

REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

Since my last report to Full Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued with its work programme and focussed on the Committee's review of **empty/blighted homes**.

We chose this review as a large number of derelict/neglected/uninhabited properties have been identified, which are a blight on the area. The review was carried forward from 2024/25 pending the appointment of a new Empty Homes Officer.

Our aim is to understand the current process for dealing with empty/blighted homes in Pendle and consider whether any changes could better deliver on the Council's priorities.

The Empty Homes Officer is now in post and attended our meeting on 11th November, along with the Head of Housing and Environmental Health.

- At the meeting we received information on how the current process works including details on the definition of an empty home; the reasons why properties become and remain empty; the challenges presented by empty homes; how empty properties are brought back into use; and the enforcement options available to the Council.

We also received information on Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs), enforced sale, and Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs).

We learnt that blighted homes present a different challenge to those that are empty, as various factors have to be taken into account, such as vulnerability and/or social/community issues for which other organisations may be involved.

As with all of our reviews, we had plenty of questions for the officers, most of which were answered at the meeting. Others had to be taken away to gather further information. We are keen to find out if the administration of the process can be improved; what financial savings have been made through visits by the Empty Homes Officer to those properties listed empty on Council Tax records but found to be occupied; and whether there are any funding sources available in recognition of works to bring empty homes back into use, such as an empty homes bonus.

In order to continue with the review we have called an additional meeting of the Committee, to take place on 9th December, where we will receive further information in response to our questions.

At that same meeting we are being invited to comment on the Empty Homes Strategy 2025-2030. Any recommendations we make will be reported to the Executive in December before it is brought to Council early next year.

We are also going to take a look at the Enforced Sale Policy and Procedure.

At our November meeting we also agreed to add a general review on asset transfers to our work programme, should Local Government Reorganisation timescales allow.

Councillor Chris Church
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
5th December 2025