

**COUNCIL**  
**26 SEPTEMBER 2019**

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**OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Council Tax Empty Property Premium**

2. We have considered the proposed changes to the Council Tax Empty Property premium and have agreed to support those proposed changes. The report will now be considered by Cabinet and recommended to Council for approval.
3. The Council can currently charge a Council tax premium of 50 per cent for all unoccupied and unfurnished domestic properties which have been empty for a period of two-years or more, however, new legislation was introduced in November 2018 which will allow Council's to increase that premium by :-
  - (i) 100 per cent for properties which have been empty for two years or more;
  - (ii) 200 per cent for properties which have been empty for five years or more; and
  - (iii) 300 per cent for properties which have been empty for ten years or more.
4. The purpose of the new legislation is to encourage landlords and property owners to bring their empty properties back into use as soon as possible and to penalise those owners who deliberately leave their properties empty for years. There are however, a number of exemptions to provide protection for those owners who are making genuine efforts to bring their long-term properties back into use as part of the proposed changes and Officers will work closely with landlords and owners of long-term empty properties to provide advice and assistance.
5. There has been a consultation with the owners of long-term empty domestic properties, of which there are 154 in Darlington and we were advised that only 25 of those were in arrears with their Council Tax, with the majority of owners paying the empty property premium. It is estimated that, for 2019/20, the Council Tax empty property premium will generate an additional £106k of Council Tax income.

**Work Programme**

6. We considered the draft work programme for the remainder of the 2019/20 Municipal Year. As Members may be aware all items to be considered by Cabinet are now included on the Forward Plan and we will use this to help formulate our work programme going forward.
7. Members have been requested to highlight and identify any areas they would wish to include on the agreed work programme.

**Councillor Scott Durham**  
**Chair Efficiency and Resources Scrutiny Committee**