help matters - dealing with the planning department is a nightmare

As per above comments

If people have second homes in the area for holidays then a premium would be acceptable in my opinion, but people who have had a property left as part of a will then in my opinion I think that is totally unfair. If the property was the only asset left with no cash it falls on family to cover all costs as in funeral and keeping the house in good repair until sold

In addition to my comments under Question 8, I feel strongly that, as in my case, where unnecessary expenditure has been incurred due to unreasonable delays by Council Planners or misinformation concerning, for example, a TPO that had been imposed but subsequently rescinded without notifying the property owner (resulting in expensive and unnecessary tree surgery), an appropriate element of past Council Tax levies should be refunded or, at least, a moratorium be granted on further payments.

Council tax premiums should be abolished forthwith it is an unfair tax which in my opinion is no better than theft

"If the council can make decisions on why properties are left empty long term and able to do something about it, the situation would improve.

It's just another unjustified money making tax for the council.

I wonder if we would be in this position if it had been decided not to sell off Council Houses. It is crucial that more affordable housing is made available in Flintshire, and I welcome the new developments at Sealand, for instance. My grandparents lived in a

council house that is now a private residence. Why is it a private residence? Why should I pay for a housing shortage? Build more homes!

My late brother's house would not classify as social/affordable housing, so I doubt very much that it contributes to the lack of affordable housing. The house is not long-term empty, as a friend of my brother's visits it twice a month to ensure it is tidy and the lawn is mowed, and stays two to three days.

It appears that Councils are targeting one small sector to try and find a solution to their housing problems. Instead of diverting the attention onto a sector, where people are paying their Council taxes and contributing to the local community, the Councils should be looking at their own Buildings and assets to provide affordable housing. Stopping targeting one area of the community; the people who have second homes do contribute to the local area, often far more than a full time resident and they are not using local council services that are already stretched; those who have empty properties are more often trying to update them, again contributing to the local area, before selling them on or renting them. Why penalize people who are paying their fair share and not needing to use already depleted council services. This practice is wrong, wrong, wrong and Councils should rethink this bias ways.

"I can only reiterate - different approaches are needed for long term empty properties and ' second homes'.

- Different approaches are needed for ' second homes' that are rented out and those that aren't making a profit;

- Different approaches are needed for holiday, coastal areas;

- The 50% premium is already unfair given the minimal use of services;

- An additional 50% would-be immoral and would amount to 'legalized robbery';

- whether we keep or sell the property makes no difference to the amount of Welsh used in the area, the amount of social or'

Affordable ' housing, or the character of the community."

I think if a property can't be habitable within 3 years then a compulsory purchase order at the purchase price should be implemented.

When we were able to visit our second home, we would go out to eat at restaurants and visit all tourists' sites and spend as much as we liked to help the local shops. With the lockdowns of the past two years, we have been prevented from visiting our second home but have continued to be charged in full for council tax.

"I have outlined some suggestions above. In this consultation, the council has not provided its own assessment of what difference premiums make in reality nor has it demonstrated how premiums contribute to the problems councils are trying to solve. I think that a premium is the wrong word to describe what is intended. I think it is an additional tax or levy.

"The property was left to me for my children, I have paid the increased charge for the last two years and it is crippling! The property is uninhabitable, no heating, no kitchen, no bathroom and an outside toilet, it is literally a shell yet still I had to pay the increase the council. unable to get a loan I save so that the work can be completed in one go, the council tax eats into my fund which really doesn't help it moves the finish line further away.

New properties have been built near to me, the value of their homes much greater than mine, yet in my band and paying the same as me. Yet Flintshire Bands would put them in a higher band due to value. How can that be? With more new homes and people moving into Wales from far surely this is where the council should be making an increase, putting these into the correct band.

Second homes are making it impossible for the younger generation within communities to get on the property ladder."

"Personally I would set the premium at 250% which would really make empty property owner think long and hard as to why they are leaving them vacant.

I live in Gwespyr and we have councilor or possibly ex councilor who owns a property in the village which has been vacant for over six years, the current policy has done nothing to make him feel with this total eyesore."

"It seems empty properties are being penalised, they should pay but not and extra 50 or 100%.

Second homes should however pay at least half. "

Second homes are proportionally very small in number to the overall housing stock

"The charge is limiting available funds to bring the properties back into use.

You are frustrating the property owner by applying this charge.

How much additional revenue has the Local Authority made by charging this 'tax'?

What has the Local Authority used this money for and has it made a difference to the issue?"

I myself has been a subject of premium tax on a partially occupied home whilst renovating the property throughout the pandemic. I would also like to know if empty commercial properties (some have houses on the land) are also subject to the same premium - thanks

In my case any increase in council tax premium would reduce the amount of money I would have available to spend in local shops and for local services

Tax them more, if they can afford to let the property stay empty then penalise them heavily as people need social housing badly in these tough times, which will only get worse in time.

"Probably treat each property on its own unique merit.

I'm sure ""one size doesn't fit all""

Maybe the local community leaders should have a big say based on their local knowledge.

Has anyone looked at reinstating?

The once opulent living spaces above the shops in most High Streets?"

Better services for the vast majority who are full-time occupants in Flintshire.

"I purchased this property in 1986.

As I had to move away for work my mother moved into the property and lived there until she passed away.

I have spent a great deal of money refurbishing the property and have been unable to visit due to COVID rules.

I do not wish to rent the property as it is intended for my retirement in a few years' time. It might prove difficult to get a tenant removed. We use the property for visits to see family. Paying 100% would have a massive impact on my salary as we are also paying to keep the electricity on and heating costs so it doesn't fall into disrepair."

Flintshire need to get in the real world and stop this failed policy. It is apparent the biggest issue that is driving house prices up in Wales the affluence within the Welsh communities from those who come from those originally from the traditional Welsh Communities - ask the estate agents who are selling the properties who is paying the higher prices for these properties. Welsh property prices have gone up the highest in the UK during the last 12 months, its nothing to do with alleged second home owners. I would double the premiums on both, there is enough holiday accommodation in Wales! Second home owners can afford the premium and empty homes get a reduction if put into the rental sector.

Look at yourself as landlords

The more you charge the more the owner will charge if ever rented in future to get cost back therefore preventing some persons from renting. I would reduce charges & encourage owners to rent at lower premiums by guaranteeing rent & covering any damage caused.

Raising the premium would not reduce the number of 2nd homes, but it would increase the income raised. Charging for parking in Wepre Park for visitors by way of parking meters with permits for locals or disabled would be helpful.

The council should consider whether it has the power to force landlords to bring long term empty properties back into good repair.

The focus should not be on long term empty property but on the building of actually affordable homes by developers... 20% below market price isn't affordable in any way.

The council tax system shouldn't be used for social engineering or to discriminate against a fortunate few. It shouldn't penalise second home ownership.

WHY are properties left empty for years? If you don't live in the property- let someone else have use of it. Especially if it's run down and blights the area. If you can afford a second home - you can afford the council tax. We need to restore village communities where neighbours look out for each other - not strangers coming in as and when they feel like it.

Holiday chalets that have planning permission allowing them to be used throughout the year but not allowing them to be used as residential property need to be included in exclusions from the second home premium charge as there is no impact on housing stock availability. It is unfair for Chalet owners to be treated as though they are removing houses from local housing stock when they could never be used as residential property as they are on a holiday park with specific planning permission.

"I have an uninhabitable long term empty property and I can't afford the council tax with it being double.

My young children are without food and heating in order to pay the double council tax
"Perhaps you should survey the 605 owners as to why they are empty for so long - probably mortgage covenants prohibiting it or elderly family members who own but can't live without assisted living as examples and then actually see what the root cause is rather than this unfair and biased approach.

Also these second homes and empty dwellings are being scapegoated for lack of foresight and poor policy implementation. Charging owners more does not make the village/town better regardless of the additional premiums charged, as you don't target the money back to the residential area its specifically from so you are misleading the public.

I would just like to clarify I own one property and pay council tax. This issue does not affect me. It's just poor leadership historically."

Please reconsider a tax break to those who were trying to renovate during lockdown. Many months delay has been caused and projects have been delayed despite expectancy to still find the extra council tax

"I am not in good health and wish to decide my options in the near future. The news that a review of the Premium Scheme is to take place comes as no surprise to me, due to how this once great country has become, for those like myself who provide for our futures and not become a drain on Governments and Councils. Whilst I agree there are people who are in difficulty, those like me are punished by the State to provide for those who chose not to provide for themselves, but instead, play the Benefits System and that is why the word `punished` applies.

During my schooldays I underwent several operations that involved both lungs, resulting with my having 50% capacity ever since. Despite that I worked for 59 years in Full employment, but the emphysema that developed over the years finally caught up with me, so I gave up working well past when I reached the official retirement age.

With regard to all the above, I now find I am at risk of further depletion of Savings and Pension. This I contend is a very `great official injustice` and also to the other people facing your review. The total number of properties under review must be tiny considering the thousands of properties within Flintshire CC boundaries.

I hope you will take into account the above, for those of us who think of the future and have taken appropriate action in the year past.

As a second home owner we are contributing to the economy of Wales.

"No allowances are given for genuine home owners who have purchased/inherited property and are renovating to make the dwelling habitable and which will become the main residence. Also given the fact that any building works have been greatly impacted by Covid-19 I think the current system is unfair.

Councils would be aware of anyone who is genuinely make home improvements as plans/building regulations would have to be approved by you."

Whilst the charge of a Council Tax premium is not the entire answer to getting these empty properties turned around, sold, made habitable and let to those in need of housing, I think it does help and is therefore a useful tool in the box to achieve this. I have at least four long term empty properties in my own Ward and they are a nuisance to those living in neighbouring properties and the untidiness if they affect the property values of those neighbouring properties. Despite attempts by the Empty Homes Officer to work with the owners and offering help with grants to refurbish them and get them sold or made habitable for letting, the owners have shown reluctance to co-operate and they remain empty and a nuisance. This has convinced me that we do need to increase the premium above the current 50% and indeed to raise it every couple of years for those who are still not prepared to co-operate and sell their properties or rent them out. It is really unethical in my book to allow such properties to continue unoccupied when

we have so many families, couples and individuals homeless locally and nationally. This would be a great help in enabling us to tackle the homeless problem which besets so many.

The question is already answered

As stated above it is an unfair charge as people sometimes take longer than anticipated to refurbish a property, why do you think you should decide how long it should take? Some people refurbish properties as a hobby, on a weekend or evenings and sometimes things crop up that take more time or cost more money than you thought and you are penalising people for that, the money you are charging could be used to finish the property off. Maybe consider a visit to the property after 12 months to see how it is progressing then visits every 3 months or so to see if progress is being made or ask people to send progress photos to make sure they are actually doing the work instead of just a big charge.

Firstly understand more about why the property is empty. My daughter was renovating for 2 years and living with us and has to start paying die an inhabitant house.

"To place ""Long term empty properties"" in the same category as ""second HOME"", is to say the least incompatible.

A ""second home"" is furnished and therefore able to be lived in, at any time day or night, weeks or months.

A ""long term empty property"" will be empty for any number of reasons.

In our case, (as an example) due only to our limited funds in achieving our renovation goals. To be frustrated with the threat of ever increasing costs of building materials, the continuing covid restrictions and the consequences therein and now with the possible increase in our Council tax from 50 to 100%.

Delaying completion of our renovations to our bungalow by?? Months!"

I just wish I could talk to someone face to face who would understand and listen but nobody will!!!!

"It has been stated by Flintshire County Council that there are currently 2,120 people on a waiting list for social/affordable housing and yet Flintshire County Council have not sought to reduce this figure by renovating their current property assets which they own and which remain empty and unkempt!

There are two Flintshire County Council owned shops in Mostyn, both of which already have established living accommodation on the first floor. The ground floor is of the same size as the first floor and could easily be converted into living accommodation, with an entrance via the existing door into the shop at the front of the property. Both shops could provide four self-contained flats, both of which could have parking near to the property on the existing Council own land. However, Flintshire County Council to

date have chosen NOT to utilise these already LONG-TERM EMPTY properties, which they own and presumably do not generate any income for the authority! Perhaps Flintshire County Council should answer their own question of ""What impact do these long-term empty properties have on the community?""

These shops have remained unoccupied, with the frontage unkempt for over 3 plus years and over the past 12 months a council owned bungalow has remained vacant, following the resident leaving. The interior of the property was in very good order and presumably could be made ready for a new tenant without much effort on the part of Flintshire County Council, and yet it has remained empty for a year when there is an obvious demand!

It is obvious that Flintshire County Council need to address the long-term empty properties in their ownership, before seeking to further penalise tax payers doing their best for their potential future tenants.

"To a certain extent the tax premium is a housing policy which conceals a degree of mild harassment towards second-home owners and empty property owners and, furthermore, being of doubtful effectiveness, in turn leads one to suspect a degree of tax collection eagerness, in addition to asking oneself the question: ""Is this the only way of solving Flintshire's housing problems?"" And this, very quickly, followed by: ""Do the second-home owners - many with Welsh connections - pull up stakes and cross the Dee?"" Be careful not to suggest what you may not really mean.

In a bilingual area or nation, if an authority wishes to encourage outsiders to integrate linguistically, it is essential to actively avoid identifying the bilingual nature of the country with other social or economic issues."

"My two properties are within one mile of each other and so neither are holiday homes. Some one sleeps in both properties each night.

I think there should be more categories to cover council tax rates. Firstly, those supporting businesses should qualify for a reduced rate. Secondly, those qualifying as second/holiday homes should warrant a higher band council tax. Thirdly, those classified as empty houses should qualify for financial assistance of some kind. Fourthly, it should not be assumed that all empty properties are suitable for family occupation. A comprehensive, independent assessment is required. "

"Perhaps you should look at the area the second home is in, is it depriving anyone of affordable housing because it is in a desirable holiday location , does it have a negative impact on the area by being scruffy and unkempt and if it generates a profit for the owner. Perhaps you should give a council tax discount to people who have to live next to scruffy tenants with unkempt houses who cause a nuisance and dump rubbish everywhere

Individual circumstances should be taken more into consideration"

Council tax premium should not be charged on local Welsh ownership on two properties within the same county. Local people cannot afford to buy properties when they are on the market and increasing the premium would only encourage wealthier paid individuals from across the border to move into the area, thus impacting on a loss of culture, language and heritage in our villages.

I support the Council in their desire to fill long term empty properties. Such a policy can only strengthen small communities, in particular. Though I do not think the Council tax level has a large bearing on the intentions of second homeowners, they can usually afford to pay any increase. Though properties may be unintentionally long term empty for other reasons as described above. These properties should not incur an extra charge

Looking after your own family has to be the only option.

"Council Tax is payable for the provision of a range of services such as education, refuse collection, sports & leisure facilities, libraries, etc. ; police, fire brigade, ; town and parish councils.

The owners of long term empty properties cannot avail themselves of the benefits provided by council services as they are not residents so to impose any additional premium in addition to the basic council tax band is wholly unfair and inequitable - why pay a large after tax amount of money for nothing? The addition of any premium adds insult to injury as it is merely increasing the amount of the subsidy and a diversion of personal resources that could be applied to improve the property. COVID has also resulted in at least a minimum 18 month delay on projects.

This is in complete contrast to the second home properties , where the owner (resident - if a holiday let) can enjoy the services provided and can clearly afford to pay either out of their own pockets (or holiday let income)!!"

"In addition to my previous comments, regarding council tax premiums on long-term empty properties / second homes I would suggest the following:

For second homes, if the home-owner has business connections to Flintshire and contributes to the local economy by being employed, or providing employment, and / or spending locally, no council tax premium should be levied as these home owners already contribute to the local economy and local community. If a council tax premium drives away these second-home owners this will be detrimental to the local economy and local community.

For long-term empty properties it is better to offer a carrot of encouragement in the form of grants and tax relief to refurbish these properties and bring them back to habitable use than to make a stick of premium council tax to beat the owner with. Council tax should be removed completely from these properties during the refurbishment process. Encouraging refurbishment in this way will bring positive benefits to the local

community; punishing the owner by increasing the council tax premium will not necessarily bring any change, so will add nothing locally.

Neither second homes, nor empty properties are likely to add to the council's stock of affordable housing if relinquished by their owners.

I have to pay the premium even though it is not a second home which is unfair therefore people in my situation should not be treated in the same way as those with second homes.

As I have said earlier, individual circumstances should be taken into account as to why someone needs or uses a second home in Flintshire. If a second-home owner has a genuine reason for needing a home in Flintshire, such as providing care or working or having business interests locally, then no council tax premium should be levied. As someone who grew up in Flintshire I regard this as my home as much as anywhere else, and I spend considerable time in the county on business and family matters. I would like to extend my business interests in Flintshire, but need a home to stay in – which is not necessarily my main residence – in the county to facilitate this. Any council tax premium would be a deterrent to this, and detrimental to the local economy and community.

Appendix 3 – Level of Council Tax Premiums Set Throughout Wales for Second Homes and Long Term Empty Properties

Council Tax Premiums for Second Homes

Local Authority	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Flintshire	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Denbighshire	-	-	-	50%	50%	50%
Wrexham	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Conwy	-	-	25%	25%	25%	25%
Gwynedd	-	50%	50%	50%	100%	100%
Isle of Anglesey	25%	25%	35%	35%	35%	50%
Powys	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Ceredigion	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%
Pembrokeshire	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	100%
Swansea	-	-	-	-	100%	100%
Cardiff	-	-	-	-	-	-


Council Tax Premiums for Long Term Empty Properties

Local Authority	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022/23
Flintshire	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Denbighshire	-	-	50%	50%	50%	50%
Wrexham	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Conwy	-	-	25%	25%	50%	50%
Gwynedd	-	50%	50%	50%	100%	100%
Isle of Anglesey	25%	25%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Powys	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Ceredigion	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%
Pembrokeshire	-	-	25%	50%	25-100%*	25-100%*
Swansea	-	-	-	100%	100%	100%
Cardiff	-	-	50%	50%	50%	50%

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Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) (including equality, environment, health, human rights, socio-economic Duty, United Nations Conventions the Rights of the Child and Welsh language

Name of Policy or Practice	Consideration of Variation of Council Tax Premium Scheme for Second Homes and Long-term Empty Properties		
Responsible Officer (responsible for the Policy or Practice)	Chief Officer, Governance		
Service / Portfolio	Governance - Revenues	Start Date of Assessment	6 th July 2022

Name of officer(s) (and partners) completing the IIA		
Name(s)	Job Title(s)	Signature(s)
David Barnes	Revenues and Procurement Manager	
Andrew Taylor	Lead Revenue Officer	

*Consider including only job titles when publishing

Document Version	Revision Date	Briefly Describe the Changes

IIA Approved by Responsible Officer / Portfolio / Service / Committee	
Date IIA Concluded	
Name	
Job Title	
Signature	

Introduction

This document is a multi-purpose tool ensuring the appropriate steps are taken to comply with the [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) Equality Impact Assessment legislation and to demonstrate that we have shown due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage when taking strategic decisions under the [Socio-economic Duty](#). It also incorporates [Welsh Language impacts](#), environmental and bio-diversity impacts, health impacts and United Nations Conventions Rights of a Child.

When we plan to introduce a new, or revise an existing, policy, strategy or practice, develop a new service, make changes or cuts to a service or make strategic decisions, we are required to consider if the decision would have a disproportionate impact on people sharing one or more [protected characteristic](#) or whether it could create inequalities of outcome around socio-economic disadvantage. Where this is likely to be the case, we must take appropriate action. The IIA process is not intended to prevent us doing things but to ensure we have considered the impact. It helps us focus on the actions we can take to remove and/or mitigate any disproportionate or discriminatory impact and introduce measures to advance equality of opportunity.

To comply with the PSED [General Duty](#) and [Socio-economic Duty](#), we must have 'due regard' (or consciously consider the need) to: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations and to the need to reduce the inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage. The greater the relevance and potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. The General Duty will be more relevant to some functions than others and they may also be more relevant to some protected characteristics than others. Our duty must be exercised with rigour, an open mind and considered at a time when it can make a difference to our decisions. Policies with high relevance, such as strategic budgetary decisions, grant-making programmes, changes to service delivery (including withdrawal or reorganisation of services), and recruitment or pay policies should always be subject to an assessment for impact. For further guidance see [EHRC Assessing Impact Guidance](#). Our duty to comply with this legislation cannot be delegated.

This form should demonstrate the steps taken to carry out the assessment including relevant engagement/consultation, the information taken into account, the results of the assessment and any decisions taken in relation to those results. The IIA should be published where it shows a substantial (or likely) impact on our ability to meet the PSED.

Benefits of undertaking an IIA:

- Gain a better understanding of those who may be impacted by the policy or practice
- Better meet differing needs and become more accessible and inclusive
- Enable planning for success – identifies potential pitfalls and unintended consequences before any damage is done
- Enable improved planning that will make decisions proactive rather than reactive, avoid having to reverse decisions which could have cost and reputational implications
- Demonstrate decisions are thought through and have taken into account the views of those affected
- Enable us to manage expectations by explaining the limitations within which we are working (e.g. budget)

- Help avoid risks and improve outcomes for individuals
- Remove inappropriate or harmful practices and eliminate institutional discrimination
- Ensure we put Welsh and English Language on an equal footing. and that decisions are made that safeguard and promote the use of the Welsh language
- Improve and protect health, maximising health benefits and reducing health risks
- Be more open and transparent
- Use our resources more effectively

Whilst this document may seem lengthy, as well as containing the necessary steps in the process, it also contains guidance notes in the key areas to assist you in undertaking the IIA. Additional links to further information are also included for assistance. Further information can be found on NHS/ WLGA PSED/ EIA [here](#).

The Welsh Government¹ guidance states that:

Impact assessment prompts and guides us to gather, and if necessary, seek evidence so as to improve the development of a policy or delivery plan, or inform a change of direction in policy or delivery. It is a methodology to help in the development and implementation of policy, rather than templates with tick boxes and checklists.

Integrated Impact Assessment Steps

- Step 1 - Identify the Main Aims and Objectives of the Policy or Practice
- Step 2 - Data, Engagement and Assessing the Impact
- Step 3 - Procurement and Partnerships
- Step 4 - Dealing with Adverse or Unlawful Impact and Strengthening the Policy or Practice
- Step 5 - Decision to Proceed
- Step 6 - Actions and Arrangements for Monitoring Outcomes and Reviewing Data
- Step 7 - Publishing the Integrated Impact Assessment

Important Note to Completing Officer(s):

It is important that the IIA is completed when the policy or practice is being developed so that the findings from the IIA can be used to influence and shape the policy or practice. It is recommended as a minimum, it is completed by a lead officer who is responsible for the policy or practice, a subject matter expert and a critical friend with at least one who has received formal IIA training. This document needs to be presented to the decision makers along with the draft policy or practice as part of the decision making process.

¹ Welsh Government Integrated Impact Assessment Guidance

Where you are developing a high level strategy or plan that does not contain sufficient detail to show how it will impact on individuals or groups (i.e. where there will be plans and actions sitting beneath the strategy that will determine this), you should still undertake the Impact Assessment. You may also need to complete additional IIA(s) on the plans and actions beneath the high level strategy. This will ensure you demonstrate that you have shown due regard to complying with the General Duty, the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Welsh Language Standards the Socio-economic Duty, the Human Rights Act, the United Nations Conventions, Rights of the Child.

If your policy or practice is as a result of a UK, Welsh Government or Local Authority wide directive, you should still assess the impact of this locally to identify any differential impact due to local difference.

You should consider whether other events, e.g. COVID-19, Brexit, Black Lives Matter, etc. have highlighted or exacerbated inequalities that need to be addressed as you work through the IIA.

STEP 1 – Identify the Main Aims and Objectives of the Policy or Practice

1. What is being assessed? *(Please double click on the relevant box(es) (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)*

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures (which modify service delivery or employment practices)
- Service review or re-organisation proposals which affect the community and/or staff, e.g. early years provision, care, education
- Efficiency or saving proposals, e.g., resulting in a change in community facilities, activities, support or employment opportunities
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
- Decisions affecting service users, employees or the wider community including (de)commissioning or revised services
- New project proposals affecting staff, communities or accessibility to the built environment, e.g. new construction work or adaptations to existing buildings, moving to on-line services, self-service, changing location
- Large Scale Public Events
- Local implementation of National Strategy/Plans/Legislation (refer to any national IIA and consider local impact)
- Strategic directive and intent, including those developed at Regional Partnership Boards and Public Service Boards which impact on a public bodies functions
- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)
- Setting objectives (for example, well-being objectives, equality objectives, Welsh language strategy)
- Major procurement and commissioning decisions
- Decisions that affect the ability (including external partners) to offer Welsh language opportunities and services
- Other please explain in the box below:

2. What are the overall aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy or practice?

When considering whether or not to amend the premium levels, the discretion given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help local authorities to:

- bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and
- increase the supply of affordable housing; and
- enhance the sustainability of local communities.

3. Who are the main consultative groups (stakeholders)?

Note: Consider communities of interest or place (where people are grouped together because of specific characteristics or where they live)
Every household within Flintshire and those who live outside Flintshire, but own a property in the Residential Rating, but especially those impacted by the proposed changes i.e. those who have second homes and long term empty properties within the county who would be potentially impacted by any variation to the current premium scheme.

The scheme was open to all the general public to ensure anyone who currently or in the future may be subject to the premium were able to respond including groups such as first time buyers.

Therefore a full public consultation was undertaken for a period of 4 weeks from 8th November 2021 to 6th December 2021 to capture the views of all potentially affected parties with the Council receiving 522 full or partial responses in both English and Welsh.

4. Is the policy related to, influenced by, or affected by other policies or areas of work (internal or external), e.g. strategic IIAs if this is an operational IIA and vice versa?

Note: Consider this in terms of statutory requirements, local policies, regional (partnership) decisions, national policies, welfare reforms.

This is linked to local and national objectives to bring empty houses and periodically occupied properties back into housing stock for local communities.

Page 122

STEP 2 - Data, Engagement and Assessing the Impact

When completing this section, you need to consider if you have sufficient information with which to complete your IIA, or whether you need to undertake a period of engagement/consultation before continuing. The legislation relating to the IIA process requires you to **engage and involve people who represent the interests of those who share one or more of the protected characteristics and with those who have an interest in the way you carry out your functions**. The socio economic duty also requires us to **take into account the voices of those in the community including those with lived experience of socio economic disadvantage**. You should undertake engagement with communities of interest or communities of place to understand if they are more affected or disadvantaged by your proposals. This needs to be proportionate to the policy or practice being assessed. Remember that stakeholders can also include our own workforce as well as partner organisations.

Before carrying out particular engagement activities, you should first look to data from recent consultations, engagement and research. This could be on a recent related policy or recent assessments undertaken by colleagues or other sources, e.g., [Is Wales Fairer?](#), [North Wales Background Data Document](#), Info Base Cymru, WIMD. This can help to build confidence among groups and communities, who can see that what they have said is being acted on. If you have very little or no information from previous engagement that is relevant to this IIA, you should undertake some engagement work with your stakeholders and with relevant representative groups to ensure that you do not unwittingly overlook the needs of each

protected group. It is seldom acceptable to state simply that a policy will universally benefit/disadvantage everyone, and therefore individuals will be affected equally whatever their characteristics. The analysis should be more robust than this, demonstrating consideration of all of the available evidence and addressing any gaps or disparities. Specific steps may be required to address an existing disadvantage or meet different needs.

The Gunning Principles, established from past court cases, can be helpful in ensuring we apply fairness in engagement and consultation:

- Principle 1: Consultation must take place when the proposals are still at a formative stage. You must not have already made up your mind.
- Principle 2: Sufficient reasons must be put forward to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Have people been given the information and opportunity to influence?
- Principle 3: Adequate time must be given for consideration and response. Is the consultation long enough bearing in mind the circumstances?
- Principle 4: The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision.

5. Have you complied with the duty to engage as described above and are you sufficiently informed to proceed?

Yes No *(please cross as appropriate X)*

6. If Yes, what engagement activities did you undertake and who with?

We undertook a full 4 week consultation with the general public which was promoted on our website and via press release. The Council received 522 full or partial responses in both English and Welsh from across the spectrum of the public from both living inside and outside of Flintshire.

7. If No, you may wish to consider pausing at this point while you undertake (further) engagement activities which you can include in the action plan below. Please incorporate any information obtained from this additional activity in the boxes in question 8.

Action	Dates	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility	Information added to IIA (✓)

Page 23

8. **What information do you hold about the impact on each of the following characteristic and statutory considerations / duties from your experience of current service delivery and recent engagement or consultation?** Include any additional relevant data; research and performance management information; surveys; Government, professional body or organisation studies; Census data; Is Wales Fairer? (EHRC² data); complaints/compliments; service user data and feedback; inspections/ audits; socio-economic data including WIMD³ data. You may wish to include sub-headings showing where each element of your data has come from, e.g. national data, local data, organisation data, general or specific engagement exercises, etc.

Consider any positive or negative impact including trends in data, geography (urban or rural issues), demography, access issues, barriers, etc. Also include any areas where there are inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage or other relevant issues identified by communities of interest or communities of place (i.e. where stakeholders, service users, staff, representative bodies, etc. are grouped together because of specific characteristics or where they live) and any issues identified for people living in less favourable social and/or economic circumstances.



Prompts for
Equality Impact Asses

Page 124

Equality and Human Rights			
Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
Age	<p>If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market.</p> <p>This would allow more opportunity for those presently seeking a home and currently sharing with another household to obtain a</p>	Positive	<p>Older People Children Young People Working Age People Young Families Demographics</p>

² Equality and Human Rights Commission

³ Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation

Equality and Human Rights

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	home of their own. Those finding themselves in this position may predominantly be first time buyers or younger people and increasing the housing stock would provide more opportunity local young residents to obtain their own home to own or rent.		NB: Where children / young people are affected complete the Childrens Rights Checklist United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Caring responsibilities
Disability	<p>If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market.</p> <p>People who have a disability may need to find alternative more suitable accommodation at short notice. An increase in available housing stock would increase their choice and opportunity to move for local disabled residents.</p>	Positive	Mobility / Dexterity Blind or Visually impaired Deaf or Hearing impaired Mental Health Learning Disabilities Dementia Neurological difference / Autism Access to buildings/ facilities, induction loops, signage Access to communication methods, use of British Sign Language, Easy Read Carers Dietary requirements Other Long Term Health Conditions United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
Gender Reassignment	The policy outcome would have no specific impact to a person due only to gender reassignment.	No Impact	A person who proposes to, starts or has changed their gender identity Transgender Appropriate language use, i.e. gender neutral language, appropriate pronouns Gender neutral changing facilities and toilets confidentiality

Equality and Human Rights


Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<p>If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market.</p> <p>This would increase the opportunities for those who are married or in a civil partnership to buy or rent their own home.</p>	Positive	<p>Marital status Civil Partnership status Reference to partners and not assuming husband and wife relationships /terminology</p>
Pregnancy & Maternity	<p>If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market.</p> <p>This would increase the opportunities for those who are pregnant or on maternity leave to have more options to a more suitable home as their change in personal circumstances requires them to do so.</p>	Positive	<p>Pregnant mothers Those entitled to maternity and paternity leave Foster/Adoption Breastfeeding mothers Access to breast feeding facilities Dress codes/uniforms- do they accommodate pregnant women</p>
Race	<p>The policy outcome would have no specific impact to a person due only to race. It would however increase the availability of housing in Flintshire and potentially attract more diversification in our community.</p>	Neutral	<p>Consider Ethnicity Nationality Gypsies / Travellers Language: interpreter provision Use of plain language Refugee / Asylum Seekers Migrants Positive Action Awareness events United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD)</p>
Religion & Belief	<p>The policy outcome would have no specific impact to a person due only to religious belief.</p>	Neutral	<p>Faith Communities Non Beliefs Dietary requirements Vegetarianism/Veganism</p>

Equality and Human Rights

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
			Other philosophical beliefs Dress code/uniforms Religious festivals/activities Buildings – access to prayer room facilities
Sex	The policy outcome would have no specific impact to a person due only to their sex.	Neutral	Men / Women Gender Identity Toilet facilities/baby changing Childcare Gender Pay Gap Sex workers United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UNCEDAW)
Sexual Orientation	The policy outcome would have no specific impact to a person due only to sexual orientation.	Neutral	Gay Lesbian Bi-sexual Heterosexual Terminology - Avoid making assumptions about a person's sexual orientation use gender-neutral terms such as partner(s). Confidentiality about sexuality Further resources available from Stonewall Cymru
Socio-economic Considerations- Reducing inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage	If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market.	Positive	People living in less favourable social and economic circumstances than others in the same society. Disadvantage may be exacerbated by many factors of daily life, not just urban or rural boundaries.


Equality and Human Rights

Page 128

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	<p>Those that are subject to the premium as either second home owners or owners of long-term empty properties are generally not a group subject to socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>The evidence of our consultation indicates a large percentage of owners of long term empty properties would sell them, rent them or bring them up to a higher standard. All of these outcomes will bring a degree of “levelling up” with those with a primary residence and a long term empty residence ensuring that the empty residency is instead brought into use for a potentially homeless, vulnerable or socio-economically disadvantaged person/household.</p> <p>In addition to providing additional housing stock in Flintshire, maintaining or increasing the premium also increases income to the authority by raising additional council tax.</p> <p>These additional funds can reduce the burden of council tax across residents of all socio economic standing, but also be used to fund initiatives designed specifically to support socio-economically disadvantaged people with all aspects of their life.</p>		<p>‘Intersectionality’ issues - where identity compounds socio-economic status, e.g., single parents (often women), disabled people, some BAME groups. Examples include lower levels of good health, lower paid work, poorer educational attainment and an increased risk of being a victim of crime</p> <p>Further resources available from Welsh Government including examples of inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage</p> <p> Inequalities of outcome.pdf</p>
Human Rights	<p>If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market.</p>	Positive	<p>See Human Rights Articles below. https://humanrightstracker.com/en/ on EHRC website</p>

Equality and Human Rights			
Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
	This will support the Human Rights Act Article 11.1 <i>“The right to choose one’s residence, to determine where to live and to freedom of movement.”</i>		
Other (please state) Homeless	<p>If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market.</p> <p>This would contribute to allowing Flintshire to reduce issues of being homeless or living in unsuitable accommodation.</p>	Positive	E.g., Modern Slavery, Safeguarding, Other COVID effects, Carers, Ex-offenders, Veterans, Care Leavers, Substance Abuse, Homeless
Welsh Language			
Welsh Language	<p>The outcome of the policy if determined to maintain or increase the premium would continue to ensure that communities have only small numbers of long term empty properties and properties that are only occupied periodically as second homes.</p> <p>This would ensure that there are more local people living within Flintshire in previously empty or periodically occupied homes, promoting a greater use of the Welsh Language in the community.</p>	Positive	<p>Ensuring equal status of both Welsh and English languages. Availability of and access to services, activities and information.</p> <p>Availability of Welsh speaking employees</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Rights of individuals to ask for WL services.</p> <p>Impact on Welsh speaking communities, including:</p> <p>Positive / negative effects on opportunities to use the WL.</p> <p>Possible changes to number/percentage of Welsh speakers</p> <p>Migration</p>

Equality and Human Rights

Protected Characteristic /Group	Relevant Data	Positive and / or Negative Impact	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
			Job opportunities / Staffing changes. Training needs and opportunities Availability of Welsh medium education. <div style="text-align: center;">  20200921 DG S Policy making stand </div>

Page 130

Human Rights Act 1998 Article 2 Right to life Article 3 Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment Article 4 Freedom from Slavery and forced labour • Article 5 Right to liberty and security • Article 6 Right to a fair trial • Article 7 No punishment without law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article 8 Respect for private life, family, home and correspondence • Article 9 Freedom of thought, belief and religion • Article 10 Freedom of expression • Article 11 Freedom of Assembly and association • Article 12 Right to marry and start a family • Article 13 Right to access effective remedy if rights are violated • Article 14 Protection from discrimination
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Environment and Biodiversity

	Relevant Data/Information	Positive and /or negative impacts	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
Reducing greenhouse gas emissions	If long-term empty properties are incentivised to be brought back into use by maintaining or increasing the premium, this would ensure that properties that require investment are modernised including the fitting of more modern and efficient heating, insulation and appliances.	Positive	Will energy need be met through renewable sources? Will it reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy consumption and the need to travel? * Will it reduce ozone depleting emissions? Will it reduce emissions through retrofitting new technology?

Environment and Biodiversity

	Relevant Data/Information	Positive and /or negative impacts	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
			Will it reduce heat island effects on people and property?
Plan for future climate change	The policy would not impact on the plan for future climate change.		Will it minimise flood risk from all sources of flooding? * Will it reduce property damage due to storm events/heavy rainfall by improving flood resistance and flood resilience? Will it reduce combined sewer overflow events? Will it encourage the re-use of resources? Will it encourage sustainable construction methods and procurement? Will it encourage water efficiency and drought resilience?
Pollution: air, water/ soil/noise and vibration and emissions	If long-term empty properties are incentivised to be brought back into use by maintaining or increasing the premium, this would ensure that properties that are perhaps empty and derelict and causing harm to the environment and visual amenity of an area are brought up to a good standard.	Positive	Will it reduce combined sewer overflow events? Will it improve air quality? * Will it reduce emissions of key pollutants? Will it reduce noise concerns and noise complaints? Will it reduce noise levels?
Integrating biodiversity into decision making	The policy would not impact on integrating biodiversity into decision making.		Have you considered the impacts and opportunities for action for biodiversity at early stages Are the impacts of procurement on biodiversity considered? Are products sourced sustainably? Have the wider benefits of improved biodiversity been considered, flood prevention, health and wellbeing, recreation? Can you link with other strategies and initiatives for biodiversity e.g. FCC Environment and Sustainability policy, FCC Section

DSD/13/1


Environment and Biodiversity

	Relevant Data/Information	Positive and /or negative impacts	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
			6 Plan, FCC Urban tree and woodland plan?
Increasing the resilience of our natural environment?	No impact.		Does the proposal work with nature and consider the use of nature based solutions first and foremost? Does your proposal support the creation of new habitats (in addition to any mitigation or compensation habitat) Does it contribute to the restoration of degraded habitats? Does it improve site management to improve nature value?
Improving understanding and raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity	Any decision to maintain or increase the premium would provide a disincentive for a property to be left empty long-term and instead be used as a primary residency. The outside space of a property that is lived in is more likely to be managed in a respectful way to encourage biodiversity.	Positive	Can your proposal promote understanding of biodiversity? Can the delivery of public goods and services such as social care, community health and recreation promote biodiversity? Can your proposal promote biodiversity with partners/beneficiaries
Encouraging resource efficiency (energy, water, materials and minerals)	If long-term empty properties are incentivised to be brought back into use by maintaining or increasing the premium, this would ensure that properties that require investment are modernised including the fitting of more modern and efficient heating, insulation and appliances. This would mean that resources are protected as the property would use less energy and any remedial works done e.g. fixing of leaks.	Positive	Will it reduce water consumption and improve water efficiency? Will it reduce energy consumption? *
Reducing waste production and	It could be reasonably expected that the outcome of the policy would encourage more recycling from permanent residents who	Positive	Will it reduce consumption of materials and resources? Will it reduce household waste?

Environment and Biodiversity


	Relevant Data/Information	Positive and /or negative impacts	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
increase recycling, recovery and re-use of waste	are familiar and educated in local recycling collections and centres rather than those in periodically occupied properties.		Will it increase recycling, recovery and re-use? Will it reduce construction waste?
Reducing need to travel and promote sustainable forms of transport	By having more available housing, this allows local people to live and work in the community they wish, reducing the requirement to travel long distances for work and social purposes.	Positive	Will it reduce volumes of traffic? Will it encourage walking and cycling?*
Improving the physical environment: housing, public space, access to and quality of green space	<p>By maintaining a premium and potentially increasing the premium would ensure that empty properties in communities are not left to deteriorate into a state of disrepair improving the aesthetics of the area.</p> <p>Furthermore, it would also discourage owners from allowing properties to remain empty in the long term and either selling them or renting them to local people, increasing the number of homes available to local people to rent or buy.</p> <p>This was supported in the public consultation where owners of properties that are currently empty suggested they would sell the property providing opportunity for it to become a residential dwelling once more.</p>	Positive	<p>Will it reduce litter?</p> <p>Will it enhance the quality of public realm?</p> <p>Will it improve access and mobility for all equality groups</p> <p>Will it improve open space?</p> <p>Will it improve landscape character?</p> <p>Will it minimise development on Greenfield sites</p>
Protecting and enhancing the historic environment and architectural, archaeological	The policy would not affect this characteristic.		<p>Will it protect heritage sites and cultural value?</p> <p>Will it protect strategic views?</p> <p>Will it protect listed buildings and their settings?</p> <p>Will it help preserve, enhance and record archaeological features and their settings?</p>


Environment and Biodiversity			
	Relevant Data/Information	Positive and /or negative impacts	Prompts (not an exhaustive list)
and cultural heritage			

Health			
Determinants of health	Relevant data /information	Positive and /or negative impacts	Prompts (not an exhaustive list) Guidance from
Lifestyles	The policy will not affect this characteristic.		 HIA_Tool_Kit_V2_W EB.pdf
	Bringing properties back into use and increasing local housing stock means that families can continue to live in the communities in which they grew up creating close family networks and a sense of belonging.	Positive	Family organisation and roles Citizen power and influence Social support and social networks Neighbourliness Sense of belonging Local pride Divisions in community Social isolation Peer pressure Community identity Language/Cultural and spiritual ethos Racism Other social exclusion

Page 134

Health

Determinants of health	Relevant data /information	Positive and /or negative impacts	Prompts (not an exhaustive list) Guidance from  HIA_Tool_Kit_V2_W EB.pdf
Mental well-being	The policy will not affect this characteristic		Does this proposal support sense of control? Does it enable participation in community and economic life? Does it impact on emotional wellbeing and resilience?
Living/environmental conditions affecting health	Properties that are left empty long-term often fall into disrepair and can be a blight on the attractiveness of an area. By incentivising properties to be brought back into use improves the appearance of communities and provides incentive for others to maintain their properties to a higher standard.	Positive	Built environment Neighbourhood design Housing Indoor environment Noise Air and water quality Attractiveness of area Green space Community safety Smell/odour Waste disposal Road hazards Injury hazards Quality and safety of play areas
Economic conditions affecting health	The policy will not affect this characteristic.		Unemployment Income Economic inactivity <input type="checkbox"/> Type of employment Workplace conditions
Access and quality of services	The policy will not affect this characteristic.		Medical services

Health			
Determinants of health	Relevant data /information	Positive and /or negative impacts	Prompts (not an exhaustive list) Guidance from  HIA_Tool_Kit_V2_W EB.pdf
			Other caring services Shops and commercial services Public amenities Transport including parking Education and training Information technology
Macr-economic, environmental and sustainability factors	The policy will not affect this characteristic.		Government policies Gross Domestic Product Economic development Biological diversity Climate

Page 136

United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the child			
	Relevant data or information	Positive and/or negative impacts	Prompts (not exhaustive)
Relevant Article	None identified	N/A	Summary of conventions

There are four articles in the convention that are seen as special. They're known as the "General Principles" and they help to interpret all the other articles and play a fundamental role in realising all the rights in the Convention for all children. They are:	
Article 2	The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background
Article 3	(best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.
Article 6	(life, survival and development) Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential

Article 12	2 (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life
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9. Are there any data or information gaps and if so what are they and how do you intend to address them?

There are not considered to be any data gaps in this assessment as a full public consultation was undertaken on the specific proposal to potentially vary the present Council Tax Premium Policy. The engagement process was carefully planned, administered and communicated to ensure maximum engagement and ensure there are no gaps in data or sections of the community not consulted.

A 4 week consultation with the general public was undertaken from 8th November 2021 to 6th December 2021 which was promoted on our website and via press release. The Council received 522 full or partial responses in both English and Welsh from across the spectrum of the public from both living inside and outside of Flintshire.

Page 137

Note: If it is not possible to obtain this information now, you should include this in your action plan in Step 6 so that this information is available for future IIAs.

10. How does your proposal ensure that you are working in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Welsh Language Measure (Wales) 2011), to ensure the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language, and that every opportunity is taken to promote the Welsh language (beyond providing services bilingually) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?

Our consultation results show that 23.8% of respondents consider that long term empty properties and second homes have a negative effect on the treatment of the Welsh Language compared with just 2.7% who felt they have a positive impact. Therefore any decision to maintain or increase the level of premium would contribute to fewer empty or periodically used properties and allow for the development of Welsh language in communities.

11. If this IIA is being updated from a previous version of a similar policy or practice, were the intended outcomes of the proposal last time achieved or were there other outcomes? (Please provide details, for example, was the impact confined to the people you initially thought would be affected, or were other people affected and if so, how?)

Not applicable

12. **What is the cumulative impact of this proposal on different protected groups when considering other key decisions affecting these groups made by the organisation?** (You may need to discuss this with your Chief Officer or Cabinet Member to consider more widely if this proposal will affect certain groups more adversely because of other decisions the organisation is making, e.g., financial impact/poverty, withdrawal of multiple services and whether this is disadvantaging the same groups, e.g., disabled people, older people, single parents (who are mainly women), etc.)

The cumulative impact of any decision to maintain or increase the premium will continue to ensure owners of long-term empty properties and second homes into use and increase the availability of local housing for local residents – this links with one of the Strategic Priorities of the Council as set on the Council Plan:

Theme: Affordable and Accessible Housing

Priority: Empty Properties – bringing empty homes back into use to enhance the local housing market and improve our local communities.

13. **How does this proposal meet with each of the 7 goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?**

For more information, please see: <https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

A Prosperous Wales – having more available housing would encourage local residents and talent to stay in the county/wales and contribute to future prosperity. Having a capped level of premium still encourages visitors and non-residents to come to the county, as they will want to use their second homes more often to obtain "value" and will bring their spending power to the county more frequently.

A Resilient Wales – by addressing the issue of shortage of housing stock, this will ensure Wales and the County are in a strong position to be able to provide suitable housing to residents who wish to live there meaning they do not have to seek alternative solutions outside the county/country.

A More Equal Wales – the policy will proactively support those at a socio-economic disadvantage to secure themselves a home in the county as owners of long-term empty properties will have more incentive to make them suitable for sale and let into the local housing market. Therefore those who have an empty property who are typically not at a socio-economic disadvantage will be encouraged to take action.

A Healthier Wales – adequate provision and availability of housing is recognised as a key enabler to good health.

A Wales of Cohesive Communities – having more properties lived in permanently rather than being left empty or used as holiday homes will ensure communities remain vibrant and cohesive without the potential blight of unoccupied properties. The premium scheme could have a positive impact by encouraging owners to bring empty properties back into use and thereby helping to develop strong and cohesive communities by addressing housing needs.

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language – the policy disincentives properties being left empty or being periodically occupied and instead encourages properties to be lived in full time as a primary residence. Having a higher percentage of properties being permanent residences will encourage the uptake, maintenance of the Welsh language in the community. It will also provide more opportunity for local residents to have access to housing stock when they require in order to stay living local and contribute to the local culture of the area rather than migrating away.

14. How does this proposal meet with the 5 ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ?

For more information, please see: <https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

Page 109

Long term, Integration, Involvement, Collaboration, Prevention

Any potential increase to the premium will not bring overnight radical solutions to the shortage of housing in Flintshire or Wales, however it will dovetail and support other initiatives as part of a long-term integrated plan to ensure we make maximum use of existing housing stock in addition to new development to encourage inward investment in collaboration with strategic partners. This will lead to a focus on the prevention of homelessness and overcrowding in homes in Flintshire.

15. Describe any intended negative impact identified and explain why you believe this is justified (for example, on the grounds of advancing equality of opportunity or fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not or because of an objective justification¹ or positive action²)

No negative impact on protected characteristics

Note¹: Objective Justification - gives a defence for applying a policy, rule or practice that would otherwise be unlawful direct or indirect discrimination. To rely on the objective justification defence, the employer, service provider or other organisation must show that its policy or rule was for a good reason – that is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. A **legitimate aim** is the reason behind the discrimination which must not be discriminatory in itself and must be a genuine or real reason, e.g., health, safety or welfare of individuals. If the aim is simply to reduce costs because it is cheaper to discriminate, this will not be legitimate. Consider if the importance of the aim outweighs any discriminatory effects of the unfavourable treatment and be sure that there are no alternative measures available that would meet the aim without too much difficulty (proportionate) and would avoid the discriminatory effect.

Note²: Positive Action - Where an employer takes specific steps to improve equality in the workplace to address any imbalance of opportunity, lessen a disadvantage or increase participation in a particular activity, for example, increasing the number of disabled people in senior roles where they are under-represented by targeting specific groups with job adverts or offering training to help create opportunities for certain groups. The public sector is expected to consider the use of positive action to help them comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

16. Could any of the negative impacts identified amount to unlawful discrimination but are perceived to be unavoidable (e.g., reduction in funding)?

Page 140
Yes No Not Sure (Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

17. If you answered Yes or Not Sure to question 15, please state below, which protected group(s) this applies to and explain why (including likely impact or effects of this proposed change)

18. If you answered No to question 15, are there any barriers identified which amount to a differential impact for certain groups and what are they?

None

STEP 3 - Procurement and Partnerships

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires all public authorities to consider the needs of protected characteristics when designing and delivering public services, including where this is done in partnership with other organisations or through procurement of services. The Welsh Language Standards also require all public authorities to consider the effects of any policy decision, or change in service delivery, on the Welsh language, which includes any work done in partnership or by third parties. We must also ensure we consider the Socio-economic Duty when

planning major procurement and commissioning decisions to consider how such arrangements can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

When procuring works, goods or services from other organisations (on the basis of a relevant agreement), we must have due regard to whether it would be appropriate :

- for the award criteria for that contract to include considerations to help meet the General Duty (to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations);
- to stipulate conditions relating to the performance of the contract to help meet the three aims of the General Duty.

This only applies to contractual arrangements that are “relevant agreements” which means either the award of a ‘public contract’ or the conclusion of a ‘framework agreement’, both of which are regulated by the Public Sector Directive (Directive 2004/18/EC) which regulates the specified EU thresholds. Further information can be found [here](#).

We must consider how such arrangements can improve equal opportunities and reduce inequalities of outcome due to protected characteristics and caused by socio-economic disadvantage, particularly on major procurement and commissioning decisions. The PSED applies to the work that private sector organisations undertake when delivering a public function on our behalf. We therefore need to ensure that those organisations exercise those functions by ensuring our procurement and monitoring of those services complies with the General Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In the same way, the Welsh Language Standards applies to any work undertaken on behalf of, and in the name of, public bodies that are themselves subject to the Standards, and so consideration should be given to how these requirements are monitored and communicated through the procurement documents. The Socio Economic Duty does not pass to a third party through procurement, commissioning or outsourcing. Therefore when we work in partnership with bodies not covered by the Socio Economic Duty, the duty only applies to us as the relevant public body.

19 Is this policy or practice to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors or in partnership with another organisation(s)?

Yes No (Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select ‘checked’ as appropriate)

If No, please proceed to Step 4

20. If Yes, what steps will you take to comply with the General Equality Duty, Human Rights and Welsh Language Legislation and the Socio-Economic Duty in regard to procurement and/or partnerships? Think about :

Procurement

- Setting out clear equality expectations in Tendering and Specification documentation, showing how promotion of equality may be built into individual procurement projects

Partnerships

Be clear about who is responsible for :

- Equality Monitoring relevant data

- On what you based your decisions in the award process, including consideration of ethnical employment and supply chain code of practice
- Ensure that contract clauses cover the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and socio-economic requirements as well as Welsh Language Duties (remember that any duties from the Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards are also applicable to services provided on your behalf under contract by external bodies).
- Performance and Monitoring measures are included to monitor compliance, managing and enforcing contracts

- Equality Impact Assessments
- Delivering the actions from the IIA
- Ensuring that equality, human rights and Welsh Language legislation is complied with by all partners
- Demonstrating due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Socio-Economic duty

Not applicable

STEP 4 - Dealing with Adverse or Unlawful Impact and Strengthening the Policy or Practice

1. When considering proportionality, does the policy or practice have a significantly positive or negative impact or create inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage?
(Please give brief details)

Significantly positive impact	Significantly negative impact
<p>If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market increasing the supply of housing stock within the county.</p> <p>Those that are subject to the premium as either second home owners or owners of long-term empty properties are generally not a group subject to socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>The evidence of our consultation indicates a large percentage of owners of long term empty properties would sell them, rent them or bring them up to a higher standard. This would bring properties into use for a potentially homeless, vulnerable or socio-economically disadvantaged person/household.</p>	

<p>In addition to providing additional housing stock in Flintshire, maintaining or increasing the premium also increases income to the authority by raising additional council tax.</p> <p>These additional funds can reduce the burden of council tax across residents of all socio economic standing, but also be used to fund initiatives designed specifically to support socio-economically disadvantaged people with all aspects of their life.</p> <p>Finally, increasing the supply of housing in Flintshire would prevent migration of Flintshire residents to other areas allowing close family and community cohesion to continue.</p>	
<p>If the present Premium Scheme set at 50% is maintained or increased it is expected that more properties not presently occupied on a residential basis would become available to the sales or rental market.</p> <p>This will support the Human Rights Act Article 11.1 <i>“The right to choose one’s residence, to determine where to live and to freedom of movement.”</i></p>	

22. It is important that you record the mitigating actions you will take in developing your final policy/practice draft. Record here what measures or changes you will introduce to the policy or practice in the final draft which could reduce or remove any unlawful or negative impact or disadvantage and/or improve equality of opportunity/introduce positive change; or reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage? (This could also inform the Action Plan in Q30)

Unlawful or Negative Impact Identified	Mitigation / Positive Actions Taken in the Policy/Practice	Completed (✓)
Not applicable		

23. Will these measures remove any unlawful impact or disadvantage?

Yes No (Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

24. If No, what actions could you take to achieve the same goal by an alternative means?

Not applicable

25.

Wh

at measures or changes in the following important legislative areas have you included to strengthen or change the policy/practice:

- a) to foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity as covered by the General Duty in the Equality Act 2010;
- b) to reduce inequalities of outcome as a result of socio-economic disadvantage;
- c) to increase opportunities to use the Welsh language and in treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language as set out in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and reduce or prevent any adverse effects that the policy/practice may have on the Welsh language?

Not applicable

Page 144

26. Do you have enough information to make an informed judgement?

Yes No (Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

27. If you answered Yes, please justify:

We have not identified any negative impacts with respect to the detailed characteristics.

28. If you answered No, what information do you require and what do you need to do to make a decision?

(Note: Should data collection be included in the action plan (Step 6)?)

Not applicable

[You may need to stop here until you have obtained the additional information]

STEP 5 - Decision to Proceed

29. Using the information you have gathered in Steps 1 – 4 above, please state on the table below whether you are able to proceed with the policy or practice and if so, on what basis?

(Please double click on the relevant box (X) and select 'checked' as appropriate)

Decision	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Continue with policy or practice in its current form
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Continue with policy or practice but with amendments for improvement or to remove any areas of adverse impact identified in Step 4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	Continue with the plan as any detrimental impact can be justified
<input type="checkbox"/> No	Do not continue with this policy or practice as it is not possible to address the adverse impact. Consider alternative ways of addressing the issues.

Page 10 of 15

30. Are there any final recommendations in relation to the outcome of this Equality Impact Assessment?

No

STEP 6 - Actions and Arrangements for Monitoring Outcomes and Reviewing Data

The IIA process is an ongoing one that doesn't end when the policy/practice and IIA is agreed and implemented. There is a specific legal duty to monitor the impact of policies/practices on equality on an ongoing basis to identify if the outcomes have changed since you introduced or amended this new policy or practice. If you do not hold relevant data, then you should be taking steps to rectify this in your action plan. To review the EHRC guidance on data collection you can review their [Measurement Framework](#).

31. Please outline below any actions identified in Steps 1-5 or any additional data collection that will help you monitor your policy/practice once implemented:

Action	Dates	Timeframe	Lead Responsibility	Add to Service Plan (✓)

32. Please outline below what arrangements you will make to monitor and review the ongoing impact of this policy or practice including timescales for when it should be formally reviewed:

Monitoring and Review arrangements (including where outcomes will be recorded)	Timeframe & Frequency	Lead Responsibility	Add to Service Plan (✓)

Page 146

STEP 7 - Publishing the Integrated Impact Assessment

Please arrange for this completed IIA to be agreed by your Chief Officer and arrange for translation and publishing with a copy sent to Stephanie Aldridge: stephanie.aldrige@flintshire.gov.uk.

APPENDIX 5 - ANALYSIS OF COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM CASES

Community	Total Number of Properties	Second Homes Premiums	Long Term Empty Premiums	Total Premiums	Proportion of Premium Cases
Argoed	2,515	3	11	14	1.81%
Bagillt	1,794	5	15	20	2.59%
Broughton & Bretton	2,894	1	17	18	2.33%
Brynford	434	1	3	4	0.52%
Buckley	7,403	4	49	53	6.87%
Caerwys	622	3	9	12	1.55%
Cilcain	602	7	7	14	1.81%
Connahs Quay	7,290	6	59	65	8.42%
Flint	6,078	13	34	47	6.09%
Gwernaffield & Pantymwyn	869	4	10	14	1.81%
Gwernymynydd	526	4	7	11	1.42%
Halkyn	1,278	2	8	10	1.30%
Hawarden	6,296	11	30	41	5.31%
Higher Kinnerton	753	0	2	2	0.26%
Holywell	4,296	16	45	61	7.90%
Hope	1,886	4	21	25	3.24%
Leeswood	977	1	16	17	2.20%
Llanasa	2,182	20	48	68	8.81%
Llanfynydd	822	2	8	10	1.30%
Mold	4,830	11	40	51	6.61%
Mostyn	837	1	8	9	1.17%
Nannerch	214	7	6	13	1.68%
Nercwys	264	0	5	5	0.65%
Northop	1,386	1	16	17	2.20%
Northop Hall	762	1	5	6	0.78%
Penyffordd	2,003	2	8	10	1.30%
Queensferry	966	1	25	26	3.37%
Saltney	2,346	5	14	19	2.46%
Sealand	1,481	2	29	31	4.02%
Shotton	2,979	11	21	32	4.15%
Trelawnyd & Gwaenysgor	413	3	5	8	1.04%
Treuddyn	746	1	5	6	0.78%
Whitford	1,033	11	11	22	2.85%
Ysceifiog	548	3	8	11	1.42%
Total Band 'D'					
Equivalent Properties	70,325	167	605	772	

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FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 13 December 2022
Report Subject	Electoral Reform in Wales
Report Author	Chief Executive & Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welsh Government is responsible for devolved local government and Senedd elections. The Westminster Government is responsible for policy relating to elections to the House of Commons (UK Parliamentary) and for Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

In 2017, the Welsh Government consulted on immediate priorities for reform in the Electoral Reform in Local Government in Wales White Paper. These immediate priorities were legislated for through the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

One of the changes was that local authorities can decide to adopt the Single Transferrable Vote system for their elections, in place of the First Past the Post system. Part one of the report explains the process involved.

Part two of the report explains the Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper and how Welsh Government are seeking to accelerate their reform agenda and commence what they describe as an ambitious plan to modernise electoral administration in Wales.

The White Paper includes proposals for:

- promoting engagement in elections
- making standing for election safer and more straight forward
- legislation to modernise the administration of elections
- legislation to improve the conduct of electoral and community reviews for local government
- legislation to consolidate electoral law
- longer-term propositions for electoral reform to support Welsh democracy in the future

The closing date for consultation responses is 10 January 2023.

Part three of the report summaries the Elections Act 2022, which received Royal Assent in April 2022 and is applicable for UK Parliamentary and Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

The impact of the Elections Act 2022 creates divergence issues in Wales which are highlighted in the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Council indicates in principle whether it would wish to consider adopting the Single Transferrable Vote system once guidance has been published.
2	That Council make a response to the Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper.
3	That Council notes the requirements of the Elections Act 2022, and approves the proposed steps to minimise potential disenfranchisement.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING ELECTORAL REFORM IN WALES
1.01	<p><u>Part One: Power to adopt the Single Transferable Vote system</u></p> <p>Principal councils (not town and community councils) may adopt the STV system for their elections. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 sets out the steps (sections 8 and 9) a local authority must take if it is minded to change its voting system.</p>
1.02	<p>Voting Systems</p> <p><u>First past the post</u> Currently at a local election, voters put a cross (X) next to their preferred candidate on a ballot paper. Ballot papers are counted and the candidate with the most votes represents the ward.</p> <p><u>Single Transferable Vote (STV)</u> Voters rank candidates in order of preference by marking 1, 2, and 3 and so on. A voter can rank as many or as few candidates as they like or vote for only one candidate.</p> <p>Each candidate needs to reach a quota. This is the minimum number of votes calculated according to the number of seats and votes cast.</p> <p>The first preference votes for each candidate are added up. Candidates who achieve this quota are elected.</p> <p>Surplus votes from candidates who hit the quota go to second preference candidates.</p> <p>Votes from the candidate with the fewest first preference votes who do not achieve the quota are eliminated. Their votes go to the second preference.</p>

1.03	<p>Process</p> <p>Before exercising the power to change the local authority must consult local government electors, town and community councils and any other interested parties.</p> <p>Such a change would require a resolution supported by a two-thirds majority of full council. Such a resolution must be considered at a meeting specially convened for the purpose, with written notice given at least 21 days before the meeting.</p> <p>A resolution would need to be passed by 15 November in the year three years before the next ordinary election is due. To change the system for the next local government elections in 2027, this would be by <u>15 November 2024</u>.</p> <p>Any council opting to change its voting system would be required to use the new system for the next two rounds of ordinary elections. In the case of a by-election for a casual vacancy, the voting method used at the previous ordinary election would be used. After those two rounds, it could decide whether to return to the previous voting system.</p> <p>If a council exercises its power to change the voting system, the council must notify Welsh Ministers and the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission of the change.</p>
1.04	<p>After receiving a notification, Welsh Ministers may direct the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales to conduct an initial review of the area of the council. Welsh Ministers must consult the Commission before such a direction, and persons representing principal councils as the Welsh Ministers consider appropriate.</p> <p>Provisions for initial reviews as outlined above are set out in Schedule 1 of the 2021 Act, which requires that if a Council adopts STV, <u>the number of councillors for each electoral ward is to be no less than three, but no more than six.</u></p>
1.05	<p>Draft rules for STV elections will be published for consultation soon. Welsh Government aim to provide guidance in early 2023 and any local consultation would need to wait until this is in place.</p>
1.06	<p><u>Part 2: Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper</u></p> <p>In October 2022 Welsh Government published a White Paper setting out the Welsh Government's framework for electoral reform. It is the government's sated intention to increase voter participation and ensure that every citizen is able to play their full part in democracy.</p> <p>https://gov.wales/consultation-electoral-administration-and-reform-white-paper-html</p>

1.07	<p>The White Paper includes proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting engagement in elections • making standing for election safer and more straight forward • legislation to modernise the administration of elections • legislation to improve the conduct of electoral and community reviews for local government • legislation to consolidate electoral law • longer-term propositions for electoral reform to support Welsh democracy in the future
1.08	<p>The White Paper initially sets out the longer-term vision for electoral reform. It seeks views on what changes may be desirable in the future and what should be considered further by the Welsh Government. Chapters then set out aspects of more immediate reform, first to simplify electoral registration and more clearly identify the Welsh electorate in chapter 3, then proposals to improve the administration of devolved elections in chapter 4, approaches to support voters and candidates participate in elections are set out at chapter 5, ways that elections can be modernised to take account of new technology and citizen demands are at chapter 6, and finally chapter 7 sets out broader improvements on how local democracy operate beyond elections. A summary is attached at Appendix 2.</p>
1.09	<p>Welsh government welcome views on all aspects of this document but have also indicated areas of the document likely to be of particular interest to different groups of people to make it easier to respond. Members will be interested in much of chapter 4 on strengthening electoral administration and parts of chapters 5 and 7, in particular proposals on candidate safety, improving diversity, training for elected members and rules about councillors serving as members of the Senedd.</p>
1.10	<p>A draft response is included in Appendix 3. Members may wish to comment further as outlined in 1.09 above. In particular questions 5, 35 and 36 may be of interest.</p> <p>Question 5 refers to the term of office for County and Town/Community Councillors and asks whether it should revert back to four years. A longer term of office provides stability in governance. Also, the term of office for Senedd Members and Police and Crime Commissioners is five years, so retaining a five year term would give parity and be consistent. Lastly, a four year term would lead to a cyclical combination of polls for reserved and devolved elections, which, because of differences in the franchise and procedural requirements, could cause confusion.</p> <p>Question 35 asks whether the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' role to oversee the salaries of Chief Executives should be abolished. Members may feel that as outlined in the draft response, it is a matter for each Council to determine, as you would with any other post within the Council. That is to say that the proposal should be supported.</p> <p>Question 36 refers to the idea that new powers could be created to enable determinations to be made about parachute payments for Councillors. It is currently a perceived inequality and barrier to encouraging greater diversity</p>

	<p>that a Councillor who loses their seat does not receive a sum equivalent to a redundancy payment.</p> <p>The consultation period ends on 10 January 2023.</p>
1.11	<p><u>Part 3: The Elections Act 2022</u></p> <p>The Elections Act 2022 seeks to make a number of changes to the elections process at UK Parliamentary and Police and Crime Commissioner elections. This does not apply to local government or Senedd elections.</p> <p>The main changes are summarised below:</p>
1.12	<p>Voter Identification (ID) requirement (live from January 2023 and for UKPE and PCC from 4 May 2023).</p> <p>Voters will be required to produce an approved form of photographic ID at the polling station before they can be issued with a ballot paper. A free Voter Authority Certificate will also be available from the Electoral Registration Officer for voters who do not have one of the approved forms of photographic ID.</p>
1.13	<p>Accessibility (live in elections from 4 May 2023)</p> <p>Returning Officers will be responsible for improving support in polling stations for people with a wide range of disabilities and voters may be assisted by anyone over the age of 18.</p>
1.14	<p>Absent Voting (Spring 2023 – Spring 2024)</p> <p>Electors will be able to apply online for an absent vote, with both online and paper applications requiring the applicant's identity to be verified (expected to be in place from July 2023).</p> <p>Electors will be required to reapply every three years for a postal vote, replacing current rules of refreshing their signature every five years (transitional arrangements in place from January 2024).</p> <p>Electors will only be allowed to act as proxy for up to four people, of which no more than two can be 'domestic electors' (expected to be in place for May 2024 polls).</p> <p>Political parties and campaigners will be banned from handling postal votes (expected Autumn 2023).</p>
1.15	<p>Police and Crime Commissioner elections (May 2024)</p> <p>EU Citizens' Voting and Candidacy Rights (July 2023) - EU citizens will no longer automatically be entitled to register to vote and stand for election</p> <p>End of Supplementary Voting - The voting method will move to the "first past the post" system.</p>

1.16	<p>Overseas electors (expected to be in place at elections from May 2024)</p> <p>The 15 year limit on expatriates right to vote in Parliamentary elections will be removed and ex-pats will be able to register in respect of their last UK address. We will be required to verify such applications, including the claimed connection to a previous UK address.</p>
1.17	<p>Divergence Issues</p> <p>The following areas are of concern and will be required to be carefully managed. The White Paper may resolve some of these issues, and Council may wish to ask Welsh Government to harmonise requirements when it legislates.</p> <p>Combination polls – Police and Crime Commissioner elections can be combined with Senedd and Local Government elections / UK Parliamentary elections can be combined with Local Government elections. Voter ID would be required for only one of the elections.</p> <p>Absent voting – There is scope for voter, candidate and political party confusion. Online absent voter applications and identification verification apply to UK Parliamentary and Police Crime Commissioner elections but not Senedd and Local Government, so electors will have to apply twice. In addition, voters would renew their postal vote every 5 years for Senedd and Local Government elections and every 3 years for UK Parliamentary and Police and Crime Commissioner elections. There will also be different restrictions for proxy voters also.</p>
1.18	<p>As noted under Risk Management (below) the requirement for voters to produce photographic ID has the potential to disenfranchise some sections of society who have lower levels of ownership of such documents (elderly, lower socio economic and BAME groups). The Act requires the Council to produce proof of identification for people without photographic ID. This service will need to be widely promoted to ensure that those who need it are aware of its existence. The Electoral Commission should be encouraged to promote the service and the council could undertake its own publicity as well.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Power to adopt the Single Transferable Vote system None specific at this early stage.</p> <p>Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper Welsh Government have published a draft Regulatory Impact Assessment.</p> <p>The Elections Act 2022 Capacity and resilience on the electoral services team. The challenges that may be faced in recruiting enough polling station staff. Funding will be available relating to new burdens of the Act.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>Power to adopt the Single Transferable Vote system The Council must consult local government electors, town and community councils and any other interested parties.</p> <p>Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper This is an open consultation by Welsh Government.</p> <p>The Elections Act 2022 None.</p>

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	<p>Power to adopt the Single Transferable Vote system None at this stage.</p> <p>Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper There are a number of risks to governance, public participation and confidence in the elections system, and resources, posed by the White Paper. Welsh Government has published its own assessment of how the proposals meet the requirements of the Well Being of Future Generations Act.</p> <p>The Elections Act 2022 The divergence issues as a result of elections being governed by two separate governments may lead to voter, candidate and political party confusion.</p> <p>As an Act of the UK Parliament this legislation does not include an assessment of how it meets the needs of future generations. However, our own assessment indicates that the provision of voter ID has the potential to disenfranchise some sections of society.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix One - The electoral administration and reform White Paper https://gov.wales/consultation-electoral-administration-and-reform-white-paper.html</p> <p>Appendix Two – Summary of White Paper</p> <p>Appendix Three - Draft response to the White Paper</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Briefing Note for Group Leaders. Previous Welsh Government and Council papers on Electoral Reform. The Elections Act 2022 https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3020</p> <p>Contact Officer: Lynn Phillips, Team Leader – Democratic Services Telephone: 01352 702329 E-mail: lyn.phillips@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Act: a Bill that has been approved by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and been given Royal Assent by the Monarch.</p> <p>Single Transferable Vote system: a form of proportional representation.</p> <p>White Paper: a policy paper which sets out the intention to pass legislation and is published for consultation and scrutiny.</p> <p>BAME: Black, Asian, and minority ethnic</p>

Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper - Summary

Chapter 1: introduction

In 2017, the Welsh Government (WG) consulted on immediate priorities for reform in the Electoral Reform in Local Government in Wales White Paper. These immediate priorities were legislated for through the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. As a consequence of these 2 Acts, a number of changes have been made for devolved elections, including:

- the franchise has been extended to 16 and 17 year olds, and qualifying foreign nationals
- local authorities can decide to adopt the Single Transferrable Vote system for their elections, in place of the First Past the Post system.
- updating the disqualification regime so that local government employees who are not in politically restricted posts can stand for election to their own councils without having to resign first

This White Paper accelerates their reform agenda to start their ambitions plans to modernise electoral administration in Wales.

WG, will use the following six principles to benchmark electoral reform and guide their work to support democratic engagement and participation.

1. Equity; 2. Accessibility; 3. Participation; 4. Improving citizen experience; 5. Simplicity; 6. Integrity

Senedd reform

Alongside the Programme for Government's commitment to electoral reform, WG has agreed to take forward Senedd Reform, as part of its Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru. WG is working to prepare legislation to implement these recommendations. This includes 16 new constituencies for the Senedd, each returning 6 members through the d'Hondt system currently used for Senedd regions and commitments to ensure diversity of membership.

Chapter 2: long term vision for devolved Elections

Consolidating the law for accessibility and simplicity

The plan is to consolidate electoral law in Wales for devolved elections. They will consult on and remake a bi-lingual consolidated Conduct Order ahead of the 2026 Senedd Elections. In remaking the Order, it will reflect any changes needed as a consequence of taking forward policy proposals outlined in this consultation paper.

Enfranchising some prisoners from Wales

The 2017 White Paper asked for views on whether some prisoners from Wales should be able to vote in local government elections. WG is committed to enfranchising some prisoners from Wales. UK Government is opposed in principle to prisoner voting which makes further progress challenging so they have decided not to include this in their immediate reform programme.

Electronic remote voting/online absent voting

They do not plan to legislate for electronic remote voting in the immediate term but recognise the potential benefits that online voting could bring and will continue to consider the potential for such a system as a long-term goal. In the meantime, considering establishing a set of practical criteria that a system would need to meet to be considered for implementation.

Promoting diversity in democracy

WG is committed to promoting and supporting diversity in local democracy and has run 2 phases of the Diversity in Democracy Programme, this is in addition to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. WG will continue to support and work actively with partners to increase diversity in local democracy.

All-Wales database

An all-Wales database offers potential benefits in terms of data accuracy, identifying duplicate entries across multiple registers, single unique identifier codes and Wales wide look-up functions. They feels these benefits are particularly useful in terms of potential future electoral reform such as vote anywhere schemes and advance voting. The implementation method and the potential additional benefits which could be provided by such a system will need to be considered and will continue to consider the desirability of an all-Wales database and the need to legislate for such a provision.

Monitoring impact of existing legislation

They would like to understand views on the implications and effectiveness of recent legislation that affect how elections in Wales are run. The following are of particular interest:

Coincidence or combinations of elections: dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022

Elections to the Senedd and local government have always operated differently to elections of Members of Parliament. With the passing of the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022, they will continue to press for the avoidance of combined or coinciding reserved and devolved elections.

Digital imprints: Elections Act 2022

UK Government provisions introduced in the Elections Act 2022, introduces a new digital imprints regime which requires political campaigners to explicitly show who they are and on behalf of whom they are promoting digital campaigning material. In March 2022, the Senedd granted its consent for the digital imprints provisions to apply to devolved elections. This means that there is consistency in the requirements which apply to digital campaign material used in all elections.

Online nominations: Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021/2021 Rules

For the local elections in May 2021, nominations of candidacy could be filed online. This innovation has been discussed extensively with electoral administrators. The Wales Electoral Coordination Board has undertaken a review to identify possible options in this space, and they may need to update legislation to support innovation in this area. (I am a member of a working group).

Term lengths: Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

Principal councils and Town and Community Councils now operate with a term of five years between elections. There remains different views on whether a 4 or 5 year term is preferable for local government members. This includes the balance of voters being empowered to keep their elected representatives in check, and councils' longer term planning capability to make significant changes

locally. A shorter period between elections would also limit the potential for electoral reviews and the time for principal councils to opt for the Single Transferable Vote.

Chapter 3: simplifying electoral registration in Wales

Restating the franchise

They feel that the current provisions setting out the franchise for devolved elections in Wales are untidy, which creates complexity for those responsible for interpreting the legislation and those who are responsible for administering elections.

As the UK is no longer a member of the European Union (EU), the legal basis for an automatic grant of voting and candidacy rights to all EU citizens no longer exists. Therefore, they are considering the changes to reflect this. One option is to treat EU citizens in the same way as we treat foreign nationals from other countries, whilst another option may be to align voting rights with immigration status. They may also need to consider the effect of the reciprocal voting and candidacy rights agreements, so they are considering restating the franchise for Welsh elections in one bilingual Act and updating the franchise and candidacy rights for EU citizens now that the UK has left the EU.

Automatic registration

They are proposing some changes to the current provisions and making automatic registration of voters mandatory for all Electoral Registration Officers in Wales. This would allow EROs to add anyone to the local government electoral register (which is also used for Senedd elections) using data held by the local authority. They believe this would be of particular benefit to those newly enfranchised 16 and 17 year olds and qualifying foreign citizens in Wales, They also believe this could increase participation in Senedd and local government elections.

They are also proposing to remove the open register for devolved elections in Wales. This would mean that the data of voters on the local government register in Wales could not be sold to some third parties.

They are seeking views on the best way to make the process of automatic registration as easy as possible for the voter and how best to collect and use locally held data to make sure that the local government electoral register remains as accurate as possible and uses the best quality data.

They are also looking to run a series of pilots, that will focus on how best to collect data, how to use existing data most effectively to identify electors and verify their identity and how best to communicate with electors. They are keen to hear from local authorities willing to participate, so they can develop a programme.

Improving student and young people's registration rates

They propose allowing students to register to vote during their enrolment week through a data sharing agreement between their university and the student's relevant local authority. They wish to work with local authorities and institutions in the higher education sector in Wales to establish a model in which data sharing agreements, for the register to vote process only, are in place across Wales. Greater data sharing could also support the approach to automatic registration set out above

Chapter 4: strengthening electoral administration

Electoral Management Board

There is currently no statutory body responsible for coordinating elections for Wales. The WECB is a non-statutory, voluntary body facilitated by the Electoral Commission. They propose to legislate for the establishment of an Electoral Management Board in Wales (“the Board”) which would perform functions independently of government that are currently undertaken by the WECB and develop this over time. (They have a board in Scotland).

The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (the Commission)

Following the completion of the ten-year programme of principal council electoral reviews the WLGA and the Commission identified potential improvements to the review process that could better support the aim of effective and convenient local government. They are looking on improving the following –

Principal Council Electoral Reviews

Period for making Electoral Review Orders

They intend to amend the timescale specified in section 9(8) of the 2013 Act so that the Commission could not publish final reports or recommendations relating to the electoral arrangements for principal councils within a specified period (of either twelve or fifteen months) in advance of an ordinary council election. They need to ensure any provision provides Welsh Ministers with sufficient time to consider the Commission’s final reports, including if the Commission were asked to revisit a part of a review.

Maximum Periods for the Conduct of a Review and the Making of Decisions

Propose the maximum period for the conduct of an electoral review by the Commission should be 15 months and decisions should be made by Welsh Ministers to either implement the Commission’s recommendations with or without modification, or decisions to make no order should be made within three months of their receiving the final report from the Commission.

Pausing reviews

New power to pause a review under certain circumstances, if required.

The 10 year programme of electoral reviews

Amend the Act to provide for a common list of mandatory consultees for the 10 year programme, the pre-review process and consultation on the draft proposals for electoral arrangements

Voter engagement

Intend to strengthen the requirement for the Commission to demonstrate that it has arrangements in place to ensure the opportunities for voter engagement are maximised.

Ward names

Require the Commission to publish ward names in Welsh and English of their reports and documentation. This will enable electors and other stakeholders to more easily and readily consider the approach taken in identifying the recommended ward names.

Considerations for the review of Principal Area Electoral Arrangements

It is intended to extend the range of considerations the Commission must take into account when formulating its recommendations for electoral arrangements. The Commission will set out and consult upon how it will balance these considerations when setting out its draft and final recommendations, and in its procedure and methodology for electoral reviews.

Requirement for the Commission to set out the data sets used to underpin their review

In its conduct of electoral reviews, the Commission draws on many data sets and is likely they will draw on even more sets. This information will be set out in its procedure and methodology.

Further consultation on recommendations in the final report

Further specific consultation with the voters and councillors in the wards where final recommendations introduce proposals for new electoral arrangements, before being able to prepare the final report and submitting it to the Welsh Ministers

Submission of final reports to the Welsh ministers

To clarify the purpose of the 6 week period and Welsh Ministers will not consider, take any action on review recommendations or make an Order until this period has elapsed.

Implementation following an electoral review

They propose to introduce a power to direct the Commission to reconsider and consult again on a part of an electoral review where certain situations where the majority of the recommendations have resulted in proposals for more effective and convenient local government but, having considered the criteria and representations submitted during the 6 week representation period, the Welsh Ministers conclude that arrangements concerning a particular ward or collection of wards could be improved.

Publication and distribution of hard copies of reports and other documentation

Remove the requirement to publish and distribute hard copy reports etc but would be available on request.

Community reviews

Proposing to introduce legislation which will make it clear that we must undertake a full review of all our towns/communities and their related electoral arrangements once in every 10 year period and this would be linked to the 10 year period that the Commission sets out for its electoral review programme. The Commission will be required to discharge their duties to ensure the principal council can then discharge its duty in relation to completion of a community review in advance of an electoral review being completed.

Also propose introducing legislation to require principal councils to report annually to their full council on their communities and community electoral arrangements, including a summary of any local orders made during the year. As well as sending a copy of this report to the Commission and Welsh Ministers. Would also require us to publish any local orders in a dedicated section of our website and send electronic copies to the Commission and to Welsh Ministers.

Seaward boundaries

Propose to enable the arrangements for multiple local government areas and the expansion and contraction of seaward boundaries to be made as part of a single review.

Matters relating to electoral and other reviews not requiring legislation

Electoral reviews and other review reports are complex but need to be accessible to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties not all of whom are professional or technical experts. We will therefore work with the Commission to improve the accessibility of reports and data by using digital opportunities such a mapping portal and best practice in accessible reporting.

Functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

They propose the dissolve the Panel and transfer its functions to the Commission (Boundary). This would mean one set of commissioners would determine the numbers of councillors across Wales, the electoral arrangements, and the remuneration of councillors.

The functions to be transferred would include the remuneration of elected members of relevant authorities and functions in the event of a voluntary merger between two or more principal councils or other form of restructuring. As part of the transfer, they also intend to remove the function set out in relation to the remuneration of principal council chief executives. This provision was added in response to a specific set of circumstances which are no longer relevant as other mechanisms, such as the requirement to publish pay policy statements, now exist to ensure transparency in relation to the remuneration arrangements for a principal council's most senior employee.

They are also seeking views on whether the functions transferring should be clarified to enable the Commission to consider 'parachute' payments for local elected members as part of the councillors' total remuneration package. Parachute payments are available for members of the UK Parliament and the Senedd when candidates have stood for election but have failed to be re-elected. The payments are sometimes likened to redundancy payments for employees and are linked to length of time served in the elected office. This recognises these roles are full time and individuals have forgone full time employment or career development to undertake them

Technical, consequential, transitional and saving provision

This relates to making any necessary consequential, transitional, or saving provision to support these proposals as required.

Campaign finance, expenses and political party spending

The existing regulatory framework governing the spending and funding (political finance) of candidates, political parties and third-party campaigners and other campaigners is contained in various Acts. The UK Elections Act 2022 expanded and strengthened the law about political Finance. As a result, in future there will be a difference in the political finance rules as they apply to reserved and devolved elections in Wales. To avoid voter confusion and administrative complexity, where appropriate, it is proposed to introduce equivalent provisions in respect of devolved elections in Wales.

Electoral pilots

May 2022 only 4 authorities (all in South Wales) delivered advance voting pilots. For future pilots they would be interested in a more varied mix of authorities, including in different regions or rural

authorities. They think that this could potentially be achieved through Welsh Ministers having a power to direct authorities to participate in a pilot, or by earlier and varied communications and engagement to encourage take up.

Returning Officers and requirements relating to the Welsh language

WG is committed to ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language when elections are held in Wales. The role of ROs, being varied and depending on the type of election and its legal requirements (including where there are combined polls at devolved and reserved elections), secondly their statutory independence as officeholder, and last their accountability for the elections being administered is complex.

Chapter 5: building democratic health

Section A: for voters

Together with the Electoral Commission we provide information to voters about the electoral register, ways to vote, when an election is taking place and polling details. However, information about candidates and/or political parties to help voters make an informed decision is sometimes unavailable or inaccessible. Wider information about the importance of taking part in an election is even more disparate.

Accessible voter information

WG originally made provision for the publication of candidate statements in the draft Rules for the 2021 local elections but did not implement this following the concerns raised. They are now considering how provision for candidate statements can be taken forward, including whether centralising and simplifying the provision of voter information should be a statutory responsibility of a body with access to secure funding.

Improving accessibility of electoral process for underrepresented People

As part of this work will consider information needs in languages other than English and Welsh, and how information can be provided in a convenient, accessible and trusted way; including for voters who cannot or do not wish to access information digitally. Improve the physical barriers some feel they encounter when casting their vote.

Also want to encourage political parties to produce accessible materials. This will include further stakeholder engagement and consideration how an amendment to legislation, similar to that in the Elections Act 2022, could best operate.

Education

As the Curriculum for Wales is rolled out, WG will work closely with education to develop a coherent and sustainable framework for supporting schools to ensure learners progress in this area of learning. They want to ensure that learners have opportunities to increase their understanding of democracy and the role they must play as citizens in an engaging way that promotes a lifelong habit of participation. They have developed resources to help young people develop as ethical, informed citizens who understand their rights and exercise their democratic responsibilities and ensuring politically neutral materials for teachers to teach this area with confidence.

Section B: for candidates

The safety of people standing to represent their local communities as candidates to the Senedd or local authorities has become an increasing concern over recent years.

Strengthening of the undue influence electoral offence

The Elections Act 2022 introduced for reserved elections new language to modernise and strengthen one of the classic electoral offences, Undue Influence. Others electoral offences are ‘bribery’ and ‘treating’. All are labelled ‘corrupt practices’ in electoral law and carry an additional electoral sanction. WG intend to do the same.

Other measures we propose to take on candidate safety

Concern whether electoral candidates, particularly those from under-represented groups, are deterred from seeking election by fear of abuse, including harassment and intimidation. While they are building the evidence base to allow them to take more targeted actions to help reduce instances of abuse of electoral candidates they propose to focus on the following short and long-term actions:

- evidence: collect information from candidates post-election to develop evidence based on the type and frequency of abuse encountered and the personal impact that may have
- communication: what communications could be helpful in reducing abuse in campaigns, this could include in schools, or inclusion in a national communication campaign in advance of major elections
- costs: to ensure fairness in electoral campaigns, candidates may only spend a certain amount on their campaign, commonly referred to as election spending limits. Could introduce legislation to exempt spending on safety-related necessities
- support and advice: better signposting for candidates about personal safety and possibly supplemented with training in advance of major elections.
- campaign pledge: encouraging all candidates to sign up to a campaign pledge, similar to WLGA’s “Fair and Respectful campaign” pledge in advance of the 2022 local elections
- online abuse: the UK Government’s Online Safety Bill is currently being considered in Parliament. This will place duties on certain companies to remove illegal content and to address harmful material in line with their terms and conditions. Will monitor this as it goes through Parliament
- statement of persons nominated: the rules for local and Senedd elections could be amended to require that the SOPN form includes a standard description of the geographical qualifications for standing as a candidate to remove local pressure on candidates to publish their home address

Access to Elected Office Fund

Plan to legislate that Welsh Ministers maintain an ‘Access to Elected Office Fund’ which is available for all devolved Welsh ordinary and by elections. The purpose of the Fund is to provide support for candidates from underrepresented groups.

Local government candidates’ survey

Development of this survey with key partners and it may be possible that principal councils could add questions aimed at providing information about local initiatives. They believe this approach provides for consistency across Wales, continuity of the time series of the data set and also enables local flexibility to add questions.

Chapter 6: modernising Welsh elections

Advance voting

Further work is needed to develop any future policy and supporting administrative structure before a decision could be taken on whether advance voting should be rolled out more widely. They are keen to bring the ballot box closer to people's lives and make voting as easy as possible for voters. To consider whether enabling advance voting and voting at alternative venues, such as colleges, schools, workplaces or places where there are large gatherings of people, would assist in delivering this aim, and whether this should become normal practise in devolved elections.

Reforming postal and proxy voting

The UK Elections Act 2022, creates divergences issues as they are changes from a 5 to a 3 year renewal cycle for absent vote applications (Parliamentary and PCC election), but for local and Senedd election will still be on a 5 year cycle. This may create confusion and complexity for administrators and voters.

The Act 2022 contains powers to establish an Online Absent Voting Application system for reserved elections. They are in the process of considering both short and long-term options for a similar system for devolved elections.

Postal vote ballot tracking

Interested in exploring the introduction of a postal vote e-tracking system that would allow for the processing of incoming Postal Vote Statements and provides a mechanism to notify electors of errors so that corrections can be made in time to ensure that their postal votes are counted. They believe that an electronic system such as this would help to reduce the number of postal votes rejected and would have a positive impact on public confidence in the postal voting system by providing electors with live updates on the progress of their postal ballots. Initially this could involve the establishment of a simple delivery notification and error notification system. In the future there is potential for it to provide a broader system for engagement with voters through the inclusion of things such as voter information, candidate statements, elections results and post-election engagement.

Digital registers

Some local authorities used technology (Digital register) during the pilots in May 2022. This could replace the need for hardcopy of registers and corresponding number lists (CNLs). There is now strong evidence of the benefits of using Digital Registers in terms of convenience for voters, election staff and administrators. Not proposing to mandate the use of Digital Registers for devolved elections in Wales in the short-term, but will continue to facilitate and encourage their uptake.

Chapter 7: improving our democracy

Training for elected members

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires local elections to secure the provision of 'reasonable training and development' for their members'. At present all training and development for councillors is taken forward on a voluntary basis.

If mandatory training were introduced, there would be two aspects to be considered. The first would be the requirement for councils to provide the training including consideration of what levels, type and extent of training would be specified as mandatory. This would need to be considered to ensure councillors across Wales had access to the same quality and extent of mandatory training. Secondly, they believe it would be important for candidates to understand and agree to undertaking the training in advance of being elected. This could be achieved through a declaration at the point of nomination that individuals understand and are willing to undertake mandatory training and reinforced by the oath of office if elected. The latter provides the opportunity for introducing sanctions under the ethical code of conduct if mandatory training is not undertaken without good reason. This would provide the candidate with a clear message they are expected to undertake appropriate training and would avoid individuals being elected and only then discovering they are required to undertake specific training.

Changes to the disqualification regime for Local Councillors from also serving as Members of the Senedd

Considering whether to make changes to the current disqualification regime for election to the Senedd, in particular:

- disqualifying town and community councillors in Wales from serving as Members of the Senedd, bringing arrangements into line with the disqualification regime for principal council members in Wales
- removing the “grace period” for all councillors elected to the Senedd, and for the Members of the Senedd elected as councillors.

Removing the grace period would mean that if a member of a principal council or town or community council is elected as a Member of the Senedd and takes up that seat, the councillor’s seat will become vacant, and this may trigger a by election at the local level (the outcome will depend on whether the relevant person is a member of a principal council or a town or community council and also when the vacancy arises).

Impact assessments

Published a draft Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) and Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) alongside this White Paper, to provide best estimates for costs, benefits and impacts of the proposals. They will gather more information to bolster these assessments as they develop proposals following this consultation.

Consultation questions

We would be keen to hear your views on these proposals, in particular on:

Chapter 1

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the six principles for electoral reform of equity, accessibility, participation, improving citizen experience, simplicity, integrity?

Fully agree

Partially Agree

Disagree

Please explain your answer:

We partially agree with the six principles for electoral reform set out in the Paper.

However, while simplicity is a key objective in making registering to vote and voting easier, it seems an impossible objective considering the divergence issues brought about by the Elections Act 2022.

While some suggestions are clearly designed to make devolved elections more accessible and improve the citizen experience, without the UK Government replicating provisions for reserved polls it again adds another level of complication.

The six principles cannot be adhered to when the UK and Welsh Government approaches to electoral reform are not aligned.

Chapter 2

2. Should the Welsh Government commit resource to considering how electronic remote voting could operate for devolved elections?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

We are supportive of Welsh Government committing resource to consider how electronic remote voting could operate for devolved elections. We believe the use of IT for voting should be considered but only utilised when the system(s) can be shown to deliver safe and secure results, deliver improvements on current paper-based systems, be cost-effective and demonstrate public confidence.

3. What impacts, if any, do you think the proposed introduction of an all-Wales database of electoral registration data would have on the electoral process (such as registration and electoral services)?

Please consider the potentially positive and negative impacts and provide evidence to support your response, where available. Please comment on each characteristic individually.

It is a matter for the UK Parliament and devolved governments to determine whether a national electoral register would be appropriate. If it were, there would be obvious and clear benefits to electoral processes.

The ERO has a duty to prepare three separate registers; one for UK parliamentary electors, one for local government electors, and one for overseas peers. Although the registers are created separately, they are stored on the same software system.

We think a separate electronic register for Wales could well lead to difficulties in this regard.

4. What are your views on the application of Elections Act 2022 provisions on (a) digital imprints for digital campaign material, and (b) online nominations?

It is our view is that imprints should be required on all digital and printed electoral material. This will allow for consistency, greater transparency, ease of monitoring, and to ensure there is no uncertainty or confusion as to whether an imprint should be included or not. The use of imprints allows the electorate to clearly see material that is promoting a candidate(s) or political party. We also recommend that a candidate should not have to include their home address on any imprint.

The Election Act 2022 makes no provision for online nominations.

5. Should principal and town and community councils revert to four year terms?

Yes
No
Don't know

Please explain your answer:

Chapter 3

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the franchise for devolved elections should be restated in one bi-lingual Welsh Act?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Please explain your answer:

We strongly in support of any attempt Welsh Government make to consolidate electoral law where possible. Ideally a new, modern Electoral Administration Act in collaboration with all four UK governments would be of benefit.

7. From your perspective, should the franchise reflect the changes in the status of EU citizens now the UK has left the EU?

8. How can we best help people understand they have been automatically registered and feel confident that their data is protected, especially for people who may be vulnerable or wish to register anonymously?

Any communication should be prescribed and developed in collaboration with the electoral community. This will ensure that consistent information is provided to any elector who is registered automatically across Wales. There would have to be a clear message that this is only for devolved polls and FAQs to explain the difference, as this will lead to voter confusion. This includes those wishing to register anonymously.

9. To what extent do you agree with the removal of the open register in relation to devolved elections?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please explain your answer

We believe that the electoral register should only be compiled for electoral and statutory purposes and should not be sold for commercial purposes. The open register lists the names of all electors who have not 'opted out'. Access to the open register is not restricted. It is available for sale to any person who wishes to buy a copy and the data in it may be used for any purpose. Credit referencing agencies are legally able to commercially sell details of any elector appearing on the open register. There is often a misconception from the public that local authorities are profiting from the open/edited register, rather than credit referencing agencies and third parties.

This should apply to registers produced for devolved and reserved elections to avoid further divergence issues.

10. Should the Welsh Government place a duty on local authorities to have data sharing agreements within the authority itself, and where applicable, with other authorities or organisations?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

The ERO/RO is the data controller not the local authority. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) requires EROs and their local authority to register as separate data controllers.

11. Are there any specific aspects of automatic registration that should be piloted before we move to an all Wales roll out?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

There may be benefit in piloting areas regarding the quality of data sets to identify new electors. Are such datasets considered good enough to automatically register an elector. Also are there may be national data sets that could be used.

The key to any reform is communication, so this is another area that could be piloted.

12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that students should have the option to register to vote whilst enrolling at university?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please explain your answer:

It would seem sensible to allow students to register to vote during their enrolment week, as long as the appropriate mechanisms are in place.

Where answered Strongly Agree or Agree:

12a. Should any data that is provided be subsequently shared, via a data sharing agreement, with the relevant Local Authority's Electoral Services Team?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

The data sharing agreement should be between the university and the ERO not the university and local authority.

Chapter 4

13. Do you agree that a statutory Electoral Management Board for Wales should be established?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please explain your answer:

We support this recommendation and believe that Wales would benefit from the establishment of an Electoral Management Board (EMB). Careful consideration would need to be given to its set up and membership.

14. If answered Strongly Agree or Agree to Question 13, what should its functions be?

The responsibility of the Board should be to assist ROs/EROs in carrying out their functions in relation to elections and electoral registration. It should provide co-ordination of key processes and promoting good practice. It could provide training in key areas and provide advice and guidance, so there is consistent approach across Wales, when required.

15. Should the Electoral Management Board have powers to issue directions to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers?

16. Should the Electoral Management Board have the power to issue advice to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers on the carrying out of their functions?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

As mentioned previously careful consideration needs to be given on who is appointed to the board. Members should have substantial knowledge and experience in delivering elections and electoral registration. The power should be used to ensure consistency but should be respectful of any arguments for local choice in the exercise of discretion by RO's

17. What are your views on who should be members of the Electoral Management Board and how they should be appointed?

Members of the board need to be able to inspire confidence in both ROs and electoral candidates/agents. They will require extensive experience not only of the legislation but also the practicalities of work as an ERO/RO

18. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposals to provide for greater electoral certainty by extending the statutory time during which no final electoral review reports can be published and no electoral review orders may be made?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please explain your answer:

This would avoid resource implications for councils and administrators extending the timetable.

19a. At which point in the electoral cycle should the Commission be prevented from publishing electoral review reports:

Within twelve months of an ordinary election

Within fifteen months of an ordinary election

Other – please specify

19b. Do you agree the Commission should, as far as possible, be required to schedule electoral reviews within two years of a community review being completed?

Yes – it would be sensible to schedule electoral reviews within two years of a community review be completed by a local authority.

20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the suggested proposals for setting maximum review and decision making periods?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

We support any changes to the electoral review process that brings greater electoral certainty for administrators, councillors and prospective candidates. The proposal to set a maximum period of 15 months to conduct an electoral review with decisions required to be made by Welsh Ministers to implement the recommendations within three months of receiving the final report provides a clear timeframe.

21. What are your views on whether a power to pause the conduct of electoral reviews should be included in legislation?

It seems sensible to have this power because of the uncertainty of when the next UK Parliamentary election may take place or any other snap election. Also should there be another public health emergency.

22. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of a common, extended list of mandatory consultees for all parts of the electoral review process?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

So that there is a consistent approach and as many key stakeholders are included.

23. To what extent do you agree or disagree that requirements to engage with eligible voters as part of the electoral review process should be strengthened, including in respect of ward names?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

We are supportive of this in principal, but this would have a considerable impact on the resources of the local authority. This should be fully funded and resource templates to be provided to assist consistency.

24. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to amend and extend the considerations the Commission must take into account when determining electoral arrangements which maximise effective and convenient local government?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

The emphasis on ensuring the ratio of local government electors to the number of members of the council to be elected is, as far practicable, the same in every electoral ward of the principal area fails to take account other factors that can impact councillor workload.

Such as the existence of tourism population, the levels of deprivation in a ward, the nature and concentration of businesses and the whether the ward is urban and rural are important factors to consider when determining council size.

25. Do you agree with our proposals requiring the Commission to undertake a further consultation where a recommendation in its proposed final review report is not one of the options it consulted upon in its draft report?

Yes we agree with this proposal.

26. Do you agree with our proposals to enable Welsh Ministers to require the Commission to revisit a part of an electoral review before they make an electoral review order?

We do not agree with this proposal as we believe it would take away the independence of the review.

27. Are there are any further changes to the electoral review process that should be considered?

We have no further suggestions to make.

28. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the purpose of the six-week representation period should be clarified in the legislation?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

This provides greater clarification of the process.

29. Do you agree that Welsh Ministers should be required to consider any representations received during this period before taking any action to direct the Commission to undertake further work or implement, modify or not implement the recommendations set out in the final recommendations report?

30. To what extent do you agree or disagree that legal requirements on the Commission to provide hard copies of documentation should be removed, except for when they are requested?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

We are supportive of this proposal.

31. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals for legislative change in relation to community reviews?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

We are supportive of the proposals that will bring consistency to both the electoral review and community review process.

32. Please provide any further comments on how you think the process of conducting community reviews could be improved.

None.

33. To what extent do you agree or disagree that seaward boundary review arrangements should be revised to include the ability for the Commission to undertake reviews relating to multiple local government areas and the expansion and

contraction of seaward boundaries in a single review process? Should those arrangements to be included in the same review order?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

We have no comment to make.

34. Do you agree with our proposals to transfer the functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales to the Commission?

35. Do you agree that functions relating to the determination of the salaries of chief executives should be abolished and not transferred?

Yes the salary of a Chief Executive, as with any employee, is a matter for each council as employer to determine in accordance with local priorities and the prevailing market conditions.

36. What do you think about the idea that new powers should be created to enable determinations to be made about parachute payments for councillors?

37. Do you agree with our proposal for Wales to maintain a single regulatory framework on political finance for reserved and devolved elections in Wales, where appropriate?

38. Please provide any further comments on the specific measures under consideration regarding political finance.

39. What types of innovation in electoral administration would you like to see piloted in the future?

The areas that we would like piloted in the future include

- *Online voting*
- *Automatic and compulsory registration*
- *Extending the election timetable*
- *Digital registers*
- *Polling hours*
- *Polling station provision*

40. How could we facilitate a more varied mix of local authorities participating in future pilots?

A long timeframe, clear direction and understanding of the process involved.

41. What are your views on a power of direction for Welsh Ministers which would enable them to compel a local authority to pilot electoral innovations?

42. Should Returning Officers be subject to specific Welsh language requirements when elections take place?

Yes
No
Don't know

Please explain your answer:

43. Are there any types of services you would like to see Returning Officers providing in Welsh?

44. Have you ever experienced any issue related to the Welsh language during elections?

Yes
No
Don't know

Please explain your answer:

Chapter 5

45. Should the Welsh Government consider making provision for an online voter information platform? What information should be provided on the platform and who should host it?

Yes
No
Don't know

Please explain your answer:

46. Who would need to provide information to an online voter information platform and how could they be supported to do so?

47. What should be done to encourage political parties to produce accessible materials?

48. To what extent do you agree or disagree that that the returning officer at devolved elections should be under a duty to provide such equipment as it is reasonable to provide for the purposes of making it easier for disabled people to vote?

The Elections Act 2022 includes provisions for reserved polls relating to assisting people with disabilities to vote, and introduces a duty on the Electoral Commission to provide guidance to ROs on the requirement to provide reasonable equipment to

assist voters with disabilities in polling stations. ROs must have regard to this guidance, which will support them to make accessibility arrangements for the May 2023 elections and beyond. It would be beneficial for similar arrangements for devolved polls.

49. What support should be put in place to ensure the returning officer is able to effectively discharge that role?

Guidance and funding to cover any new burdens.

50. Do you think the Welsh Government should specify in regulations the type of assistance which must be offered to disabled voters in polling stations?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

There should be consistency of approach between reserved and devolved polls when it comes to equipment provision for disabled electors.

51. What sort of assistance do you think should be offered to disabled voters in polling stations?

52. In addition to provisions in the Curriculum for Wales, are there any other measures that the Welsh Government should put in place through the education system to ensure that learners in Wales can confidently take part in Welsh elections?

53. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the definition of the electoral offence of Undue Influence provided by section 114A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 be used for devolved elections?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

Following the changes in the UK Elections Act 2022 it would seem appropriate to review.

54. Do you think some or all of these proposed actions described in the White Paper will help to contribute to reducing instances of abuse of candidates?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

55. If an exemption from candidates spending limits for security related spending is sought, what activities should be included in that exemption?

56. Will the proposed addition to the standard wording included in the Statement of Persons Nominated form have the desired effect of reducing occurrences of abuse or would different measures would be more effective?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

The intention to include a standard description of the geographical qualifications for standing as a candidate on the statement of persons nominated is likely to have limited impact and do little to remove local pressure on candidates to publish their home address.

57. What other actions would contribute to reducing instances of abuse of candidates?

58. Should Welsh Ministers legislate to require the establishment and maintenance of an 'Access to Elected Office Fund'?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

59. Should this Fund be available to support candidates from under-represented groups for all devolved Welsh ordinary and by-elections?

60. If you agree the Fund should be a requirement set out in primary legislation, what should be the parameters within which the Fund should operate?

61. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the requirement to set out the Local Government Candidates' Survey questions in regulations should be removed?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

61a. If Strongly Agree or Agree, should the survey be updated through a formal review process involving key partners?

62. Do you agree there should be flexibility for local authorities to ask questions about local widening participation measures?

63. Do you agree questions should be included in the survey about candidates' experiences of abuse and harassment (see the section on "other measures we are taking to ensure candidates safety")?

64. Do you think Welsh Ministers should approve the full set of questions or only the core all-Wales questions?

Chapter 6

65. What are your views on the impact of maintaining the current renewal time of 5 years in light of the Elections Act 2022 changes?

The renewal time of 5 years should be reduced to 3 years allowing devolved polls to follow the same timescale for reserved polls. This should limit voter confusion and reduce administrative burden on EROs. This will help with any divergence issues.

66. Would you like to see advance voting and /or voting in a range of venues offered for devolved elections across Wales?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

67. Do you support the introduction of an online absent voting application system in Wales? If yes, what would you like to see in place?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

We are supportive of an online absent voting application system for devolved elections and should look at using the same system UK Government introduces for reserved polls. Two different online portals to apply for an absent vote is both confusing for electors and creates additional burdens for electoral administrators.

The communication requirements would be complex to ensure electors understood the need to complete two different online postal vote applications. The complication could lead to electors choosing only to have a postal vote for reserved polls due to the high-profile nature of UK Parliamentary elections and detrimentally impact turnout at devolved polls.

68a. Do you think that such a system would help to reduce the number of postal votes rejected due to errors on PVS' and help raise public confidence in the postal voting system?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

An online system could make it easier for electors to apply for a postal vote and prevent errors on the initial application.

68b. Could a manual system be used to do this?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

It would not be practicable to add validation checks to a manual system.

69. Would the introduction of a postal ballot tracking system, such as that described above, create a significant administrative burden on local authority electoral teams?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

With the high volume of electors with a postal vote it would be an extra administrative burden. No duty should be placed on the RO to contact electors and it would be unmanageable during the short election timetable. The onus should be on the elector to check, clear guidance is provided on how to complete the postal vote. Would such a system be viable in terms of security and working with IT systems?

70. Do you support the introduction of a postal vote e-tracking system in Wales?

Fully support

Partially support

Do not support

Please explain your answer:

As explained above.

71. Do you support the wider introduction and use of Digital Registers for non-reserved elections in Wales? What are the benefits or detriments of doing so?

Yes but this would need to be fully funded. Local authorities do not have funds to move to a digital solution.

72. Are there any potential barriers to a wider introduction of Digital Registers?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

As outlined above there are huge cost implications. Also this would only be for devolved polls, so there is another divergence issue.

Chapter 7

73. To what extent do you agree or disagree that there should be mandatory training and development for councillors?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

74. If Strongly Agree or agree to question 73, should this mandatory training and development for councillors include principal councils and town and community councils?

75. If Strongly Agree or Agree to question 74, should the expectations for mandatory training be different between principal councils and town and community councils?

76. If Strongly Agree or Agree to question 75, what proposals would you make for areas to be included in mandatory training?

77. If Strongly Agree or Agree that there should be mandatory training, do you consider candidates should be asked to confirm their willingness to undertake it as part of the nomination of candidates' process?

78. Should there then be sanctions for candidates who do not confirm they are prepared to undertake mandatory training?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

79. Should a commitment to undertake mandatory training and development form part of the oath successful candidates must take before being able to take up their office?

Yes

No

Don't know

Please explain your answer:

80. If Yes at Q79 what sanctions should apply to elected members for then not undertaking mandatory training and development?

81. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the policy proposal to bring arrangements for Town and Community councillors into line with the disqualification regime for principal council members in Wales, so that members of Town and Community councils are disqualified from becoming a member of the Senedd?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

82. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the grace period for all councillors elected to the Senedd should be retained?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

83. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach to assessing the impacts of the proposals set out in the draft IIA? Do you have any comments?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

84. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach to assessing the costs and benefits of the legislative proposals set out in the draft RIA?

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Why do you say this?

85. Are there other areas that should be considered as we develop the IIA and RIA further?

86. Please identify any other sources of data and information that we should consider in the IIA and RIA ?

87. We would like to know your views on the effects that our proposals for electoral reform would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- opportunities for people to use Welsh, and
- on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

We support the use of both the Welsh and English languages.

88. Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and
- no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

As above.

89. We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any comments on any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please tell us below.

No further comments to make.

Name:

Organisation (if applicable): Flintshire County Council

Email address

Responses to consultations may be made public. To keep your response anonymous (including email addresses) tick the box.

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Agenda Item 8

This Council notes the current use of many types of animals at various events held by private organisations, friends of groups and the Council across the County and wishes to continue to do all that it can to promote, safeguard and encourage high standards of animal welfare.

The RSPCA states that it is opposed to the use of animals in entertainment or animal encounters where distress or suffering to an animal is likely to be caused. However, the organisation also recognises the benefits of certain types of events using animals, for example:-

- dog agility events that involve training dogs to run through and over obstacles using treats, toys and praise; and
- the use of animals in schools and other educational establishments (i.e. in the form of visits as opposed to the educational establishments keeping the animals themselves) with a view to teaching young people about animal care and welfare, which is a positive step towards ending cruelty towards animals in the future.

The introduction of the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021 is a significant step towards effectively controlling the use of, and encounters with, animals and ensuring their welfare. However, it is noted that there may be instances where, even though certain events may not in principle be supported by the Council, the Authority may still be required (by law) to grant a licence if all relevant conditions are met.

Notwithstanding the above, the Council considers that:-

- no animal should be made to endure stress or suffering;
- all appropriate steps should be taken to mitigate any risk of stress or suffering to animals in any relevant events being held by any organisation within the County;
- certain animals, such as dogs, may benefit from partaking in events but steps should still be taken to ensure their welfare and minimise any risk to them; and
- the use of animals in certain instances – such as in schools, other educational establishments and community settings for educational and conservation purposes, by suitably registered charities – where appropriate and will have no negative impact on animal welfare subject to such events being managed properly.

This Council therefore resolves:-

- I. to note the implications of relevant licensing legislation which may grant, or require the Council to grant, licences to third parties for the use of animals within the County;
- II. subject to (III) below, to cease the use of animals in Council events and that, in particular, no Council organised event will include the use of reindeer or donkeys;
- III. that the use of animals such as birds, dogs, reptiles and invertebrates such as spiders, scorpions, crustaceans, or molluscs in Council organised events be permitted only where:-
 - A. animals are being displayed for educational purposes or for purposes which are consistent with their natural habitat and activities; and
 - B. the relevant non profit organisation providing the animal(s) holds a certificate issued in accordance with the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Wales) Regulations 2021; and
 - C. any appropriate mitigating measures as required by relevant officers of the Council are put in place to ensure the welfare of the animal(s) concerned and to ensure that they are not put at risk by partaking in the event.
- IV. to apply the principles in (II) and (III) to events organised by other organisations where council co-operation other than statutory obligations are requested, such as in the case of road closures, publicity, and use of council buildings or land etc.
- V. to circulate the above resolutions to all relevant departments, and to schools.

Proposer: Dan Rose
Seconded: Carolyn Preece

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER 10: QUESTIONS

(1) Councillor Bernie Attridge:

Can the Leader of the Council confirm that the Largest Town in Flintshire Connah's Quay will re-open its Sports Centre for community use that was agreed by a previous Labour Administration?

(2) Councillor Bernie Attridge:

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing confirm to full Council that his administration has no plans to privatise our Direct Labour Organisation in our HRA? If there are no plans to privatise can you advise what plans are there to expand the workforce so we don't have to rely on Contractors to fill the gaps.

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