

<b>Report Title</b>	EMPTY PROPERTIES
<b>Meeting</b>	Colne and District Committee
<b>Meeting Date</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
<b>Report Author</b>	Simon O'Hara
<b>Directorate</b>	Housing & Environmental Health
<b>Lead Executive Member(s)</b>	Councillor Zafar Ali
<b>Wards Affected</b>	Boulsworth and Foulridge, Waterside and Horsfield, Vivary Bridge
<b>Public. Part Exempt, or Fully Exempt</b>	Part Exempt
<b>Appendices (if any)</b>	Empty property addresses (not for publication)

## 1. Executive Summary

To inform the Committee on the current position regarding unoccupied properties in the Colne District. There are a number of known vacant houses in the Colne and District Committee area. These houses are a wasted resource, attract anti-social behaviour and detract from the amenity and prosperity of the area.

## 2. Recommendations

That the Committee note the current position with empty houses in their wards.

## 3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

To ensure that empty properties in the borough are managed effectively, using the appropriate enforcement action when necessary to bring vacant homes back into use.

Pendle Council's Local Plan Core Strategy, which was adopted on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015, states that the authority needs to address the issues of redundant, low demand housing, and by doing so, will help create a vibrant housing market offering a mix of quality, affordable housing for all.

Over the Borough the total number of properties in taxation, that have been empty for more than six months is 932 properties (included within this are 198 unoccupied but substantially furnished houses). There are also 324 properties that are exempt from taxation. This represents a vacancy rate of 3.0%. This is below the average for Lancashire (3.4%) but above the figure for England (2.7% in 2024).

There are currently 198 residential properties in Colne and District Committee area which have been empty for more than six months, and a further 33 premises that are classed as 'unoccupied but substantially furnished/ second homes'. The total figure of 231 represents 2.2% of the housing stock covered by the Committees wards. There are a further 89 which are exempt from taxation. The table below shows the number of empty properties in each ward for those 'Unoccupied furnished/ second homes', 'over 6 months up to 2 years' and 'over 2 years'.

Ward	Unoccupied furnished/ second homes	Over 6 months to 2 years	Over 2 years	Total
Boulsworth	14	24	11	49
Foulridge	1	8	5	14
Horsfield	4	27	15	46
Vivary Bridge	5	36	16	57
Waterside	9	31	25	65
Committee Area Total	33	126	72	231

Although the overall numbers for the Colne and District Committee area are lower than that of Lancashire, there remains a number of vacant houses in the area that are a priority and require action to bring them back into use and we are targeting these to try and bring them back into use.

The Council has a range of enforcement powers to bring empty properties back into use, for example via a Compulsory purchase order or an Enforced Sale. We will use these legal methods, where it is appropriate, to try and resolve the most problematic premises.

Could the Committee please note, case law exists which implies that the Council should only visit and view properties if a preliminary check, such as from council tax records, indicates it is unoccupied.

#### **4. Implications**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

As a tool to encourage bringing empty properties back into use the Council charges empty property premiums on properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for:

- a period of 1 to 5 years has to pay a premium of 100% of the Council Tax
- a period of 5 to 10 years has to pay a premium of 200% of the Council Tax
- a period of more than 10 years has to pay a premium of 300% of the Council Tax

From April 2026 the Council will charge a 100% council tax premium on second homes.

**5.2 Legal and Governance Implications - NONE**

**5.3 Climate and Biodiversity Implications – NONE**

**5.5 Human Resources Implications - NONE**

**5.6 Equality and Diversity Implications – NONE**

**6. Consultation - NONE**

**7. Alternative Options Considered – N/A**

**8. Statutory Officer Sign off** (please put an x in the relevant box below)

Section 151 Officer	X
Monitoring Officer	<b>X</b>

## **9. Background Documents**

1. Pendle Council's Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted 17/12/15)

### **Contact Officers**

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## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1: Empty property addresses by ward (NOT FOR PUBLICATION)**