

Report Title	EMPTY PROPERTIES
Meeting	Colne and District Committee
Meeting Date	06 th August 2026
Report Author	Simon O'Hara
Directorate	Housing & Environmental Health
Lead Executive Member(s)	Councillor Zafar Ali
Wards Affected	Boulsworth and Foulridge, Waterside and Horsfield, Vivary Bridge
Public. Part Exempt, or Fully Exempt	Public
Appendices (if any)	N/A

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current position regarding empty residential properties within the Colne and District Committee area.

There remain a number of known vacant residential properties across the Committee area. Empty homes represent an underutilised housing resource, can contribute to anti-social behaviour, and may have an adverse impact on the appearance, amenity and economic prosperity of local neighbourhoods. The Council continues to work proactively to encourage the reoccupation of these properties and to address the issues associated with long-term vacancy.

2. Recommendations

That the Committee notes the current position in relation to empty residential properties within the wards comprising the Colne and District Committee area.

3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

The effective management of empty residential properties remains an important element of the Council's housing strategy. Where appropriate, the Council will utilise available enforcement powers to support the re-use of vacant homes, minimise long-term vacancy and maximise the availability of housing across the borough.

Pendle Borough Council's Local Plan Core Strategy, adopted on 17 December 2015, recognises the need to address the challenges associated with redundant, vacant and low-demand housing. Bringing empty and underutilised properties back into use is a key component of this approach and supports the creation of a balanced and sustainable housing market, providing a suitable mix of high-quality and affordable homes to meet local housing needs.

Across the borough, there are currently 834 residential properties recorded for Council Tax purposes that have been empty for more than six months. This figure includes 137 properties classified as second homes. In addition, 339 properties are currently exempt from Council Tax. Collectively, these figures represent an overall vacancy rate of 2.8%, which is below the Lancashire average of 3.4% and slightly above the national average vacancy rate for England of 2.7% in 2024.

Within the Colne and District Committee area, there are currently 178 residential properties that have been vacant for more than six months, together with a further 26 properties recorded as second homes. The combined total of 206 properties represents approximately 2% of the housing stock within the wards covered by the Committee. In addition, there are 91 properties in the area that are exempt from Council Tax.

A ward-by-ward breakdown is provided below:

Ward	Second homes (over 6mths)	Over 6 months to 2 years	Over 2 years	Total
Boulsworth & Foulridge	8	38	16	62
Vivary Bridge	7	42	23	72
Waterside & Horsfield	11	40	19	70
Committee Area Total	26	120	58	204

4. Implications

The latest vacant property data for the Colne and District Committee area indicates a positive reduction in the number of empty homes. Vacancy levels are currently below the averages recorded for both Lancashire and England.

Despite these encouraging overall figures, a number of problematic unoccupied properties remain. These properties continue to have a detrimental impact on local communities and therefore remain a priority for intervention. Targeted activity will be undertaken to engage with owners and utilise available enforcement and assistance measures, where appropriate, to bring these properties back into beneficial use.

Enforcement powers are being used where appropriate and include, for example, the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders and Enforced Sales procedures.

Members are advised that relevant case law indicates that the Council should undertake property visits and inspections only where an initial assessment, such as a review of Council Tax records, provides reasonable grounds to believe that the property is unoccupied.

5.1 Financial Implications

As part of its approach to encouraging the re-use of empty homes, the Council applies Council Tax premiums for the following periods:

- Properties empty for **between 1 and 5 years** are subject to a **100% Council Tax premium**
- Properties empty for **between 5 and 10 years** are subject to a **200% Council Tax premium**
- Properties empty for **more than 10 years** are subject to a **300% Council Tax premium**
- From **April 2026**, the Council has introduced 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	X

9. Background Documents

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

Contact Officers

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