

Item 9 - Question Time

Response to Ms J Douglas

The Council agreed a 100% increase resulting in a 200% charge on certain vacant properties. The Council did **not** agree to a 200% increase as shown in the question.

The Scottish Government has recently released updated guidance to Councils in respect of “long term empty properties” and the discounts that could be considered. This guidance is currently being reviewed by Council officers who intend to write to affected account holders to (a) advise what this additional guidance means and (b) for customers to provide any further information to allow a further review of discount to be considered if the customer wishes.

Early estimations are that most accounts will see no change in the 200% charge currently being levied, but some accounts will. The correspondence to customers will include notification that Council Tax recovery against the affected accounts will be suspended until August 2015 to (a) recognise the exceptional circumstances of the additional guidance being provided (b) give customers time to consider the additional guidance and provide further information where appropriate and (c) for Council officers to consider the current 200% charge based upon the any new information provided by customers.

It is important to note that entries on the Valuation Register are a matter for the Assessor and the Council then has a legal obligation to levy Council Tax on all properties on the Register.

I will however request that Officers discuss this matter with the Assessor and see what action may be possible. Depending on the response, discussion with the Scottish Government may be an appropriate step discussing whether certain types/categories of entries should be on the Valuation List. I will undertake to provide an update to this Council at the next meeting in June.