

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Council Tax Premiums - Policy

Meeting/Date: CLT – 24th November 2025
Decision – 4th December 2025

Executive Portfolio: Resident Services and Corporate Performance
(Cllr S Ferguson)

Report by: K Kelly – Revenues and Benefits Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

On 11th December 2024, the Council made a determination to:

- 1) Amend the existing empty homes premium to charge an additional 100% Council Tax premium after one year of the conditions being met, rather than the current two years, with effect from 1st April 2026
- 2) Introduce a second homes premium of 100% with effect from 1st April 2026

During the same meeting, the Council provided delegated authority for the s.151 Officer, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, to adopt a policy setting out exceptions to the premiums in line with any regulations or guidance issued by Central Government, and to make subsequent updates to the policy as and when required.

Recommendation(s):

The Corporate Leadership Team is

RECOMMENDED

To endorse the recommendation to adopt the policy shown in Appendix A.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek formal approval for the adoption of a policy setting out the application of exceptions to Council Tax premiums.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 allows the Council to apply a Council Tax premium on empty and unfurnished properties after one year rather than two, and to implement a premium on dwellings on second homes. These measures are intended to incentivise the occupation of empty homes, maximising the availability of housing within the district.
- 2.2 In December 2024, Huntingdonshire District Council made a determination to:
 - 1) Amend the existing empty homes premium to charge an additional 100% Council Tax premium after one year of the conditions being met, rather than the current two years, with effect from 1st April 2026
 - 2) Introduce a second homes premium of 100% with effect from 1st April 2026
- 2.4 The Council has delegated authority for the adoption of a formal policy covering the application of these exceptions to the s.151 Officer, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance.

3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1 In order to ensure that the implementation of premiums works towards policy aims of encouraging empty homes back into use and does not unfairly penalise owners, Government has passed legislation to provide exceptions to the premiums in certain circumstances.
- 3.2 In addition to these mandated exceptions, Local Authorities can take account of other circumstances in its application of premiums to ensure that the approach delivers policy aims and does not unfairly penalise those where the dwellings are empty for genuine reasons.
- 3.3 Any decision to reduce or remit Council Tax would be taken using the Council's discretionary powers under s13a of The Local Government Finance Act 1992. These powers exist for any Council Tax charge not just the premiums, and the policy that covers the use of such discretion can be found in APPENDIX B.
- 3.4 Following a request from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a working group meeting was held on 16th September 2025 to explore scenarios where applications for reducing or remitting the premiums may or may not be considered favourably.

- 3.5 A number of different scenarios were explored, and consideration was given to how the premium exceptions interacted with other exemptions and discounts that already feature within the Council Tax system.
- 3.6 The discussion concluded with agreement that rather than looking to define a set of circumstances where applications to reduce or remit the premium may be considered more or less favourably, it would be preferable to consider applications on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the policy intention of bringing empty homes back into full time use.
- 3.7 Assurances were provided to the group on how decisions would be reached, who were also advised of the clear route for escalation and appeal in the event of dispute.
- 3.8 A policy covering the application of exceptions has now been developed and can be found in APPENDIX A.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 Bringing empty homes back into use can have a positive impact on the local housing market and the communities in which these homes are situated.
- 4.2 The premiums are not intended to penalise owners who are already taking steps to bring properties back into use, and the list of exceptions set out by Government provide for a range of circumstances where the premium would either be delayed or would not apply.

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

[\(See Corporate Plan\)](#)

- 5.1 The Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028 outlines our ambition to:
 - 1) Improve the quality of life for local people
 - 2) Create a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
 - 3) Doing our core work well
- 5.2 The application of Council Tax premiums on unoccupied properties is intended to encourage owners to bring these back into use, directly supporting these ambitions.
- 5.3 Bringing empty properties back into use can help to meet the Council's housing need and supports the journey of Pride in Place as part of the Council's Place Strategy – Huntingdon Futures.
- 5.4 Where the status of the unoccupied properties remains unchanged following the implementation of the proposals, additional Council Tax will be generated, contributing to the cost of local services.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Exceptions to the premiums are set out within The Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings and Consequential Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was conducted in advance of the decision to introduce the additional premiums, which confirmed that there would be no differential impact on protected characteristics. This document can be found within the Background Papers link.

8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 8.1 The adoption of a formal policy ensures fair and consistent decision making and reduces the risk of challenge.

9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

APPENDIX A – Council Tax Premiums - Exceptions Policy

APPENDIX B – Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy (s13a)

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Council Decision 11th December 2024](#)

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Katie Kelly / Revenues and Benefits Manager
Tel No: 01480 388151
Email: katie.kelly@huntingdonshire.gov.uk