



BUSINESS RATES - EMPTY PROPERTY POLICY

Policy Status	Approved and finalised by the committee on <i>22/02/2024</i>
Responsible Officer	Gail Smith, Revenues Finance Manager
Policy Sponsor	Mary Beattie, Head of Finance
Authorised By	Aberdeenshire Council – 22 February 2024
Policy Review Date	22/02/2029

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The purpose of the policy is to incentivise ratepayers to bring unoccupied business rates properties back into use and reduce the number of empty properties within the Aberdeenshire area.
- 1.2 To secure investment to sustain economic growth by encouraging investment from new businesses to occupy these properties within our local communities and provide new employment opportunities.

2. Scope of Policy

- 2.1 For Business Rates purposes empty properties are defined, in legislation, as those rateable properties which are not currently occupied.
- 2.2 Empty property reliefs or reductions available to Business Rates ratepayers for empty non-domestic properties were previously determined by the following legislation – Sections 24 to 25 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1966, the Non-Domestic Rating (Unoccupied Property) (Scotland) Regulations 1994, and the Non-Domestic Rating (Unoccupied Property) (Scotland) Regulations 2018. These regulations no longer apply, and each Local Authority are required to have in place their own Empty Property Policy under devolved powers.
- 2.3 From 1st April 2023, any discount available for empty non-domestic properties will be determined by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 Part 11. A rating authority may, in accordance with Part 11 of this Act reduce any rate levied by it in respect of lands and heritages but any scheme must have regard to the authority's expenditure and income and the interests of persons liable to pay council tax set by the authority. Part 11 does not allow any additional premiums to be added to the full charge for Non-Domestic Rates.



- 2.4 The decision to delegate determination of empty property discount to local authorities will not impact on reliefs for occupied properties. These will remain in place and will continue to be governed by existing statute.

3. Policy Principles

- 3.1 From 1 April 2024 empty properties will be awarded 50% discount for up to 3 months from the date the property became empty irrelevant of type of property.
- 3.2 At the end of the 3-month period, if the property remains empty, the discount will reduce to 10%.
- 3.3 Current cases in receipt of a 10% discount will continue to receive this discount from 1 April 2024.
- 3.4 From 1 April 2025, if a property has remained empty for 2 or more years, the 10% discount will be removed and the full charge levied.
- 3.5 Cases previously in receipt of 100% discount and were exempt from Business Rates prior to 1 April 2023, will be awarded 10% discount from 1 April 2024 and if applicable discount removed from 1 April 2025.
- 3.6 Where a property becomes re-occupied, for the purposes of applications for unoccupied discount, the premises for which discount is being applied for must have been occupied for a period of at least 6 months.

4. Supporting Policies and Documents

[Local Government \(Scotland\) Act 1966](#)

[The Non-Domestic Rating \(Unoccupied Property\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 1994](#)

[The Non-Domestic Rating \(Unoccupied Property\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2018](#)

[Community Empowerment \(Scotland\) Act 2015](#)



5. Council Strategic Priorities

Pillar	Priority	How does the policy reflect the Council's strategic Priorities?
A sustainable economy	We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.	Reducing vacant properties, attracting new businesses, and creating jobs. This would make Aberdeenshire more appealing to working-age individuals, complementing the existing skilled workforce and fostering a diverse, resilient local economy.
Connected communities	We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.	Occupied properties can foster a sense of community and connection, as they are more likely to be used for local businesses, community centers, or housing.
Living well locally	We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.	<p><u>Health and Activity</u> More occupied properties can lead to increased local services and amenities, supporting residents in leading healthy and active lives.</p> <p><u>Supporting an Ageing Population</u> Ensuring properties are used effectively can help cater to the needs of an ageing population by providing community services.</p>



6. Policy Revision

Version Number	Revision Date	Committee Approval Date	Summary of Changes

7. Policy Distribution

Name	Designation	Organisation