

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
30 MARCH 2017
APPENDIX I

Question from Councillor Mountford

To the Depute Leader (Finance)

How much extra revenue has been generated by the Empty Homes Premium since it was introduced?

Reply from Councillor Mitchell

This Council took the decision to increase Council Tax for long term empty properties, to the maximum 200% charge, from 1st April 2016. To date, an additional £475k in revenue has already been received and we estimate that the ultimate collection level for 2016/17 will be in the region of £525k. This slightly exceeds the projected income figure of £500k within the financial plan.

Supplementary

Councillor Mountford asked what evidence was there to show that this policy was bringing empty homes back into use. Councillor Mitchell undertook to ask officers to provide this information.

Question from Councillor White

To Depute Leader (Finance)

How many freedom of information requests FOI have we had in the last year and how much has this cost the council?

Reply from Councillor Mitchell

A total of 1241 Freedom of Information requests were received in 2016.

The Council does not currently record the full cost of handling FOI requests. FOI responses are coordinated by two officers within the Information Management Team who each spend approximately 75% of their time dealing with FOI enquiries. The annual cost of these two posts is £43,468. This does not however reflect the full cost of responding to FOIs as extracting the requested information, obtaining legal advice and/or responding to requests for reviews also involves staff within other service departments.

Supplementary

Councillor White requested that while he did not want to increase the burden on officers could they sample the cost of some FOI requests. Councillor Mitchell advised that he would discuss the feasibility of this with officers.