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**How to use the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Template**

The Strategic Empty Homes Framework template has been produced by Arneil Johnson in partnership with SEHP.

The template and Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance have been developed to assist local authorities who wish to adopt a more strategic approach to empty homes work in terms of policy, partnership, intervention and investment.

They provide a step-by-step process which detail the sequence of activities that Empty Home Officers can take to develop a Strategic Empty Homes Framework, and set out options for consultation on the framework and how to reflect these in the final framework document. The 8 steps are set out below:



This template offers a structure, sample text and presentational ideas to support local authorities and should be used in parallel with the advisory guidance as the basis for developing an effective written strategy.

To use the template document effectively, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. Text shaded in pale green should be used as the basis to provide local detail, evidence and context i.e. this text provides a useful starting point to add local narrative and analysis. A prompt on what information to include is provided in the relevant text box, or above it.

2. **<<Text formatted this way>>** require local authority name, statistics or supporting details to be inserted.

This should be done prior to any public consultation on the Framework, or publication (where no prior consultation takes place).

3. Text shaded in dark green is provided as information and advice on how to complete the

template and should be deleted by local authorities prior to publishing a draft or final Framework document.

4. Other text is sample text which can be used by local authorities as required or reframing for local context or evidence. Local authorities may choose to omit sections (at least in part) if they feel that it will not be necessary for their audience. Text may also be edited and reframed as required for local context.

# Introduction

***<<Insert local authority name>>*** is pleased to present this Strategic Empty Homes Framework covering the period ***<<insert timeframe aligned to Empty Homes Action Plan timescales>>*.**

This Strategic Empty Homes Framework seeks to:

* set a clear target for reducing the number of empty homes in ***<<insert local authority name>>*** over the next ***<<insert number of years>>***
* support homeowners to bring empty homes back into use, increasing local housing options and meeting housing need
* enable housing regeneration, placemaking and neighbourhood improvement activity which improves community safety, environmental quality, and housing condition
* make a positive contribution to the building reuse and repurposing agenda aligned to the Council’s wider ambitions for tackling climate change
* raise the profile of empty homes across the community planning and housing market partnership to maximise investment, partnership commitment and innovation in tackling empty homes.

## What is meant by Empty Homes?

In this Strategic Empty Homes Framework***,*** empty homes have been classified using the following definitions:

* **Long term empty properties**. These are dwellings that have been empty for 6 months or more and are liable for council tax. The most recent figures published by the Scottish Government show that there were ***<<insert number>>*** long term empty properties in ***<<insert local authority name>>*** in ***<<insert year>>***
* **Unoccupied exemptions.** These are properties which are empty and exempt from paying council tax. The most recent figures published by the Scottish Government show that there were ***<<insert number>>*** unoccupied exemptions in ***<<insert local authority name>>*** in ***<<insert year>>***. There is no requirement for a property to have been empty for more than 6 months before it can be included in this category.

For owners, empty homes can have considerable financial impacts in terms of lost rental income, mortgage payments, council tax, insurance, maintenance and security. Empty Homes can therefore pose the potential for significant financial loss.

From a wider community perspective, empty homes can cause a negative appearance in terms of place, undermine regeneration efforts, prevent common works from taking place and lower the value of nearby properties. Furthermore, properties which are inactive within the housing market do not contribute to economic activity within communities and do not help with homelessness prevention or meeting housing need.

This Strategic Empty Homes Framework focuses on long term empty properties, setting out the approaches that the Council and partners will take to bring homes back into use. Having said this, it should be noted that unoccupied exemptions may include properties where the previous owner has died and/or properties that have been repossessed. The Strategic Empty Homes Framework also sets out approaches for bringing these properties back to use.

This Strategic Empty Homes Partnership Framework can therefore deliver significant economic and financial benefits to ***<<insert local authority name>>,*** communities, local businesses, owners, landlords and residents by contributing to:

* enhancing housing supply to meet housing need
* reducing homelessness by increasing housing options
* achieving Net Zero Targets and carbon savings through the retrofitting of existing properties as an alternative to new supply
* reducing neighbourhood complaints and the avoidable deployment of public resources
* reducing requirements for Police and Fire Services to attend empty homes
* financial returns for owners by realising asset value or generating rental income
* improving aesthetic appearance and sense of place within a community
* progressing common works to improve housing standards across other homes.

# The Legislative and Policy Context for Empty Homes

There is a rich and diverse policy context for tackling empty homes in Scotland, which supports the delivery of empty homes activity and influences the contribution that empty homes can make to national, local and community objectives***.***

It is important that this Strategic Empty Homes Framework supports and helps deliver national housing outcomes and targets, whilst also reflecting the local needs and priorities set out by community planning and housing market partnerships.

This Strategic Empty Homes Partnership Framework is set within the wider Community Planning and housing strategy framework for the Council and its partners. The Framework defines the contribution that empty homes can make to local strategic priorities and meeting the targets set out in Scotland’s first national Housing Strategy: ‘Housing to 2040’. The national and local strategic framework that supports and enables the delivery of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework is set out in more detail below.

## Statutory Requirements

There are a number of statutory requirements placed on ***<<insert local authority name>>,*** with those that relate directly or indirectly to bringing empty homes back into use, as follows:

* Local Government Finance (Unoccupied properties etc.) (Scotland) Act 2012. This allows local authorities to charge increased Council Tax on certain homes that have been empty over a year
* The Housing (Scotland) Act 2011 which places a duty on local authorities to develop a Local Housing Strategy (LHS) which set out the local authority’s and local partners’ vision for the supply of housing across all tenures and types of housing provision
* Local authorities’ duties to homeless people including a statutory responsibility to anyone threatened with, or experiencing, homelessness
* House Condition (Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, Section 10) creates duties to have in place a Below Tolerable Standard Strategy, Housing Renewal Area Policy and Scheme of Assistance Strategy
* Tackling the effects of Climate Change – Section 44 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009
* Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 introduces a new statutory target for reducing fuel poverty. The target is that by 2040, as far as reasonably possible, no household, in any Local Authority area, in Scotland is in fuel poverty; and, in any event, no more than 5% of households, in any local authority area in Scotland are in fuel poverty. No more than 1% of households in Scotland should be in extreme fuel poverty.

This legislative framework not only places powers and duties on ***<<insert local authority name>>*** but offers mechanisms which can drive empty homes activity and intervention including enforcement action, advice, assistance and investment.

## The National Policy Context for Empty Homes

The national policy context places the empty homes agenda within a framework of strategic ambitions around housing, place, community, net zero and the Scottish economy. Whilst there are currently no statutory requirements for local authorities regarding empty homes, the Scottish Government is keen to encourage empty homeowners to bring properties back into use and in particular, to increase affordable housing supply in Scotland to tackle shortages in this sector.

There are currently eleven National Outcomes describing what the Scottish Government wants to achieve. By proactively tackling empty homes and bringing them back into use, the Council and partners can contribute to delivery of several of these as shown below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| National Outcome | Empty Homes Contribution |
| **Economy:** We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy | Assisting and enabling empty homeowners to bring their properties back into use, provides greater housing choice, improves the aesthetic appearance of communities and can contribute to making communities more robust and resilient through investment, job creation and greater local spend |
| **Fair work and business:** We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone | Empty homes can contribute to fair work and local business agendas through job creation, spend on materials and resources, learning and development of a skilled workforce and increasing the number of households accessing services, amenities |
| **Communities:** We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe | Tackling empty homes improves community safety, encouraging greater levels of resident occupation to reduce security risks and enhance neighbourhood quality |
| **Poverty:** We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally | Empty homes that are brought back into use can contribute to increasing the supply of affordable housing and therefore assist in tackling the poverty agenda. |
| **Environment:** We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment | Refurbishment and retrofitting have significantly less impact on the environment and carbon emissions than newbuild housing activity. Empty homes can contribute to increasing housing choice and supply whilst reducing impact on consumption and production.  Bringing empty homes back into use safeguards properties at risk by allowing works to be carried out not only for that property but others where there are communal repairs. Ensuring properties are protected and lived in increases housing supply and provides a better environment for those who wish to live in communities in the future |
| **Health:** We are healthy and active | Psychologists have long known that people's surroundings can influence their moods and mental health. The mental and physical wellbeing of people who live in the same street as an empty home can be adversely affected as the condition of the house deteriorates and it becomes the focus of anti-social behaviour. People living in areas with high levels of long-term empty homes may be more prone to depression due to the decline of their neighbourhood. Bringing empty homes back to use can help people to rediscover a sense of place and remove the negative stresses and risks to physical health that people living next door to an empty home may face. |

**Table 3.1: Empty Homes impact on achieving National Outcomes**

Empty homes have an important role to play in helping to deliver the right homes, in the right places for people across Scotland. The Scottish Government’s Housing to 2040 strategy sets an ambitious vision of what housing should look like over the next two decades and a plan on how to achieve this vision.

Bringing empty homes back into use will help deliver all priorities set out in the Housing to 2040 strategy as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A picture with four jigsaw pieces with text. Text in first piece is Affordable zero emissions homes. Text in second piece More homes in great places. Text in third piece Affordability and Choice. Text in fourth piece Improving quality of all homes. | *Affordable warmth and zero emissions homes*:   * Help to drive down carbon emissions caused by housing and housing construction. * Assist with reduced heating and operational carbon emissions through retrofitting for improved energy performance.   *More homes at the heart of great places:*   * Help to meet demand for affordable housing in areas of most need. * Contribute to the regeneration and revitalising of town centres, villages and rural communities.   *Affordability and choice:*   * Contribute to delivering 100,000 affordable homes between 2021/22 and 2031/32 * Ensure as wide a range as possible of property types and tenures across Scotland.   *Improving the quality of all homes:*   * Supporting the renovation of existing homes and returning them back to use * Improving the quality of housing stock and the aesthetic appearance of neighbourhoods. |

Furthermore, the new National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)[[1]](#footnote-2) Policy 9 ‘Quality Homes’, encourages the delivery of homes across different tenures and by a range of providers. In doing so, it places an emphasis on sustainability and opportunities for tackling climate change, as well as adopting the approach of building reuse. NPF4 therefore promotes the sustainable reuse of buildings such as empty homes.

Within NPF4 Policy 9 ‘Quality Homes’ there is recognition and encouragement for a significant contribution to housing targets to be made by existing empty homes, or buildings not currently used for residential purposes, being returned or converted to use as homes. This provides an opportunity to consider how bringing housing back into effective use through remodeling and rehabilitation of existing properties could be promoted through the ***<<insert local authority area>>*** LHS and Local Development Plan.

## The Local Policy Context for Empty Homes

The ***<<insert local authority area>>*** LHS is at the heart of the arrangements for housing and planning through its links with the Local Development Plan and its strategic role in directing investment in housing and housing related services.

The ***<<insert local authority area>>*** LHS sets out a strategic vision for the delivery of housing and housing services and the outcomes that partners are seeking to achieve to meet housing need. The LHS sets out the approach to increasing housing supply, meeting housing need and demand, preventing and alleviating homelessness, delivering specialist housing, improving private sector housing condition and energy efficiency, addressing fuel poverty and delivering the housing contribution to meeting net zero targets. More specifically, the LHS defines tackling empty homes as a key area for action, partnership and investment.

Insert overview of LHS priorities, objectives and outcomes creating links to empty homes activity using Section 6.1 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance as a framework.

**Increasing Housing Supply and Meeting Housing Need**

***<<Insert LHS Actions and Priorities>>***

**Placemaking and Regeneration**

***<<Insert LHS Actions and Priorities>>***

**Preventing and Addressing Homelessness**

***<<Insert LHS Actions and Priorities>>***

**Specialist Housing Provision**

***<<Insert LHS Actions and Priorities>>***

**Fuel Poverty, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change**

***<<Insert LHS Actions and Priorities>>***

**Stock Condition**

***<<Insert LHS Actions and Priorities>>***

All Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) are required to prepare and publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). This may include outcomes that will be assisted by empty homes work. If known, and where appropriate, details of LOIP priorities should be included in the Strategic Empty Homes Framework. Sample text for this is included below.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (CE Act) introduced a requirement for all local Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) to prepare and publish a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) which: sets out the local outcomes which the CPP will prioritise for improvement to reduce inequalities and add maximum value to each community, and; identifies smaller areas within the local authority area which experience the poorest outcomes, leading to Locality Plans to improve outcomes on agreed priorities for these communities being prepared and produced.

***The vision for the <<insert local authority area>> Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) is to: <<insert Local Outcomes Improvement Plan vision>>***

The LOIP has the following strategic priorities:

**<<insert LOIP Strategic Objectives aligning to empty homes activity using Section 6.2 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance >>**

# Evidencing the Need to Tackle Empty Homes in <<insert local authority name>>

This Strategic Empty Homes Framework has been informed by a clear understanding of the extent and nature of empty homes across **<<insert local authority area>>** and their impact on neighbourhoods, communities, homeowners and local residents. To achieve this, a robust evidence base has been developed by the Council and partners detailing the number and types of empty homes across **<<insert local authority area>>,** as well as important contextual information on tenure estimates, unmet housing need, the incidence of homelessness, the role of the private rented sector and housing condition and quality issues.

This evidence base provides us with a strong understanding of the scale of empty homes as well as the challenges faced in bringing them back into use. This analysis is crucial to informing our decisions on how partnerships, investment and innovation should guide empty homes activity and interventions. Our analysis of empty homes arising from this evidence, is detailed below:

## Profiling Empty Homes

Table 3.1 details the scale of ineffective housing stock in <<insert local authority area>> providing a helpful measure of the number of homes which are not in use and are not contributing to meeting housing need on a permanent basis.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ineffective Housing Stock | **<<Insert Local Authority Area>>** |
| Total Dwellings |  |
| Long-term Empty Dwellings |  |
| Dwellings with Unoccupied Exemptions |  |

***Table 3.1: In-effective Housing Stock Scotland (NRS Household Estimates published June 2022)***

Table 3.1 shows that empty homes, both ‘long-term empty dwellings’ and ‘dwellings with unoccupied exemptions’, account for **<<*XX>>***% of all dwellings in ***<<insert local authority area>>.***

Insert further analysis and local context around Table 4.1 using Section 7.1 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance as a framework.

## Long Term Empty Homes

Table 3.2, sets out how levels of long term empty and unoccupied dwellings in ***<<insert local authority area>>*** compare with levels in Scotland as a whole.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Geography | % of dwellings long term empty (all) | % of dwellings long term empty (12 months+) | % of dwellings unoccupied exempt | % of Scottish Housing Stock | % of Scottish vacant housing stock |
| Local Authority |  |  |  |  |  |
| Scotland |  |  |  |  |  |

***Table 3.2: Long term empty properties and unoccupied dwellings in <<insert local authority area>> and Scotland (NRS Households and Dwellings in Scotland published June 2023)***

Insert further analysis and local context around Table 4.2 using Section 7.1 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance as a framework, including:

* Housing market operation and impact on empty homes e.g., scale/quality of local PRS/owner-occupied sector
* Extent/nature of mixed tenure housing challenges that could influence the empty homes agenda
* Second homes where these are known or thought to be a significant factor limiting housing availability

Table 3.2 shows that the levels of long term empty dwellings and dwellings with unoccupied exemptions in <<insert local authority area>> are…

Table 3.3 illustrates the number of long-term empty dwellings in ***<<insert local authority area>>,*** and the areas within the local authority with the highest concentration of long term empty dwellings.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Geography | Long Term Empty homes | Total stock | % of homes that are long-term empty homes | % of housing stock  In local authority | % of long-term empty homes in local authority |
| Local Authority |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 3 |  |  |  |  |  |

***Table 3.3:* Long-term Empty Homes**

Insert further analysis and local context around Table 3.3 using Section 7.2 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance.

Further develop this analysis, as required, by detailing sub-area localities that have a higher proportion of long term empty homes than the % of the total housing stock in the area, showing other categories of unoccupied homes (unoccupied exemptions and second homes) as detailed in Table 3.4:

Table 3.3 shows that the scale of long term empty homes in ***<<insert local authority area>>*** are…

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Geography | Long Term Empty Homes | Unoccupied Exemption | Second Homes | Total Stock | % occupied dwellings (total dwellings – LTE, Unoccupied exemptions and second homes) |
| Local Authority |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 3 |  |  |  |  |  |

***Table 3.4: Long term empty, unoccupied exemptions and second homes***

Insert further analysis and local context around Table 3.4 using Section 7.2 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance.

Further develop this analysis by detailing recent trends in the number of long term empty homes as suggested in Table 3.5:

Table 3.4 shows that <<Insert further analysis and local context around Table 3.4>>

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Geography | Long Term Empty Homes Year 1 | Long Term Empty Homes Year 2 | Long Term Empty Homes Year 3 | % Increase/ decrease Year 2 | % Increase/ decrease Year 3 |
| Local Authority |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Scotland |  |  |  |  |  |

***Table 3.5: Number and % of Long-term Empty Homes by Local Authority and Housing Market Sub area***

Table 3.6 details the estimated cost per empty home per year in ***<<insert local authority area>>,*** This includes;council tax revenue where empty properties are currently exempt from council tax or in arrears with no realistic prospect of collection unless home returned to use; call out costs for services such as environmental health, and emergency services resulting from anti-social behaviour, fly tipping and public order offences; subsequent work to secure properties, and; resources required for handling complaints involving long term empty homes where these are not dealt with by an empty homes officer.

Each home brought back into use saves the equivalent amount of money for **<<insert local authority area>>**. It also generates additional revenue for ***<<insert local authority area>>*** where money is spent by the new owners in the local economy.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Cost area | Cost per empty Homes | Estimated total cost |
| Lost council tax revenue (average per empty home) |  |  |
| Responding to anti-social behaviour (include costs for local authority and emergency services) |  |  |
| Other non-urgent long-term empty homes complaints |  |  |
| Total |  |  |

***Table 3.6: Cost of long-term empty homes***

Table 3.7 details the breakdown homes in each Council Tax Band in **<<insert local authority area>>** and in areas with highest levels of long term empty homes**.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Geography | Total dwellings | % Band A | % Band B | % Band C | % Band D | % Band E | % Band F | % Band G | % Band H |
| Local Authority |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Area 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Scotland |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

***Table 3.7: Number and % Empty Properties by Council Tax Band***

Insert further analysis and local context around Table 3.7 using Section 7.2 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance. Additional analysis may include type of homes and number of rooms. This information was last published by NRS in 2018, but may be included in 2022 Census results when published.

The 2022 Census may also include a breakdown of properties by tenure (i.e owner occupied, local authority, RSL, PRS). This information may provide further context, indicating areas where empty homes may not be privately owned, or where housing stock is predominantly RSL or other social housing, and whether privately owned empty stock is likely to be former rental property, or owner occupied.

Table 3.7 provides a suggestion of the property sizes and/or types that are dominant in areas with high levels of long term empty homes, and therefore the potential costs, demand for, and feasibility of bringing homes back into use. It reveals that…

Further develop this analysis by detailing the length of time properties have been empty as detailed in Table 3.8, aligned to analysis of the complexities associated with property deterioration and tracing owners.

Please note, this information should be for all empty properties in the relevant areas (and not limited to properties that are part of an EHOs active caseload). The information is not included in published statistics but should be obtainable from council tax teams.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Local Authority | | Area 1 | | Area 2 | | Area 3 | |
| **Length of time empty** | No. of Empty Homes | % of Empty Homes | No. of Empty Homes | % of Empty Homes | No. of Empty Homes | % of Empty Homes | No. of Empty Homes | % of Empty Homes |
| |  | | --- | | 6-12 months | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1-2 Years |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2-3 Years |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3-4 Years |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4-5 Years |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5-10 Years |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 10 Years + |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

***Table 3.8: Empty Property Timescales***

While unoccupied exemptions include properties which are empty and unfurnished for less than 6 months, local authority dwellings awaiting demolition, and some other homes empty for less than six months; the term also covers privately owned properties that are empty due to the property being repossessed, the death of a previous owner, the owner being in long term care or detention, dwellings last occupied by charitable bodies, dwellings empty under statute and some other privately owned homes that have been empty for six months or longer.

If brought back to use, these properties may contribute towards delivery of national policy outcomes and LHS priorities. However, there is a high likelihood of them remaining empty without EHO intervention. Table 3.9 provides an indication of the number and percentage of unoccupied exemptions in ***<<insert local authority area>>*** that may fall into these categories.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Property Description | No. Empty Properties |
| All unoccupied exemptions; of which |  |
| Privately owned properties empty for six months or longer |  |

***Table 3.9: Exemption Classifications***

Insert further analysis and local context around Table 3.9 using Section 7.2 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance as a framework. This may include a breakdown of dwellings falling into each of the relevant categories set out in The Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) (Scotland) Order 1997 and subsequent amendments.

Table 3.9 reveals that…

## Housing Need and Demand

Empty homes activity contributes to increasing housing supply to meet the demand for affordable and market housing in ***<<insert local authority area>>***. Bringing empty homes back to use can also support ***<<insert local authority name>>*** to; meet its statutory duty to the prevent homelessness wherever possible and to mitigate the impact of homelessness where it cannot be prevented; increase provision of specialist housing units across categories such as wheelchair, amenity and sheltered. Where the private rented sector plays a large part in market housing provision, long term empty homes may be of interest to private investors. Equally where supply has outstripped demand for privately rented properties, former rental properties may be of interest for buyback or acquisition schemes.

***<<insert local authority name>>*** data in each of these categories demonstrates levels of housing demand that empty homes can contribute to increasing the supply of.

Insert overview of LHS priorities, objectives and outcomes creating links to empty homes activity using Section 6.1 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance as a framework.

**Housing Need and Demand**

***<<Insert links to relevant LHS data>>***

**Affordable Housing Pressures**

***<< Insert links to relevant LHS data >>***

**Homelessness**

***<< Insert links to relevant LHS data >>***

**Specialist Social Housing**

***<< Insert links to relevant LHS data >>***

**Private Rented Sector**

***<<Insert links to relevant LHS data>>***

Insert further analysis and local context around above information to consider how a targeted approach to bring empty homes back into use could support the delivery of additional housing to meet demand.

**<<Insert further analysis>>**

# Local Action, Challenges & Barriers in Tackling Empty Homes

As well as evidencing the need to tackle empty homes in ***<<insert local authority area*>>**, the Strategic Empty Homes Framework builds upon the activity and interventions which have succeeded in bringing empty homes back into use; as well as specific local challenges and barriers to tackling empty homes.

The Strategic Framework therefore builds on successes that have been achieved by projects and initiatives within ***<<insert local authority area*>>,** as well as innovation in empty homes activity across Scotland, other parts of the UK and elsewhere as the basis of piloting or programming future activity.

## Empty Homes Projects and Initiatives in <<insert local authority name>>

Begin with details of specific empty homes services, initiatives and local projects which have been successful in tackling empty homes within your LA using Chapter 8 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance to detail activity. Then extend to include similar details for initiatives and projects elsewhere that you consider are worth exploring/adopting in your LA.

Be forward thinking - provide further detail of empty homes innovation and best practice under consideration as a result of specific local context and/or circumstances, and also provide details of other initiatives within your local authority where you have identified a clear potential contribution that empty homes can make, setting out what that contribution would look like.

**<<Insert text here>>**

## Challenges and Barriers to Tackling Empty Homes

There are a number of key challenges and barriers to tackling empty homes in ***<<insert local authority area*>>** which require to be proactively addressed by the development and delivery of this Strategic Empty Homes Framework.

Insert details of specific challenges to tackling empty homes, using Chapter 9 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance to detail difficulties including the examples provided in Section 9.1.

These challenges have been identified through the development of the empty homes evidence base and by engaging with local partners and stakeholders involved in empty homes activity.

Some of the key local barriers to developing and implementing a strategic approach to empty homes includes:

Insert details of specific local barriers to tackling empty homes, tailoring the examples provided below to local analysis and context. Remember not to overstate, or understate, any of the barriers and to consider whether they are barriers to the work as a whole or to specific categories of empty homes.

* EHO Capacity: Competing priorities for action and intervention alongside operational responsibilities
* Resources: Lack of/limited grant assistance and loan schemes to support investment in empty homes.
* Competing priorities: Balancing operational workload issues with new projects, initiatives and reporting requirements
* Legal complexities: Challenging cases where owners can’t be traced, or ownership is in dispute can be extremely time consuming.
* Legal or financial constraints: Reluctance or inability to use Compulsory Purchase Orders due to costs involved in purchase or legal resource not available to pursue cases.
* Other legal or administrative processes: Including de-crofting, establishing status of properties subject to repossession proceedings, or obtaining grants of confirmation where owners and next-generation heirs are deceased.
* Access to data: Data sharing agreements are not in place and/or there is lack of appetite to resolve data barriers and/or collection of data within council is insufficient to support a strategic approach to empty homes work.
* Rigid application of empty homes council tax surcharge: Limited or no discretion to delay imposition of empty homes surcharge where it may enable owner to complete work required to bring property up to habitable standard.
* Resource intensive activities for limited outcomes: Small number of empty homes brought back into use annually compared to costs/time involved in doing so.
* Wider understanding and appreciation of contribution empty homes makes to corporate and community objectives: Lack of knowledge and understanding of how empty homes links to LHS and wider local authority plans and priorities.
* Lack of awareness of empty homes work and the opportunities for advice and assistance: Empty homes agenda is not understood or brought into by partners, stakeholders and wider public with greater marketing and communication required to raise awareness and encourage engagement.
* Shortage of tradespeople or materials: Limited availability of building trade professionals or materials leading to delay in completing projects and increased average cost for building and renovation work.
* Socio-economic factors: Large number of systemic vacancies as a result of economic decline/depopulation/limited employment opportunities e.t.c

# The Strategic Framework for Tackling Empty Homes in <<insert local authority name>>

This Strategic Empty Homes Framework sets out how the Council and partners will work together over the next **<<*XX>>*** years to proactively tackle the impact of empty homes on communities, neighbourhoods, homeowners and residents across ***<<insert local authority area*>>.**

**To achieve this, the following aim has been set for the Strategic Empty Homes Framework:**

***<<Insert Strategic Empty Homes Framework aim>>***

This aim provides the overarching vision for empty homes in ***<<insert local authority area>>.*** It sets out what the Council and partners want to achieve in tackling empty homes and reflects the level of ambition agreed with delivery partners. It also reflects the strategic aim of the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership to ‘bring as many privately-owned empty homes back into use as possible’.

Insert local context on the development of the strategy aim including how it reflects local policy priorities, capacity to deliver and the partnership network available to ensure successful delivery.

Where possible, also provide details of any targets set locally on the number of empty homes to be brought back into use each year.

**<<Insert text here>>**

To guide, coordinate and target empty homes activity, a number of main issues have been identified informed by local evidence and aligned to local policy priorities. These main issues also reflect the local initiatives and innovation which provide a strong foundation for future empty homes activity, as well as the specific local challenges and barriers that partners and stakeholders seek to overcome.

Insert local context on the development of strategic objectives including how they reflect the main issues arising as a result of analysis, policy alignment and stakeholder feedback.

**<<Insert text here>>**

These main issues have been used as a basis to define the following strategic objectives, which break down the overarching aim for empty homes and offer more detail on what will be delivered, by whom and when:

***<<Insert Strategic Empty Homes Framework Objective 1>>***

***<<Insert Strategic Empty Homes Framework Objective 2>>***

***<<Insert Strategic Empty Homes Framework Objective 3>>***

***<<Insert Strategic Empty Homes Framework Objective 4>>***

***<<Insert Strategic Empty Homes Framework Objective 5>>***

In order to deliver this aim and strategic objectives, a schedule of activities, projects and initiatives have been developed into an Action Plan, enabling partners to bring empty homes back into use over the next **<<*XX>>*** years. This Action Plan has been developed in collaboration with local partners and stakeholders who will support implementation, monitoring and evaluation of empty homes activity.

# Empty Homes SMART Action Plan

The following Action Plan has been developed to enable the Council and partners to plan, deliver, monitor and evaluate the impact of empty homes activity over the next <<*XX>>* years. It sets a framework for partnership working and investment that reflects strategic objectives and creates a route map for delivering the aim of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework.

The Action Plan sets out a range of milestones detailing the activity associated with implementation, setting target timescales and details of the lead agency for implementation. The Action Plan, activities and targets will be reviewed annually to ensure partners are able to respond flexibly to changes in need across *<<insert local authority area>>.*

The Strategic Empty Homes Framework Action Plan should set out the actions required to achieve the overall aim and strategic objectives below. Where applicable, it should also set out current performance against the objective.

The Action Plan should clarify the resources required, timescales and responsibilities of all those involved in delivery.

Complete the tables below for each Strategic Objective using Section 12 of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework Guidance.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategic Objective 1: ****<<Copy strategic objective 1 from Section 5 of template >>**** | | | | |
| Baseline | What is current position/performance? | Target | What is final delivery target, and objective end date? | |
| Action | Milestones | Timescale | Responsibility | Resources |
| 1.1 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategic Objective 2: ****<<Copy strategic objective 2 from Section 5 of template>>**** | | | | |
| Baseline | What is current position/performance? | Target | What is final delivery target, and objective end date? | |
| Action | Milestones | Timescale | Responsibility | Resources |
| 1.1 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategic Objective 3: ****<<Copy strategic objective 3 from Section 5 of template>>**** | | | | |
| Baseline | What is current position/performance? | Target | What is final delivery target, and objective end date? | |
| Action | Milestones | Timescale | Responsibility | Resources |
| 1.1 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategic Objective 4: ****<<Copy strategic objective 4 from Section 5 of template>>**** | | | | |
| Baseline | What is current position/performance? | Target | What is final delivery target, and objective end date? | |
| Action | Milestones | Timescale | Responsibility | Resources |
| 1.1 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategic Objective 5: ****<<Copy strategic objective 5 from Section 5 of template>>**** | | | | |
| Baseline | What is current position/performance? | Target | What is final delivery target, and objective end date? | |
| Action | Milestones | Timescale | Responsibility | Resources |
| 1.1 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.2 |  |  |  |  |
| 1.3 |  |  |  |  |

# Resourcing Empty Homes Activity in <<insert local authority name>>

As a council, we place a high level of strategic importance in addressing long term empty homes and see empty homes work as an important element in meeting the aims, objectives and targets set out in our LHS, LOIP and our contribution to the delivery of several National Outcomes as set out in Section 2 of this Framework.

This is reflected in the capital resources that we have allocated for this area.

The proposed allocated funding for the next four years is illustrated below in Table 7.1:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategic Empty Homes Framework Budget 2023/24 – 2026/27 COSTS | | | | |
| Resource | Current financial year 23/24 | 24/25 | 25/26 | 26/27 |
| Direct salary costs (Empty Homes Officer) |  |  |  |  |
| Indirect salary costs (including finance and legal staff) |  |  |  |  |
| Empty Homes Loans |  |  |  |  |
| Empty Homes Grants |  |  |  |  |
| Empty Homes Buy Back/Acquisition |  |  |  |  |
| Compulsory Purchase Order (costs of purchase) |  |  |  |  |
| Other |  |  |  |  |

***Table 7.1: Average 4 Year Expenditure on Empty Homes***

Insert further information including where funding has already been agreed outwith the framework, what funding is conditional on framework approval, linked objectives and local housing strategy priorities for each element of new funding, and deliverables for this funding.

**<<Insert text here>>**

Table 7.2 indicates revenue income that it is anticipated will be generated as a result of delivery of this framework or through revenue raised from the application of powers to increase council tax for long term empty homes under The Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013.

Additionally, the table includes details of other funding sources that will be used specifically for delivery of the framework, including funding allocated under the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, other Scottish Government initiatives, and third party funding where elements of the framework are pursued in partnership with other organisations.

The table also includes preventative spending savings. These are savings for the local authority and emergency services from reduction in complaints and incidents attributable to deterioration of empty properties, and anti-social behaviour associated with empty properties.

Insert table below, and/or link back to figures on costs per empty home in section 3 of template (if used) together with aggregated estimate of total income from total estimated homes to be brought back to use through objectives. Delete or add rows to the table to reflect information that is available and/or required for approval of proposed budget and supporting activities. Adjust text above the table accordingly.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strategic Empty Homes Framework Budget 2023/24 – 2026/27 REVENUE | | | | |
| Resource | Current financial year 23/24 | 24/25 | 26/27 | 26/27 |
| Income generated from homes returned to use |  |  |  |  |
| Council tax (where property returned to use was exempt from council tax or in long term arrears) |  |  |  |  |
| Affordable Housing Supply Programme funding |  |  |  |  |
| Income generated through long term empty home surcharge (money received on long term empty homes) |  |  |  |  |
| Other Scottish Government funding allocated to empty homes work. |  |  |  |  |
| Other grants and funding |  |  |  |  |
| Preventative spending savings |  |  |  |  |

***Table 7.2: Average 4 Year Income from and for returning Empty Homes to use***

# Monitoring Progress and Evaluating Impact

The actions scheduled under each strategic objective, have been developed into the detailed Action Plan in Chapter 8, which sets out specific timescales, resources and partner responsibilities to guide implementation and delivery. This Action Plan provides a strong basis for monitoring progress in implementing the Strategic Empty Homes Framework on a regular basis.

A range of milestones have been developed to measure impact over time aligned to delivery timescales. The Action Plan therefore provides a basis for evaluating the longer term impact of activity, partnership and investment in tackling empty homes.

Insert details of the monitoring arrangements that will be put in place to track the progress of the Strategic Empty Homes Action Plan. Arrangements could include ongoing reviews to monitor progress made on milestones, targets and use of resources within the timescales outlined in the Action Plan.

If relevant, provide further detail to the Empty Homes Steering Group established to oversee this work including partner composition and remit.

*In order to monitor progress and achievements the following monitoring arrangements will be adopted:*

* *establish an Empty Homes Steering Group*
* *six monthly and annual updates of Action Plan*
* *Steering Group review of actions not progressed or slow to commence.*

## Evaluation

Insert details of the evaluation arrangements that will be put in place to measure the impact of the Strategic Empty Homes Action Plan over the life of the strategy. Arrangements could include periodic reviews to measure impact of key interventions over the medium to longer term.

It is important to ensure that the evaluation of the Strategic Empty Homes Framework is reported to relevant partners and stakeholders as well as internally within the local authority. This evaluation reporting will include:

* *demonstrating progress against actions that contribute to the LHS, RRTP, Community Plan and Corporate Plan*
* *the wider partnership frameworks which are achieving shared or national objectives.*

This regular programme of evaluation with provide the Council and partners with an opportunity to understand:

* the progress that has been achieved
* current position
* delivery improvements required.

This approach will provide an assessment of the successes and challenges associated with tackling empty homes and provides a transparent approach to improvement planning and scrutiny. Progress reports will be made available and be published on the Council’s website with any supporting documents.

# Consultation & Engagement

This section should be completed where there has been consultation activity on the Strategic Empty Homes Framework that is separate from consultation on Local Housing Strategy or other housing strategies and initiatives. Where no separate public consultation has taken place, the section should include details of any internal consultation and provide links to consultation on LHS e.t.c

Consultation has been central to the development of this strategy and sought the views of staff, empty home owners, partners and residents. A formal consultation process for the draft strategy was carried out over a period of **<<XX>>** weeks from **<<XX>>** to **<<XX>>**. The consultation draft and questions are available to view at **<<insert link to consultation version of framework>>**

Insert further details explaining how the views of partners and stakeholders have helped to influence the development of empty homes priorities and actions.

***Additionally, the following activities have been undertaken to support the consultation.***

* ***surveys (both online and telephone) targeted to specific communities and/or wider stakeholders)***
* ***focus groups (both online and in person) targeted to communities and/or wider stakeholders)***
* ***public forums***
* ***targeted forums (including consultation activity to support engagement with hard to reach groups)***
* ***live Q&A sessions***
* ***piggy backing onto existing consultation opportunities or sounding bords e.g. LHS, RRTPs, Community Planning processes, Citizen’s Panel or Tenants and Residents Association feedback.***

## Feedback from the consultation.

The questions and feedback results from the consultation were as follows:

***<<Insert Question 1>>***

***<<Insert feedback on Question 1, and how these have been reflected in final draft>>***

***<<Insert Question 2>>***

***<<Insert feedback on Question 2, and how these have been reflected in final draft>>***

***<<Insert Question 3>***

***<<Insert feedback on Question 3, and how these have been reflected in final draft>>***

***<<Insert Question 4>>***

***<<Insert feedback on Question 4, and how these have been reflected in final draft>>***

***<<Insert Question 5>>***

***<<Insert feedback on Question 5, and how these have been reflected in final draft>>***

As a result, the Strategic Empty Homes Framework reflects the local needs and experiences of residents and communities, as well as the views of partners and stakeholders on the development of priorities and actions.

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1. <https://www.transformingplanning.scot/media/2832/policy-9-quality-homes-pdf-199kb.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)