

CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

QUESTION UNDER RULE 13 OF THE
COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

Council Meeting: Wednesday, 24 September 2025

Question from: Councillor Prashad

**Question to: Councillor Dacre, Cabinet Member with responsibility
for Resources**

As at June 2025, there were 2551 empty homes in Calderdale which was an increase of 42 properties on the previous quarter.

Council tax has been paid on 2168 of the 2551 empty properties leaving 383 properties where council tax has not been paid. Using Tax Band A as an average, this equates to £587,862.87 in unpaid council tax.

There is a significant demand for properties to house homeless people and the latest figures from the Government suggest that local councils have spent £2.8bn on temporary accommodation which is a 25% increase compared with the previous year. Calderdale Spent £73,012 on temporary accommodation for the month of August 2025.

Could the portfolio holder please confirm firstly whether there are any plans to mitigate the unpaid council tax on empty properties and secondly whether it is timely to consider whether CMBC should be looking to help landlords to bring their properties back into habitable condition rather than spending large amounts of money on temporary accommodation.

RESPONSE

The short answers are that we already seek to increase collection on all properties, including empty properties and we already work with owners of empty homes to bring these properties back into use.

The empty homes premium, rising to 400% on properties empty for more than 10 years, does mean arrears increase proportionately. The rationale for the premium is of course to discourage owners from leaving properties empty.

Bringing properties back into use will have a limited effect on homelessness levels and temporary accommodation costs as some owners do not wish to sell or rent their property.

We will always try to work with customers to recover unpaid Council Tax. We will seek to recover through court 'Orders for Sale' once all other options have been exhausted. In the case of empty homes this will include where Council Tax Premium debt has reached a certain level and the owner has made no attempt to repay or bring the property back into use. We will take into account whether the owner is adequately housed elsewhere.

We are committed to reducing the use of temporary accommodation in hotels and B&Bs which is unsuitable for "living" in and expensive. For instance we are working to increase the provision of self contained temporary accommodation.

There is a multi-service response across the Council and with partners to increase the housing supply and address homelessness.

- Homelessness prevention work with younger people.
- Work with housing charity Crisis to develop an action plan to reduce the demand on temporary accommodation.
- The Homelessness Service is working with registered provider Horton Housing which will take on a long-term lease on a 17 bedroomed property. The Council will provide temporary accommodation support. This will reduce hotel and B&B use, therefore significantly reducing costs.
- A Private Landlord Liaison Officer was recruited to build closer relationships with landlords already operating in the sector to provide direct placements for tenants instead of using more expensive temporary accommodation services.
- Work with charities such as Happy Days UK, The Basement Project and The Gathering Place to provide beds, homes, and support for vulnerable tenants in recovery from mental health illness and substance addictions.
- Joint working with the Women's Centre to help them purchase empty homes directly from the owners to support their clients who are fleeing domestic abuse.
- The Empty Homes Officer works with empty homeowners to establish their intentions, offering advice, guidance and support depending on whether they wish to dispose of the property through owner-occupation, sale or bring it back into use through a private rented tenancy.

NOTE: Questions under Rule 13 must be in writing and submitted to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services by noon the Friday before the Council Meeting.