

EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2025-2030

Bridgend County Borough Council

In conjunction with Shared Regulatory Services.



Empty Homes Strategy 2025-2030

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Foreword:

As the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Economic Development and Housing, I am proud to introduce our Empty Property Strategy — a vital step forward in our commitment to building stronger, more vibrant communities.

Empty homes are more than just bricks and mortar left unused; they represent missed opportunities. At a time when the demand for housing continues to grow, every empty property is a potential home for a family in need, a chance to revitalise a neighbourhood, and a way to support our local economy.

This strategy sets out our shared vision for addressing the issue of empty properties across our area. It reflects our ambition to work collaboratively with property owners, residents, and partners to find practical, innovative solutions. It also recognises the complex reasons why properties become and remain empty, and the need for a collaborative, compassionate, and practical approach to bringing them back into use. Sometimes we must take enforcement action where other approaches have failed, with formal enforcement action always being a last resort.

For property owners, this strategy offers guidance, support, and clear pathways to help unlock the potential of their assets. For residents, it outlines how we aim to improve neighbourhoods and reduce the negative impacts of long-term vacancies. For officers and elected members, it provides a framework for action — grounded in evidence, shaped by local priorities, and driven by partnership.

This strategy reaffirms our commitment to bringing empty properties back into use to meet housing needs and strengthen our communities.

Bridgend County Borough Council is committed to reducing the high number of empty homes across the borough by ensuring they are brought back into use. This strategy outlines the Council's approach to addressing the issue and details the initiatives available to support property owners in reoccupying vacant properties. Bringing empty homes back into use will have a positive impact on residents in housing need and the wider community, for whom such properties often cause disruption and concern.

The strategy has been shaped by a public consultation held in September 2024, during which key stakeholders, empty property owners, and residents shared their views on the most effective ways to tackle this issue. Their feedback has been instrumental in shaping a plan that reflects local priorities and delivers practical, actionable solutions.

Building on the progress made during the 2019–2023 strategy, the updated approach incorporates new and innovative methods, including enhanced financial incentives, stricter enforcement measures, and stronger partnerships through the Empty Properties Working Group. It sets out a broad range of initiatives aimed at supporting owners to return their properties to use and highlights the Council's commitment to tackling the issue strategically and sustainably.

The implementation of this strategy will be continuously monitored and formally reviewed in 2030 to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

2. Scope of the Strategy:

This strategy primarily focuses on empty private sector homes and buildings with the potential to provide residential accommodation and only extends to

commercial properties that are suitable for partial or full residential conversion.

3. Strategic Context:

This strategy aligns with the priorities set out in the Council's corporate vision, [Delivering Together: Bridgend County Borough Council Strategic Plan 2023–2028](#), and the [Corporate Delivery Plan for 2025-20/26](#). The strategy contributes directly to several key wellbeing objectives, including:

- **THRIVING** - A prosperous place with thriving communities.

By encouraging energy-efficient renovations through financial incentives.

Through improvements to our town centres, making them safer, more attractive, and better positioned to attract investment.

- **EMPOWERING** - Supporting our most vulnerable.

By supporting people facing homelessness to secure stable housing.

By increasing the availability of affordable and suitable accommodation.

By revitalising neglected properties and strengthening community resilience.

- **MODERNISING** - Creating modern, seamless public services.

By improving community engagement and access to information and advice.

This strategy also supports the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, contributing to three of the seven national well-being goals:

1. A Healthier Wales – by helping people access secure, quality housing that supports physical and mental wellbeing.

2. A Prosperous Wales – by stimulating investment in housing and creating local employment opportunities through renovation.

3. A Wales of Cohesive Communities – by reducing the negative impacts of long-term empty homes and fostering stronger neighbourhoods.

4. Understanding Empty Properties

4.1 Definition of an ‘Empty Property’:

For the purposes of this strategy and in terms of how the Council reports performance to Welsh Government, an empty property is defined as:



4.2 Unbanded Properties

In addition to properties that are liable for council tax, the Council also monitors and takes action in cases where properties have been unbanded by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA).

An unbanded property is a council tax property which has either :

- Had the banding removed by the VOA because the property is in poor condition or major building work is taking place, so it is taken off the council tax list, or
- Is a newly built property which has yet to be banded by the Valuation Office. These properties are given a provisional band until the Council are notified of the official band, in

order for the council tax payer to make payment on the account.

The Empty Property section monitors and gets involved in cases where properties have been unbanded by the VOA due to serious disrepair, partial demolition, or being derelict.

The Council Tax section monitors the new properties that need to be added to the council tax list and those that have been removed. They check when building work is finished and refer the property back to the VOA so it can be added to the list again.

4.3 Council Tax Premiums:

In Bridgend, properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of more than 12 months, are classified as long-term empty properties. To encourage owners to return these properties back into use, the Council applies a Council Tax premium, in accordance with powers detailed in the Housing (Wales) Act, 2014.

Since 1st April 2023, long-term empty properties (for 12 months or more) are subject to a Council Tax charge of 200% of the annual council tax amount for the first 2 years, after which the premium will increase to 300% of the annual charge.

Certain exemptions to the premium apply. For further information please refer to the Council Tax guidance [here](#):

Alternatively, enquiries can be directed to: premiums@bridgend.gov.uk

4.4 Reasons Why Properties Become Empty:

There are a wide range of reasons why properties become and remain empty. Through engagement with property owners, the Council has identified several recurring factors that contribute to long-term vacancy:

- **Transitions In Ownership:** The natural process of buying, selling, or letting properties.
- **Poor Physical Condition:** Properties that are challenging to rent or sell due to their physical condition, requiring renovation beyond the owner's financial capability.
- **Challenging Marketability:** Properties that are difficult to rent or sell because of their location, limited facilities, or inadequate infrastructure.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** Navigating local regulations i.e. planning/building.
- **Changes In Personal Circumstances:** Older property owners may move into care or support accommodation and choose not to sell, resulting in their properties remaining vacant either temporarily or for the long term.
- **Legal Complications:** The legal process to resolve ownership issues can be lengthy. For example, where ownership is unclear or disputed following the death of the previous owner, delaying the property's return to use.
- **Abandonment:** Where owners cannot be traced or are unwilling to engage.
- **Property Holding for Investment Purposes:** Where owners retain the asset vacant in anticipation of market gains or redevelopment opportunities.
- **Surplus Ownership:** Where partners co-habit leaving the second property empty.
- **Adjoining Business Premises:** Where the property is adjoined to a business and the owner does not wish to let or sell.

Understanding these reasons enables the Council to tailor its support and guidance, helping owners overcome barriers and facilitating the reoccupation of long-term empty homes.

4.5 Tracing Property Owners:

One of the key challenges in tackling long-term empty properties is identifying and contacting the legal owner, particularly where ownership details are unclear or outdated. We recognise that in such cases, without local authority intervention the properties are likely to remain vacant for the long-term.

To address this, the Council employs a range of methods to trace and engage property owners including:

- Reviewing official records, including Council Tax data, Land Registry information, probate records, and the electoral register.
- Engaging with the local community, such as neighbours, local councillors, and others who may have knowledge about the property or its ownership.

- Issuing public notices, including advertisements in local newspapers, inviting the owner, or anyone with relevant information, to come forward.

- Appointing a professional tracing agent, when all other reasonable attempts have been exhausted. This measure is taken as a last resort.

If after all reasonable efforts, the owner remains untraceable, all correspondence will be served directly on the empty property.

4.6 Problems Associated with Empty Homes:

Property owners have a duty to ensure that vacant homes do not pose a risk or become a source of nuisance to the wider community. Long-term empty properties can have a significant and negative impact on their surroundings, often resulting in:

- Reduced property values for nearby homes.
- The increased risk of attracting pests and vermin.
- The potential for vandalism and anti-social behaviour (i.e. graffiti and trespassing).
- Opportunities for unauthorised entry, which may lead to illegal activities (i.e. squatting).
- An increased risk of fly tipping and illegal waste disposal in and around the property.
- The potential to cause structural and damp issues, which may affect adjoining or nearby buildings.
- Impact on the visual amenity of an area.

If left unaddressed, these properties can impose considerable burdens on the Council, emergency services, local residents, and the environment. Owners remain financially responsible for their upkeep and are strongly encouraged to

take early, preventative action before issues escalate.

Properties deteriorate more rapidly when left empty, meaning even a short-term empty property can quickly become an unsightly burden, that becomes increasingly difficult and costly for owners to manage.

4.7 Spotting the Signs of a Long-Term Empty Property:

Long-term empty properties are often easily identifiable, especially when they show signs of neglect or deterioration. Some of the most common indicators include:

- A noticeable build-up of unopened post behind the front door or in external letterboxes.
- An overgrown garden or unmaintained outdoor area, including the accumulation of refuse or fly-tipped waste.
- Visible signs of disrepair, such as broken windows, damaged roofing, or internal damage.
- The property being boarded up or otherwise visibly secured.
- Lights left on continuously with no signs of anyone visiting over an extended period.

If several of these signs are present, the property may be long-term vacant. Reporting such properties enables the Council to investigate and take steps to encourage their return to use—helping to improve local housing availability and enhance neighbourhood appearance and safety.

4.8 To Report an Empty Property:

The Council welcomes reports from members of the public regarding concerns or issues associated with empty residential properties. These may include impacts on

neighbouring homes or the wider community.

To support this, the Council's website contains a dedicated enquiry form, which can be accessed [here](#).

Please Note: The Council does **NOT** investigate anonymous complaints.

This form allows individuals to notify the Empty Property Coordinator of any suspected long-term vacancies or associated problems.

Please Note: While all reports are taken seriously, the Council is not able to pursue enforcement action in every case. Each report will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with priority given to properties that pose the greatest risk to public health, safety, or amenity. Wherever possible, the Council will seek to work collaboratively with property owners, encouraging voluntary action before initiating any formal enforcement measures.

4.9 How the Council Handles Empty Property Complaints:

Upon receipt of a complaint, the matter is referred to the Council's Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) department, where it is allocated to an Officer for further investigation. Common complaints include issues such as refuse accumulation, disrepair issues (e.g. dampness) or unauthorised access.

Where complaints fall outside the remit of SRS, the matter may be escalated to other Council departments. For example, Building Control may become involved if a property's condition presents a potential health and safety risk. In these instances, SRS can offer support in coordinating the appropriate response across services.

The Council's investigative approach is twofold: it addresses any immediate public

health or safety concerns, while also working with the property owner to identify long-term solutions that can return the property to use. Officers will always seek to resolve issues informally in the first instance, encouraging owners to take voluntary action wherever possible.

However, where cooperation is not forthcoming, or where a property poses significant risk, formal enforcement measures may be pursued. These actions can include the serving of legal notices. If compliance is not achieved, the Council may initiate prosecution or undertake necessary works in default, with all associated costs recovered from the owner.

For details of the full range of enforcement tools available, please refer to **[Appendix 1](#)**.

Please Note: Addressing empty property issues is often a complex and time-consuming process. Some cases may take several years to resolve.

4.10 Performance Monitoring:

The Council's performance in tackling empty homes is measured through two nationally recognised indicators, as defined by Welsh Government and submitted to Data Cymru annually. These indicators are used to compare performance across Local Authorities in Wales.

- **EMH0001 – Percentage of Empty Private Sector Properties Brought Back into Use (6+ Months Vacant):** This indicator measures the proportion of empty private sector homes that are returned to use during the financial year as a direct result of local authority action. The figure is calculated using:

- The number of empty private properties brought back into use through Council intervention, and
- The total number of private sector properties that had been vacant for more than six months as of 1 April.

- **EMH0002 – Percentage of Empty Private Sector Properties Brought Back into Use (12+ Months Vacant):** Similar to EMH0001, this indicator reflects the Council's direct impact on long-term vacancy but focuses exclusively on properties empty for more than twelve months at the start of the financial year. The metric is based on:

- The number of empty private sector dwellings brought back into use through Council action, and
- The total number of such properties vacant for over 12 months as of 1 April.

As well as this, the Council also monitors progress to inform its business planning¹ and ensure alignment with both local and national objectives. The internal data collection focuses on the following metrics:

- The number of empty properties in the top 20 that are subject to local authority intervention resulting in positive progress².

¹ [Bridgend Council Corporate Plan](#)

² (* Positive progress is defined as a significant change likely to result in the property being brought back into beneficial use such as those on the market for sale; sold and in new ownership; under renovation; subject

- The number of top 20 properties returned to use with local authority intervention.
- Total number of empty properties returned to use with local authority intervention
- Total number of empty property actions across the local authority.

All relevant departments (e.g. Council Tax, Regeneration, Planning) will be required to submit timely and accurate data to support the annual Welsh Government return and internal reporting cycles. The Empty Property Coordinator will lead the coordination of this process and ensure outcomes are fed back into service planning.

5. Why Bring Empty Properties Back into Use

5.1 Housing Need in Bridgend

Bridgend Council is facing significant pressure on its housing market. Several complex and interrelated factors are contributing to this strain, including:

- Rising level of homelessness.
- Extended waiting times on the Common Housing Register.

to enforcement notices or other enforcement action; work in default, progressing through probate (or other legal route) as a result of intervention)

- A severe shortage of affordable housing.
- Private sector rental costs exceeding Local Housing Allowance rates, making homes inaccessible for many residents.

Over the course of our previous strategy, the number of applicants on the Common Housing Register increased from 816 at the end of 2019/2020 to 3,254 at the end of August 2024³. This surge in demand reflects the combined impact of the cost-of-living crisis and an increasing challenges in the private rented sector.

While demand for housing continues to far exceed supply, a significant number of empty homes remain across the borough. Although returning these properties back into use will not, on its own, resolve all of Bridgend's housing issues, it can play a valuable role in easing pressure.

Returning empty homes to the market can increase the overall supply of accommodation and supports the Councils wider efforts to respond to housing need.

5.2 Increasing Housing Supply

A key priority for the Council is to increase the housing supply within the borough. This not only includes bringing long-term empty properties back into use but also maximising the potential of underutilised buildings as a source of providing additional homes.

A key area of opportunity is the conversion of vacant or underused space above commercial and retail premises. These spaces are often overlooked despite offering considerable potential—

particularly for creating smaller units suited to single-person households.

By making better use of such spaces, the Council can support more efficient land use, enhance town centres, and help meet the growing demand for affordable accommodation.

6. Empty Homes Action Plan

To support the effective return of empty properties back into use, the Council has developed a targeted [Empty Homes Action Plan](#) (See Annex 1).

This plan outlines the strategic objectives of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy and clearly defines the responsibilities assigned to members of the Empty Property Working Group, ensuring a collaborative and coordinated approach in delivering key outcomes.

6.1 The Empty Property Action Plan Objectives:

The Action Plan is underpinned by three core objectives:

Objective 1: Promote, Educate, and Support – To engage empty property owners, prospective purchasers, and developers by delivering clear and effective communication. The Council will provide tailored advice, raise awareness of available support, and encourage voluntary action to return properties to use.

Objective 2: Prioritisation And Targeted Approach – To address empty properties using a strategic, evidence-based approach. This involves prioritising properties that pose the highest risk to the

³ [HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS POSITION STATEMENT - SEPTEMBER 2024](#)

public or environment, or those which cause the greatest impact on communities

Objective 3: Taking Proportionate and Effective Enforcement Action – Where informal engagement proves unsuccessful and voluntary measures fail, the Council will use its statutory powers to take appropriate, proportionate, and transparent action.

6.2 Our Approach:

To achieve our objectives, the Council adopts a proactive and strategic approach by allocating dedicated resources to address empty properties. This includes providing tailored advice and offering financial assistance to encourage empty property owners to take meaningful action. By intervening, the Council aims to reduce the number of properties being left vacant for prolonged periods and to minimise their impact on the community.

6.3 Proactive Engagement

Fostering positive, collaborative relationships with empty property owners and developers is essential to the Council's efforts in bringing properties back into use. The Council is committed to offering support, guidance, and education to encourage positive engagement. To support this, a range of initiatives have been developed to support this goal, including:

- **Annual Mailout:** Annual communication with up-to-date advice and support offers.
- **Empty Property Landlord Information Pack:** A resource that includes key information on support schemes available, to help empty property owners understand the options available to them.

- **Empty Property Survey** – An online self-referral tool allowing empty property owners to tell us about their empty property and request tailored advice.
- **Social media campaigns**
- **Attendance at landlord forum meetings** – Regular participation to support knowledge-sharing
- **Collaborative working** with other council departments, and other local authorities to share best practices and align approaches.
- **Partnership working** with Private Sector Housing to deliver the leasing scheme to provide secure accommodation.
- **Engagement with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)** to identify opportunities to bring properties into use through trusted housing partners.

6.4 Incentivising Owners:

The Council offers a range of targeted support packages designed to assist empty property owners in bringing their properties back into use. The current assistance includes:

- **Interest Free Loans:** Available to help owners renovate or improve properties for either sale or letting.
- **The Leasing Scheme:** Offers a grant incentive to improve property conditions, after which the Council leases the home from the owner at Local Housing Allowance rates.
- **The National Empty Homes Grant:** Aimed at supporting properties being renovated for owner-occupier use.

- Transforming Towns Programme: Focused on converting town centre underused upper floor spaces into residential units.

* Find out about the latest vacant town centre empty properties [here](#).
- Bridgend Valleys and District Centres Placemaking Property Improvement Grant: Supports the conversion of upper floor spaces above commercial premises into residential accommodation. *

** Disclaimer: This grant is currently available, however funding beyond 2025/26 is not yet confirmed. We will provide updates as further information becomes available.*

The Council will actively seek to maximise any available financial opportunities, by working in partnership with other council departments and external organisations to help owners restore and bring their empty properties back into use.

To find out more about these schemes, including eligibility criteria and how to apply, please visit our website [here](#).

6.5 How Do We Prioritise Empty Homes:

Tackling empty properties is a complex and resource-intensive challenge. To ensure efficient and strategic use of available capacity, the Council has adopted a targeted, evidence-based framework for prioritising intervention. This approach enables the Council to focus its efforts on properties that present the highest risk to the community or the greatest potential for positive reuse.

Each year, Council Tax data is reviewed to identify residential properties that have been empty for extended periods, with particular attention given to those unoccupied for more than six or twelve months. These properties are then risk

assessed, upon receipt of a complaint, to determine their priority for further action.

Please note: When resources allow the Council will carry out proactive inspections in line with the empty property action plan – **Annex 1**.

Higher concern is typically given to properties that meet one or more of the risk assessment criteria:

- Length of Vacancy
Higher priority is assigned to properties that have remained unoccupied for over 12 months.
- Outstanding Debt
Includes Council Tax arrears or other charges registered against them such as enforcement or works carried out in default.
- Condition of the Property
Visible signs of disrepair, structural deterioration, or internal damage.
- Complaint History
Properties that have been the subject of multiple complaints to departments such as Planning, Building Control or Environmental Health.
- Enforcement History
A previous record of formal enforcement action by the Council.
- Environmental Neglect
Issues such as overgrown gardens, fly-tipping, pest infestations, or vermin activity.
- Anti-Social Behaviour
Reports of vandalism, graffiti, unauthorised access, squatting, or other criminal activity linked to the property.
- Strategic Location

Properties situated in areas of high housing demand or within key regeneration zones, including town centres.

Each property is assigned a score based on these factors. Properties with the highest score are prioritised for enforcement or intervention. This approach ensures decisions are proportionate, transparent, and aligned with broader regeneration goals.

To maximise impact and ensure efficient use of available resources, the Council prioritises the top 20 highest-scoring properties for targeted action. This list is routinely reviewed and updated to reflect new information and successful interventions, ensuring efforts remain focused on where they are most needed.

6.6 Determining the Best Course of Action:

The Council seeks to resolve issues relating to empty properties through informal means in the first instance. However, the type of interventions officers take escalate in severity depending on the risk posed and the responsiveness of the property owner.

The types of intervention taken by the Council include:

- Proactive Identification and Inspection of Empty Properties.

Note: If the owner is unwilling to engage or is untraceable the Council can obtain a legal warrant to facilitate an inspection and to allow works in default.

- Providing Tailored Advice and Support
- Administering Financial Assistance
- Serving Statutory Notices
- Carrying out Works in Default

- Securing Properties
- Initiating Enforced Sale Proceedings
- Compulsory Purchase Order

Note: The Council is unable to enforce a sale against every property; this measure is reserved for only the most extreme cases.

The Council faces challenges where high priority properties fall into a state of disrepair, but the owner takes steps to avoid enforcement action. When the owner ensures there are no ongoing public health risks or outstanding debts registered against the property it can limit the Council's legal options. Although the complexity of these cases is acknowledged, it does not deter the Council from its engagement efforts to bring the property back into use.

When formal enforcement action is being considered, the Council's 'Empty Property Working Group' plays a role in the process. The group will review each priority case and recommend the most appropriate course of action to take against the property.

7. Contact Us:

If you have any queries about the strategy or you would like further information on the support available to empty property owners, please contact us either by:

Post:

Empty Property Assistance
Bridgend County Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Angel Street,
Bridgend.
CF31 4WB

By email: emptyproperties@bridgend.gov.uk

8. Accessibility

Bridgend Council wants to ensure our information is accessible. This policy has been published in English and Welsh on our website <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/> and in hard copy. We are also able to provide the document in alternative formats including audio tape, large print and in community languages. We have access to interpreter services where required. Requests for copies in other formats or other languages should be addressed in writing to –

Post:

Bridgend County Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Angel Street,
Bridgend.
CF31 4WB

Or by **email:** talktous@bridgend.gov.uk

Or by **telephone:** 01656 643643

Appendix One: Action Plan

The goal is to optimise the re-use of empty properties within Bridgend County Borough Council, increasing the availability of homes for both rent and ownership.

ACTION What are we going to do?	WHAT WE WILL DO How are we going to do it?	BY WHOM?	BY WHEN?	MONITORING / MEASURE / TARGET
Continue to coordinate the Bridgend Empty Homes Working Group to deliver the aims and objectives of the Empty Homes Strategy.	Maintain the Empty Homes Working Group Meeting – chaired by the Empty Property Coordinator from Shared Regulatory Services Continue to meet every quarter to implement and monitor the strategy. The meeting format has transitioned from a fully online model to a hybrid approach.	All members of the Working Group.	Quarterly 2025-2030.	Group continued and attended by members.
Continue active participation in regional working groups, such as the SE Wales Empty Homes Working Group, to promote shared learning and continuous service improvement	Maintain membership in key housing-related regional forums and attend scheduled meetings to exchange best practice, discuss operational challenges, and explore new approaches adopted by peer authorities. Use insights gained to inform local service delivery and ensure Bridgend's empty homes approach remains responsive, collaborative, and evidence-based	Empty Property Coordinator and Housing Policy Officer	Ongoing	Number of meetings attended

Coordinate annual reporting on empty property performance	<p>Compile an annual performance report detailing the number of empty properties brought back into use as a direct result of local authority interventions.</p> <p>All relevant departments (e.g., Housing, Council Tax, Regeneration, Enforcement,) will contribute timely and accurate data regarding their actions.</p>	Led by Empty Property Coordinator and supported by all members of the Empty Property Working Group	Annually from March 2025-2030.	<p>Report submitted to Data Cymru each year.</p> <p>Local data collection carried out to complete internal performance monitoring.</p>
Objective 1: Promote, Educate, and Support – To engage empty property owners, prospective purchasers, and developers by delivering clear and effective communication. The Council will provide tailored advice, raise awareness of available support, and encourage voluntary action to return properties to use.				
Revise and Maintain an Empty Property Information Pack.	<p>Revise and update the Authority's 'Empty Property Information Pack' with key information including advice and financial assistance available to help bring empty properties back into use.</p> <p>Collaborate with the Regeneration team to include information that supports bringing commercial properties back into use for both business use and residential accommodation.</p>	<p>Housing Policy Officer</p> <p>Grants Building Surveyor/Support Officer</p> <p>Regeneration Officer</p> <p>Empty Property Coordinator</p>	April 2026	<p>The production of an updated Empty Property Information Guide.</p> <p>The number of Empty Property Guides sent.</p> <p>The number of Empty Property Guides downloaded from the website.</p>
Review current information on the 'Empty Homes'	Continue to ensure a user-friendly website for empty property owners.	Housing Policy Officer	Ongoing	Webpage Views

webpage and ensure up to date advice is readily available.	<p>Conducting a periodic audit of the current webpage reviewing content for relevance and accuracy.</p> <p>Update content, as needed, to reflect latest policies and services for empty properties.</p> <p>Collaborating with other departments to ensure cross-linking between webpages.</p> <p>Regularly monitor links to ensure ongoing connectivity.</p> <p>Create user-friendly web forms for the expression of interests.</p>	Empty Property Coordinator		Number of Redirect Links Accessed
Enhance the Annual Mailout by trialling a targeted and innovative outreach method to engage empty property owners more effectively.	<p>Explore and introduce theme-based messaging informed by property data.</p> <p>Improve readability and relevance.</p> <p>Test varying delivery formats and track response rates to help inform future communications.</p>	<p>Empty Property Coordinator</p> <p>Housing Policy Officer</p>	<p>Ongoing – (First Trial commenced June 2025.)</p> <p>To be reviewed and refined annually.</p>	Response rates from property owners.
Launch a regular in-person monthly open surgery to provide dedicated support to empty property owners.	<p>Implement a scheduled appointment-based system at Bridgend Civic Offices, allowing owners to meet face-to-face with relevant officers. Appointments will be triaged to ensure attendees are matched with the most appropriate support. Sessions will offer one-to-one guidance.</p> <p>Promotion through digital channels to raise awareness.</p> <p>The frequency of surgeries will be monitored and reviewed regularly to align with demand and effectiveness.</p>	Led by Empty Property Coordinator and supported by all members of the Empty Property Working Group.	Ongoing – from 2026.	<p>Number of appointments booked and attended.</p> <p>Measure outcomes such as follow-up engagement, applications for support schemes, and properties returned to use</p>

				following consultation.
Organise and host an annual Empty Homes Open Day to engage directly with property owners and promote available support.	Plan and deliver a multi-agency in-person event at a central location, starting with annual frequency from April 2026. The event will bring together council departments, estate agents, Rent Smart Wales, and other key stakeholders to offer guidance on bringing empty properties back into use. Owners will be able to discuss their individual circumstances and access expert advice in one place. The frequency of future events will be reviewed based on attendance, stakeholder feedback, and overall effectiveness.	Led by Empty Property Coordinator and supported by all members of the Empty Property Working Group.	Ongoing – to commence September 2026.	Number of attendees; qualitative feedback from participants and stakeholders; properties re-engaged or supported following the event; event frequency reviewed annually based on success.
Create an annual Councillor newsletter to update Members on assistance available for empty property owners.	Develop and distribute a digital annual newsletter summarising the latest support packages, initiatives, performance highlights, and success stories relating to empty properties. The content will be designed to help Councillors understand current interventions so they can cascade information into their communities and encourage referrals.	Led by Empty Property Coordinator and supported by all members of the Empty Property Working Group.	First release July 2026. Annually thereafter.	Newsletter issued annually. Feedback from Councillors on usefulness and reach.
Deliver a monthly communications campaign led by different departments to promote the Empty Homes Programme and	Develop an annual communications plan. Assign themed messaging to a different department each month (e.g., Housing, Council Tax, Regeneration, SRS) to spotlight various aspects—such as financial assistance, leasing schemes, premium charges). Content to be promoted via digital channels, local media, newsletters, and print. Performance will be reviewed monthly and adjusted based on reach, engagement, and alignment with wider housing objectives	Communications Team Led by Empty Property Coordinator and supported by all members of the	Launch from January 2026; ongoing and reviewed quarterly	Monthly tracking of engagement (e.g. social media interactions, website traffic, enquiries received); annual campaign review; adjustments made based on audience response

related support schemes.		Empty Property Working Group		and operational priorities
Improve Communication with Internal and External Stakeholders to strengthen collaborative opportunities and support for empty property solutions.	<p>Engage with the Climate Change Officer to explore potential collaboration opportunities for Empty Properties such as funding opportunities (e.g. retrofit initiatives, decarbonisation grants that could be applied to empty homes).</p> <p>Establish a regular communication channel with local estate agents to ensure they are informed about the latest support schemes, including the National Empty Homes Grant and financial assistance for developers—enabling them to advise prospective buyers and clients effectively</p>	<p>Housing Policy Officer</p> <p>Empty Property Coordinator</p>	<p>Engagement with Climate Change Officer by March 2026.</p> <p>Initial engagement with estate agents by March 2026; ongoing thereafter</p>	<p>Meeting held with Climate Change</p> <p>Number of communications issued to estate agents.</p> <p>Feedback received from estate agents</p>
Partnership working with Housing Solutions to deliver the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme.	Partner with Housing Solutions to identify eligible empty properties and support owners through the leasing process; coordinate with Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) to carry out timely property inspections and ensure compliance with the elimination of Category 1 hazards. Provide follow-up support to ensure all remediation work is completed before leasing. Maintain a joint operational protocol and regular liaison to ensure seamless delivery.	<p>Housing Solutions</p> <p>Shared Regulatory Services</p> <p>Empty Property Coordinator</p>	Ongoing	<p>Number of properties assessed and enrolled in the leasing scheme.</p> <p>Number of properties inspected and confirmed free of Category 1 hazards.</p> <p>Number of properties successfully tenanted through the scheme.</p>

Objective 2: Prioritisation And Targeted Approach – To address empty properties using a strategic, evidence-based approach. This involves prioritising properties that pose the highest risk to the public or environment, or those which cause the greatest impact on communities.

Explore the feasibility of a working partnership with Probate Genealogists to trace ownership of long-term empty properties where the owner is unidentifiable.	Initiate engagement with Fraser & Fraser; complete and implement a Data Processing Agreement to support information exchange and owner tracing activities; integrate a referral process for complex cases.	Empty Property Coordinator	April 2026	<p>Number of long-term empty properties contacted where ownership was previously untraceable.</p> <p>Monitor percentage of successful ownership traces facilitated via Fraser & Fraser</p>
Conduct joint street-view surveys of key town centre areas to identify commercial and residential properties with regeneration potential.	<p>Collaboratively survey priority town centre zones through coordinated walkabouts involving relevant departments (e.g. regeneration, conservation, housing).</p> <p>Identify underused or vacant properties that may benefit from financial packages or support schemes such as regeneration funding, or empty property loans.</p> <p>Data gathered will inform targeted engagement.</p>	<p>Empty Property Coordinator</p> <p>Regeneration Officer</p> <p>Conservation Officer</p> <p>Housing/Grants Officer</p> <p>Town Centre Manager</p>	To commence from Mid-2026, then ongoing (subject to resource availability)	<p>Number of properties surveyed and targeted.</p> <p>Number of properties identified as eligible for support.</p> <p>Number of properties subsequently brought back into use or improved through financial assistance uptake</p>

Data-Led Targeting of Priority Property Types or Areas	Analyse Council Tax data to identify long-term empty properties by area, property type (e.g. terraces/flats)	Empty Property Coordinator Housing Policy Officer	Annually (subject to resource)	Number of priority properties identified.
Undertake proactive visits to long-term empty properties using the risk assessment tool to monitor condition and review prioritisation	Conduct regular site visits to reassess the physical and environmental condition of long-term empty properties using the Council's risk assessment form. Document evidence of worsening conditions to inform changes in property scores. Use findings to update and review the Top 20 list. Identify emerging priority cases for enforcement or engagement action.	Led by Empty Property Coordinator	Ongoing – Annually review top 20 properties	Number of proactive visits undertaken and properties assessed.
Objective 3: Taking Proportionate and Effective Enforcement Action				
Investigate all reactive complaints relating to empty residential properties and respond with appropriate intervention	Log and assess all complaints received regarding empty homes. Assess any risk to public safety and determine the need for enforcement action. Officers will attempt to work with the owners to bring them back into beneficial use.	Empty Property Coordinator Shared Regulatory Services: Environmental Health and Technical Officers. Planning and Building Control	Ongoing	Number of complaints received regarding empty homes.
Publicise successful enforcement actions to reinforce the	Work in partnership with the Communications Team to develop and release timely media content—such as press releases, articles, and social media posts—showcasing key enforcement cases where statutory powers have been used	Led by Empty Property Coordinator and supported by all	After successful enforcement action has been taken.	Number of enforcement-related stories published; community

Council's commitment to addressing long-term empty properties	<p>successfully. Highlight the outcomes, community impact, and Council's firm stance as a deterrent to property neglect.</p> <p>Increase public engagement and awareness.</p>	<p>members of the Empty Property Working Group.</p> <p>Communications Team</p>	Ongoing	engagement (e.g. views, shares).
Strengthen collaboration with Council Tax	<p>Provide targeted advice and assistance to owners of empty properties on Council Tax exemptions and premium charges</p> <p>Maintain and share accurate data on empty and second homes</p> <p>Continue to review, monitor, and provide feedback on the effectiveness of Council Tax premiums.</p>	<p>Empty Property Coordinator</p> <p>Council Tax</p>	Ongoing	Number of queries responded to and number of communications in relation to targeted advice.
Explore the potential implementation of an internal referral process to facilitate shared working across departments on empty property cases	<p>Engage key departments (e.g., Housing, Council Tax, Regeneration, SRS) to identify opportunities where shared information would benefit case progression.</p> <p>Develop a simple internal referral protocol that considers existing workflows and data sensitivities.</p> <p>If resources allow, explore the feasibility of creating a shared database of empty properties accessible to relevant departments to update as new information becomes available.</p>	<p>Led by Empty Property Coordinator and supported by all members of the Empty Property Working Group.</p>	Ongoing	Number of referrals made.

Apply proportionate enforcement action to bring priority empty properties back into use, utilising the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Empty Property Enforcement Fund	Identify long-term empty properties causing significant community impact and assess them for potential enforcement action, including Works in Default, Enforced Sale, or Compulsory Purchase Orders. Actions will be taken on a case-by-case basis, with careful consideration of each property's circumstances, funding eligibility, and alignment with regeneration objectives. Officers will work cross-departmentally to prepare enforcement cases and funding applications	Led by Empty Property Coordinator Legal Services	Ongoing	Number of successful funding bids Number of properties brought back into beneficial use through formal action
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Appendix 2: Enforcement Options Available to Tackle Empty Properties

Local authorities have a range of enforcement powers to address the negative impact of long-term empty properties. The key legislative tools include:

- **Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Section 80** Abatement Notices can be served under section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in respect of statutory nuisances caused by a property's structure or associated land.
- **Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 – Section 4** enables the Council to serve Notices on the owner of the land to ensure the premises are free from rodents.
- **Building Act 1984** Can be used to address structural defects, dangerous buildings, or defective drainage at empty properties.
- **Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Section 29** Enables Councils to secure empty buildings against unauthorised access if they are open to entry and pose a risk.
- **Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Section 215** Where a property's condition adversely affects the amenity of the neighbourhood, a notice can be served requiring improvement works.
- **Housing Act 2004 – Part 1: Housing Health and Safety Rating System** Provides powers to assess residential properties for 29 potential hazards and take enforcement action where Category 1 hazards are present.
- **The Law of Property Act 1925 – Enforced Sale** Where a local authority has incurred recoverable costs (e.g. through default works) and secured a financial charge, it may enforce sale to recover debt.
- **Housing Act 1985 – Section 17: Compulsory Purchase Orders** Allows local authorities to acquire properties in order to provide housing accommodation by agreement or with the consent of the secretary of state.
- **Housing Act 1985 – Section 265: Demolition Orders** Enables the Council to order the demolition of properties deemed unfit for habitation and beyond reasonable repair.
- **Housing Act 2004 – Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs)** Subject to tribunal approval, these allow Councils to take over the management (not ownership) of empty residential dwellings in order to bring them back into use.