

Council tax changes approved for empty homes

COUNCIL TAKES FIRST STEP IN TACKLING ISSUE OF EMPTY HOMES

The City of Edinburgh Council is set to introduce changes to council tax that will aim to tackle the issue of empty homes in the Capital.

[A report](#) to the Council's Finance and Budget Committee approved today outlines the plans, which includes reducing the council tax discount rate for empty and unfurnished homes from 50% to 10% after 6 months and increasing council tax by 100% after 12 months.

The planned changes come following new Scottish Government arrangements enabling councils, in certain circumstances, to use council tax as an incentive for encouraging owners of empty homes to bring them back into use and increase the available property stock.

This is specifically to tackle empty and unfurnished homes that have been lying unused for extended periods of time. Council tax would continue to be waived for the first six months of a property being empty and generous discounts would be applied if the property is actively being marketed.



Convener of
Finance and
Resources Alasdair
Rankin

Councillor Alasdair Rankin, the city's Finance and Budget Convener, said: "Even though Edinburgh has a relatively low level of empty homes in both the social and private sectors, the Council has a duty to look at all the options open to us to deliver more homes.

"It is of utmost importance that we bring more empty homes back into use and council tax is just one of the avenues that the Council is looking to use. This report is undoubtedly a major step forward in tackling this pressing issue."

The work forms part of the city's Empty Homes Task Force, which was established by the Council with the objective of bringing empty homes back into use. The Task Force has representatives from all political groups, Shelter/Scottish Empty Homes Partnership, Orchard and Shipman and Link Housing Association.

Councillor Cammy Day, the city's Housing Leader, said: "[The Capital Coalition has set up an Empty Homes Task Force](#) to examine ways of bringing empty homes back into use. Link Housing Association – one of the task force members – has secured funding from the Scottish Government's Empty Homes Fund. The Council also support a number of letting schemes to help owners of empty homes bring them back into use."

Council records indicate that there are over 1700 properties classed as long term empty and approximately 5800 properties attracting second home discounts. The Council will review all classification to ensure accuracy on an ongoing basis.

It is planned that the policy will be implemented in the second half of 2013/14 supported by an information campaign to raise awareness.