due to high rates of negative equity homeowners were "locked into paying tax on something they cannot dispose of". People Before Profit's Barry Martin said it was "morally reprehensible to equate cutting property tax to cutting services for homeowners.

Brian McDough (Lab) said those benefiting most from the cut had the most expensive houses, and proposed a 10 per cent cut. The amount of tax a household pays is based on the price of the home in May 2014.

That valuation remains fixed until the end of October 2016 even if house prices have risen in the meantime.

The other three Dublin authorities, Dublin City Council, Dublin Rathdown and South Dublin, agreed on Monday to implement the full 15 per cent cut.

Councillors in all 33 local authorities across the State can vary local property tax up to 15 per cent per year, and have until September 30th to tell the Minister what they intend to do.

Six local authorities have yet to set a date to vote on the issue. Nine councils have gone for no change, three will hold meetings on Friday, and two more on Monday.

Dublin, Longford, Westmeath and Mayo have gone for a 5 per cent cut. Kildare's 7.5 per cent cut and Cork County Council are cutting by 10 per cent.

The composite of the country is not easy. Councillors would, of course, like to reduce the burden on their constituents, but don't have the same cash to play with.

For example, Donaghadee has just over 90,000 taxable homes and to the middle of this year had accumulated €350 million in property tax. By comparison, Donegal has about 11,000 fewer houses registered for the tax (just under 60,000). But because of lower property values, it had collected just €1.2 million to the middle of this year.

However, if Dublin and the wealthier counties appear to be getting an easy ride, there is a catch.

That €511 million will form part of a operating budget of about €9 billion for the city, most of which comes from rates and the provision of goods and services. But a chunk of it, about €27 million from Government grants that the council currently pays to fund homeless services.

Of the total cut with city council and others that gave the full 15 per cent cut now receive? The government has yet to decide the

Irish pair win top architecture prize

Dublin-based company recognised as being at vanguard of contemporary architecture

FRANK MCDONALD

Multiple award-winning Dublin-based architects Sheila O'Donnell and John Tuomey are to receive Britain's Royal Gold Medal in recognition of their lifetime's work as a "touche de force in Irish and British architecture".

Regarded as the world's most prestigious architecture award, personally approved by Queen Elizabeth II, it is given by the Royal Institute of British Architects (Riba) to those who have had a significant influence on the advancement of architecture.

Ms O'Donnell and Mr Tuomey are the only third and fourth Irish citizens to win the Royal Gold Medal, after Michael Scott in 1975 and engineer Peter Rice in 1992.

Previous husband-and-wife winners include Charles and Ray Eames (1979) and Michael and Patricia Hopkins (1994). Awarded since 1848, previous Royal Gold Medal winners include American deconstructivist Frank Gehry (2000), postmodernist Norman Foster (1963), the extraordinary influential Frank Lloyd Wright (1944) and Gothic revivalist Sir George Gilbert Scott (1859).

"We're humbled to find ourselves in such a company of heroes," the Irish pair said. "We believe in the social value and the poetic purpose of architecture and the gold medal encourages us to prevail in this most privileged and complicated career."

Riba president Stephen Hodder said they were "at the vanguard of contemporary Irish architecture."

Their work was always inventive, strikingly well considered, particular to its place and brief, beautifully crafted and ever developing.

They set up O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects in 1988, a decade later in Ireland, having previously worked together in London for internationally renowned architects Stirling, Hopkins and Colquhoun & Miller, after graduating from the UCD School of Architecture.

"Their new practice coupled Sheila's quiet, studied modernism alongside John's fluency - a lyrical 'constructivism' and through their buildings, publications, exhibitions and teaching they have forged a confident new identity for Irish architecture," Riba said.

In the early 1990s, O'Donnell + Tuomey Architects were part of the Group of 10 consortium of architects who drew up the masterplan for Temple Bar in Dublin.

Their first major project, the Irish Film Institute in Earlsfort Terrace, won acclaim for its dynamic re-working of the Quaker Meeting House.

Their early work, from a dispersed private home in Naas, Co Kildare to the Rathdown Multi-Denominational School in Dublin showed how public housing and community buildings "provided the canvas for their experimental and unconventional creative approach and celebrated style", according to Riba.

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