

Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC

Assembly Member for Aberconwy
Aelod Cynulliad dros Aberconwy



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Shadow Spokesperson for Local Government
Llefarydd yr Wrthblaid ar gyfer Llywodraeth Leol

Cllr Dilwyn Roberts, Leader
Conwy County Borough Council
Bodlondeb
Conwy
LL32 8DU

Office of Janet Finch-Saunders AM,
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LL30 2TL.
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Ref: TYH/JFS/HM
11th August 2016

National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff Bay,
CF99 1NA.
0300 200 7454

Re: Council Tax Premiums Consultation

Dear Councillor Dilwyn Roberts,

I am writing with regards to the current Council Tax Premiums Consultation. I understand that the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 gave discretionary powers to local authorities the discretionary powers to charge a premium of up to 100% of council tax on long-term empty homes and second homes, from 1st April 2017.

In response to this proposal, I am submitting this letter, to be considered as part of the consultation process.

I would like to express clearly that I do not agree with the proposals for a 100% premium to be charged on top of the current rates, and, indeed, that no premium should be added.

My concerns on this matter are as follows:

- The potential detrimental effect on our tourism industry. Many second home owners live outside of Aberconwy, and chose to holiday in this area bringing much-welcomed and regular tourism. Increasing council tax premiums to such an extent may discourage such ownership and dissuade them from holidaying in this area.
- The potentially unaffordable expense faced by those who have had properties on the market for over a year, where, in addition to stress and expense of trying to sell a property, a doubling of council tax premium may add an unnecessary additional burden.
- The potential deterrence to those considering purchasing a 'run-down' property to develop, for residence or holiday let in the future.
- The potential detrimental effect on the property market, and reduction in property sales and investment in the area.
- As noted in the Council's report, there are also concerns regarding potential hardship for some, a potential increase in appeals and avoidance, a potential fall in collection rates, (these last two both leading to a potential increase in recovery action), and the

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Janet Finch-Saunders will treat in confidence any personal information which you may pass on to her, and she will normally allow her staff to see it, so that they can consult with relevant authorities in order to help and advise you. We may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed on issues which you may find of interest. Please let us know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.

Mi wnaiff Janet Finch-Saunders cadw unrhyw wybodaeth personol yn gwbl gyfrinachol, ac fel arfer mi fydd rhaid iddi rannu'r wybodaeth 'efo aelodau o staff i'w galluogi nhw i ddelio 'efo'r awdurdodau perthnasol er mwyn eich helpu a'ch cynorthwyo chi. Efallai mi fydd angen i rywun ysgrifennu atoch er mwyn darparu'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf o bwys. Gadwch wybod i ni os nad oes diddordeb gennych mewn cael eich cysylltu at y diben hwn.

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- inconsistency with the initial premium proposals made by other authorities across North Wales, which could lead to investors looking outside of Conwy County to purchase property
- The Council's report also notes the potential for properties to be re-assessed as commercial, and potentially liable for business rate relief, thereby costing the authority more, rather than generating more income

A number of constituents who own second homes or empty properties within Aberconwy have approached me with the above concerns, as well as individuals concerns of their own, which have been expressed to the Council through their own submissions to the consultation.

I would be grateful if you could advise as to how the submissions to the consultation process will be taken into account when making a decision on this matter.

Finally, I have received concerns from a number of second home owners, expressing their disappointment that the deadline for responses to the consultation was not specified on the letter. Given that this consultation has been undertaken during the summer holiday season, a number of people may be away during this time, and therefore unknowingly miss the deadline. Could you advise as to how this matter will be addressed, and what flexibility may be given to concerns submitted within a reasonable timeframe after the deadline.

I would, one more, like to reaffirm my strong opposition to this proposal.

Yours sincerely,



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