

Council 16 July 2026 Written Questions

1. Councillor Tong

To the Leader

Cambridge City Council has previously spoken with members of ACORN, a community union with a branch here in Cambridge, about seeking to end its use of bailiffs to collect council tax debt. Will the Leader of Cambridge City Council commit to establishing a working group to tackle this pressing issue, including at least one ACORN representative in an advisory position amongst its membership?

Response provided after the full Council meeting:

The Leader is currently in the process of agreeing a date to meet with representatives of ACORN, as agreed at full Council.

In addition to your specific question, the following information provides some additional context on how the process at Cambridge seeks to support financially vulnerable residents.

- This Council runs a Council Tax Reduction Scheme that covers 100% of the tax for people on the lowest incomes. In comparison, Peterborough City Council scheme covers 67% of the tax for people on the lowest incomes. You can find the detail of our scheme [here](#).
- Our scheme automatically enrolls residents applying for Universal Credit, and 75% of people receiving CTR come through this route. This is not the case for every Council.

If you have any practical examples where our approach has not worked for residents, I would be grateful if you could let me know. Our focus continues to be support for people who are unable to pay, at the same time as ensuring we collect the right amount of tax from those who can, and any examples of where we are not delivering on this approach will help us to improve.

The usual route to set up a working group would be via the Leader or Cabinet. In terms of a task and finish group the relevant Scrutiny Committee can agree to establish a task and finish group to consider and report back on specific topics, such as this one.

2. Councillor Tong

To the Cabinet Member for Housing

Despite the fact that many local residents are unable to afford a place of their own, it has been estimated that there are hundreds of empty homes across Cambridge. What plans does Cambridge City Council have to exercise its compulsory purchase powers to bring these properties back into use?

Response:

The Empty Homes Officer deals with long term empty properties which have come to the Councils attention via complaints / other means, they are currently involved in investigations relating to 160 such properties known to them.

The Councils Empty Homes Policy, available on our website, explains how we work to bring homes back into use on a case-by-case basis in line with consideration of the most appropriate course of formal enforcement action where necessary / appropriate.

Earlier this year, following continued investigation, the Empty Homes Officer sought engagement with the owner of a problematic, long-term empty property in the City for which compulsory purchase was being considered. Negotiation with the owner resulted in a swift sale of the property by auction a process which the Empty Homes Officer assisted the property owner with to ensure that the property can now be improved and brought back into use.

Informal approaches have included working with owners, offering support and incentives to bring their houses back into use. We encourage owners to use the services of the Council's Town Hall Lettings, to make improvements to the standard of their properties and property management, subsequently letting them to those most in need of accommodation in the City.

In 2025/2026 27 units of accommodation were brought back into habitable use within the city via intervention by the Empty Homes Officer.