



**REPORT OF:** HOUSING, HEALTH AND ENGINEERING SERVICES  
MANAGER

**TO:** POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

**DATES:** 16<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2021

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## **EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2021 – 2024**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To seek approval of the Empty Homes Strategy 2021 - 2024.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Policy and Resources Committee approve the Empty Homes Strategy 2021 - 2024.

### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

To continue the long-term reduction in empty homes across the borough.

### **ISSUE**

Empty Homes are a key factor in low demand housing areas, they are a wasted asset, encourage anti-social behaviour and can cause neighborhoods to decline. It is therefore essential that the problem is tackled as part of the overall regeneration of Pendle.

The Council's first Empty Homes Strategy was produced in 2006. Since then, action plans were revised every two years before the strategy was last refreshed in 2019.

### **The aim and strategic objectives of the new strategy**

#### ***Aim***

The overarching aim of the Strategy is to develop and implement a range of measures that will directly, or indirectly, help return long-term empty homes back into use.

#### ***Objectives***

- To continue to raise awareness of empty homes in the borough
- To continue to maintain a database of empty homes and improve the accuracy of the data

- To assist and encourage empty homes owners to bring their property back into use
- To improve the condition of empty homes and target the most problematic with enforcement action

## Statistics

A range of proactive work has been undertaken by Housing, Health and Engineering Services over many years to implement previous action plans and strategies. This work has resulted in a significant reduction in empty homes as can be seen from Table 1.

**Table 1 – Vacant dwellings by Year**

		Measure			
		<i>All vacant dwellings</i>		<i>All long-term vacant dwellings – 6 months or more</i>	
Date to which figures relate		England	Pendle	England	Pendle
03-Oct	<b>2011</b>	719,352	2,746	277,529	1,770
01-Oct	<b>2012</b>	704,357	2,554	254,059	1,575
07-Oct	<b>2013</b>	635,127	2,529	216,050	1,206
06-Oct	<b>2014</b>	610,123	2,190	205,821	1,022
05-Oct	<b>2015</b>	600,179	2,045	203,596	1,031
03-Oct	<b>2016</b>	589,766	1,897	200,145	900
02-Oct	<b>2017</b>	605,891	1,859	205,293	944
01-Oct	<b>2018</b>	634,453	1,817	216,186	862
07-Oct	<b>2019</b>	648,114	1,620	225,845	708
05-Oct	<b>2020</b>	665,628	1,534	268,385	765

\*Source – Council Tax Base – Statistical Release - Table 615 Vacant dwellings by Local Authority District, England, from 2004 – Gov.uk – Live Tables on Dwelling Stock (including vacants) – latest update 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021

## Taking the Strategy Forward

Whilst there has been substantial success in reducing empty properties, there are still clusters of empty properties that are causing problems and attracting anti-social behaviour. Although there is funding for the Empty Property Loans Scheme, there is no dedicated officer to deliver upon empty properties work. Thus, the only staffing resource comes from officers within the wider Residential Team dealing with this work alongside their day to day work. Consequently, there is a need to continue to maximise the use of resources such as the Council's website to help respond to enquiries. We will also work with partner organisations to assist in the delivery of the strategy. The lack of staffing resource unfortunately means that the strategy needs to be limited somewhat in its ambitions.

## IMPLICATIONS

### Policy

This new Empty Homes Strategy show what we, the Council, will do about empty homes in the borough. It lists the key actions we'll be undertaking in order to deliver this strategy.

### Financial

It is anticipated that the Empty Homes Strategy will be delivered via existing funding and that there is no additional financial resources required.

**Legal**

Whilst there is no requirement to hold an 'empty homes strategy', the Council does retain strategic housing responsibilities and this document helps towards continued delivery of its statutory duties.

**Risk Management**

There is a significant risk that without the implementation of the strategy, long term empty properties will not be brought back into use

**Health and Safety**

There are no known health & safety implications arising from this report

**Sustainability**

The Empty Homes Strategy will support the delivery of some of the key priorities in Pendle's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023 and Pendle Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023. Delivering on the strategy will help bring back into use, a wasted asset

**Community Safety**

Reducing empty properties can help reduce the anti-social behaviour that is often associated with such properties.

**Equality and Diversity**

A service impact assessment has been completed and there are no known equality and diversity issues arising from this report

**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Empty Homes Strategy 2021 - 2024