

**MINUTE EXTRACT  
CABINET  
4 NOVEMBER, 2019**

51 **COUNCIL TAX (EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM)**

Councillor Pat Hackett introduced a report which outlined the current arrangements for the charging of Council Tax on Empty Homes in Wirral together with new powers to increase this charge under the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018.

The report sought approval to allow a 200% premium to be levied, on homes that had been empty for five years or more, from the 1 April 2020. This would make the Council Tax payable on such properties 300%.

The matter affected all Wards within the Borough.

Appended to the report at Appendix 1 was Exemptions to the Empty Homes Premium.

Councillor Hackett informed that this was an initiative put forward by Councillor Janette Williamson and the driver behind the proposal was not increased revenue through council tax, it was about bringing pressure to bear on owners of empty properties to bring them back into use and provide homes for people who needed them. The Council's figures indicated that there were hundreds of properties which could be in use but were being left vacant. Wirral was currently under pressure to build at least 800 new homes a year and the owners of these empty properties should be playing their part by bringing their property back into use for rent. Ideally, no one would be paying this extra council tax and of course people could avoid it by letting their properties and providing homes for people in Wirral.

Councillor Hackett reported that there were Wirral residents desperate for homes and there was a scandalous situation where hundreds of homes were vacant and that could not be right. Vulnerable people were looking for homes and this initiative was an attempt to alleviate the situation.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham informed that homelessness took many forms and unfortunately people who slept rough were just the tip of the iceberg. There were people sofa surfing, staying with relatives and adults still living with their parents because they could not find a home of their own. It was an absolute scandal that, whilst that was going on, there were homes standing empty. Councillor Whittingham knew that property owners might see the charges as being punitive but he encouraged them to speak to the Council who would encourage and help them to get these homes occupied again and so avoid this charge. The Council had a very active team that dealt with empty properties.

Councillor Chris Jones reported that landlords and owners needed to take responsibility. People would never have pride in their streets when they were living beside empty and dilapidated houses, if this was allowed to carry on.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Cabinet recommends to the Council that the full premium of 200% be applied to homes that have been empty for five years or more as allowed by the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 from 1 April 2020.**