

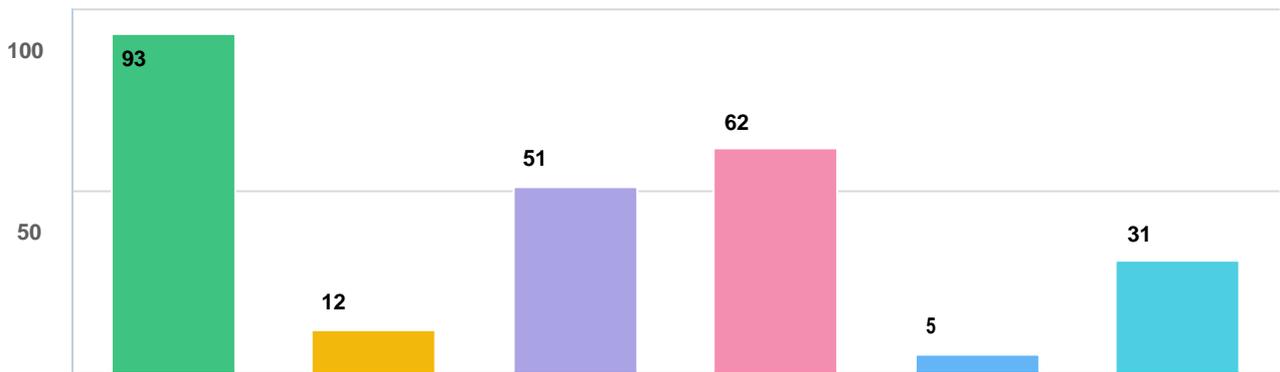
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## Appendix Two: Proposed changes to Council Tax premiums on empty homes

197 responses were received during the consultation period (1 November to 4 January 2022).

Around 44% were from landlords in Bury (with both occupied and empty properties) and a further 33% were from members of the public. A significantly smaller number of businesses and charities also responded. Thirty one other people responded including relative of second home owner, potential second home owner, Bury Council officers, owner of property but can't live in it full time due to working away.

**Q1. What answer below best describes your interest in this consultation? (Please tick all that apply)**



### Response options

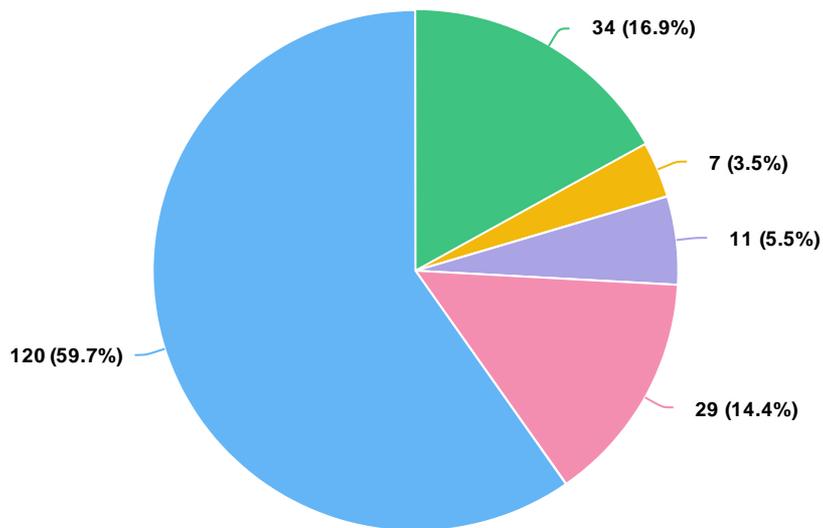
- A member of the public
- A local business owner
- A landlord of a property in Bury that isn't empty
- A landlord of a property in Bury that is empty
- A local charity, voluntary or community organisation
- Other (please specify)

Base: 254

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**Q2. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposals to remove Council tax discounts and apply a 100% Council Tax on empty properties?**



**Response options**

Strongly agree   Agree   Neither agree nor disagree   Disagree   Strongly disagree

Base : 201 responses

From the chart above it can be seen that, the majority of respondents (74%) disagreed with the proposals and further analysis shows that these respondents classified themselves as either a member of the public, a landlord with a non-empty property or a landlord with an empty property (although respondents could classify themselves as for example a member of public and a landlord) 20% agreed with the remainder neither agreeing or disagreeing.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any other comments. A range of themes were raised such as the justification of paying if the property is empty and council services are not being used, to perceived unavoidable delays because of renovations or letting issues.

Those whose comments related to the renovations also commented that they were bettering the property for future use. Similarly, landlords talked about the time taken to bring a property back up to standard. Some of the comments received relating to this are shown below.

*It is very unfair to charge full tax on empty property, especially during covid 19. People haven't got money for repairs or they cant find a reliable builder or even building material, easy target...*

*"Bury Council should, in my opinion, take steps to find out why a property is empty and take this into account before increasing council tax.*

*In my case, the property was left to me when my parents passed away. As the property was in need of renovation, it was originally my intention to complete the works before selling/letting. Unfortunately, due to other family problems at the time, my own ill health, the loss of my job, legal issues regarding transfer of ownership and not being able to get builders during covid as they couldn't get materials etc*

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*I am paying a premium for an empty property at the moment but was unable to carry on renovations due to covid but the authority didn't take it into consideration For me, the reason this property is empty and remains empty is out of my hands. I am currently selling it, but due to COVID, solicitor issues and other issues (Including Fire proofing issues and delays) I am unable to sell it. Pilling yet more costs on people like myself is a sure way of driving people into financial difficulties but on the other hand, people who are purposely hogging properties should pay a greater percentage than single person owners.*

*I am a landlord that lets a property. The property is part of my future pension arrangements (not that that should matter). The 100% one month discount is helpful as their are occasions when a tenant chooses to vacate the property and it needs to be relet. As a conscientious landlord I want the property to be in a good condition for the new tenant and will always look to make improvements where necessary - for example decorating. This is better done in between lets for the convenience of the tenants. there will be other occasions when it is not possible to get lets "back to back" and there is a short time lag between when one tenant vacates the property a new tenant arrives. Your proposals are therefore extremely unfair to those landlords that are trying to do the right things and providing rented accommodation to those people that either cannot afford to buy their own property or choose not to buy their own property as they prefer to rent instead!*

*As a landlord of twenty years with 16 apartments who is very proactive in looking after my tenants with repairs etc, it is very difficult if a tenant leaves to relet the flat immediately and one month at least gives a chance to do necessary repairs, decorate, advertise, arrange viewings and the new tenant moves in. It is very unfair to have to pay rates on an empty property when doing all within my power to relet because it is no advantage to me to keep it vacant.*

There were a smaller number of comments relating to empty properties that have been sold but are not yet occupied and whether 100% council tax should apply.

Theme	Number of comments
Delays to renovation work because of 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties e.g. builders or planning permission	47
Takes time from a tenant vacating to relet	32
Empty properties do not make use of council services	27
Second homes do not make use of council services	12
Empty properties that are sold	10

Respondents who disagreed with the proposals were more likely to give comments. 2 comments were received from those that agreed with the proposals and can be seen below:

*"We need to reduce the number of empties within the borough and bring more empties back into use. This should be in line with Bury's housing strategy and look at empties just as importantly as new build when it comes to addressing housing needs (the private sector needs just as much emphasis as RSL's).*

*By removing discounts for empties its another tool for a local authority to use to promote empties being brought back in to use proactively. "*  
*Empty properties within the private sector need to be addressed to meet our housing*

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*needs. Our housing strategy is looking at empty properties proactively rather than local authority dealing with complaints. If council tax discounts are removed for any empty property over 6 months then a positive impact on the number of empties should be seen.*

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