

New / Revised Council Tax discounts, exemptions and premiums**Council Tax Carers Discount:**

Tandridge District Council is now the only Surrey Authority not to agree to this discount or exemption due to previous Council Officer's (S151) deciding against a recommendation.

Introduction and background

Corporate Parenting means that the local authority pursues the same outcomes for children in care (looked after children) as a parent. The County Council retain the legal responsibility for 'looked after' children and care leavers. However, The Children and Social Work Act 2017 brought about change in 2017 when it determined that all local authorities have a responsibility to be "good corporate parents". The above Act introduced seven principles of corporate parenting. One of these principles is the need to prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living

Care leavers have often had their childhoods punctuated by instability and trauma, they leave home earlier and have less support than other young people. As a result, they have some of the worst life chances in the county. A 2016 Children's Society report found that when care leavers move into independent accommodation, they find managing their own finances extremely challenging. With no or limited family support and insufficient financial education care leavers are falling into debt and financial difficulty.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 asks local authorities to expand its corporate parenting duties to care leavers and provide an exemption or discount on paying Council Tax up to the age of 25, helping them make the transition to independence. Eligibility is as follows:

Care Leavers

If you are a care leaver aged under 25 who is paying Council Tax or living with someone who pays Council Tax, we may be able to reduce the amount you pay.

How to tell if you qualify as a Care Leaver

You are deemed to be a Care Leaver if:

- You are aged under 25.
- You were previously in local authority care.
- You are supported by a personal adviser or someone from the Leaving Care Team within any local authority Social Services department.

What will I pay?

- If you live alone in the property you will have nothing to pay.
- If you live with other people, all of whom are Care Leavers, you will have nothing to pay.
- If you live with someone else who is not a Care Leaver the Council Tax bill will be reduced by 25%.
- If you live with two or more people who are not Care Leavers, no discount is available.

The reduction can only be paid up to your 25th birthday.

A neighboring authority, Mole Valley, has 8 care leavers ranging from Band A to C.

Council Tax Carers Discount – Financial impact:

Surrey County Council (SCC) have committed to paying their proportion (75.8%). As yet the Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner (SPCC) has not been consulted. If the SPCC declines the exemption and discount, Tandridge would therefore have to contribute 12% to each care leavers' Council Tax bill.

There is estimated about 10 care leavers between 18 and 25 living in independent living or semi-independent living in Tandridge. A band "C" property is approximately £1,851.46 charged per annum for Council Tax. The estimated element if the SPCC disagrees would be approximately £2,000.

Council Tax Long Term Empty Homes Premium:

The Government believes these changes could help to reduce the number of empty homes by incentivising owners to bring them back into use and thereby helping to meet the current housing shortage.

In addition, increases in the number of empty properties that an authority has in its area, has a negative impact on the value of new homes bonus (NHB) it can claim. The calculation for NHB compares the number of physical properties less empty properties between years and after subtracting a 4% expected growth value, determines the base of the grant.

Introduction and background

The Chancellor's November 2017 budget announced that local authorities, with effect from April 2019, are now able to increase the additional Council Tax premium for a property left unfurnished and unoccupied over 10 years from 50% to 300%. This change was to encourage owners of empty homes to bring them properties back into use.

From 1 April 2020, when a property becomes empty and unfurnished, Strategy and Resource Committee, held on 23 January 2020, agreed to the following changes to long term empty homes:

- **From April 2020** onwards to charge a 100% premium on an empty and unfurnished property over 2 years.
- **From April 2020** onwards to increase the premium to 200% for properties that have been empty for more than 5 years.

Tandridge District Council, as of 12 November 2021, had 14 properties that have been empty and unfurnished over 10 years and the table below details them by individual bands.

Empty Over 10 years*	Number of properties	Council Tax 2021/22
Band A	1	£1,395.86
Band B	6	£1,652.55
Band C	4	£1,851.46
Band D	1	£2,114.32
Band E	2	£2,542.66
Band F	0	N/A
Band G	0	N/A
Band H	0	N/A

***As at 12/11/2021**

An additional table below highlights neighboring authorities' current additional premium for properties empty and unfurnished over 10 years.

Council	Current Premium
Croydon	300%
Epsom and Ewell	300%
Guildford	300%
Mid Sussex	300%
Mole Valley	100%
Reigate and Banstead	300%
Sevenoaks	300%
Surrey Heath	50%
Tandridge	200%
Woking	300%

Council Tax Long Term Empty Homes Premium – financial impact

A 300% premium would increase the total tax base as at December 2021 by 14 Band D equivalents, which is worth approximately £3,256.26, based on Tandridge's 11% share of the Council Tax. This additional income is likely to diminish over time as the change may encourage bringing homes back into use more quickly, which is a positive outcome given the shortage of housing in the District.

**Approximate figures are based on the current 2021/22 Council Tax figures, however, as Council Tax increases year on year you would expect additional revenue to be higher than forecasted.*