Petition PE1496: Bedroom Tax Mitigation - ALACHO

1. As the representative body for Scotland’s senior local authority housing professionals ALACHO welcomes the opportunity to comment on Petition PE 1496. We note that the petition -

“calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make approximately £50 million available to mitigate all effects of the bedroom tax in Scotland.”

2. ALACHO has consistently opposed the bedroom tax, from inception to implementation. Scotland’s chief housing officers are only too well aware of the damaging effects resulting from this iniquitous tax, the consequences of which are felt both by tenants and their families in terms of reduced incomes and increased poverty levels, and by local authorities in terms of reduced revenues and a reduced capacity to provide much needed services.

3. ALACHO is aware that several authorities have utilised their own resources and set up hardship funds or similar mechanisms to try and mitigate the impacts on tenants. However praiseworthy this may be, it can only be at the expense of councils potentially being unable to provide other much needed services in the community, such as support for homeless families or maintaining standards for households in temporary accommodation. Consequently, the transfer of additional resources from national to local government to assist with the costs of welfare reform mitigation is likely to be welcomed by local government.

4. In broad terms therefore ALACHO is supportive of maximising resources to local authorities (and RSLs) to mitigate so far as possible the impact of the bedroom tax on those affected. Needless to say we think it essential that any extra funding for mitigation is genuinely additional, and transparently shown to be so. We would also like to see councils given flexibility over the optimum ways to utilise any increased resources for mitigation, to ensure maximum impact in local communities.

5. Notwithstanding our views as set out above, ALACHO remains of firmly of the opinion that the most effective means of dealing with the consequences of the bedroom tax is to repeal the legislation.

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