

Member Question from Andy Boddington:

A paper presented to a [5 June 2019 People Overview committee](#) stated at paragraph 6.1 says: "As of 1st January 2019, there were 1,329 long term empty properties in Shropshire." This conflicts with [government data](#) (Live Table 615) which shows that the Shropshire had 1,654 long term vacants on 1 April 2019. This table is based on data supplied by councils, including Shropshire. A figure of 1,654 is more in line with the 1,615 given [in answer to my question to council](#) in June 2016.

There a discrepancy of around 300 homes between the council's and government's statistics. Can the council explain this discrepancy?

Response:

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify the discrepancy between the figures reported to People Overview Committee in June 2019 and those available on the GOV.UK website.

There are several categories which empty homes can fall into in the data presented and it's therefore important that we compare like for like when looking at statistics.

A long-term empty property is a residential property which has been empty for 6 months or longer (this relates to the larger number Councillor Boddington has highlighted). There are a number of those long-term empty properties which are classed as "exempt properties". These are residential properties which do not pay council tax because the property is empty for a specific reason such as probate, the owner is in hospital or residential care. The smaller number reported to Overview Committee excludes the exempt properties and is the reason for the discrepancy.

Paragraph 6.1 of the report to People Overview Committee on 5 June 2019 stated that:

"As of 1st January 2019, there were 1329 long term empty properties in Shropshire. These are residential properties which have been empty for at least six months. There were also an additional 455 empty properties which are exempt from Council Tax charges because for example, the owner is in care."

In 2015, an Empty Homes Task and Finish Group was set up by the Enterprise & Growth Scrutiny Committee. One of the original concerns leading to Scrutiny considering this area of work was the perceived increasing number of empty homes in Shropshire in comparison to some nationally reported statistics. The group reviewed the accuracy of the data from various sources and was confident that there has not been a significant increase in the number of empty exempt properties in real terms.