

# Public Consultation

## Consultation on Reviewing the Council Tax Premium Scheme for Long Term Empty Properties and Second Homes in Flintshire

December 2021

# Introduction

The public were invited to submit their views on the current premium scheme and the level of premium.

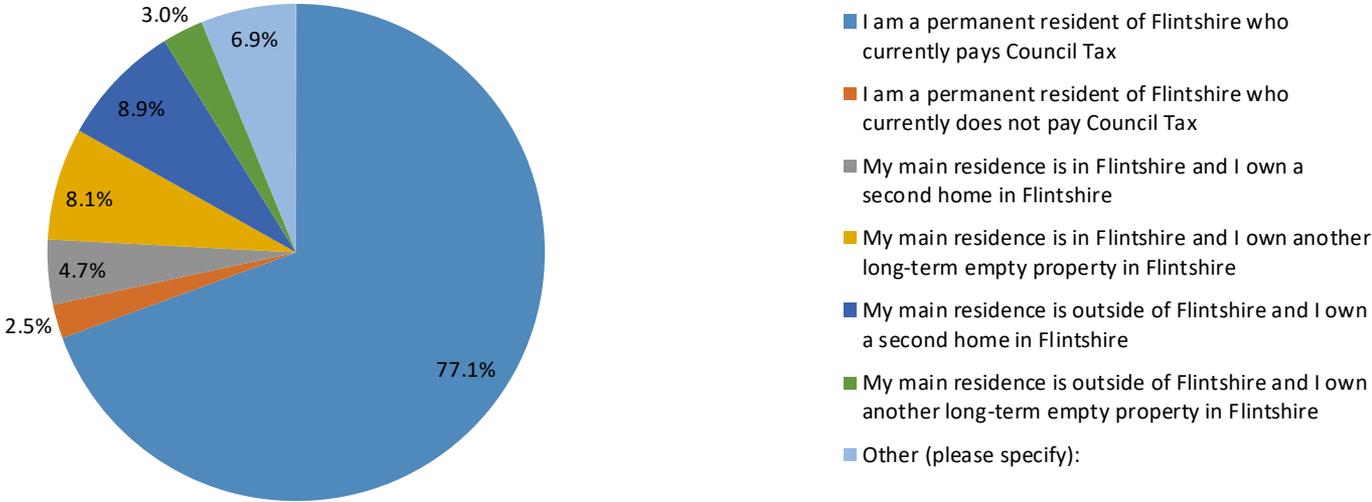
The consultation was formed of 13 questions and was live from Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 to 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

522 full or partial responses were received across the English and Welsh Consultation submissions.

The responses are documented over the coming pages.

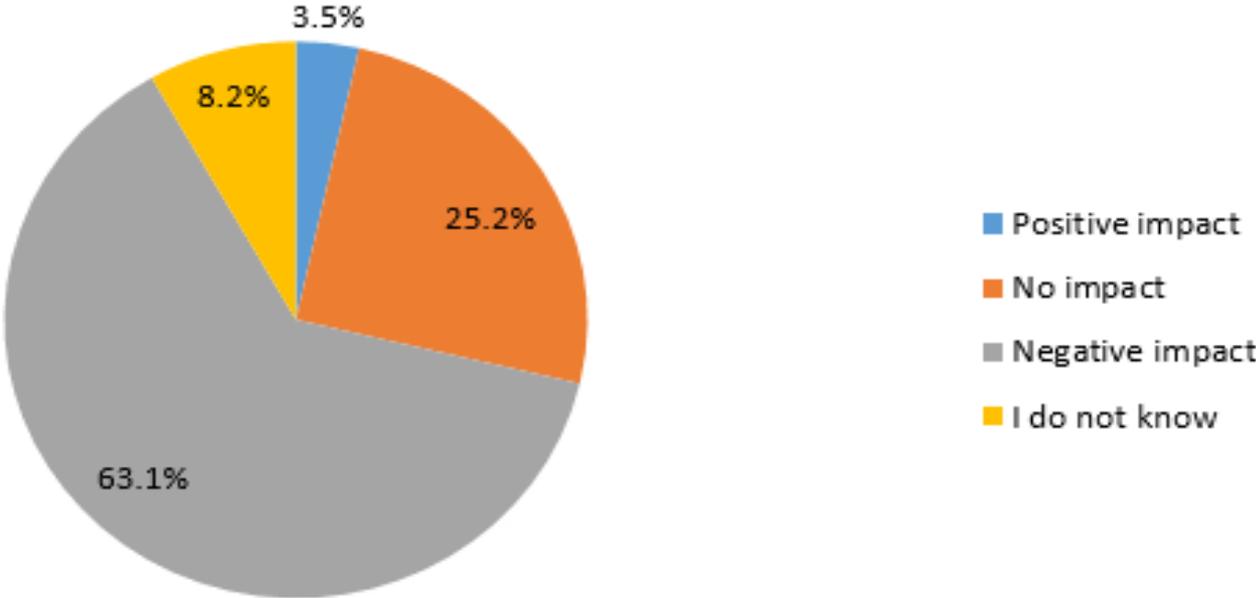
# Q1 From the list below please select the option(s) which best describe you.

From the list below please select the option(s) which best describe you.  
Please tick all that apply to you



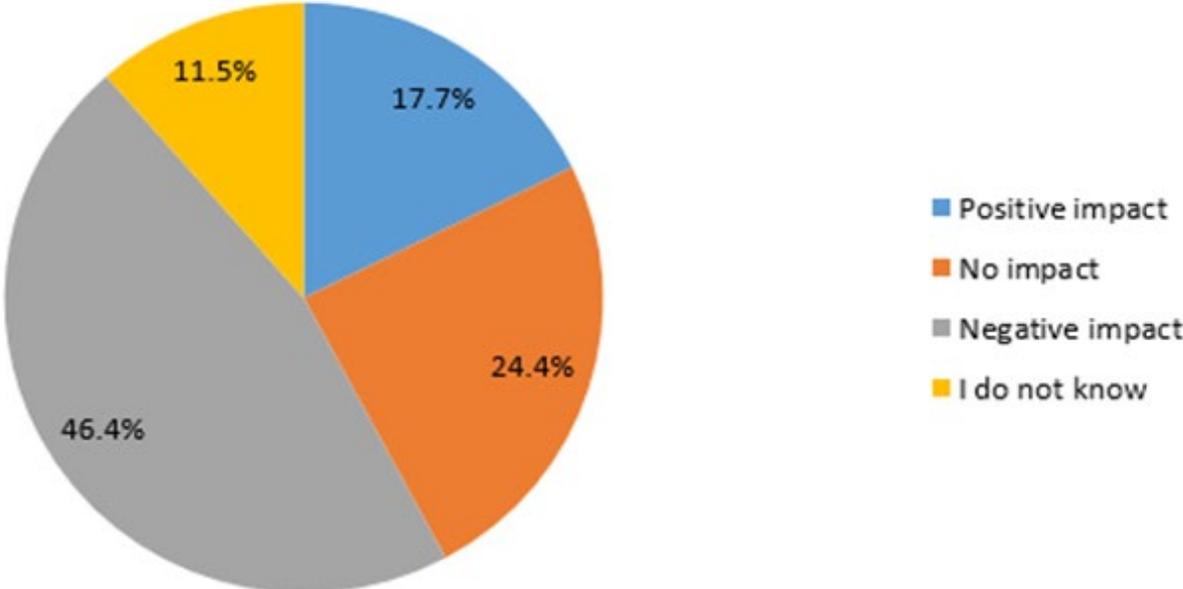
Over three quarters of those that responded are permanent residents of Flintshire who currently pay Council Tax

**Q2. In Flintshire there are currently 605 long-term empty properties subject to the council tax premium. In your opinion, what overall impact do long-term empty dwellings currently have on local communities?**



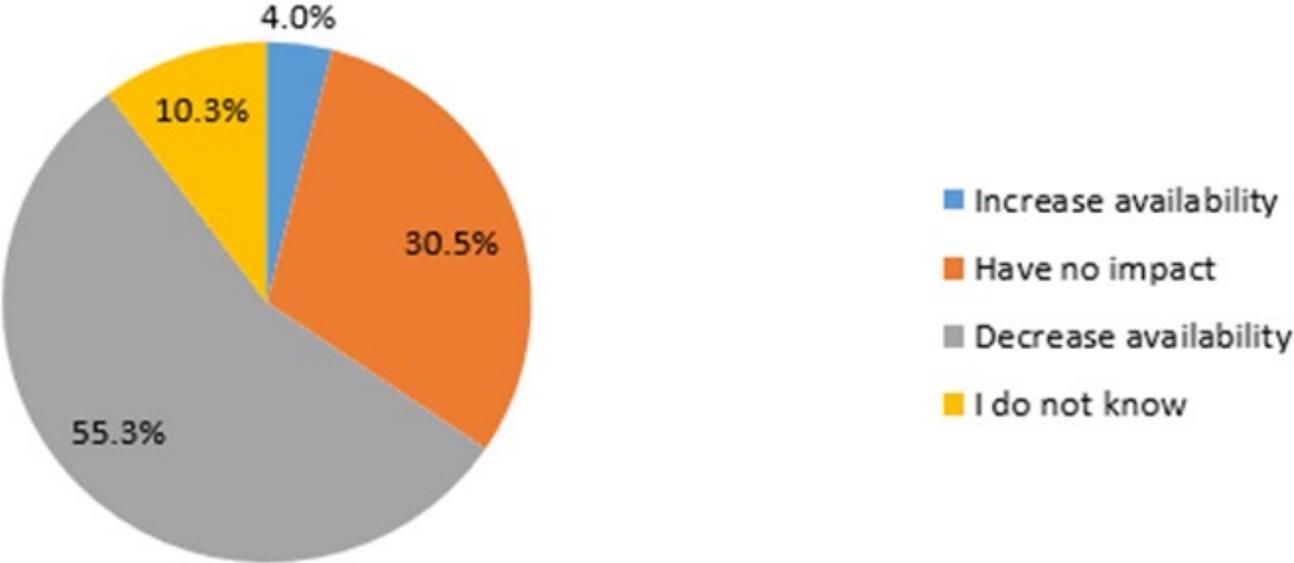
Nearly two thirds of those responding felt long-term empty properties have a negative impact on their local community.

**Q3. In Flintshire there are currently 167 second homes subject to the council tax premium. In your opinion, what overall impact do second homes currently have on local communities?**



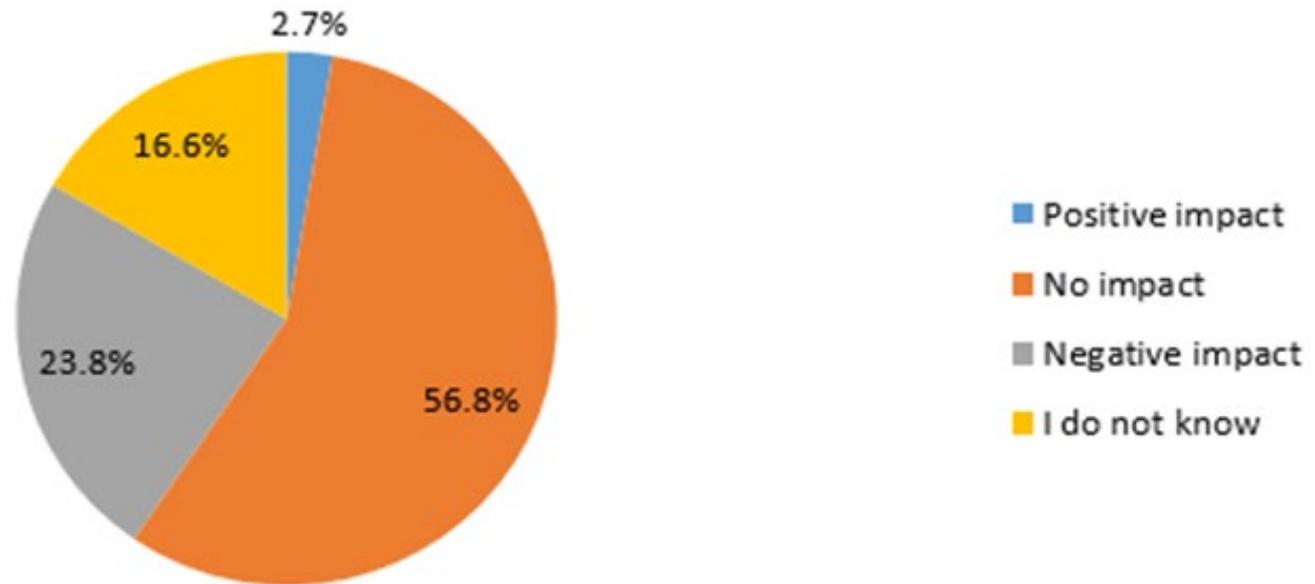
Almost half of those responding felt that second homes had a negative impact on their local community. This is significantly lower than the 63.1% who in the previous question felt long-term empty properties had a negative impact on where they live.

**Q4. In Flintshire there are currently 2,120 people on the waiting list for social/affordable housing. In your opinion, what impact do long-term empty dwellings and second homes currently have on the availability of affordable housing in Flintshire?**



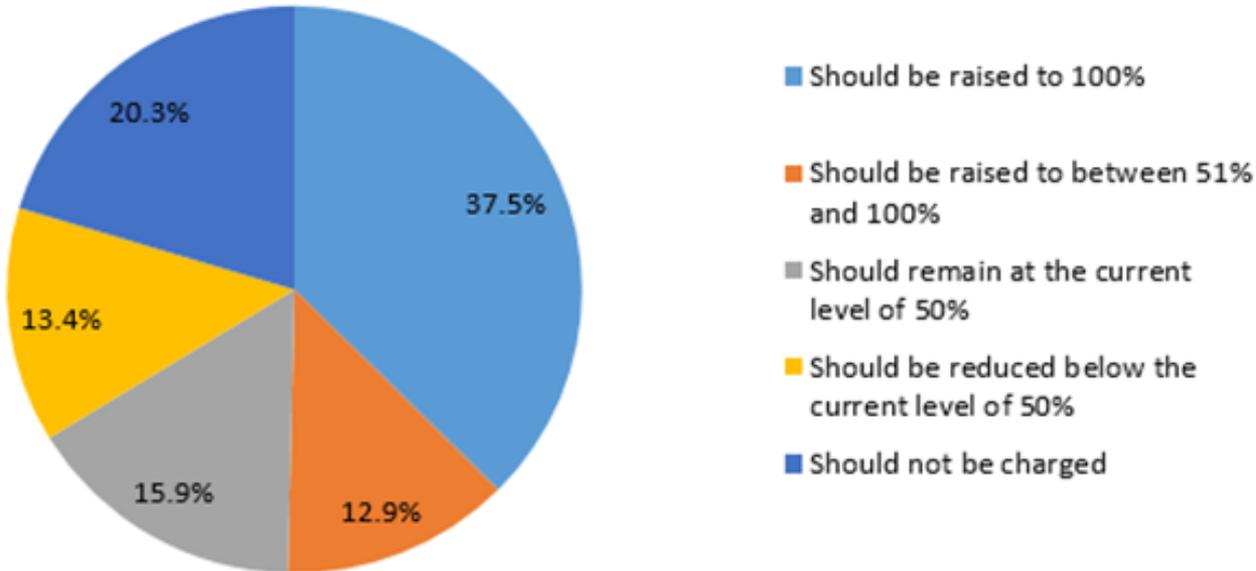
Over 55% of those that completed the consultation considered that the impact of long-term empty and second homes is to decrease availability of affordable housing in Flintshire.

**Q5. In your opinion, and thinking about the opportunities for people to use Welsh and to ensure the Welsh language is treated no less favorably than English, what impact do the current number of second homes and long-term empty properties have on the Welsh Language?**



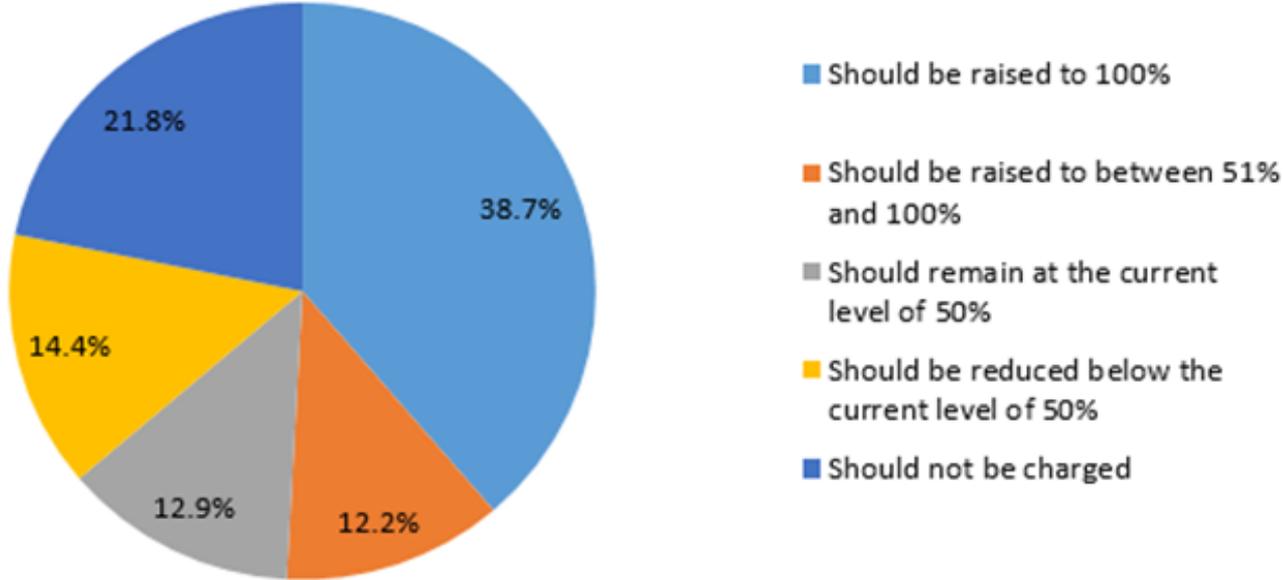
A majority of respondents expressed that long term empty properties and second homes have no impact on the treatment of welsh language.

**Q6. The Council is currently reviewing its premium scheme of 50% on second homes. In your opinion what should the proposed level of premium be in Flintshire?**



Over half of respondents felt the premium for second homes should be raised above the current level, with 37.5% considering it should be raised to the maximum 100%. This contrast with only a third of responses considered that the premium should be reduced or not charged at all.

# Q7. The Council is currently reviewing its premium scheme of 50% on long term empty dwellings. In your opinion what should the proposed level of premium be in Flintshire?



Over half of respondents felt the premium for long-term empty properties should be raised above the current level, with 38.7% considering it should be raised to the maximum 100%. This outcome is similar to the views expressed for premiums on second homes.

## Q8. Please briefly explain the reason for your selections in Q6 and Q7

Various reasons were provided to support the opinions provided in the previous two questions on the level of the premium. Those in favour of increasing the premium raised the points which included:

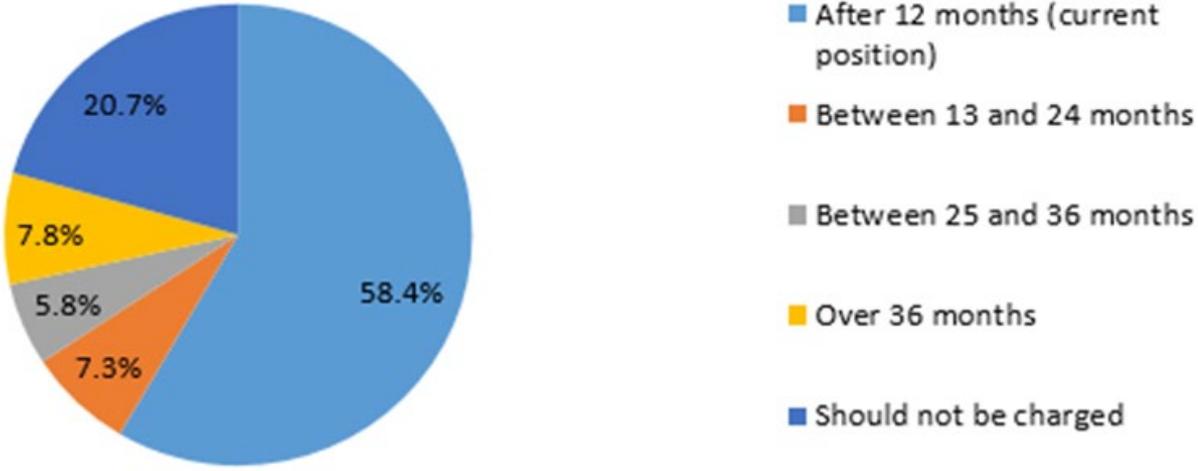
- The current level is not enough of a deterrent;
- Second homes and long term empty properties should be discouraged to provide homes for families that need them and increase the number of properties available to let;
- Second homes and long term empty properties should be discouraged to reduce new developments, reduce blight on communities and protect the planet;
- Empty homes are an eyesore and negatively impact communities.

## Q8. Please briefly explain the reason for your selections in Q6 and Q7

Those in favour of a reduction in the level of premium or not charging a premium at all raised the points below:

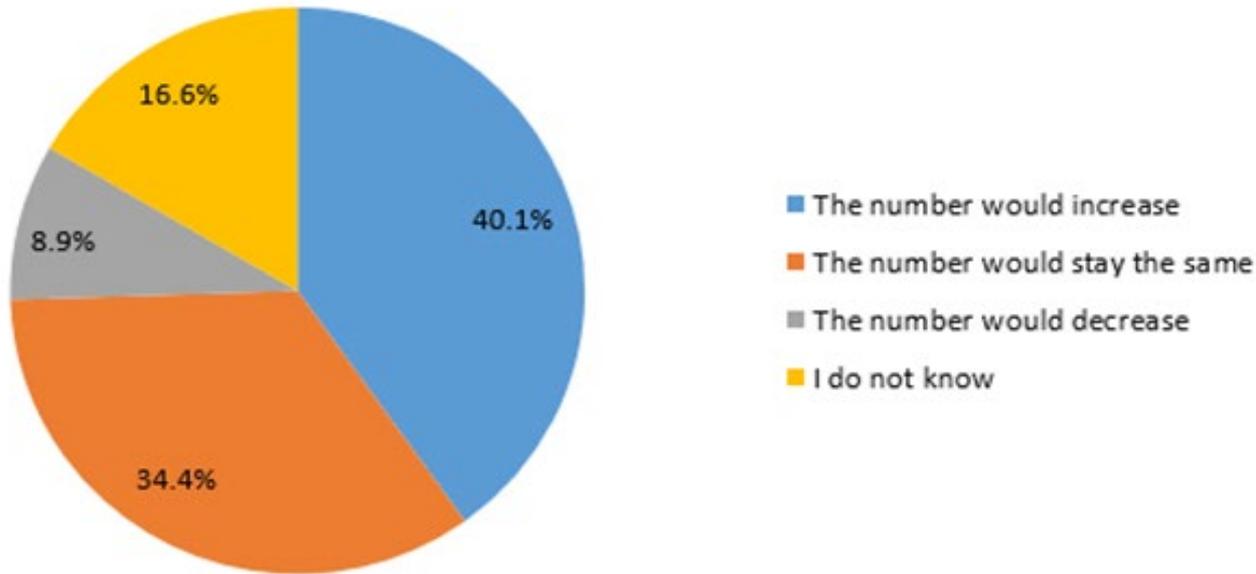
- Empty homes are not using any facilities, why should they pay?
- Some people end up paying the premium through circumstances outside of their control including inheritance or new home owners;
- How can repairs be afforded to make long –term empty properties habitable when a council tax premium has to be paid?;
- The premium discourages investment in Flintshire;
- The premium discourages tourism in the county.

**Q9. Currently a premium becomes payable after a long-term empty property has been vacant for 12 months - unless it qualifies for an exception. What length of time do you feel a property should be empty before becoming subject to a premium?**



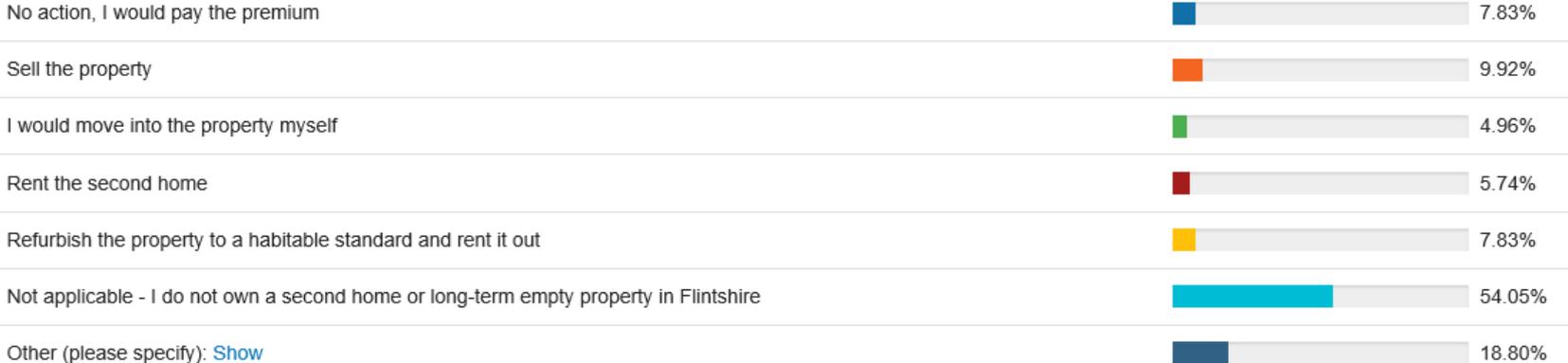
A majority of respondents 58.4% confirmed they felt that introducing the premium after 12 months for a long-term empty property was the correct timescale.

## Q10. If the premium were to be reduced, what impact do you think this would have on the number of second homes and long term empty properties in Flintshire?



40.1% of respondents felt a reduction in the premium would increase the number of second homes and long-term empty properties in Flintshire compared to only 8.9% who thought they would decrease.

# Q11. If you are the owner of a second home or long-term empty property in Flintshire, what action would you be likely to take if the premium was to be increased.

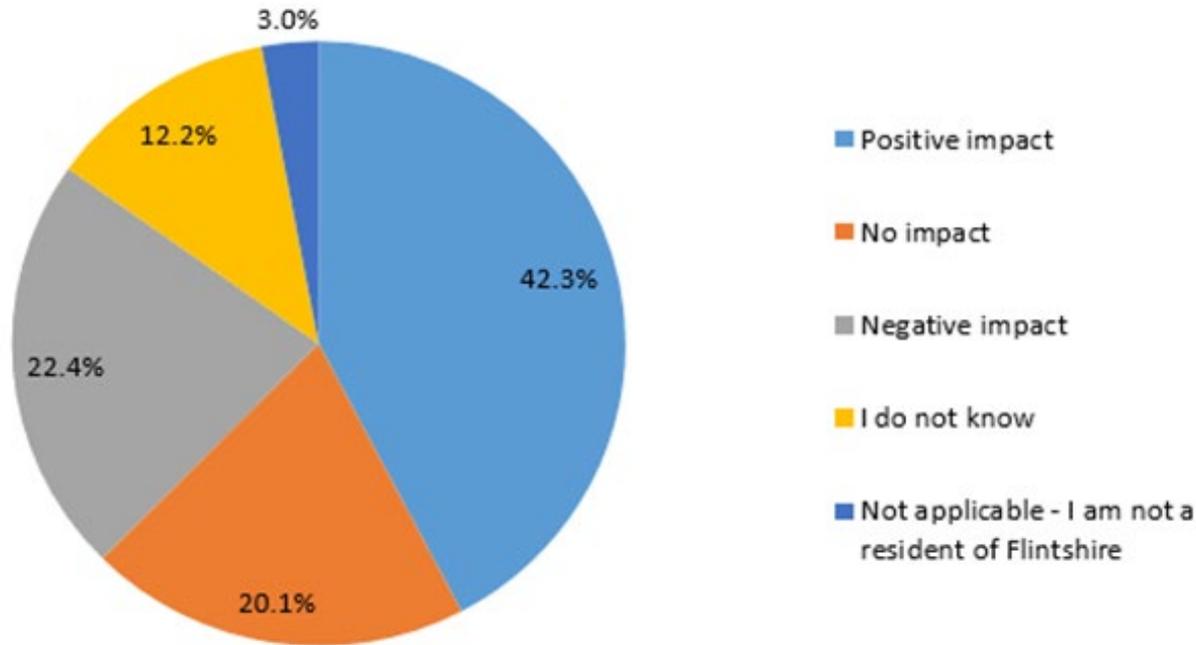


Of those that own a second home or long-term empty property in Flintshire, the most chosen response was that they would sell the property if the premium was to be increased, closely followed by taking no action and paying the premium and refurbishing the property and renting it out.

**For the 67 respondents that answered “other” in question 11, they provided further detail on what actions they would take as summarised below**

- Use the premises as a business;
- Use the premises as a commercial holiday let;
- Would continue with renovations but the additional charge would hamper the speed of renovations;
- Already trying to sell property;
- Demolish or merge with an existing property;
- Press planning for a quicker decision;
- Sell and invest somewhere else;
- Challenge or lobby the decision;
- Cause financial stress;
- No single answer can be provided.

## Q12. In your opinion, what impact would an increase - above the current 50% premium level - have on your local community.



Of those that are resident in Flintshire an expressed an opinion (84.8%), almost half (42.3%) felt that an increase in the current level of premium would have a positive impact on the local community.

## Q13. We welcome any other comments or suggestions you may have regarding council tax premiums on long term empty properties and second homes.

185 respondents completed this free-text section with very individual circumstances and observations. Some extracts from their feedback is detailed below:

“As stated above it is an unfair charge as people sometimes take longer than anticipated to refurbish a property, why do you think you should decide how long it should take? Some people refurbish properties as a hobby, on a weekend or evenings and sometimes things crop up that take more time or cost more money than you thought and you are penalising people for that, the money you are charging could be used to finish the property off”

“No allowances are given for genuine home owners who have purchased/inherited property and are renovating to make the dwelling habitable and which will become the main residence. Also given the fact that any building works have been greatly impacted by Covid-19 I think the current system is unfair. Councils would be aware of anyone who is genuinely make home improvements as plans/building regulations would have to be approved by you. “

## Q13. Further suggestions/comments

“The County Council themselves need to act on there own properties and not have any type of property empty for long periods.”

“Why are properties left empty for years? If you don’t live in the property- let someone else have use of it. Especially if it’s run down and blights the area. If you can afford a second home - you can afford the council tax. We need to restore village communities where neighbours look out for each”

“I purchased this property in 1986. As I had to move away for work my mother moved into the property and lived there until she passed away. I have spent a great deal of money refurbishing the property. I do not wish to rent the property as it is intended for my retirement. It might prove difficult to get a tenant removed. We use the property for visits to see family . Paying 100% would have a massive impact on my salary as we are also paying to keep the electricity and heating costs so it doesn’t fall into disrepair.”

## Q13. Further suggestions/comments

“The focus should not be on long term empty property but on the building of actually affordable homes by developers.”

“As a second home owner we are contributing to the economy of Wales”

“In my case any increase in council tax premium would reduce the amount of money I would have available to spend in local shops and for local services”

“the property was left to me for my children, I have paid the increased charge for the last two years and it is crippling! The property is uninhabitable, no heating, no kitchen, no bathroom and an outside toilet, it is literally a shell yet still I had to pay the increase the council”

## Q13. Further suggestions/comments

“Instead of diverting the attention onto a sector, where people are paying their Council taxes and contributing to the local community, the Councils should be looking at their own Buildings and assets to provide affordable housing.”

“A relative recently died although leaving a will it was with the solicitor who had gone out of business, it took a long time to sort out not helped by the thought of council taxes being paid on the property”

“People who buy property and land as investments to make themselves richer should pay more ..property developers are pushing up house prices. .And local young people have virtually no chance of getting on the property ladder , we have seen this happen all over the country and it’s not right”