



Daventry District Council

Consultation on Daventry District Council's Loans for Empty Homes within the Provision of Housing Assistance Policy

Consultation: 3rd December 2018 – 6th January 2019
Summary of responses

Project overview

Background

The Provision of Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) provides for support for the improvement, repair or renovation of accommodation as required under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002. Adopted by Council in 2012, the grants and loans within the HAP form a package developed to support vulnerable people maintain adapt or improve their homes.

This package currently includes loans of up to £15,000, to owners of properties that have been empty for six months or more, in order for them to be brought back into use.

Sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.6 of the Policy refer to the loans, these are summarised below:

- Loan for Social Needs Letting – A condition of this loan is that the property is let through the Council's Choice Based Lettings system. This loan can also be used in a room rental situation.
- Loan for Own Use or Gain – An interest payable loan available where the owner either wishes to sell the property or live in it themselves.

One of the key objectives of the loans has been to increase the rental accommodation supply by bringing empty homes back into use which is a sustainable way to help meet current and future housing demand, alleviating pressure on housing supply in the District. The loans are discretionary and have therefore been offered subject to eligibility, financial assessment and applicable terms and conditions.

Properties can be empty for a number of reasons, and not all owners of empty properties need help, however the loans have been there to provide an option which benefits the property owner and the community. Other courses of action that can encourage empty homes back into use include the application of a Council Tax premium, support and advice, or formal action such as enforcement.

However, only one loan for bringing an empty property into use has ever been taken up. This was in March 2012.

The Council aims to provide support that is best suited to the District and has to consider the most effective way to benefit the community. It is important that resources are targeted to make the best use of what is available and where.

Appendix A – Summary of responses

The Council therefore considered removing the loans from the HAP. Prior to taking a decision on this, the Council has undertaken consultation, the results of which are set out in this report.

Consultation

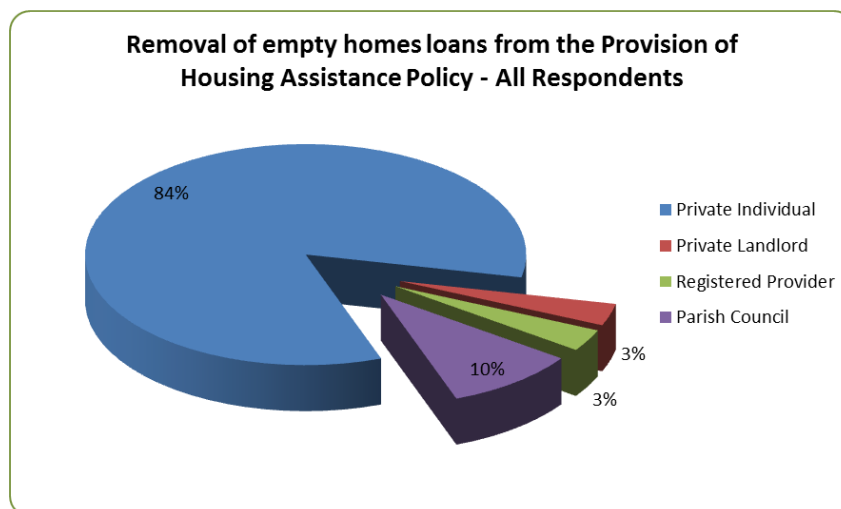
The consultation took place between the 3 December 2018 and 6 January 2019. The consultation was open to the public but targeted charity organisations and landlords, as well as the Council's People's Panel, in order to gauge a fair response.

The consultation exercise asked people to answer a series of five questions on the proposal to remove the Loan for Social Needs Letting and Loan for Own Use or Gain, requesting respondents' views and comments where appropriate.

Respondent profile

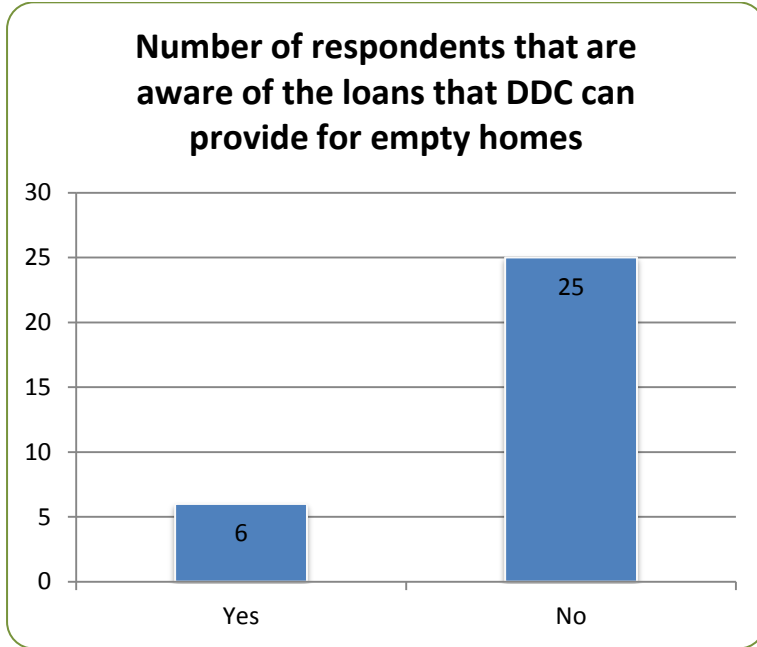
The consultation received 31 responses. The majority of responses were received from private individuals.

Respondent	Number
Private individual	26
Private landlord	1
Registered Provider	1
Local Authority	0
Voluntary or charity organisation	0
Parish Councils	3
Other	0

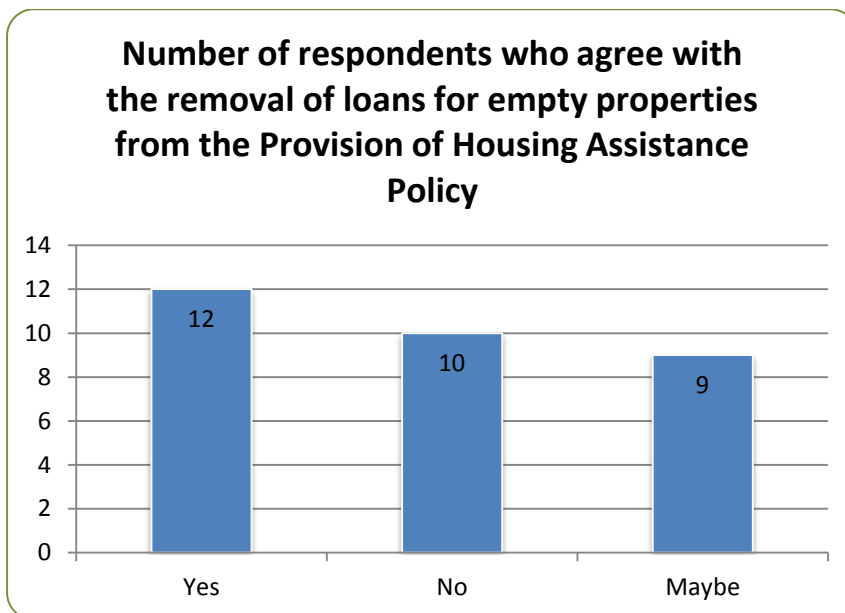


Full results

Respondents were asked if they were aware of the loans offered to bring empty homes back into use under the Provision of Housing Assistance Policy prior to the consultation. Six out of 31 respondents were aware of the assistance.



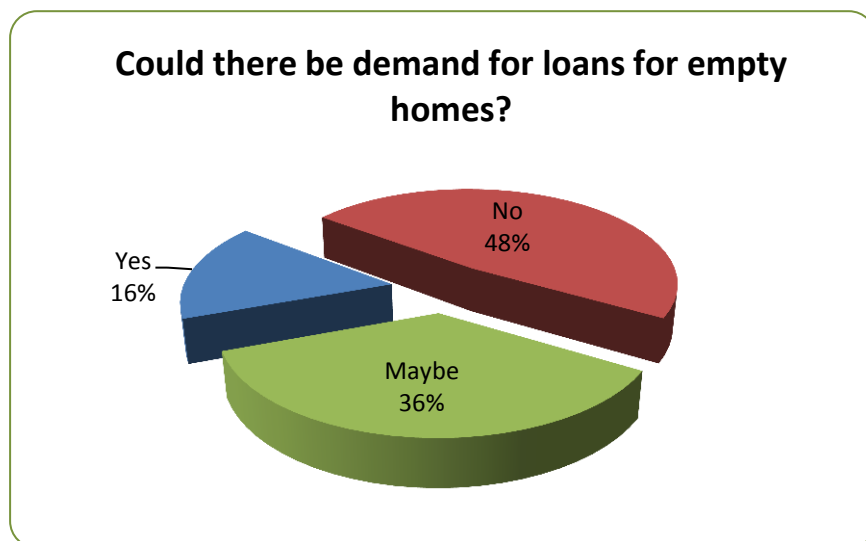
The below graph provides the responses to the proposal to remove the two loans for empty properties from the Provision of Housing Assistance Policy. 12 respondents out of 31 agreed that they should be removed.



Respondents were asked; should the loans remain, if they could provide suggestions to increase the uptake of the loans provided under the Provision of Housing Assistance Policy for empty properties. 11 out of the 12 that responded to this question suggested a form of promoting the service. All responses to this question are shown below. These fall broadly into two categories, those suggesting broader open advertising or publicity, and those specifically targeting properties or property owners.

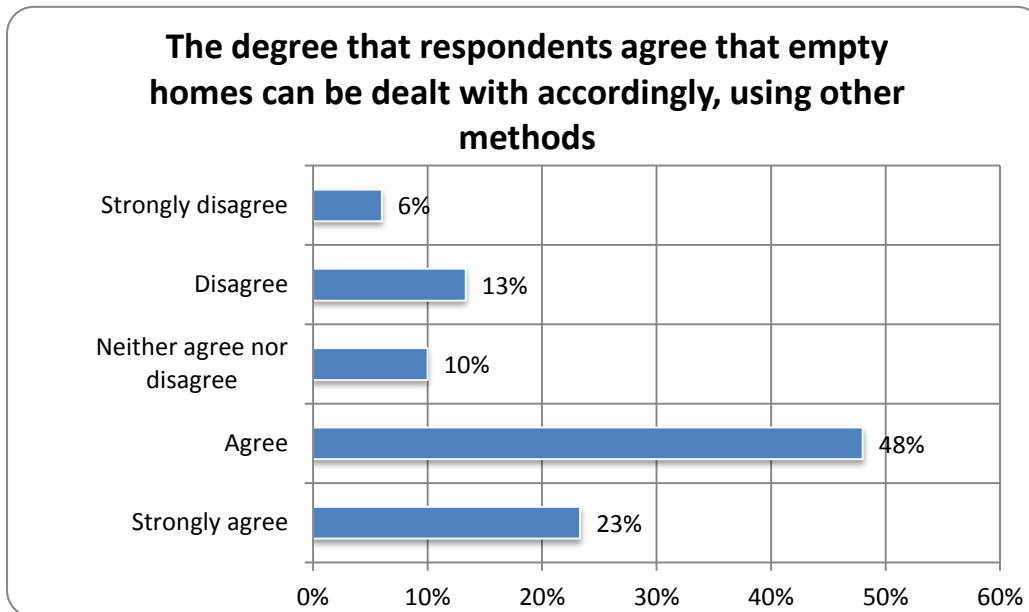
Respondent	Suggestion	Advertise / promote	Targeted
23	via the council's website and the occasional magazine distributed by DDC	✓	
22	Supply full details & how to apply in the Daventry Calling Bulletin	✓	
21	promotion of awareness of loans through media, online, charities & housing/building industry	✓	
20	Via local Parish Council websites	✓	
18	Better advertising	✓	
17	DDC must be aware of dwellings that are rated zero council tax which would be indicative that it is empty. Someone would have applied for the zero rating so they could be targeted.		✓
15	More advertising and publicity article in local press and radio	✓	
14	Do an advertisement campaign	✓	
13	Where an empty and eligible property has been identified, the option of the loans should be clearly and readily offered to the landlord prior to any consideration of any form of enforcement. If landlords are simply not aware of the available loans, why remove a "tool from the toolbox", especially if there is no cost to keeping this facility available. Maybe something as simple as posting out a leaflet to those eligible landlords, highlighting the benefits of such a scheme in conjunction with making applications quick, clear & easy could increase the uptake.	✓	✓
9	Publish more information on DDC website. Mention in Daventry Calling	✓	
6	Advertise their existence and also promote through CAB and the job centre	✓	
3	They could be advertised better and easier to apply for	✓	

Respondents were asked if they felt that there could be demand for the loans, for example, if they were aware of anyone that would benefit from the assistance or if they were aware of any empty homes. Out of the 29 that responded to this question 5 felt that there is or could be demand, 15 thought there would not and 10 were not sure. The results as percentages have been provided below



Appendix A – Summary of responses

Instead of offering and using the loans, as defined in the Provisions of Housing Assistance Policy, to bring empty homes back into use, it is proposed that other forms of bringing them back into use are utilised. This could include advice, encouragement through Council Tax premiums or informal or formal enforcement action. Respondents were asked to what extent they would agree that empty homes could be dealt with accordingly using these other methods. 22 respondents out of 31 agreed (or strongly agreed) that empty homes could be dealt with another way, 6 disagreed (or strongly disagreed), and 3 could not give an answer either way.



Full table of results

#	Respondent	Prior to this consultation, were you aware of the financial assistance that the Council can provide for empty properties?	Do you agree with the proposal to remove the two loans for empty properties from the Provision of Housing Assistance Policy?	Should the loans remain; can you provide any suggestions to increase the uptake of the assistance?	Instead of using discretionary loans for empty properties it is proposed that other forms of bringing properties back into use are utilised. To what extent do you agree that empty homes can be dealt with accordingly using other methods?	Do you feel that there could be demand for this type of assistance i.e. are you aware of a property that has been empty for a long time or you know of someone that may benefit from these types of loans?
31	Private Individual	Yes	Yes	-	Strongly agree	Yes
30	Private Individual	No	Yes	-	Agree	
29	Private Individual	No	Yes	-	Agree	Maybe
28	Private Individual	No	Yes	-	Strongly agree	No
27	Private Individual	No	No	No	Agree	No
26	Crick Parish Council	No	Yes	-	Strongly disagree	Maybe
25	Private Individual	No	Yes	-	Strongly agree	No
24	Private Individual	Yes	Yes	-	Strongly agree	Maybe
23	Private Individual	No	No	Yes	Neither agree or disagree	Maybe
22	Private Individual	No	Maybe	Yes	Agree	Maybe
21	Private Individual	No	No	Yes	Disagree	Maybe
20	Private Individual	No	Maybe	Yes	Agree	Maybe
19	Private Individual	No	No	No	Agree	No
18	Private Individual	No	No	Yes	Agree	No
17	Private Individual	No	Maybe	Yes	Neither agree or disagree	No
16	Private Individual	No	Yes	-	Agree	No
15	Private Individual	No	No	Yes	Disagree	Yes

Appendix A – Summary of responses

14	Housing Association	Yes	No	Yes	Disagree	No
13	Private Individual	No	Maybe	Yes	Neither agree or disagree	Maybe
12	Private Individual	No	Yes	-	Agree	No
11	Private Individual	No	Maybe	No	Strongly agree	No
10	Private Individual	Yes	Maybe	No	Strongly agree	No
9	Private Individual	No	No	Yes	Disagree	Maybe
8	Private Individual	No	Yes	-	Strongly agree	No
7	Ravensthorpe Parish Council	No	Maybe	No	Agree	No
6	Private Individual	Yes	No	Yes	Agree	Yes
5	Private Landlord	No	Yes	-	Agree	Yes
4	Private Individual	No	Maybe	No	Agree	No
3	Private Individual	Yes	No	Yes	Strongly disagree	Yes
2	Private Individual	No	Yes	-	Agree	No
1	Maidwell and Draughton Parish Council	No	Maybe	Yes	Agree	Maybe

Analysis of results

The majority of respondents were not aware of the loans specifically for empty homes, available under the Provision of Housing Assistance Policy. Of those respondents that provided suggestions to increase the uptake of the assistance, the majority view was that the service should be promoted and advertised.

Yes, no and maybe options were provided for respondents to deliver their opinion on the removal of the loans for empty properties. According to the results on this single question there was support to remove the loans as 40% of respondents agreed with the proposal. 33% did not agree with the proposal and 27% could not provide a single response and therefore selected *Maybe*.

Those respondents that selected the *Maybe* option, with regard to removing the loans for empty properties, later offered their opinion on using alternative methods to bring empty homes back into use. 7 of the respondents that selected *Maybe* agreed that alternative methods could be used to bring empty homes back into use. The other two respondents that selected *Maybe* could not agree or disagree with using other methods.

Of those respondents who disagreed with the proposals to remove the loans, four agreed that other methods to bring empty homes back into use could be utilised.

Of the respondents that agreed to the proposal, one strongly disagreed with using any other actions/methods to bring empty homes back into use.