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Bridgend County Borough Council



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Gwasanaethau Gweithredol a Phartneriaethol / Operational and Partnership Services

Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 /
643147

Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Andrew Rees

Ein cyf / Our ref:

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Thursday, 15 March 2018

Dear Councillor,

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

A meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 will be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB on **Wednesday, 21 March 2018 at 09:30**.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
To receive apologies for absence from Members.
2. Declarations of Interest
To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008 (including whipping declarations)
3. Approval of Minutes 3 - 20
To receive for approval the minutes of the meetings of the 17/01/18 and 12/02/18
4. Forward Work Programme Update 21 - 40
5. Empty Properties 41 - 82

Invitees:

Cllr Hywel Williams – Deputy Leader
Cllr Richard Young – Cabinet Member Communities
Andrew Jolley – Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services
Martin Morgans – Head of Performance and Partnership Services
Jonathan Parsons – Group Manager Development
Helen Picton – Shared Regulatory Service

6. Urgent Items
To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

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Yours faithfully

P A Jolley

Corporate Director Operational and Partnership Services

Councillors:

SE Baldwin
TH Beedle
N Clarke
P Davies
RM Granville
DG Howells

Councillors

A Hussain
DRW Lewis
DG Owen
RMI Shaw
JC Spanswick
RME Stirman

Councillors

G Thomas
E Venables
MC Voisey
JE Williams

Agenda Item 3

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2018

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2018 AT 09:30

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

SE Baldwin
DG Howells
G Thomas

TH Beedle
A Hussain
E Venables

N Clarke
RMI Shaw
MC Voisey

P Davies
RME Stirman
JE Williams

Apologies for Absence

DRW Lewis

Officers:

Gail Jewell Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Andrew Rees Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Invitees:

Fiona Blick Group Manager Property
John Davies Bryncethin RFC
Philip Jones Bryncethin RFC
Zak Shell Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Shephard Corporate Director – Communities
Guy Smith Community Asset Transfer Officer
Geraint Thomas Clerk to Pencoed Town Council

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor RMI Shaw declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 – Community Asset Transfer as he is the Chair (not elected Member) of Llangeinor HWB; Chair (elected Member) of Pontycymer Bowls & Garw Valley Tennis clubs and as a Steering Group Member of the TRC Garw Valley Sports Hub feasibility study which he sits as an elected Member.

Councillor G Thomas declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 – Community Asset Transfer as he is a member of Bryncethin RFC and took no part in the discussion when the Chair and Vice-Chair of Bryncethin RFC were present at the meeting.

Councillor MC Voisey declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Community Asset Transfer as he is a Member of Bridgend Town Council.

Councillor SE Baldwin declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Community Asset Transfer as he is a Member of Bridgend Town Council.

Councillor N Clarke declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Community Asset Transfer as she is a Member of Porthcawl Town Council.

Councillor A Hussain declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Community Asset Transfer as he is a Member of Newcastle Higher Council.

Councillor JE Williams declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Community Asset Transfer as she is a Member of Pencoed Town Council.

Councillor RME Stirman declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Community Asset Transfer as she is a Member of Garw Valley Community Council.

21. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 of 22 November 2017 be approved as a true and accurate record.

22. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer reported on items which had been prioritised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee which included the next item delegated to this Committee to consider. She also presented a list of further potential items for comment and prioritisation and requested the Committee identify any further items for consideration using the pre-determined criteria form.

Conclusions

Following the Committee's discussions, Members determined the following in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme:

Regarding the Town Centre Regeneration item, Members have requested that the following representation be invited to the meeting in 12 February 2018:

- Cabinet Member – Education and Regeneration;
- Rhiannon Kingsley, Town Centre Manager;
- Representation from BID Company;
- Clerks from each town Council in the Borough;
- Trader Representation;
- Representative from a disability organisation;
- Representation from ABMU / Cwm Taf.

Regarding the Empty Housing item scheduled for 21 March 2018, Members have requested that the following information be included in the report request:

- That the report be titled Empty Properties and detail information on both commercial properties and housing;
- How many Section 215 notices have been used in relation to blight properties.

The item on the Waste Services Contract has been highlighted by the Committee as a priority to be presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for formal prioritisation.

23. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

The Corporate Director Communities reported on the community asset transfer (CAT) policy which had been borne out of austerity measures and the need to preserve services. He stated that on reflection, there had been some successes in the transfer of some facilities, but some difficulties had been encountered in transfers being completed, due to their complexity and the capacity of organisations that are largely voluntary. He also informed the Committee that one of the issues affecting CAT is the existence of policies that to some extent conflict within the Council, for example the substantial

financial subsidy for the provision of playing fields and parks pavilions can serve as a disincentive to the CAT transfer of those types of facilities. He stated that it was the intention to review CAT in order to improve the process as part of the review of the change management funded 'CAT' post that was due to end in the autumn of this year.

The Committee was addressed by Mr Phil Jones of Bryncethin RFC to contribute to the discussions on CAT. He stated that Bryncethin RFC is nearing the end of the process and whilst it realised that any improvements to the process will not help Bryncethin Rugby Club, he felt it was important that the rugby club spoke of their experience in order to assist other clubs and organisations coming through.

However, the rugby club strongly believe that if the Council is going to carry out a worthwhile review then it must discuss all of the issues, whether they be positive or negative. For the rugby club's part, the process had been long and, at times, extremely frustrating and there were times when the rugby club came close to stepping away from it.

He stated that on paper the process looks fine, but the execution of that process has been poor, even allowing for the fact that it is the first transfer of its kind that the authority has undertaken. Bryncethin RFC submitted an Expression of Interest on 7 January 2015, and the lease had yet to be signed. Whilst the rugby club appreciate that all of the delays have not been caused by the Authority, their overall performance in this instant has not been satisfactory. In addition the rugby club believe that, unless it can be streamlined and become easier for applicants to manage, it will jeopardise the whole Asset Transfer scheme.

Bryncethin RFC has, over the last few months, applied for substantial amounts of funding from the Rural Communities Development Fund, the Rural Facilities Project, the Welsh Church Act Fund and the Welsh Rugby Union. There had been no refusals of funding to date, but the potential funders are all waiting for the lease to be in place before they will either confirm the funding or progress to stage 2 applications. The rugby club believe some of this funding could be at risk because of the time it is taking to secure the lease, but progress has continued to be slow.

Mr Jones stated that on a positive side, going forward for other organisations, the various stages that they will have to go through should now be far more refined and this should make things move more quickly. The rugby club feel that the original process was rushed through and not developed enough before it was invited to apply, which has led to some of the delays.

He stated that a lease has now been developed and, although this will need adjusting on a case by case basis, it should save time. From the rugby club's experience it could not understand why that, if another Authority has developed a lease that has been tested in practice, this could not be utilised as the basis for other Authorities. Also the go ahead to draw up the lease was not given until about 6 or 7 months ago, some 18 months after the application was made. He stated that the reason seems to be that the Authority did not want to incur costs until the rugby club's business plan had been approved and yet it was obvious that a lease would be required at some stage, even if it was not for the rugby club.

Mr Jones stated that the appointment of Guy Smith as CAT Officer has been a very positive move and if it were not for his appointment the rugby club would be even further behind in the process to where it is now. However, from the rugby club's experience so far, despite the CAT Officer's excellent efforts, he has struggled to get prompt responses

from the many departments that seem to be involved in the process, and this has meant that his impact has been less than it could have been.

In summary, the rugby club believe that there must be some indicative timescales that can be given to future applicants. He stated that while this was easier said than done, and it depends on a number of factors but, until this discipline is introduced into the process it will continue to drag on, which makes it impossible for applicants to Programme the timing of their funding application and any physical work to the asset.

Mr Jones stated that there must also be a genuine will for this process to be successful, and linked up and coordinated actions from all the individuals and departments involved. He hoped that Bryncethin RFCs experience will be a “one off” and the process would have served as a learning curve for all involved.

The Cabinet Member Communities thanked the officials of Bryncethin RFC for attending the Committee and sharing their experiences and hoped that lessons would be learnt by the Council, but stated that this particular CAT was not a straight forward one to start with as it involved developing a new facility on the site rather than simply taking over an existing asset. This also meant that the level of capital funding the Council was being asked to provide was greater than would normally be the case so the level of due diligence necessary was also significant. In those circumstances a lease could not be granted until there was sufficient comfort that the Authority had adequate assurances.

The Committee thanked the officials of Bryncethin RFC for their feedback and shared the rugby club’s frustrations that grant funding would not be forthcoming until a lease had been signed, which could deter other clubs and organisations from coming forward with CATs or walking away from the process. The Committee questioned whether the Council had learnt lessons and also asked why CATs had not been progressed. The Cabinet Member Communities informed the Committee that the delays in processing some CATs was attributable to a resource issues and one which might not easily be put right. A CAT officer had been appointed which meant that there was resource to liaise with clubs and town and community councils and promote CAT but other relevant departments such as legal and property had no additional resource for this purpose. He thanked the officials of Bryncethin RFC for the contribution they had made in what has been a very complicated CAT. He stated that the Council had learnt that each CAT was unique.

A member of the Committee referred to the approach taken by Carmarthenshire County Council which had seen 122 assets transferred, whereas only one CAT had taken place in Bridgend. A member of the Committee also commented that Bryncethin RFC had been offered a 35 year lease, whereas Brackla Community Council and Porthcawl Town Council had been offered 99 year leases. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that Carmarthenshire County Council had taken a decision to make whole scale transfers of assets and enhance the process with financial incentives to ease transfers. He added that leases for a term of 35 years are based on advice from the Welsh Government and are ordinarily adequate to allow funding bids to external funders. He stated that it was difficult to compare local authorities on the approaches they take for CAT. He also stated that CATs were taking time to complete because of the due diligence process which had to be followed to protect the Council’s position. Additionally not all of the delays are attributable to the Council. In the case of Bryncethin RFC for example, there had been attempts to change the lease term from 35 years to 99 years after the initial heads of terms had been approved.

The Committee commented that the CAT process involved the Council removing the cost of liabilities and that some Town and Community Councils have the resources to

fund CAT whilst others do not have those means. The Committee commended Bryncethin RFC for having the tenacity to pursue a CAT. The Committee considered that the Council in some circumstances would ultimately have to take a decision on either to transfer an asset or to close the facility. The Committee also considered that the Council would need to ensure that the leases it enters into for CAT are of value and also safeguards the Council's position. The Committee considered that only certain types of organisations could take on the responsibility for CAT and there was a need for the Council to prioritise getting a certain number of CATs completed.

The Clerk to Pencoed Town Council was invited to address the Committee to contribute to the discussions on CAT. He informed the Committee that he endorsed the comments which had been made by Bryncethin RFC in the lack of progress made with CATs. He also endorsed the positive comments made by the rugby club in relation to the appointment of Guy Smith as CAT Officer.

The Clerk to Pencoed Town Council informed the Committee that three assets were being transferred to Pencoed Town Council on 35 year leases which have yet to be signed and consequently as with the experience of the rugby club funding could not be drawn down until the leases had been signed. He believed that the process for the completion of leases could be simplified especially where there is a proposed lease from one local authority to another. He stated that the transfer of facilities to Pencoed Town Council was one of the priorities in the Pencoed Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan and that the Town Council will shortly be holding a workshop to progress the Strategy and Action Plan. He informed the Committee of the inordinate amount of time it takes to deal with Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) and did not believe that the lack of progress in progressing CATs to their conclusion was a resourcing issue. The Clerk to Pencoed Town Council believed that the CAT Officer was open in his dealings with the Town Council but did not believe that this was the case with the other Departments within BCBC.

The Committee questioned the reason for delays in leases being completed. The Group Manager Property Services informed the Committee of the complexity of leases and that for a CAT there is a different type of lease to that of a commercial lease. She stated that a lease can be drafted quite swiftly based on agreed heads of terms but it can take time to complete if the parties can't agree the wording of specific clauses. She informed the Committee that the Council is the custodians for public assets and those assets have to be safeguarded.

A member of the Committee informed the Committee that the Caerau Development Trust proposed to transfer the lease of the BMX facility to the Noddfa Trust as that Trust run the facility. The CAT Officer informed the Committee that a large amount of funding had been procured for this facility and that the Property Services Department is checking whether the proposal to transfer the lease could be done and whether Welsh Government approval was also required. The Corporate Director Communities also informed the Committee that the Caerau Development Trust is a charitable organisation and there may be some delay due to that status.

The Committee considered that communication needed to be greatly improved between the Council and the organisations who had submitted expressions of interest in a CAT. The Committee considered that although there are resource implications facing the Council in progressing CATs, the Council does need to adhere to timescales and respond to questions raised by organisations in a timely manner. The Corporate Director Communities confirmed that there is always room for communication to improve and that often communication between sets of lawyers can be complicated and protracted due to the formality required. He stated that CATs are complex in their nature and that in the case of the Bryncethin RFC CAT the proposals for the redevelopment of

the facilities required a great deal of due diligence to be undertaken in order to scrutinise the rugby club's business plan. He stated that officers are in post to safeguard the interests of the authority.

Mr Phil Jones of Bryncethin RFC informed the Committee that he did not believe the project to be a complex one, but if funding was not received for the construction of the new building would not proceed. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that the funding of £110k by the Council was dependent on the rugby club having an approved business plan for the project.

The Committee considered that the Council should invest in staff resources in order to facilitate CATs being completed or organisations will walk away from asset transfers. The Cabinet Member Communities informed the Committee that the latest batch of CATs received were not as complicated as the Bryncethin RFC transaction. He stated that the MTFs would have to be revisited if more resources were to be devoted to processing CATs. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that it was not just about investing in staff but in some instances there might also be a need to have a fundamental policy change. For example, he stated that with regard to playing fields and pavilions the Council would need to determine whether to substantially increase charges or potentially some facilities would close, because the status quo position meant that facilities were deteriorating, there was no investment readily available and the number of CAT transfers of these facilities was so far limited. The Committee considered that a short term input of resources was required in order to get CATs over the line. The Committee considered that providing a deadline for the transfer of services or facilities might be helpful, explicitly pointing out that otherwise they would have to close. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that cognisance would need to be taken of the Future Generations and Wellbeing Act in deciding whether or not to close facilities as it could lead to some areas in the County Borough having an inequitable provision of facilities if the take up of CAT was ' patchy' throughout the County Borough. The Committee also considered that some Community Councils are small and should consider working together in order to maintain facilities.

The Committee questioned why the Rest Bay facility was transferred by means of a management agreement and not a CAT. The Corporate Director Communities informed the Committee that the Council and Welsh Government has a long term ambition to host major events in Porthcawl including the Open Championship at Porthcawl and in the event of that happening; access would be required to the land around for a range of purposes including car parking, commercial activity and media requirements. It was important therefore that the Council protected its ability to be able to access the land in these circumstances. There were therefore circumstances where it would be more appropriate to enable some form of self-management of the facility by means of a management agreement rather than a full CAT.

The Committee questioned whether it would be possible to have a common lease for CAT transfers like other local authorities. The Group Manager Property Services informed the Committee that information is shared with other local authorities and a template could be developed for CATs but to date the CATs undertaken have needed bespoke leases.

The Committee questioned whether the relationship between the town and community councils and the Council is different than with the Council and sporting organisations and whether in the circumstances of transferring assets between democratically elected public bodies the process of CAT could potentially be streamlined. The Group Manager Property Services informed the Committee that the relationship between the Council and Town and Community Councils would be different to that with sporting organisations and therefore this potentially could be the case. The Committee considered whether there

was a role for Councillors to arbitrate between the Council and sporting organisations to speed up the CAT process. The CAT Officer informed the Committee that there is already a more streamlined process in place for CATs with Town and Community Councils as there was no requirement to produce a business plan to support their CAT application which was the case for sporting organisations.

Mr John Davies of Bryncethin RFC informed the Committee that representatives of sporting organisations are volunteers and do have frustrations at delays taken to process CATs.

The Committee thanked the invitees for their contribution.

A member of the Committee stated that there was a need to strike a balance between assets and liabilities and to also consider money being spent by the Council and a schedule of dilapidations prior to an asset being the subject of a CAT. The Committee considered that good lines of communication are vital with organisations wishing to take over an asset. The Committee also considered that the CAT process is lengthy and it should be borne in mind that the representatives of organisations are volunteers and to encourage CATs the Council may need to front load assets as a package of support to organisations in developing their business plans. The Head of Neighbourhood Services informed the Committee that the Community Asset Transfer Steering Group has been a step in the right direction and will assist in streamlining CAT processes and approval mechanisms.

The Committee questioned whether Town and Community Councils could access funds on behalf of third parties. The CAT Officer explained that this approach was unlikely to be successful due to double counting.

The Committee considered whether there were too many existing facilities and whether clubs could share facilities. The Corporate Director Communities confirmed that an option is to review the existing facilities and encourage sports hubs to be developed. He also informed the Committee that a report would be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet on a strategy for CATs particularly with regard to parks and playing fields.

A member of the Committee stated that the allotments association were actively looking at grant funding and asked why the leases proposed were to be of 25 years duration. The Group Manager Property Services stated that allotment sites had not been included within the CAT programme.

The Committee questioned whether there is scope to have Member representation on the CAT Steering Group. The Head of Neighbourhood Services stated that he would consider this request.

Conclusions

The Committee highlighted the need for Bridgend County Borough Council to communicate more efficiently with Town and Community Councils, Community Groups and Sports Clubs and recommended that, as previously carried out, a current and up to date list of CAT Priority 1 assets be sent to all, to invite expressions of interest in the transferring of Council assets, detailing what advice and financial support would be made available for any interested parties.

In relation to the current CAT process, Members emphasised the need for the method to be further developed and streamlined in order for the scheme to be successful. Therefore Members recommended that where applicable, indicative timescales be

provided to assist with expectations throughout the stages and to avoid any potential risks in relation to any funding applications made by groups.

Members acknowledged and understood the frustrations relayed by the Pencoed Town Clerk and representatives from Bryncethin RFC with reference to their analysis of the current CAT process being long and protracted and expressed particular concerns over the delay in the production of leases for assets. The Committee viewed this as a result of a lack of communication between the departments involved throughout the process and a shortage of resources within this area of the Authority. Therefore the Committee made the following recommendations:

- That a copy of the lease be provided at the expression of interest stage to enable much earlier discussions and deliberations.
- That when delays are encountered, that meetings are arranged with the relevant officers, along with an independent person to operate as an arbitrator to openly discuss any ongoing barriers. The Committee further suggest that the independent person could be an elected Member from another ward.

Following discussions regarding the CAT Priority 1 Asset list and the mentioned resource issues allocated to the process, Members noted that the asset list is very extensive and highlighted how onerous a task it would become if several groups put forward an expression of interest to each asset. Therefore Members recommended that the CAT Asset list be reviewed and Officers concentrate resources on the top 10 assets that are currently under discussion until transfer is completed.

The Committee noted that there is currently a Community Asset Transfer Steering Group that consists of Bridgend County Borough Council Officers only and Members recommended that the group include elected Members.

Members highlighted the need to encourage Town and Community Councils, Community Groups and Sports Clubs to work more collaboratively to enhance their viability to take over the Council's assets. Members therefore recommended that these comments be presented the TCC Forum.

In addition to the recommendations made above, the Committee provided the following resolution which takes into account most of the issues raised and discussed and also provides openness and transparency in the CAT process. Members recommended that a Community Asset Transfer pack be created to supply to potential applicants to ensure they fully understand the risk implications of taking on an asset. Members recommended that the pack include the following information:

- type and term of lease;
- estimated running costs of the asset;
- what services the Council would expect the applicant to undertake;
- who to contact for advice and support in completing the business case;
- Estimated timelines for each stage in the process.

The Committee requested the following Additional information

Members noted the inaccuracies within the CAT Priority 1 Asset list and ask that the document be reviewed and further requested that a copy of the up to date version is distributed to Members.

24. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

The meeting closed at 12:55

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SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2018

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB
ON MONDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 09:30**

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

SE Baldwin	TH Beedle	N Clarke	P Davies
DG Howells	A Hussain	RMI Shaw	RME Stirman
G Thomas	E Venables	JE Williams	

Apologies for Absence

DRW Lewis and MC Voisey

Officers:

Sarah Daniel	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Julie Ellams	Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Gary Jones	Head of Democratic Services
Michael Pitman	Business & Administrative Apprentice

Invitees:

Councillor R Young	Cabinet member Communities
Satwant Pryce	Head of Regeneration and Planning
Zak Shell	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mark Shephard	Corporate Director - Communities

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor N Clarke declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Town Centre Regeneration because she knew one of the invitees.

Councillor S Baldwin declared a personal interest in agenda item 5 – Town Centre Regeneration because he was the Director/owner of a business in Bridgend.

26. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1) Forward Work Programme Update - That subject to the addition of “item” following “delegated” in conclusion 1, and the addition of a full stop at the end of the first sentence in conclusion 2, the minutes of the meeting of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 of 6 December 2017 be approved as a true and accurate record.

2) Members asked why the Minutes from the 17th January 2018 had not been listed on the Agenda for approval. The Scrutiny Officer explained that the meetings had fallen close together in the diary and the minutes were not ready at the time of publication. Officers were aware of the recommendations contained in the minutes and would be taking action where appropriate.

27. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Scrutiny Officer presented a report identifying the items prioritised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee including the next item delegated to this Committee. She also presented the Committee with a list of potential items for comment and prioritisation and asked the Committee to identify any further items for consideration using the criteria form. Members were also asked to approve the feedback from the previous meetings and the list of responses including any outstanding.

Members expressed concerns regarding Waste Services and issues that residents were still experiencing. The Chairperson explained that the Committee would be considering this item at a future meeting where Members would have an opportunity to discuss concerns with the relevant officers in attendance.

With regard to the Empty Properties item, Members requested a baseline study on what properties were empty, how long properties had been empty and what attempts had been made to bring empty properties back into use, before the meeting. A definition of "empty property" was also requested and whether this included properties empty and for sale.

Members requested that Waste Services be added to the work programme for prioritisation and that Empty Properties should be put forward for webcasting.

RESOLVED: The Committee:

- (i) Approved the feedback from the previous meetings of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 and noted the list of responses including any still outstanding at Appendix A;
- (ii) Re Empty Properties, Members requested a baseline study on what properties were empty, how long properties had been empty and what attempts had been made to bring empty properties back into use, before the next meeting. A definition of "empty property" was also requested and whether this included properties empty and for sale.
- (iii) Identified further detail required for other items in the overall FWP at Table B of Appendix B;
- (iv) Identified Waste Services for future consideration on the Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes at meetings following the Annual Meeting in May 2018;
- (v) Suggested that Empty Properties be recommended for Webcasting.

28. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

The Corporate Director – Communities presented a report providing Members with information on the service responsibilities within Town Centre Regeneration, how they were managed, how they could be developed with reduced resources and how they impacted on the three main town centres and their regeneration. The report also covered the specific requests previously made by the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Corporate Director – Communities stressed that it was important to note that the authority was not able to influence some areas as much as it would like eg empty

properties but there were many examples of success when it came to funding requests, car parking pilots and highway improvements and the Council remained ambitious.

The Chairperson welcomed the invitees to the meeting.

A Member raised the issue of paying to park and asked why residents in Bridgend and Porthcawl had to pay, Maesteg was covered by a covenant but parking in Pencoed was free. The Corporate Director – Communities explained that he did not know the history but he suspected that payment for parking was used as a method of controlling parking which was not as much of an issue in Pencoed where street parking was available.

A Member asked for clarification on whether or not Pencoed was a town and if not, why did it have a Town Council and a Mayor. She was pleased to see that the report referred to the Council lobbying UK government to enable the implementation of a designed scheme to replace the railway level crossing with a re-modelled road bridge. The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration provided a background to the issue and added that a planning officer had sent an explanation to Members on how towns were dealt with in planning terms. There was a scheme for a major development at the level crossing and the next stage was securing support from Network Rail. The Cabinet Member for Communities said that there was no dispute, Pencoed was a town. The three principal towns had older town centres and major problems compared to Pencoed. A Member suggested that paying to park in Pencoed should be included in the car parking review. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the review had been undertaken over the last few months and a report would be submitted to Cabinet in March with options for consultation and income suggestions. There were no specific recommendations in relation to Pencoed.

A Member asked if the car parking review covered parking in schools. The Corporate Director - Communities explained that payment for car parking was used as a method to manage inconsiderate and dangerous parking and there was a risk that payment for car parking where this was not an issue would encourage parking on the roads which would lead to chaos. Payment for parking was generally used in town centres.

A Member asked if there were any proposals for parking meters in the town centres. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that this had been considered for Porthcawl seafront where there was a congestion problem. The review had looked at staffing charges and tariffs and if reducing charges would bring benefits to an area. A Member asked if it was wise to concentrate on the major towns and ignore the issues in the valleys and the communities. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the review was specifically looking at a parking strategy for BCBC and broader parking issues were separate to this review.

A Member asked if the review covered the opportunity for commuters to purchase monthly passes to BCBC car parks. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the review had looked at this and it was hoped that there would be an increase in the number of season tickets sold. Staff and Member parking had also been included in the review.

A Member requested clarification regarding residents parking. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that this was a long and complex process with knock on effects in different areas which had to be addressed as work progressed. It was difficult to see what the impact would be and what steps would be required for those affected. A permit would entitle a person to park in a street if a space was available not guarantee a space.

An invitee asked if it would be possible for the final report on the car parking review and the criteria used to determine areas where resident permit parking was required to be forwarded to all town and community councils. Members discussed a number of issues such as reducing the number of bus routes, avoiding cars in towns at peak times, the infrastructure costs of park and ride, City Deal and parking commercial vehicles outside the home.

A Member questioned the role of Civil Enforcement Officers particularly in relation to car parks and in the valleys where there were no car parks. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that there was a contingent of staff covering all areas and the staff rota could be circulated which would demonstrate the coverage.

A Member requested clarification of the powers of the PCSOs and Police Officers in the Borough as there appeared to be a disparity of powers within the Authority and others across Wales in relation to parking and motoring offences. Officers agreed to find this information and to forward it to Members.

A Member asked for a definitive timeline on the implementation of the enforcement vehicle including when it would come into use and also for the terms of use of the vehicle. Members also asked for further clarification as to what traffic offences the vehicle would be able to capture, including offences such as tax, insurance and MOT checks. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that the emphasis of the vehicle was improving traffic safety outside schools and not general parking issues. Foot patrols could move a vehicle on but the vehicle could then return with no consequence. The camera car could cover a greater area and was expected to achieve good results. A Member asked how the mobile unit would cover 68 schools at a specific time of day and what it would be doing at other times of the day and in school holidays. The Head of Neighbourhood Services explained that there were problems in other areas such as bus stops. The vehicle would be able to cover a few schools at one time and it was important to get to the point where people realised the vehicle could be in their area at any time and if they were parking illegally, there was a good chance they would get caught. He also confirmed that the vehicle would be used to police double yellow lines. A Member referred to the de-pedestrianisation of Bridgend town centre and the use of bollards and street furniture to demarcate the interface between carriageway and footway. Members were concerned that the proliferation of bollards, seats and bins could impede those partially sighted. The Head of Regeneration, Development and Property Services explained that the bollards would protect those on footway from cars and consideration would be given to spacing and colour contrast to ensure they were easily visible. The statutory process would ensure that vulnerable groups were taken into account.

The representative from Bridgend BID explained that there was pressure to open up the town centre as it had suffered following phase 2 pedestrianisation. The vacancy rate of 16% was being monitored. He explained that work to open up the centre was subject to funding and depended on grant bids. It was a substantial scheme and when it was implemented there could be issues with noise and dust.

A Member stated that it was not about driving through the centre but being able to stop, park and shop. The Head of Regeneration, Development and Property Services explained that limited parking spaces would be created and proposals would be included in the forthcoming consultation.

A Member asked how much of the Business Rates collected from local businesses came back into the Local Authority and what local services they contributed to. Officers explained that this information would be available from the Head of Finance. A member asked why there had been a decrease of 60% in business rates but an increase for

Porthcawl where footfall was down by 21%. The Head of Regeneration, Development and Property Services explained that footfall could decrease for a variety of reasons such as the weather, sporting events and the attractiveness of the place. It was a target for the next year to identify some of the reasons. A Member added that car parking in Porthcawl was a big issue as well as access along John Street and the wind tunnel effect. Members agreed that John Street was not attractive and a lot of work was required to make it more attractive to shoppers.

A Member congratulated staff on the achievements of the THI programme across the Council and investment into Bridgend, Maesteg and Porthcawl. The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration thanked the Member for his positive comments.

An invitee commented on the way restoration of Maesteg Town Hall had been handled, the level of commitment in Porthcawl compared to Maesteg and that he would like to see commitment from the Town Centre Manager that she would interact more with the people of Maesteg. The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration confirmed that officers were totally committed to all towns in the Borough. The Head of Regeneration, Development and Property Services explained the history of the Maesteg Town Hall project and that this was not to do with a lack of commitment but to circumstances beyond the control of the authority.

A Member referred to the proposed Watersports Centre at Rest Bay in Porthcawl and asked if there were plans in place to install a "changing places" facility. Members were advised that there were no plans for this due to the difficulty in managing such a facility due to the number of commercial enterprises that would be sharing the Watersports Centre. Members suggested that Officers review the decision to ensure there were adequate facilities available for disabled adults. Members suggested that as part of the lease of the building, the commercial enterprises manage and finance the facility for public use. Members also recommended that the facility included private changing rooms in addition to communal changing areas.

An invitee raised the issue of vacant flats in town centres which were falling into disrepair and asked what powers were available to compulsory purchase these dwellings. The Llynfi Valley would benefit from a small hotel but the Town Council was precluded from purchasing and developing a site. The Corporate Director – Communities explained that the issue of Empty Properties was due to be considered at a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting where relevant officers would be in attendance to answer the question.

The Chair of Maesteg Chamber of Trade explained that he was fully aware of the support in terms of investment in Maesteg Town Hall and of business community concerns regarding the project coming to fruition. He appreciated the explanation and endorsed the actions taken by the authority.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration stated that the thanks were appreciated and that empty properties continued to be a problem.

A Member asked how many blue disabled parking badges the Authority had issued to date and how that figure compared to the industry standard of 6% of available spaces marked as a disabled space. Officers agreed to forward the information to Members.

A Member asked why parent and toddler parking spaces had not been allocated in any BCBC car parks. The Head of Regeneration, Development and Property Services advised that this was not enforceable and that it was not possible to save these places for those that genuinely needed them so it wouldn't solve the problem. It was generally

accepted that these spaces were needed but it was impossible to police. Members discussed the difficulties of getting young children in and out of cars and the importance of having both Parent/Toddler parking and disabled parking in car parks.

The Chairperson commended the officers for their brilliant work and the investment they had secured for the area.

Recommendations

1. Members recommended that Officers continue ahead as planned with the car parking review so no further delays are encountered, but to be mindful to act timely and implement phase 2 of residents permit parking if the problematic parking transfers to surrounding areas
2. Members were concerned that there were no plans in place to install a "changing places" facility at the new Watersports centre at Rest Bay in Porthcawl. Members recommended that Officers review this decision and install one at this premises to ensure there is adequate facility available for disabled adults and insist that as part of the lease of the building that the commercial enterprises manage and finance the facility for public use. Members also recommended that the facility include private changing rooms in addition to communal changing areas.
3. Members recommended a review of the Enforcement vehicle within 6-12 months of implementation to monitor performance and the information to be fed back to Members

Members asked for the following further information to be sent to them:

1. How many seasonal car parking passes had been purchased by the public for the Local Authority car parks. Members would also like to know the costs and frequency available to purchase.
1. The criteria on how the locations for residents permit parking are decided and what formula and criteria is applied to determine the areas. Officers to also forward this on to Town and Community Councils for information
2. An example rota of the Civil Enforcement Officer
3. Clarification of the powers of the PCSOs and Police Officers in the Borough as there was a disparity of powers in this Authority and others across Wales in relation to parking offences.
4. A definitive timeline of the implementation of the enforcement vehicle including when it will come into use and also requested to see the terms of use of the vehicle. Members also asked for further clarification as to what traffic offences the vehicle would be able to capture, including offences such as tax, insurance and MOT checks
5. How much of the Business Rates charged to business owners come back into the Local Authority and what local services they contribute to.
6. How many blue disabled parking badges has the Authority issued to date
7. Members welcomed the review of the de-pedestrianisation of Bridgend Town Centre and requested clarification as to when this was going to happen – members would like to see timescales of any further consultations that need to be undertaken, funding constraints and design plans.
Members asked if charging the public to park in Pencoed Town will be included within the Car Parking review to ensure fairness amongst the towns in the Borough

29. URGENT ITEMS

None

The meeting closed at 12:45

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

21 MARCH 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

1. Purpose of the Report

- a) To present the items prioritised by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee including the next item delegated to this Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- b) To present the Committee with a list of further potential items for comment and prioritisation;
- c) To ask the Committee to identify any further items for consideration using the pre-determined criteria form.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The key improvement objectives identified in the Corporate Plan 2016–2020 have been embodied in the Overview & Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes. The Corporate Improvement Objectives were adopted by Council on 1 March 2017 and formally set out the improvement objectives that the Council will seek to implement between 2016 and 2020. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees engage in review and development of plans, policy or strategies that support the Corporate Themes.

3. Background

- 3.1 Under the terms of Bridgend County Borough Council's Constitution, each Overview and Scrutiny Committee must publish a Forward Work Programme (FWP) as far as it is known.
- 3.2 An effective FWP will identify the issues that the Committee wishes to focus on during the year and provide a clear rationale as to why particular issues have been selected, as well as the approach that will be adopted; i.e. will the Committee be undertaking a policy review/ development role ("Overview") or performance management approach ("Scrutiny").

Feedback

- 3.3 All conclusions made at Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SOSC) meetings, as well as recommendations and requests for information should be responded to by Officers, to ensure that there are clear outcomes from each topic investigated.

- 3.4 These will then be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committee at their next meeting to ensure that they have had a response. The feedback received for this Committee is attached at **Appendix A**
- 3.5 When each topic has been considered and the Committee is satisfied with the outcome, the SOSC will then present their findings to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) who will determine whether to remove the item from the FWP or to re-add for further prioritisation at a future date.
- 3.6 The FWPs will remain flexible and will be revisited at each COSC meeting with input from each SOSC and any information gathered from FWP meetings with Corporate Directors and Cabinet.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 Attached at **Appendix B** is the overall FWP for the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committees which includes the topics prioritised by the COSC for the next set of SOSCs in Table A, as well as a list of topics that were deemed important for future prioritisation at Table B. This list has been compiled from suggested items from each of the SOSCs at previous meetings as well as the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It also includes information proposed from Corporate Directors, detail from research undertaken by Scrutiny Officers and information from FWP Development meetings between the Scrutiny Chairs and Cabinet.
- 4.2 The Committee is asked to first consider the next topic they have been allocated by the COSC in Table A and determine what further detail they would like the report to contain, what questions they wish Officers to address and if there are any further invitees they wish to attend for this meeting to assist Members in their investigation.
- 4.3 The Committee is also asked to then consider identifying additional items using the criteria form for topics for future consideration on the Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes at meetings following the Annual Meeting in May 2018
- 4.4 As part of this, Members are asked to also consider the completed criteria forms attached at **Appendix C** that have been put forward by individual Members of the Committee and determine whether they wish to agree to add these proposed items to the FWP.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.5 Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of a local authority towards looked after children and young people. This is a legal responsibility given to local authorities by the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The Council as a whole is the 'corporate parent', therefore all Members have a level of responsibility for the children and young people looked after by Bridgend. ¹

- 4.6 In this role, it is suggested that Members consider how each item they consider affects children in care and care leavers, and in what way can the Committee assist in these areas.
- 4.7 Scrutiny Champions can greatly support the Committee in this by advising them of the ongoing work of the Cabinet-Committee and particularly any decisions or changes which they should be aware of as Corporate Parents.

Identification of Further Items

- 4.8 The Committee are reminded of the Criteria form which Members can use to propose further items for the FWP which the Committee can then consider for prioritisation at a future meeting. The Criteria Form emphasises the need to consider issues such as impact, risk, performance, budget and community perception when identifying topics for investigation and to ensure a strategic responsibility for Scrutiny and that its work benefits the organisation.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 The work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Council's Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing in the County Borough of Bridgend. Any changes to the structure of the Scrutiny Committees and the procedures relating to them would require the Bridgend County Borough Council constitution to be updated.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality implications attached to this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications attached to this report.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- (i) Approve the feedback from the previous meetings of the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 and note the list of responses including any still outstanding at **Appendix A**;
 - (ii) Identify any additional information the Committee wish to receive on their next item delegated to them in the FWP including invitees;
 - (iii) Identify any further detail required for other items in the overall FWP at Table B of **Appendix B**;

- (iv) Consider the completed criteria forms attached at **Appendix C** and determine whether they wish to agree to add these proposed items to the FWP.
- (v) Consider identifying additional items using the criteria form for topics for future consideration on the Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes at meetings following the Annual Meeting in May 2018;
- (vi) Identify any further suitable items for Webcasting from the overall Forward Work Programme.

PA Jolley

Corporate Director - Operational and Partnership Services

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Background documents

None.

Date of Meeting	Item	Members wished to make the following comments:	Response/Comments
17-Jan-2018	Community Asset Transfer	<p>The Committee highlighted the need for Bridgend County Borough Council to communicate more efficiently with Town and Community Councils, Community Groups and Sports Clubs and recommended that, as previously carried out, a current and up to date list of CAT Priority 1 assets be sent to all, to invite expressions of interest in the transferring of Council assets, detailing what advice and financial support would be made available for any interested parties.</p>	<p>Agreed. An updated list of CAT Priority 1 assets will be prepared and circulated to Town and Community Councils, Community Groups and Sports Clubs when Council policy arising from the Parks Review is determined.</p>
		<p>In relation to the current CAT process, Members emphasised the need for the method to be further developed and streamlined in order for the scheme to be successful. Therefore Members recommended that where applicable, indicative timescales be provided to assist with expectations throughout the stages and to avoid any potential risks in relation to any funding applications made by groups.</p>	<p>Agreed where possible. CAT processes will be subject to internal review with the objective of them being streamlined and ensure that transfers can be progressed in a more timely manner. However, it also needed to be recognised that some matters that caused delay were outside the control of the Council. Realistic timescales will also be provided to ensure that Town and Community Councils, Community Groups and Sports Clubs are aware of the length of time community asset transfers should take.</p>
		<p>Members acknowledged and understood the frustrations relayed by the Town Clerk and representatives from Bryncethin RFC with reference to their analysis of the current CAT process being long and protracted and expressed particular concerns over the delay in the production of leases for assets. The Committee viewed this as a result of a lack of communication between the departments involved throughout the process and a shortage of resources within this area of the Authority. Therefore the Committee made the following recommendations:</p>	<p>NA</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That a copy of the lease be provided at the expression of interest stage to enable much earlier discussions and deliberations. 	<p>The suggestion will be looked at more fully. The feasibility of preparing standard leases for categories of assets will be explored with the objective of reducing delays and workload ideally. A copy of the standard lease will be issued once an expression of interest has been approved by the CAT Steering Group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That when delays are encountered, that meetings are arranged with the relevant officers, along with an independent person to operate as an arbitrator to openly discuss any ongoing barriers. The Committee further suggest that the independent person could be an elected Member from another ward. 	<p>It is hoped that the introduction of standard leases will ensure that fair terms and conditions will offered to all parties and reduce the element of negotiation. The principle of an independent person to facilitate arbitration will be considered as part of this process.</p>
<p>Following discussions regarding the CAT Priority 1 Asset list and the mentioned resource issues allocated to the process, Members noted that the asset list is very extensive and highlighted how onerous a task it would become if several groups put forward an expression of interest to each asset. Therefore Members recommended that the CAT Asset list be reviewed and Officers concentrate resources on the top 10 assets that are currently under discussion until transfer is completed.</p>	<p>It will be difficult to target 10 assets when the Council are currently in discussions with circa. 30 community groups at various stages of the CAT process. However, it is anticipated that the circulation of an up-to-date list of CAT Priority 1 assets and the introduction of streamlined CAT processes / standard leases will significantly reduce workload going forward.</p> <p>The workload of staff involved in the CAT process will be subject to ongoing monitoring so that they can reflect Council priorities and savings required under the MTFS.</p>

<p>The Committee noted that there is currently a Community Asset Transfer Steering Group that consists of Bridgend County Borough Council Officers only and Members recommended that the group include elected Members.</p>	<p>The input of elected members is always welcomed and it is suggested that a Task and Finish Group should be established in the first instance to discuss and agree an up-to-date list of CAT Priority 1 assets and the formulation of streamlined CAT processes / standard leases with two elected members being invited to participate. The feasibility of elected members joining the CAT Steering Group can also be discussed as part of this process.</p>
<p>Members highlighted the need to encourage Town and Community Councils, Community Groups and Sports Clubs to work more collaboratively to enhance their viability to take over the Council's assets. Members therefore recommended that these comments be presented the TCC Forum.</p>	<p>Agreed. The need to work more collaboratively is acknowledged and that Town and Community Councils should be provided with a CAT update when an up-to-date list of CAT Priority 1 assets and streamlined CAT processes and standard leases have been finalised.</p>
<p>In addition to the recommendations made above, the Committee provided the following resolution which takes into account most of the issues raised and discussed and also provides openness and transparency in the CAT process. Members recommended that a Community Asset Transfer pack be created to supply to potential applicants to ensure they fully understand the risk implications of taking on an asset. Members recommended that the pack include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · type and term of lease; · estimated running costs of the asset; · what services the Council would expect the applicant to undertake; · who to contact for advice and support in completing the business case; · Estimated timelines for each stage in the process. 	<p>Agreed. In addition to the Rural Development CAT Toolkit and the running cost data which is already issued to community groups, the CAT Officer will develop a standard information pack that can be tailored for a particular asset.</p>
<p>Further Information Requested</p>	

	<p>Members noted the inaccuracies within the CAT Priority 1 Asset list and ask that the document be reviewed and further requested that a copy of the up to date version is distributed to Members.</p>	<p>An updated list of CAT Priority 1 assets will be prepared and circulated to Members when Council policy arising from the Parks Review is determined.</p>
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Date of Meeting	Item	Members wished to make the following recommendations	Response/Comments
		Members recommended that Officers continue ahead as planned with the car parking review so no further delays are encountered, but to be mindful to act timely and implement phase 2 of residents permit parking if the problematic parking transfers to surrounding areas	

12-Feb-2018	Town Centre Regeneration	<p>Members were concerned that there were no plans in place to install a “changing places” facility at the new Watersports centre at Rest Bay in Porthcawl. Members recommended that Officers review this decision and install one at this premises to ensure there is adequate facility available for disabled adults and insist that as part of the lease of the building that the commercial enterprises manage and finance the facility for public use. Members also recommended that the facility include private changing rooms in addition to communal changing areas.</p>	<p>It has been very difficult to plan for public toilet provision in this facility, as by the time it is built, the current budget for public conveniences may have been cut further as part of the MTFs. As the facility is funded by EU grant, if it is not used for the purpose for which the grant is given, there is a risk of grant clawback. Therefore, careful consideration has been given to ensuring that whatever facilities are designed, are also affordable in the longer term. Public toilets are evidently difficult and expensive to run and maintain, and commercial operators are unlikely to be willing to take on such responsibilities in their leases. A changing places facility has additional specialist equipment which requires a higher level of maintenance and inspection, making it more costly to run. The Council cannot ‘insist’ that a potential leaseholder takes such responsibilities without incurring a high risk that the building will not be let. Again this would result in a clawback risk as well as the loss of an important facility for the local economy.</p> <p>A changing places facility is proposed in the Maritime Centre in Porthcawl Harbour. There are none currently in Bridgend and Maesteg, and these locations would be a higher priority, should Council resources be available to run them, than having a second facility in the same town</p>
		<p>Members recommended a review of the Enforcement vehicle within 6-12 months of implementation to monitor performance and the information to be fed back to Members</p>	

		Members requested the following further information to be sent to them:	
		How many seasonal car parking passes had been purchased by the public for the Local Authority car parks. Members would also like to know the costs and frequency available to purchase	
		The criteria on how the locations for residents permit parking are decided and what formula and criteria is applied to determine the areas. Officers to also forward this on to Town and Community Councils for information	
		An example rota of the Civil Enforcement Officer	
		Clarification of the powers of the PCSOs and Police Officers in the Borough as there was a disparity of powers in this Authority and others across Wales in relation to parking offences.	
		A definitive timeline of the implementation of the enforcement vehicle including when it will come into use and also requested to see the terms of use of the vehicle. Members also asked for further clarification as to what traffic offences the vehicle would be able to capture, including offences such as tax, insurance and MOT checks	
		How much of the Business Rates charged to business owners come back into the Local Authority and what local services they contribute to	

		How many blue disabled parking badges has the Authority issued to date	
		Members welcomed the review of the de-pedestrianisation of Bridgend Town Centre and requested clarification as to when this was going to happen – members would like to see timescales of any further consultations that need to be undertaken, funding constraints and design plans.	
		Members asked if charging the public to park in Pencoed Town will be included within the Car Parking review to ensure fairness amongst the towns in the Borough	

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

Table A

The following items were previously prioritised by the Subject OVS Committees and considered by Corporate at its last meeting where the top three items were scheduled in for the next round of meetings:

Date	Subject Committee	Item	Specific Information to request	Rationale for prioritisation	Proposed date	Proposed rationale for timing from Officers	Suggested Invitees	Prioritised by Committees	Webcast
16-Apr-2018	SOSC 1	Early Help and Social Care	<p>The process into how the following information will be presented will be confirmed following meetings with both Directorates Corporate Directors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to date figures presenting the numbers of Looked After Children by Local Authority; A breakdown of referral figures, to include statistics from local pre-school nurseries; Outcome from the review undertaken by Institute of Public Care; What services are being provided post 16, given that research indicates shows that children who have been looked after, have the increased probability that their children will also end up in the care system; <p>To evidence how the two services are working together and the impact on the LAC population.</p> <p><i>Rec from BREP -</i> For Scrutiny to receive data relating to the Early Help and Safeguarding Board's joint dataset to evidence how the work being undertaken in relation to Early Help has impacted directly on social services.</p> <p>Detailed analysis of the causes and demands on Children's Social Services. Members commented that if this is not known and understood then the Authority cannot effectively plan for the future and Members cannot be assured that changes that are being introduced are fit for purpose.</p>				<p>Susan Cooper Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing; Lindsay Harvey, Interim Corporate Director - Education and Family Support; Cllr Charles Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration; Cllr Phil White, Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help; Nicola Echanis, Head of Education and Early Help. Laura Kinsey, Head of Children's Social Care; Mark Lewis, Elizabeth Walton James, Group Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance</p>	SOSC 1	
17-Apr-2018	SOSC 2	Dementia Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include accurate and up to date figures on the people diagnosed with dementia in Bridgend County Borough for comparison with the number of people predicted to be living with dementia; Provide Members with the information which can be found on the Local GP Dementia Register which highlights prevalence of dementia by area throughout the borough and type of dementia. The Panel recommend that these statistics are presented on a map diagram for ease of reference. If possible, Members wish that this data be elaborated upon to include age, and whether the numbers show if diagnosis was received prior to moving into the borough; Provide an update on the review of joint intentions with health and the third sector and include information regarding the production of a dementia strategy and delivery plan - stating milestones, target dates and responsible officers. Provide an update on existing discussions with nursing care providers in relation to the development of nursing residential care places for people with dementia; <p>Include facts and figures on people with dementia living in Cardiff as well as Neath Port Talbot and Swansea for comparison to Bridgend.</p> <p>Comparisons with other LAs such as Maesteg and the Vale on dementia awareness training to consider how successful the Authority has been in making Bridgend Dementia friendly.</p>			<p>Proposed change from Directorate from 7 March as will take time to get the detailed information as it is not owned by the LA and needs to be gathered from Health etc.</p>	<p>Susan Cooper Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing; Cllr Phil White, Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help; Jacqueline Davies, Head of Adult Social Care; Representative from Age Concern Wales; Representative from ABMU; Representative from Bavo.</p>		Corporate highlighted this item as suitable for webcasting.
19-Apr-2018	SOSC 3	Emergency Housing	<p>Is the current emergency housing provided by BCBC meeting the needs of the service users? Is the current provision a good use of public resources? Should an alternative provision be made to ensure families, in particular children, achieve their potential.</p> <p>Service user numbers Service user demographic –ages, disabilities, gender Outcomes Challenges faced daily by families using provision –health, dentist, mental health, schools *Members have requested a possible site visit</p>	<p>members asked for this item to be prioritised by the Corporate Committee to address the homelessness across the county which has increased and can be seen by the increased number of people sleeping in tents.</p>			<p>Andrew Jolley, Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services; Martin Morgans, Head of Performance and Partnership Services Cllr Dhanisha Patel, Cabinet Member - Wellbeing and Future Generations;</p>	SOSC3 SOSC 1	

Date TBC Following Annual Meeting	SOSC 1	Budgetary Impacts of Parc Prison	<p>How much core funding does BCBC receive to deal with the impact of a prison being located within its boundary? What is the true cost of servicing this need? Is there a different impact due to Parc Prison being privately run as opposed to being run by the Prison Service? Educational aspects in prisons and their impact; What Community Services does Parc Prison provide? What does Parc Prison give back to the County Borough of Bridgend; What 3rd Sector services are provided at Parc; Details on the impact on housing; What input does the Probation Service have with working with the Authority and with the resettlement of prisoners.</p>		Proposed by Directorate for May-June 2018	Ongoing discussions with WG over financial position -more appropriate to receive later in year	<p>Susan Cooper, Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing Jacqueline Davies, Head of Adult Social Care Cllr P White, Cabinet Member Services and Early Help Cllr Charles Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration; Representative from Parc prison; Representation from Health Service Provider; Representation from 3rd Sector – Drug and Alcohol services for example; Representation from Probation Service; Representation from housing department.</p>		
Date TBC Following Annual Meeting	SOSC 2	ALN Reform	<p>When the Act has been further progressed, report to include consideration of the following points: a) How the Authority and Schools are engaging with parents over the changes to the Act? b) What the finalised process is for assessments and who is responsible for leading with them? c) What involvement/responsibilities do Educational Psychologists have under the Act? d) Has the Act led to an increase in tribunals and what impact has this had? This is set against the context of the recent announcement by the Lifelong Learning Minister that instead of saving £4.8m over four years the Act could potentially cost £8.2m due to an expected increase in the number of cases of dispute resolution. e) Given that the Act focuses on the involvement of young people and their parents, what support is available for those involved in court disputes? f) Outcomes from the Supported Internship programme. g) Support for those with ALN into employment. h) Staffing - Protection and support for staff, ALNCO support, workloads and capacity. i) Pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes and impact of Act on capacity of teachers to support pupils with ALN j) How is the implementation of the Act being monitored; what quality assurance frameworks are there and what accountability for local authorities, consortiums and schools?</p>	Needs revisiting to monitor implementation of the Bill and if needs are being met as well as impact on future budgets	Proposed by SOSC 1 to be revisited in next years FWP		<p>Lindsay Harvey, Interim Corporate Director - Education and Family Support; Cllr Charles Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration; Nicola Echanis, Head of Education and Early Help. Michelle Hatcher, Group Manager Inclusion and School Improvement Third Sector Representatives</p>		SOSC 2 highlighted this item as suitable for webcasting.
Date TBC Following Annual Meeting	SOSC3	<p>Waste Services Contract</p> <p><i>(Confirmation required as to whether Scrutiny can receive re-dacted contract - if contract being considered, item needs to go to Corporate OVSC, other issues are for SOSC)</i></p>	<p>Members would like the report to include an update on the following: The impact of the recently recruited senior managers associated with the Bridgend contract and front line operative staff. Was recruitment successful? Have all Members now been given full inductions and training Information on the updates to the CRC centre including the instalment of the polystyrene baler and webcam so residents are able to monitor the traffic flow at the site. Change of days for the communal collections - Has this happened? Has the service shown improvements since the change? Impact of the new collection vehicles. Have they made collection rounds more efficient? Outcome of the review of BCBC in house Street Scene enforcement activity Longer term trend of flytipping. What are the figures of flytipping in the Borough? Have they improved? Domestic or business? A breakdown in the number of referrals received before the new contract in a typical month and what they were related to and a breakdown of the number of referrals received in April 2018</p> <p>A review of the AHP bags be considered when Scrutiny revisit the subject of 'Waste' in approximately 12 months time to include the monetary against environmental impact.</p>	Members requested that this item is prioritised by the Corporate Committee for June 2018 so they can monitor the contract and ensure that improvements to the delivery of the service are made. Members requested that this item remain until significant improvements are made and the service is at a satisfactory level for residents.	SOSC 3 proposed revisit item in June 2018		<p>Mark Shepherd, Corporate Director Communities; Cllr Hywel Williams, Deputy Leader; Cllr Richard Young, Cabinet Member – Communities; Zak Shell, Head of Streetscene; Maz Akhtar, Regional Manager Kier Julian Tranter, Managing Director Kier Claire Pring, Kier</p>	SOSC 3 Jan 18	

Table B

The following items were deemed important for future prioritisation:

Item	Specific Information to request	Rationale for prioritisation	Proposed date		Suggested Invitees		Webcast
Safeguarding	To include Safeguarding activity in both Children and Adult Services.	Members stressed that this	Pilot for Advocacy ends		Susan Cooper Corporate Director Social Services and	SOSC2 Jan 18	
Annual Recommendations/feedback Update to each SOSC	Update on all feedback that required follow up and recommendations - Cabinet and Officer ones		Proposed for March 2018 to inform next years FWP planning		None		
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) Inspection of Children's Services.	The Committee requested that they receive an information report detailing the progress of the plan and update Members whether or not the actions have addressed the issues raised by the Inspectorate.		Going to Corporate Parenting on 24 Jan - Scrutiny Officers to pick up and send to Committee				
Remodelling Fostering Project	Further project as part of the Remodelling Children's Social Services - Detail regarding the upskilling of three internal foster carers to provide intensive, therapeutic step down placements as part of Residential Remodelling project - Review of the foster carer marketing and recruitment strategy at a draft/early stage to allow members input into the process				Susan Cooper, Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing; Cllr Phil White, Cabinet Member – Social Services and Early Help; Laura Kinsey, Head of Children's Social Care; Pete Tyson, Group Manager – Commissioning; Lauren North, Commissioning and Contract		
Home to School Transport	To provide assurances on rationalisation of Learner Transport as far as possible in order to make budget savings: Update on pilot that school transport team proposing to run in Spring and Summer terms 2017-2018 - to support the enforcement of bus passes on home to school transport contracts. As part of this pilot, the Authority is also investigating opportunities to track the use of our school bus services by individual pupils. Update on Recommendation from BREP: The Panel recommend the need for the Authority to adopt a Corporate approach in relation to Home to School Transport maximising the LA's minibuses such as those used for day centres. It is proposed that this be supported by slightly amending the opening and closing times of day centres so that the buses can be available for school transport. Other aspects that could be considered include the exploration of whether school staff could transport children and young people instead of hiring independent drivers. To test and scrutinise the current licensing and school transport regime to gain assurances that it provides adequate protection against the potential of putting children and vulnerable children at	To provide assurances on rationalisation of Learner Transport as far as possible in order to make budget savings. To test and scrutinise the current licensing and school transport regime to gain assurances that it provides adequate protection against the potential of putting children and vulnerable children at risk from those who are in a position of trust. Changes to the DBS status of their employees ought to be scrutinised by an Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the earliest opportunity to ensure that children are not being put at					
Highways Services	To include information of efficiency savings and the impact of what the MTFS has on the service			Proposed by HOS as had been drafted previously for scrutiny but did not go due to timing issues - felt that Mmembers need to know info - <i>could this be an information report instead?</i>	Mark Shepherd, Corporate Director Communities; Cllr Richard Young, Cabinet Member – Communities; Zak Shell, Head of Streetscene; Andrew Hobbs, Group Manager Streetworks		
Community Services	Rec from BREP The Committee recommend that Scrutiny consider a future item on what other Local Authorities are doing to respond to the gap in provision in Community Services.					SOSC2 Feb 18	

Collaboration with Police	<p>The Panel highlighted the need to work more closely with the Police and therefore proposed that a Research and Evaluation Panel be established to look at Policing of the borough on a local level. Members proposed the following points and areas to go to the Research and Evaluation Panel for consideration as part of their ongoing investigative work:</p> <p>a) As the delegated powers to the Police and PCSO's varies between local authorities, the Panel recommend that clarification be provided on what powers have been assigned to the Police and what has been retained be the LA to inform all Members, members of the public, Inspectors and PCSOs;</p> <p>b) How often does the Chief Executive and Leader meet with key people in the Police to discuss and align priorities;</p> <p>c) How often do both the Corporate Director – Operational and Partnership Services and the Corporate Director - Communities meet with their counterparts in the Police to discuss community policing and safety within the County Borough and align priorities.</p> <p>d) The need for a joint plan between Police and the LA;</p> <p>e) How the Police assist the LA in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.</p>					
Remodelling Children's Residential Services Project	SOSC 1 requested that the item be followed up by Scrutiny in the future for monitoring purposes, incorporating evidence of outcomes.					
CSSIW investigation into LAC	The Committee requested that the outcome of the CSSIW investigation into Looked After Children be provided to Scrutiny for information when it becomes available.					
CAMHS	Members on 12 December 2018, Members note that most of the replies feature an element of work in progress and have asked to retain the item on the FWP for future review. To receive an update on current provision and further advise on current situation in relation to comments and					

School Standards	<p>Requested from SOSC 1 meeting in February to receive a further report at a meeting in the near future, (to be agreed by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny), incorporating the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Categorisation information; • In relation to Post-16 data at 4.53 of the report, the Committee requested that they receive the baseline for each school to give a better indication of how each school has improved; • Information on Bridgend's ranking for Key Stage 4 based on the latest results; • Information on what targets were set at each stage in order to determine whether the performance was expected and possibly a cohort issue or whether any actuals differed significantly from the targets set; • Information that the Consortium has gathered through drilling down into each schools' performance to determine what challenges schools face; • Further detail of the performance of those with ALN attending the PRU or Heronsbridge School as Members felt this was not incorporated into the report to a great degree; • Information on the work that the Consortium is doing to identify the variation for each secondary school at Key Stage 4, and what is being done about it; • More information in relation to each schools performance – not necessarily more data but detail of the where, what and how in relation to good and poor performance for each school so that the Committee has an overall understanding of the current situation and priority schools in Bridgend; • What extent are schools responding to the changes recently introduced such as the removal of Btec etc, to ensure they are still meeting the needs of the pupils; • What work is being done to mitigate against future dips in performance resulting from any changes to curriculum or changes to performance measures; • Evidence of how the Consortium has made a direct impact on schools and school performance, what outcomes can they be measured on in relation to Bridgend to assure Members of value for money; • What is being done to mitigate against the impact of changes in teachers to ensure that this does not have a resulting impact on the performance of pupils; • Performance in relation to vocational qualifications and non-core subjects – where are there causes for concern and where there is excellent work taking place etc. 				<p>Lindsay Harvey, Interim Corporate Director - Education and Family Support; Cllr Charles Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration; Nicola Echanis, Head of Education and Early Help; Mandy Paish, CSC Senior Challenge Advisor; Mike Glavin, Managing Director CSC Representative from School Budget Forum</p>	
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The following items for briefing sessions or pre-Council briefing

Item	Specific Information to request
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Overview of Direct Payment Scheme	To update Members on the Direct Payments Process. How outcomes for individuals are being identified and monitored.
Social Services Commissioning Strategy	To include information on what work has taken place following the Social Services and Wellbeing Act population assessment. To also cover the following:
Western Bay Regional Report	Update on situation and way forward with WB and Regional Working?
Residential Remodelling - Extra Care Housing	Site visit to current Extra Care Housing and then to new site once work has begun
Children's Social Services	Briefing for SOSC 1 on Child Practice Reviews - details of latest CPRs over last 12-18 months - what recommendations have come out of them, how have they been responded to, how have they helped inform future work to help safeguard children.

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Potential items proposed for the Forward Work Programme - questions to consider	
Proposed Item	Review of Bus Services
Is this item within the remit of the Committee?	Yes
How does it fit with the Corporate Priorities?	Yes, all three priorities – but particularly resilient communities
Is it a public interest item?	Yes
What are the questions that need answering?	Impact on communities – connectivity and timetabling
Then:	
What is the expected outcome from receiving the item?	How can it be improved to make access and egress from communities better for people dependent on public transport
What can be achieved?	Better understanding of routes and the service users
What impact can Members have on this area?	Looking at options or alternatives available
What information should be reported to the Committee? I.e. data, case studies, examples of outcomes, challenges etc.	Data usage, patronage of services and times, footfall; challenges for communities.
How should information be presented at the meeting? I.e. PowerPoint/Prezi presentation, audio/visual formats, photos, graphics, charts, maps etc.	Information from data collection – views of users and service providers
Who should be invited to contribute to achieve a representative picture? I.e. front line staff, users, carers, young people, representatives from partner organisations, business representatives etc.	Service users; transport providers, community groups
What is the proposed rationale for prioritising this item within the Scrutiny FWP?	Financial impact on provision of public bus transport
Is the item particularly suitable for webcasting?	Yes

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BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

21 MARCH 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, OPERATIONAL & PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

EMPTY PROPERTIES

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Committee on how effective the Local Authority has been in bringing back into use empty private sector residential and commercial properties and the processes, powers and policies the Authority has to bring these empty properties back into use.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The report contributes to the following outcome within the Corporate Plan 2016-20:

- Supporting a successful economy

- 2.2 The report contributes to the following goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsive Wales

3. Background

3.1 Local Context

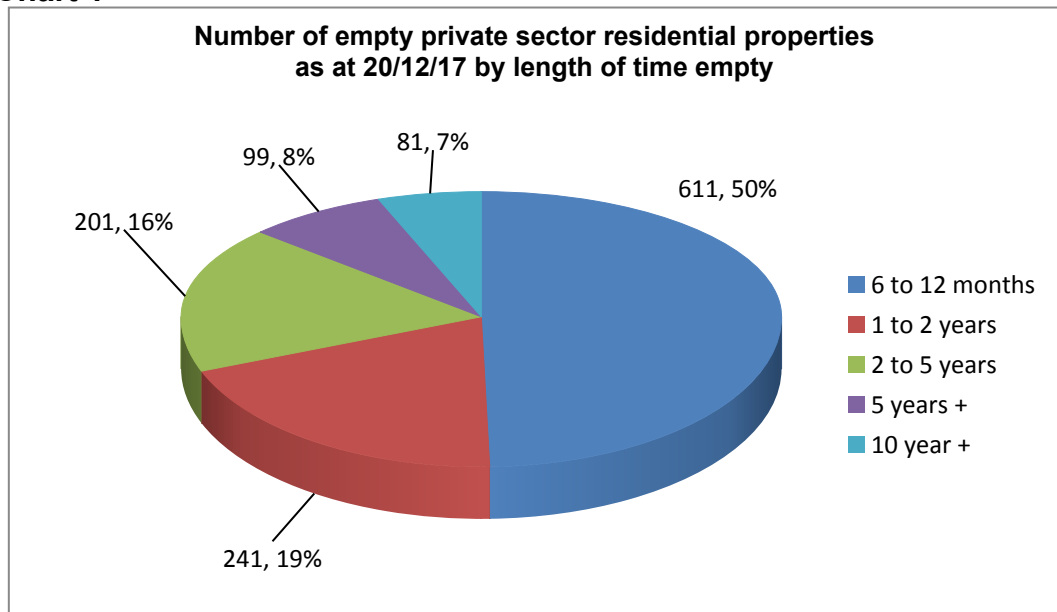
- 3.1.1 There are an estimated 62,462 homes in the County Borough. Approximately 70% of these are owner occupied, 16% privately rented, and the remaining 14% rented from a housing association. In September 2003 the Council transferred its housing stock to Valleys to Coast Housing Association and therefore is no longer a social landlord and does not own any houses, flats or sheltered housing.

- 3.1.2 As at 20th December 2017 there were 1233 private sector residential properties empty for 6 months or longer (2% of the total homes in the County Borough). Whilst it is acknowledged that flexibility and churn is a healthy and normal part of the housing market and there will be empty homes for sale or let, it is the long-term empty properties that are a particular concern, especially where there is no plan in place to bring them back into use.

- 3.1.3 Chart 1 shows the length of time residential properties have been empty. It can be seen that the majority of the empty properties (50%) have been empty for 6 to 12 months. However, 31% of properties have been empty for 2 or more years and it is

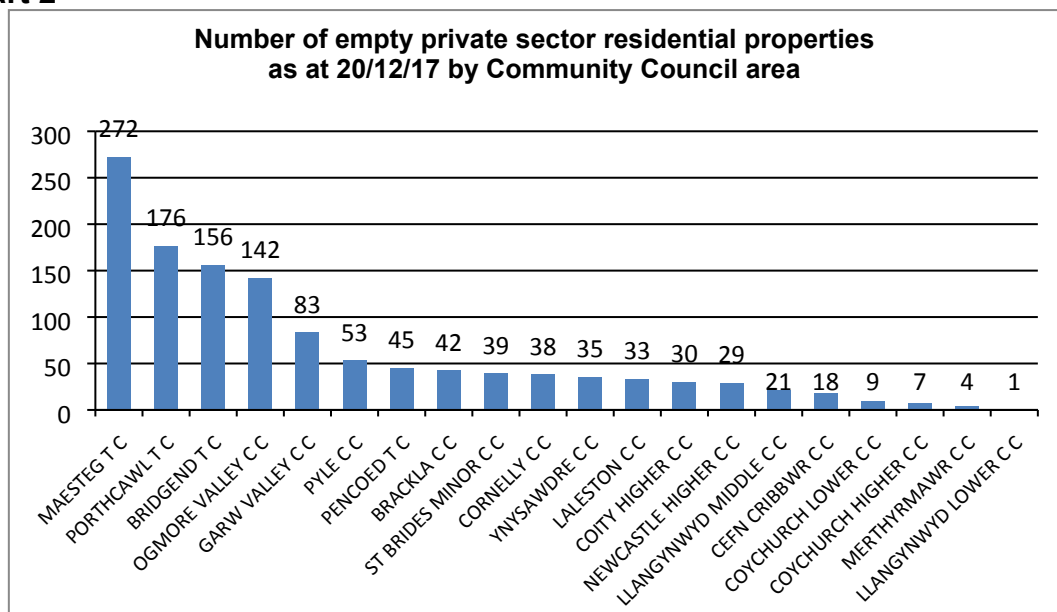
these longer-term empty properties that are of more concern and require a particular focus.

Chart 1



3.1.4 Chart 2 shows the areas (by Community Council area) residential properties are located in. It can be seen that the majority of properties are in and around the town centre areas; Maesteg, Porthcawl and Bridgend and account for 49% of empty residential properties. This would indicate that a particular focus on the town centres and their periphery would be of benefit, especially in order to facilitate vibrant and viable town centres and contribute to supporting a successful economy.

Chart 2



3.1.5 Empty private sector commercial properties are also a wasted resource. As at 6th March 2018 there were approximately 309 empty commercial properties across the county borough.

3.1.6 Under Business Rates Legislation shops and offices are entitled to a 3 month rate free period after which a full charge is applicable. Factories and warehouses are entitled to a 6 month rate free period after which a full charge is applicable.

3.1.7 There are certain categories of empty commercial properties that do not have to pay any Business Rates such as those below. Currently there are 170 empty commercial properties (55%) that fall into these categories:

- Properties that are listed buildings
- Properties that are in administration
- Properties where the occupation is prohibited
- Commercial land
- Properties with a rateable value less than £2600

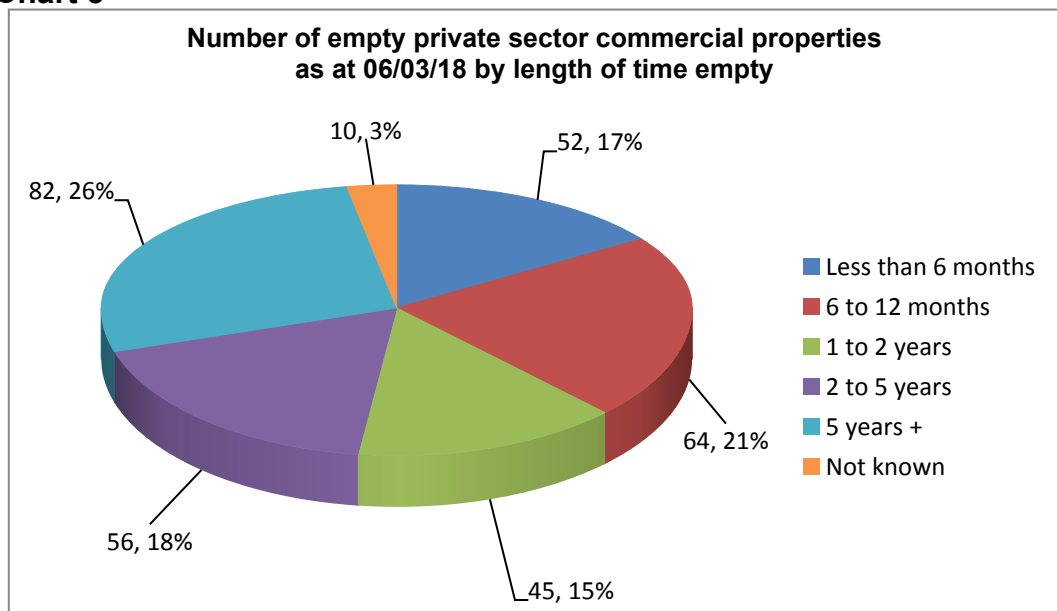
The following categories of occupied commercial properties are also not required to pay Business Rates:

- Occupied properties with a rateable value of £6000 or less that qualify for full small Business Rates relief

3.1.8 Therefore, it is often not in the owner's / leaseholder's interest to tell the Authority when a commercial property with a rateable value of £6000 becomes vacant, as they then would be liable to pay a charge. Of those commercial properties that are liable for Business Rates, 40% has a balance outstanding.

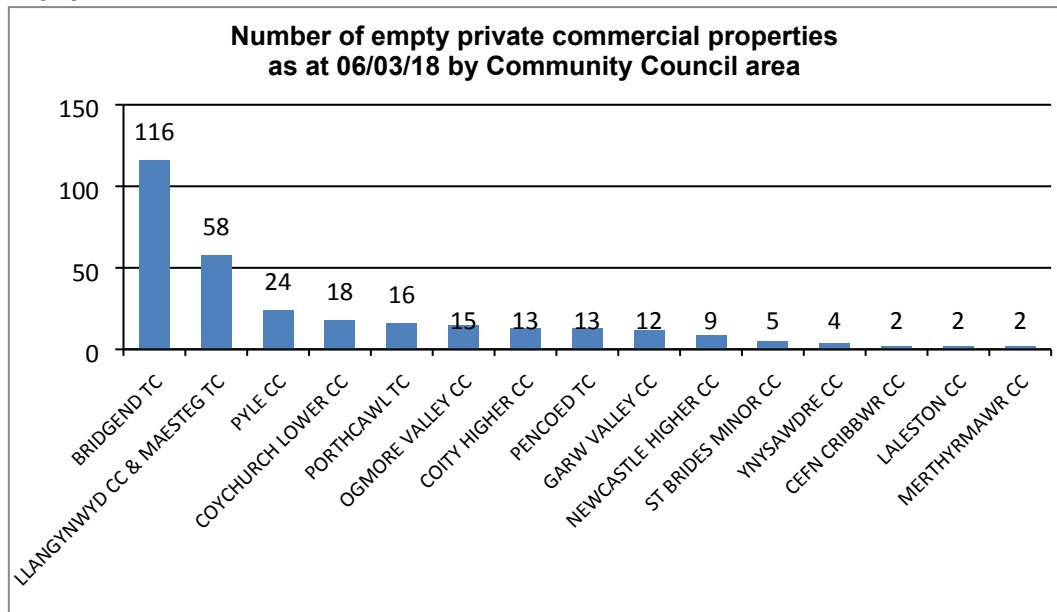
3.1.9 Chart 3 shows the length of time commercial properties have been empty. It can be seen that 44% of empty commercial properties have been empty for 2 years or longer.

Chart 3



3.1.10 Chart 4 shows the areas (by Community Council area) commercial properties are located in. It can be seen that the majority of properties are in and around Bridgend Town Centre and account for 38% of the empty commercial properties.

Chart 4



- Coity Higher (includes Brackla Industrial Estate)
- Coychurch Lower (includes Bridgend Industrial Estate and Waterton)
- Pyle (includes Pyle, Cornelly, Kenfig Hill including Village Farm Industrial Estate)
- Llangynwyd Lower and Middle & Maesteg (includes Coytrahen, Llangynwyd & Maesteg)
- Newcastle Higher (includes Aberkenfig)
- Ogmores Valley (includes Ogmores Vale & Nantymoel)
- St Brides Minor (includes Bryncethin, MacArthurGlen and Brynmenyn Industrial Estate)
- Ynysawdre (includes Tondu)

3.1.11 Empty chapels and churches are also a consideration as they could be converted into residential accommodation. There are currently 18 derelict chapels and churches across the county borough, the majority of which (72%) are in the valleys areas.

3.1.12 There are many reasons why properties become empty and these can be categorised into three factors:

- Individual factors; unresolved ownership following a death, bankruptcy, owner in hospital or prison, or a lack of owner knowledge.
- Property factors; investment not realised or repairs and renovations are too expensive.
- Housing market factors; area of low demand, area of over supply or negative equity in property.

3.1.13 Empty properties are a wasted resource and are often left in a poor state of repair. The consequences of empty properties can be categorised as follows:

- Social consequences; crime i.e. arson, graffiti, squatting, lack of public confidence in the area and the local authority.

- Environmental consequences; rodent infestation, fly tipping, dangerous structures, poor impression of area.
- Economic consequences; financial cost of repair, drain on resources of local authorities and emergency services, devalue properties in the street, deter investment.

3.1.14 There are therefore many benefits of bringing empty properties back into use and these are categorised as follows:

- Social benefits; reduction in crime, a sense of community, availability of housing for people in housing need.
- Environmental benefits; improved local environment, less building on Greenfield sites, embodied energy in house.
- Economic benefits; rental or sale income, increased property values, multiplier effect, training and job opportunities, increased Council Tax.

3.2 National Performance

3.2.1 Performance in bringing empty private sector residential properties back into use across Wales is monitored by the Welsh Local Government Agency (WLGA) Public Accountability Measures:

- PAM/013 - Percentage of empty private sector properties brought back into use during the year through direct action by the local authority
- PAM/014 - Number of additional dwellings created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use (this is a new indicator in 2017/18)

3.2.2 The measures define an empty property as “a property liable for Council Tax, which has been unoccupied for a period of 6 months or more”. This excludes:

- A second or holiday home
- A property owned by any of the following:
 - Registered Social Landlords (RSLs);
 - Police and Armed forces;
 - National Health Service;
 - Universities and colleges;
 - Local authorities and government;
 - Crown estate; or
 - Churches and other religious bodies
- A property that is in use but for non-residential purposes
- Properties that have been un-banded by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA)

3.2.3 The empty property data is obtained from the Revenues section of the Authority. Normally, a Council Tax payer is entitled to claim up to a 6 month exemption (zero payment) on a property which has been left empty and unfurnished after which a 50% charge is payable.

3.2.4 All properties which are liable to Council Tax, in the following exemption classes, regardless of whether a discount is applied or not and that have been empty for more than 6 months are included in the measures and form a baseline list of empty properties:

A	Unoccupied and unfurnished property undergoing repairs /renovation.
C	Unoccupied and unfurnished property (less than 6 months).
F	Unoccupied property which is awaiting probate.
G	Unoccupied property which is unoccupied because occupation is prohibited by law.
L	Unoccupied property where a mortgagee is in possession.
Q	Unoccupied property where the person who would normally pay the Council Tax is a bankrupt or insolvent trustee.
Zero	Properties which have been classed under exemption C (6 month exemption) and then re-banded as Zero (50% charge).

3.2.5 As can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2, Bridgend was ranked 16th in 2015/16 and dropped to 18th in 2016/17 out of 22 local authorities with 2.2% of empty properties being brought back into use as a result of direct action by the Authority. In comparison, 42.4% was achieved by Neath Port Talbot and 0.8% by Cardiff. Overall in Wales, 8.8% of empty properties were returned to occupation through direct action by local authorities in 2016-17. There has been some inconsistency between local authorities in the reporting of this measure, where correspondence with the owner that does not result in engagement with the authority, has still been counted as direct action.

Table 1

Local Authority 2015-16	Number of private sector dwellings that had been vacant for more than 6 months at 1 April which were returned to occupation through direct action by the LA	Number of private sector dwellings that had been vacant for more than 6 months at 1 April	%
Torfaen	177	417	42.45
Vale of Glamorgan	276	686	40.23
Neath Port Talbot	767	1908	40.20
Denbighshire	172	699	24.61
Swansea	440	2269	19.39
Monmouthshire	94	663	14.18
Wrexham	34	267	12.73
Isle of Anglesey	86	783	10.98
Conwy	154	1580	9.75
Flintshire	31	354	8.76
Merthyr Tydfil	46	711	6.47

Newport	84	1314	6.39
Carmarthenshire	153	2671	5.73
RCT	144	2785	5.17
Gwynedd	61	1190	5.13
Bridgend	47	1168	4.02
Caerphilly	37	958	3.86
Blaenau Gwent	20	549	3.64
Cardiff	39	1453	2.68
Ceredigion	21	815	2.58
Pembrokeshire	28	1584	1.77
Powys	27	1704	1.58
Wales	2938	26528	11.08

Table 2

Local Authority 2016-17	Number of private sector dwellings that had been vacant for more than 6 months at 1 April which were returned to occupation through direct action by the LA	Number of private sector dwellings that had been vacant for more than 6 months at 1 April	%
Neath Port Talbot	626	1478	42.35
Torfaen	108	325	33.23
Denbighshire	131	691	18.96
Swansea	358	2218	16.14
Vale of Glamorgan	95	689	13.79
Isle of Anglesey	91	773	11.77
Flintshire	38	420	9.05
Wrexham	35	419	8.35
Merthyr Tydfil	40	583	6.86
Carmarthenshire	174	2665	6.53
Caerphilly	65	1014	6.41
RCT	138	2818	4.9
Conwy	80	1683	4.75
Gwynedd	54	1358	3.98
Monmouthshire	27	696	3.88
Newport	50	1293	3.87
Blaenau Gwent	32	912	3.51
Bridgend	27	1229	2.2
Powys	25	1810	1.38
Ceredigion	11	810	1.36
Cardiff	10	1318	0.76
Pembrokeshire	-	-	-
Wales	2215	25202	8.79

3.2.6 The measure has been amended for 2017/18 to rectify this and the guidance is now clear what should be counted as direct action. A detailed record of the direct action, as outlined below, should be kept by local authorities for audit purposes:

- Grants, loans or other financial assistance either provided or facilitated by the local authority;
- Working with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) or other intermediary with relevant expertise in order to seek a suitable tenant for the property;
- Enforcement action including statutory notices;
- Tax concession letters (on request from owner);
- Direct third party purchases enabled by the local authority; or
- Dialogue with the owner where the owner has engaged with and responded to the local authority.

3.2.7 Bridgend has always been consistent in the reporting of this measure and has only ever counted properties as brought back into use where there has been engagement with the owner. The main direct actions that the Authority uses to bring an empty property back into use is “grants, loans or other financial assistance either provided or facilitated by the local authority” and “dialogue with the owner where the owner has engaged with and responded to the local authority”.

3.2.8 Bridgend’s performance in bringing empty properties back into use over the past 5 years can be seen in Table 3. The number of long-term empty properties remains relatively consistent and it is acknowledged that flexibility and churn is a healthy and normal part of the housing market and there will be empty homes for sale or let. A fall in owner engagement with the Authority has resulted in a reduction in performance, as can be seen in section 4.4.2.

Table 3

Year	Number of long-term empty properties	Number of long-term empty properties brought back into use	% of empty properties brought back into use
2012/13	1029	74	7.19%
2013/14	1105	59	5.34%
2014/15	1172	76	6.48%
2015/16	1168	47	4.02%
2016/17	1229	27	2.20%

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 In 2010, the Welsh Government developed a [good practice guide](#), with Shelter Cymru and other representative bodies, to assist local authorities in tackling empty properties. The guide highlights the powers and measures local authorities can use to deal with empty properties and it also provides examples of good practice and effective strategies to help them to develop and maintain their own strategies.
- 4.2 In February 2012 the Minister for Housing, Regeneration & Heritage launched an innovative new empty property loan scheme called “Houses into Homes”. Bridgend was allocated a total of £900,010 to provide interest free secured loans to owners of empty properties. Bridgend is not required to pay this funding back to WG.
- 4.3 Bringing empty properties back into use is a corporate responsibility and each service within the Local Authority involved with empty properties have different processes, powers and policies they can use to achieve this.

4.4 Housing & Community Regeneration

- 4.4.1 The Housing Strategy and Sustainable Renewal Teams take a proactive approach to bringing empty properties back into use. Owners of properties empty for 6 months or longer are written to at least once a year and advised of the advice and assistance available. When an owner responds to the letter and engages with the Authority, they are provided with a copy of the Empty Homes Information Pack.
- 4.4.2 A breakdown of the number of properties written to and the response rates over the past 5 years is included in Table 4. It can be seen that although a large number of properties were written to in 2016/17, the response rate was the lowest it had been in 5 years. This contributed to the lower Public Accountability Measure figure of 2.2% for Bridgend in 2016/17. It should be noted that a response does not always result in the property being brought back into use.

Table 4

Year	Total number of properties written to	Total number of responses	% responding
2012/13	891	169	19%
2013/14	740	99	13%
2014/15	1248	189	15%
2015/16	1267	226	18%
2016/17	1486	115	8%

- 4.4.3 VAT discounts are available to developers / owners carrying out works on empty properties. The Authority can provide the developer / owner with evidence confirming how long the property has been empty if required by HMRC. There are certain criteria that must be met for the VAT discount to be applied e.g. the property must not have been lived in for 2 years or more. Requests to the Authority for this evidence have been minimal.
- 4.4.4 An empty homes matchmaker service was set up to help buyers and sellers of empty properties contact each other. Owners can register and advertise free of charge on the housing options website. Personal details or the address of the empty property are never advertised and remain completely confidential. However, the general area, property type and property size will be advertised, including any photos added by the owner. These details will only be available to view by people who have registered on the website as looking to buy an empty property. The Local Authority does not get involved in any way with the sale of the property and does not offer any advice to sellers or buyers. Take up of the service has been relatively low and properties advertised on the website are often those that have not been empty for a long period and are being sold at full market value. However, it is beneficial to continue to provide this service as it is cost neutral.
- 4.4.5 Financial assistance is available to owners of empty residential and commercial properties who are looking to bring the property back into residential use. A summary of this assistance is below and further details are contained within the Empty Homes Information Pack:
- a) The Empty Homes Grant provides eligible owners with a non-repayable grant of up to £15,000 for each unit of accommodation created. The property has to be

considered, in the Authority’s opinion, to be suitable for social letting at the time of application, taking into account the size and location of the property. This is because a condition of the grant is that the property must be rented on completion of works, at the rate of the local housing allowance, and be available for nomination by the Authority or their appointed agent for a period of 3 years. The grant therefore not only contributes to bringing empty properties back into use, but also creates a source of affordable housing for households in housing need.

- b) The Homes in Town Grant provides eligible owners specifically in Bridgend Town Centre and its periphery with a non-repayable grant of up to £30,000 for each unit of accommodation for the conversion of vacant space into a residential unit. This grant can be combined with any other grants such as Townscape Heritage Initiative and an empty property loan available from the Authority. Similar conditions to the Empty Homes Grant apply.
- c) The Welsh Government “Houses into Homes” empty property loan scheme provides eligible owners with an interest free secured loan of up to £25,000 for each unit of accommodation created. Owners must either rent or sell the property following completion of the works and have up to 2 years to repay the loan if the property is to be sold or 5 years if the property is to be rented.
- d) The Authority may also make Strategic Housing Assistance available to RSLs and Housing Related Charities up to £25,000 for each unit of accommodation created, to support the long term renewal and regeneration of properties. This will include assistance with the purchase, renovation or redevelopment costs, for strategically important properties/sites where necessary, to help to meet strategic housing objectives. It may also include the purchase of key strategic properties/sites where necessary to assist physical regeneration objectives. Any scheme assisted under this grant funding will be subject to full nomination rights as outlined in the Social Housing Allocation Policy (SHAP) or any specific Council Lettings Policy in place at the time of nomination. Further details are contained within the [Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy](#).

4.4.6 A summary of the financial assistance provided between 2011 and 2018 is contained in Table 5. It can be seen that a significant number of grant and loan applications do not proceed or are withdrawn. The main reasons for this are outlined in 4.13.

Table 5

	Number of grants / loans provided	Number of units created / being created	Value of spend to date	Number & value of applications withdrawn
Empty Homes Grant	49 grants (48 properties)	49 (all occupied)	£540,000	115 (£1.15m)
Homes in Town Grant	28 grants (5 properties)	28 (not yet completed)	£770,000	
Houses into Homes empty property loan	19 loans (19 properties)	50 (all occupied)	£953,100	55 (£1.65m)

Strategic Housing Assistance	1 grant (1 property)	6 (rooms)	£25,000	
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4.4.7 The financial assistance provided has had some positive outcomes:

- A dilapidated property in Blaengarw was the subject of many complaints and the owner had been contacted by the Authority to carry out remedial works. A £75,000 loan was awarded and the property was converted into 3 flats which are all occupied.
- A historic derelict 3 storey detached property in Ogmores Vale, over 120 years old, brought vandalism and crime to the area and was an eyesore to the community. £70,000 of assistance was provided via a loan and grant funding and the property was converted into 4 flats which are all occupied.
- A derelict pub in Bryncethin had been empty for 3 years. £164,000 of assistance was provided via a loan and grant funding and the property was converted into 6 flats which are all occupied.
- A large pre-World War 2 property in Bridgend Town Centre had previously attracted anti-social behaviour to the area. It is currently being converted into 15 one bedroom flats with a total project spend of over £1m, £435,000 of which was awarded via the Homes in Town Grant.
- A hotel in Porthcawl was notorious for people with drug and alcohol problems and general anti-social behaviour. £130,000 of assistance was provided via a loan to create 8 executive apartments for sale.
- A mixed commercial and residential property in Pencoed had been empty for over a decade and was in serious disrepair. £100,000 of assistance was provided via a loan to convert the property into 2 flats, a house and a maisonette which are all occupied.
- An empty pub in Aberkenfig which had been empty for 5 years and is one of the oldest buildings in the village is being converted into 4 flats with £120,000 of assistance provided via a loan and grant funding.
- A former pub over 140 years old and a historically significant property in the Blaengarw area is being converted into 7 flats, a bunkhouse and café for local cyclists via a £144,000 loan.
- A former pub and hotel in Porthcawl that has been derelict for over 5 years is being converted into 5 flats via £75,000 of grant funding.

4.5 Conservation & Design

4.5.1 The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) aims to assist the conservation of impressive architectural heritage as part of the overall regeneration strategy for Bridgend. The THI funds the renovation of business and retail buildings, alongside

the improvement of local facilities and gap sites, helping to re-instate Bridgend's importance as an economic, historic and cultural centre in South Wales. Funding is bid for in specific areas and buildings considered in greatest need are prioritised within the boundaries.

4.5.2 Over the past 5 years the following properties have been provided with a THI Grant:

- Maesteg
 - 25a Talbot Street (empty upper floors only)
- Porthcawl
 - Customs House
 - Pilots Lookout (now occupied by the National Coastwatch Institution (NCI). The Lookout is now one of the busiest stations run by the NCI on the Wales coast)
 - Jennings Warehouse (now 14 flats to the first floor and 3 independent café / restaurant premises. The building has been shortlisted for a UK RTPA award to be announced in May as well as shortlisted for a Wales RICS award to be announced in June)
- Bridgend
 - The Victoria Inn (now Corvo Lounge to the ground floor)
 - 2 Caroline Street

4.6 Development & Building Control

4.6.1 Empty properties, especially long-term empty properties, can often fall into a state of disrepair and become at worst a dangerous structure, or an eye sore to the local community. The Development & Building Control service can use their powers to serve notices under Section 215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against such properties:

4.6.2 The scope of s.215 notices is quite limited as they are intended only to address minor matters of amenity and issues of aesthetics. The terms of the notice must be reasonable and generally in terms of blight or empty properties, would normally require the removal of curtilage items from the public view or for broken windows to be boarded up and painted. Any s.215 notice can be challenged. Planning powers allow local planning authorities to enter the land to carry out works in default, however this work must be proportionate. There is no specific budget available to do this. Whilst there is provision for the costs of the work to be recovered in practice this is often difficult due to the lack of equity in the property.

The Authority has served 2 s.215 notices over the last 5 years:-

- Dec 2015, Ton Kenfig, Bridgend This Notice was in relation to untidy land where part of the property had been demolished and some of the resulting materials left in situ. The Notice required the owner to erect a 1.8m high fence to screen the materials from the public viewpoint which included the National Nature Reserve. Clearance was not required due to an application to erect a new dwelling on the plot. The Notice was appealed in the Magistrates' Court and upheld. A fence was erected and the new dwelling has since been built.
- Jan 2017, Bridgend Road, Maesteg. Planning permission had been granted to erect dwellings on the land but the builder appeared to be using the site to store

materials; these materials were left on site for a considerable amount of time and the permission lapsed. The materials have since been cleared.

4.6.3 The Development and Building Control section can also serve notice under Sections 77 and 78 Building Act 1984. These notices are only used where there is a clear danger or in the case of s.78 an emergency situation. By serving a s.77/78 notice the Authority is acknowledging that the building or structure is dangerous and as such there is an implied duty to address that danger and carry out works in default if necessary. The scope of these works is limited to rectifying the danger but is recoverable from the owner. In practice, however, it can sometimes be very difficult to ascertain ownership.

4.6.4 The Authority has served 6 notices in the last five years. Three of these properties also had works in default undertaken and the debt to the Local Authority remains outstanding.

4.7 Shared Regulatory Services (SRS)

4.7.1 Where properties are left empty and fall into disrepair or become derelict causing a nuisance to the community, SRS will consider using legal powers to remedy the issues. This is, however, considered to be a last resort, and the Authority prefers to work with owners to find the best solution to bring the empty properties back into use first.

4.7.2 Table 6 shows the number of notices served and works in default carried out over the past 5 years by SRS (formerly Public Protection):

Table 6

Legal power	Number of notices served	Number of works in default
<p>Prevention of Damage by Pest Act 1949 Section 4</p> <p>Gives the Local Authority powers to require land owners to carry out work for the removal or destruction of rats or mice on land</p>	20	10
<p>Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1984 Section 29</p> <p>To secure unauthorised entry to an empty building or prevent it becoming a danger to public health e.g. an open ground floor door or window, slates falling off the roof or a broken window with the danger of glass falling onto the pavement below</p>	43	33
<p>Revocation of Prohibition Order Housing Act 2004 Section 25</p> <p>Where a property contains serious hazards the Authority can serve a Prohibition Order prohibiting the use of the property for human habitation resulting in</p>	4	0

the property becoming empty. Once relevant works have been completed the Authority must revoke the Order before the property can be used for human habitation		
Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 80 Where an empty property causes a statutory nuisance, the Authority can serve an Abatement Notice under s. 80 to remedy the issue e.g. a leaking chimney resulting in dampness to a neighbouring property	8	3
Building Act 1984 Section 59 This is typically used where defective guttering on an empty property is resulting in dampness to a neighbouring property	1	0
Total	76	46

4.7.3 Where works in default are carried out and a charge placed against the property, the Enforced Sale procedure can be used to enforce the sale of the property. Over the past 5 years, this has been used on 2 empty properties. The first was in Nantymoel and has been fully renovated and brought back into use. The second was in Pontycymmer and is currently being renovated. There was also a third property in Nantymoel which SRS began the Enforced Sale procedure on, however, the owner chose to sell the property at auction and pay off any money owed to the Authority. The property is currently being renovated. The Enforced sale procedure is resource intensive and SRS estimate that each property can require 50 hours of work at a cost of £50 an hour for an Environmental Health Officer with 10 hours of administration support. There are also additional resource implications for Legal and Property as well as other departments who may become involved.

4.8 Community Safety

4.8.1 Part 4 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 relates to Community Protection Notices and are designed to deal with environmental anti-social behavior (ASB) and address issues impacting quality of life. These powers have been used on a few occasions by the Authority to ask landlords to secure buildings where ASB or youth annoyance etc. occurs. However, these powers are often used as a last resort and following other powers that the Authority has. Where ASB occurs in empty properties or derelict buildings, ASB letters are sent highlighting the behaviour and the potential danger. The Police will also attempt to contact the property owner to advise them and make recommendations.

4.9 Revenues (Council Tax)

4.9.1 The Revenues section is responsible for applying exemptions to empty properties. However, if an owner of an empty property has not notified the Authority that the property is empty and is paying the Council Tax for the property, the Authority may

not be aware that the property is empty unless a member of the community advises so.

- 4.9.2 Normally, a Council Tax payer is entitled to claim up to a 6 month exemption on a property (zero payment) which has been left empty and unfurnished after which a 50% charge is payable. It is not possible to quantify the potential loss of council tax receipts which could be due to empty properties.
- 4.9.3 If a property is uninhabitable and in a state of disrepair, the Valuation Office Agency, which is part of the Inland Revenue, may delete the property from the Valuation List resulting in no charge being payable. Properties such as churches are not rateable unless converted into a dwelling and therefore are not normally included in the baseline list of empty properties.
- 4.9.4 As with all properties, where there is outstanding Council Tax debt, the Revenues section will issue bills, reminders, final notices, summonses and liability orders before a charging order is obtained on the outstanding debt on a property. There are currently 9 empty properties with a charging order against them. Once a charging order is paid i.e. the debt is cleared, no further action is taken.
- 4.9.5 On 1st April 2017, Section 139 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 provided local authorities with the power to charge more than the standard rate of council tax on long-term empty properties and certain types of second homes. However, imposing a premium is unlikely to tackle the more problematic long-term empty properties which are a “blight” on the landscape, as they are likely to be uninhabitable and therefore exempt from Council Tax. There would also be an extra cost implication for the Revenues section in the administration and policing of the applications and maintenance of these properties in order to establish that the correct charge is being applied to each account. Also, this premium would increase the Revenue’s section overall debt and there would need to be great effort exerted to recover these increased debts.

4.10 Barriers in bringing empty properties back into use

- 4.11 There are many barriers to bringing empty properties back into use, the main one being the lack of engagement by owners as evidenced in Table 2.
- 4.12 Confirming ownership of the property is often an issue, especially when the previous owner has passed away and / or the property is not listed on the land registry.
- 4.13 There are also barriers with the empty properties grant and loan schemes resulting in a high number of applicants withdrawing as evidenced in Table 3. These barriers include:
- Mortgage lenders taking a long time to give consent to a second charge for a loan;
 - There not being enough equity in the property when they are in a particular poor condition and are therefore not financially viable to proceed;
 - The grant amount being too low;
 - A reluctance to rent the property to households who are registered on the Common Housing Register as per the grant conditions;

- A reluctance to rent the property at the rate of the Local Housing Allowance as per the grant conditions;
- Bills of Quantities, estimates, architect plans are often difficult for owners to obtain;
- Owners finding suitable contractors; and
- Lack of grant funding for certain grants.

4.14 Town centre properties can also have their own specific barriers including:

- Access to the sites during the day due to parking restrictions;
- Planning issues relating to ground floor accommodation;
- Noise assessments and acoustic requirements; and
- Increased costs due to the requirement for mechanical ventilation and non-opening windows.

4.15 One of the main barriers to using legal powers and enforcement is the availability of resources. Services tend to provide a reactive service following complaints received, serving notices where appropriate. To undertake more proactive enforcement would require additional resource for each service involved with empty properties as well as for both Legal and Property Services who support the services.

4.16 There is the risk that although time and resources is put into renovating an empty property, it may continue to remain empty or have no viable end use. For this reason, it is important to prioritise the properties that the Authority will focus its resources on.

4.17 Empty Property Working Group

4.18 An Empty Property Working Group has recently been formed with representatives from each service within the Authority involved with empty properties. The scope of the Working Group is to bring back into use empty private sector commercial and residential properties:

- That have been empty for 6 months or more;
- That are either commercial or private residential properties;
- That are churches and or owned by religious bodies;
- That will normally be brought back into use as residential accommodation
- That may have been un-banded by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA);
- Across the entire county borough.

4.19 The Working Group will focus on properties that have been empty for 2 years or longer as these are often the properties that are more problematic and less likely to be those properties waiting to be sold or rented. A desktop evaluation, using the information already held by services within the Authority, will be undertaken in order to determine the top 10 priority properties in the county borough. The Working Group will then determine the actions that can be taken to work towards bringing the top 10 priority properties back into use. The desktop evaluation will consider factors such as:

- The length of time empty;

- If the property is a nuisance;
- If complaints have been received;
- If the property is in an area of high housing need;
- If there is debt owed to the Authority;
- If the property is in disrepair;
- If the property is detrimental to the local community; and
- If the property is in the town centre or its periphery.

4.20 The Working Group is in its infancy and is currently at the desktop evaluation stage. Following this the Working Group will undertake a survey of empty property owners and use this and information about the top 10 priority properties to develop an Empty Homes Strategy.

4.21 In developing the Empty Homes Strategy the Working Group will consider the opportunities the Authority may be able to take advantage of to bring empty properties back into use including Compulsory Purchase Orders and Empty Dwelling Management Orders.

4.22 The Authority does not currently have an Empty Properties Officer in place that is solely responsible for bringing empty properties back into use. There is currently budget available to appoint an Empty Properties Officer and the Working Group will consider the benefits of creating this role and what remit the role will hold. However, whilst this appointment would resource the “front end” of the service, there would also be additional demands on other departments within the Authority to progress any works on empty properties, which may not be currently resourced.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the development of the Empty Homes Strategy.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Services within the Authority utilise their existing budgets for any work undertaken on empty properties. Whilst there is currently budget available to appoint an Empty Properties Officer which would resource the “front end” of the service, there would also be additional demands on other departments within the Authority to progress any works on empty properties, which may not be currently resourced.

8. Recommendation

8.1 The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

ANDREW JOLLEY

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7th March 2018

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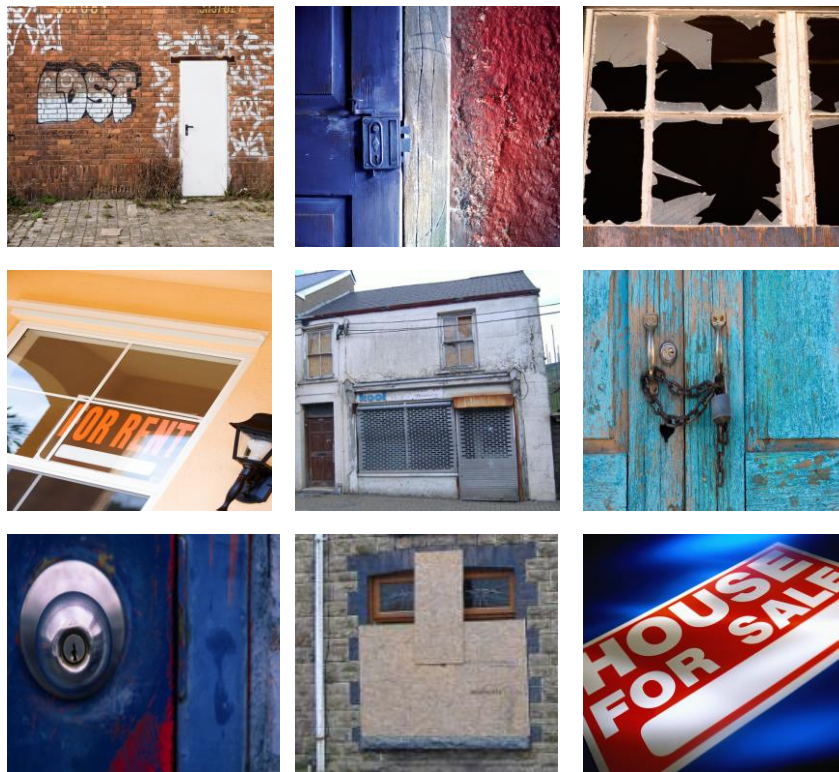
Postal Address Civic Offices
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Background documents

Appendix A: Empty Homes Information Pack

Housing and Community Regeneration

Empty Homes Information Pack



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol



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Introduction

What is an empty home?

An empty home is a dwelling that has been empty for six months or more. There can be several reasons why a property is empty and Bridgend Council is committed to working with owners to find solutions to bring empty homes back into use.

Why bring an empty home back into use?

By bringing an empty home back into use it can:

- Increase the supply of good quality affordable housing;
- Contribute to strong balanced housing markets and community sustainability;
- Give owners' choice by improving sales potential or providing rental income rather than allowing properties to become wasted assets;
- Reduce the risk of vandalism, arson or squatting and the fear of crime;
- Enhance the viability and vitality of town centres by bringing empty flats above shops back into use.

How can an empty home be brought back into use?

An empty home can be brought back into use by selling the property, or renting or renovating it to bring it up to a lettable standard. The Authority is looking at a number of initiatives to encourage owners to bring these empty homes back into use and may be able to provide you with advice or assistance in doing this.

We do understand that some homes are left empty because they are used as second homes or as holiday homes and assistance may therefore not be required.

If an empty home is particularly problematic and the empty home owner is not compliant and all negotiations have failed, the Local Authority will consider taking appropriate enforcement action to ensure that the empty home is returned to a habitable condition and bought back into use. Enforcement actions may include empty dwelling management orders, enforced sale, compulsory purchase orders or voluntary acquisition.

Who can I contact if I have any queries?

If you have any queries regarding your empty home, please contact 01656 643681, or emailing housing@bridgend.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can write to Housing & Community Regeneration, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.

Empty Homes Grant

What is the Empty Homes Grant?

The Empty Homes Grant forms part of the Authority's overall approach to tackling empty properties in the Borough and will assist in increasing the supply of affordable rented accommodation. The Authority will determine the works necessary to bring a property back into use, in consultation with the Public Protection Department. Works must not have commenced before the application is approved, and must be completed within 6 months of the approval.

What is the maximum grant amount?

Where a property has been identified as being empty on the Authority's empty property register;

- £10,000 or 75% of eligible costs, whichever is the lesser amount, per unit for a like for like conversion, i.e. if a two bed house is brought back into use as a two bed house.
- £15,000 or 75% of eligible costs, whichever is the lesser amount, per unit for a conversion into more units, i.e. if a two bed house is brought back into use as two one bed flats.
- £9,000 or 75% of eligible costs, whichever is the lesser amount, per unit for a conversion into units that have shared facilities i.e. bedsit type units that share facilities, such as a kitchen, bathroom or both.

For a commercial or non-residential empty property (which does not appear on the residential empty property register)

- £15,000 or 75% of eligible costs, whichever is the lesser amount, per unit where a non-residential property is converted into residential property, (subject to appropriate Planning Permission being obtained).
- £9,000 or 75% of eligible costs, whichever is the lesser amount, per unit for a conversion into units that have shared facilities i.e. bedsit type units that share facilities, such as a kitchen, bathroom or both.

It will include all costs for eligible works, specialist reports and preliminary and ancillary charges; and/or where a property has been vacant for a minimum of 6 months and eligible for an Empty Property Loan; 100% of eligible costs. It will include fees payable for Planning Application, Building Regulations, Land Registry title and title plan, reasonable RICS Valuation fee, Registering a charge at Companies House (if necessary); but excluding the Application administration Fee for the Empty Property Loan and excluding any eligible works. Only to be considered, if in the Authority's opinion, the property is suitable for social letting by nomination agreement with the Council or its appointed agent.

To be eligible the applicant must:

- Be aged 18 or over on the date of the grant application;
- Have an owner's interest in the property and must be able to certify intent to let the dwelling to a person who is not a member of his or her family throughout the grant condition period of 3 years;
- Be (or their appointed management agents be) registered with Rent Smart Wales, under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (and provide documentary evidence). See page 13.

To be eligible the property must:

- Be over 10 years old and identified as being empty on the Authority's empty homes register (except for the conversion of non-residential units into residential units). This is a list of residential dwellings that have been empty for 6 months or more and have been identified by the Authority's Taxation Department as paying an empty dwelling council tax rate;
- Be considered, in the Authority's opinion, to be suitable for social letting at the time of application, taking into account the size and location of the property.
- Be free from Category 1 hazards on completion of works (Please see page 20);
- Be rented on completion of works, at the rate of the local housing allowance, and be available for nomination by the Authority or their appointed agent for a period of 3 years (repayment conditions will apply). Local housing allowance is based on the needs of the household and not the size of the property. Local housing allowance can be paid directly to the landlord in certain circumstances, with prior agreement from the tenant. Example local housing allowance rates are below (please note that a single person under the age of 35 is only entitled to the shared room rate):

Shared room rate	£55.23 weekly;	1 bedroom need	£80.55 weekly;
2 bedroom need	£103.56 weekly;	3 bedroom need	£115.06 weekly;
4 bedroom need	£149.59 weekly;		

- Not be the subject of a demolition order under the Housing Acts; and
- Not have received assistance for the same works during the previous 10 year period.

What works are eligible?

- Renewal or repair of defective roof coverings including all lead work and ridge tiles;
- Rebuilding or re-pointing defective chimney stacks including all appropriate lead trays, soakers and flashings where necessary;
- Renewal of fascias, soffits, bargeboards, rainwater guttering and downpipes;
- Re-point external stonework or re-render defective external rendering to prevent ingress of penetrating damp;
- Renewal of defective timber or aluminium windows with UPVC double glazed windows;
- Renewal of external doors with secure by design type UPVC doors to improve security;
- Renewal of defective electrical re-wiring to upgrade for safety purposes, (subject to suitable appropriate electrical report);
- Renewal of defective ceilings, plasterwork and skirting boards affected by penetrating dampness;
- Works to eradicate rising dampness with the injection of a chemical damp proof course by a suitable approved specialist contractor;
- Repairs to staircase for safety reasons;
- Provision of a suitable bath or shower, wash hand basin and W.C. including all necessary plumbing. (These items will only be allowed where no bathroom exists at the property);
- Provision of a sink unit and associated plumbing where no existing kitchen exists;
- Provision of suitable boiler for heating of water for hot water to all amenities within the bathroom and kitchen, (not replacement boilers).

Any other works carried out in addition to those awarded within the grant must ensure the property is eradicated from Category 1 hazards as identified within the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Please see page 20).

All works are awarded at the discretion of the council and does mean that all the works listed will be considered within the grant, if a grant is approved. All properties will be subject to an inspection before any works commence to identify the eligible works for grant assistance. Also on completion the property will be inspected by officers of the Council and will need to meet the required standard to enable the occupants to live within the property in a safe, suitable and satisfactory environment.

What works are NOT eligible?

- Replacement of internal doors;
- Renewal of existing bathroom suites, kitchen sink and kitchen base/wall units;
- Replacement of internal and external decoration;
- Renewal of light fittings, internal window cill boards;
- Renewal of existing central heating boilers and radiators;
- Any other works considered as day to day maintenance and the responsibility of the house owner;

What are the repayment conditions?

100% of the grant is repayable for up to 3 years following the date of certification if:

1. The property is vacant for a period of 6 months or more;
2. The property is disposed of;
3. The nomination agreement with the Council or its appointed agent is not being met.

The applicant, together with any joint owner, will be required to agree to a legal charge being taken on the property, or any other form of security as the Authority deems appropriate in order to ensure repayment of the grant.

How do I apply?

You will need to complete an “Empty Homes Grant Expression of Interest Form”. On receipt of the completed form the Authority will check that you and the property comply with the eligibility criteria, and specifically check if the property, in the Authority’s opinion, is suitable for social letting, taking into account the size and location of the property. If you or the property does not comply with the eligibility criteria, you will be notified of this in writing and the reasons why.

If you and the property do comply with the eligibility criteria, we will contact you to arrange for a surveyor to visit the property. The surveyor will visit the property at a pre-arranged time together with yourself or your agent, and will be able to answer any specific questions you may have about the work or the application. The eligible works will be identified and the schedule of grant aided works will be produced. If for any reason the works are not eligible for grant assistance, you will be informed at the time of the survey being carried out.

Following this you will be sent an Empty Homes Grant Application Form, a Certificate of Intended Lending and a Supplementary Questionnaire for you to complete. You will also be sent a copy of the schedule of grant aided works.

Homes in Town Grant

What is the Homes in Town Grant?

The Homes in Towns Grant (HIT) is designed to encourage town centre living to breathe life and vitality back into the area and to increase the supply of affordable accommodation and forms part of the Authority's overall approach to tackling vacant space in the Bridgend Town Centre.

The HIT grant will be prioritised in the target area that mirrors the Townscape Heritage Initiative grant area in the first instance, however key buildings will also be considered in the wider town centre area that demonstrate a business case to attract additional grant aid. These areas are outlined in the map on page 9. An application will only be considered, if in the Authority's opinion, the property is suitable for letting through a referral agreement with the Council or its appointed agent.

The Authority will determine the works necessary to bring a property back into use. Works must not have commenced before the application is approved, and must be commenced within 6 months and completed within 12 months of the approval. This grant can be combined with other grants such as Townscape Heritage Initiative and Empty Property Loans available from the Council, to a combined maximum value of £150,000, per applicant, per annum.

What is the maximum grant amount?

Where a property has been identified as having empty or vacant space, a grant to assist the conversion or create residential premises will be made up in the following ways;

- 85% of the cost, up to a maximum of £10,000, to create a separate access (if one is not already present) to the residential premises; and
- 85% of any works identified/recommended as the result of an Acoustic survey; and
- 60% of the cost, up to a maximum of £30,000 per unit of accommodation, for the conversion of vacant space into a residential unit.

Assistance to pay professional fees, e.g. Planning and Building Regulations at 100%. Any grant assistance will include all costs for eligible works, specialist reports and preliminary and ancillary charges, if not already funded through a separate grant.

In addition, an applicant may apply for an Empty Property Loan if the property has been vacant for a minimum of 6 months. If approved, the applicant can receive 100% of eligible costs of works not included in any other grant works.

This grant can be combined with any other grants such as Townscape Heritage Initiative and Empty Property Loans available from the Council, to a combined maximum value of €500,000, per applicant (s), over any three year fiscal period as it relates to a particular applicant, subject to this being in compliance with European Union de Minimis State Aid Regulations including procedural requirements.

To be eligible the applicant must:

- Be aged 18 or over on the date of the grant application;
- Have an owner's interest in the property and must be able to certify intent to let the dwelling to a person who is not a member of his or her family throughout the grant condition period of 3 years (or 4 years if receiving assistance for a separate access);
- Be (or their appointed management agents be) registered with Rent Smart Wales, under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (and provide documentary evidence). See page 13.

To be eligible the property must:

- Be over 10 years old and identified as being suitable for conversion into residential use;
- Be considered, in the Authority's opinion, to be suitable for letting at Local Housing Allowance at the time of application;
- Be free from Category 1 hazards on completion of works;
- Be rented on completion of works, at the rate of the Local Housing Allowance and be made available under the any specific Council Lettings Policy in place at the time of referral for a minimum period of 3 years where 1-5 units are created and 5 years where 6 or more units are created;
- Not be the subject of a demolition order under the Housing Acts; and
- Not have received assistance for the same works during the previous 10 year period.

What are the repayment conditions?

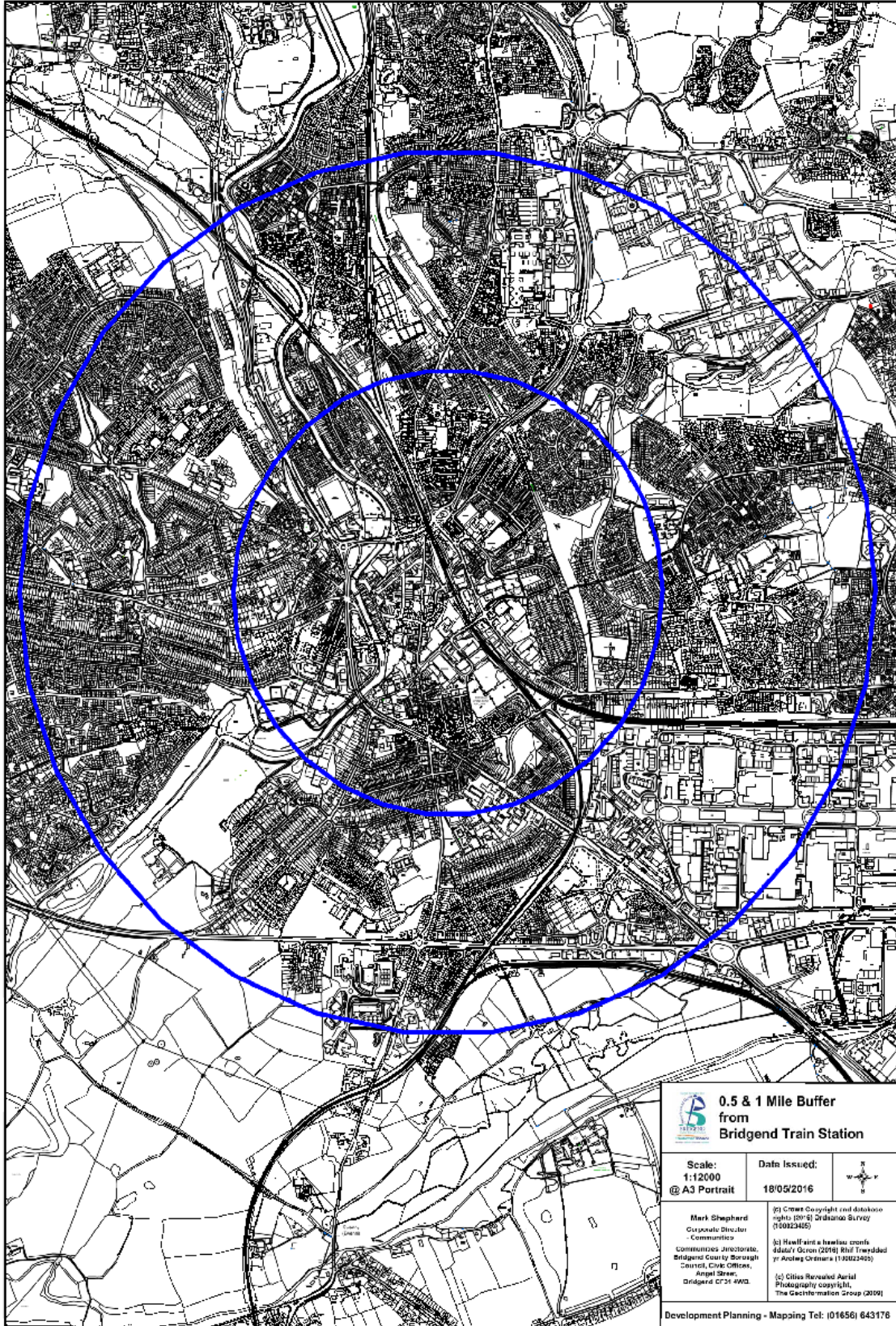
100% grant is repayable following the date of certification if:

1. The property is vacant for a period of 6 months or more;
2. The property is disposed of;
3. The referral agreement with the Council or its appointed agent is not being met.

This will apply for the following length of time;

- Be free from Category 1 hazards on completion of works;
- 3 years where the grant payable was up to £150,000
- 5 years where the grant payable was £150,001+

The applicant, together with any joint owner, will be required to agree to a legal charge being taken on the property, or any other form of security as the Authority deems appropriate in order to ensure repayment of the grant.



 0.5 & 1 Mile Buffer from Bridgend Train Station		
Scale: 1:12000 @ A3 Portrait	Date Issued: 18/05/2016	
Mark Shepherd Corporate Director - Communications COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR, BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL, Civic Offices, Angel Street, BRIDGEND CF31 4WQ.	(c) Crown Copyright and database rights (2016) Ordnance Survey (100023465) (c) Hewlett-Packard Development Company, L.P. (2016) HP DesignJet 5000 Series (170622405) (c) Cities Revealed Aerial Photography copyright, The GeoInformation Group (2009)	
Development Planning - Mapping Tel: (01656) 643176		

Houses into Homes Empty Property Loans

What are Empty Property Loans?

Empty Property Loans are loans being made available through the Houses into Homes Initiative to enable the renovation and improvement of single properties or the conversion of empty properties into a number of units, so that they are suitable for use as residential accommodation.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

To be eligible the applicant must:

- be aged 18 or over on the date of the loan application;
- not be an owner occupier;
- be present at the time of the survey and submit all relevant information requested by Bridgend County Borough Council;
- be individuals or companies who already own an empty property or are considering buying an empty property in Bridgend County Borough;
- provide for individuals (3 months pay slips), charities (3 years accounts), and companies/businesses (3 years accounts);
- not have an outstanding debt to Bridgend County Borough Council or outstanding charges against the property; and
- must pay Bridgend County Borough Council the relevant application Fee on submission of the final application.

To be eligible the property must:

- have been vacant for a minimum of 6 months;
- be in receipt of planning permission if the loan is to convert empty commercial properties into residential accommodation;
- be considered, in the Authority's opinion, to be suitable for social or private letting; or sale at the time of application;
- be renovated to a reasonable standard, comply with all relevant Building Regulations and Planning Permissions, be free from serious hazards and comply with the Houses into Homes Standard on completion of the works;
- be suitable for immediate occupation, whether by for sale (loan to sell) or to let (loan to let) on completion of the works;
- not be the subject of a demolition order under the Housing Acts;
- not have received assistance for the same works during the previous 10 year period;
- not be under an insurance claim or third party claim;
- not include works outside the curtilage of the property unless they relate to the provision of essential services such as water, gas or electricity; and
- not be used by the applicant and/or his family as their home.

What is the maximum amount of loan I can apply for?

£25,000 per property or unit, up to a total maximum of £250,000 per applicant. It will include all costs for eligible works, specialist reports and preliminary and ancillary charges. Where the cost of the works exceed the value of the loan, then the applicant must be able to show that they have adequate funds to complete the development.

There will be a maximum of 80% loan to value, based on the current value and condition of the property offered as security, supported by an independent valuation by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and local authority land search.

Therefore, if you have an existing mortgage of £65,000 on a property with a current market value of £100,000, then the maximum loan that can be approved is £15,000; £65,000 & £15,000 = £80,000 (Maximum 80% Loan to value).

It is possible in certain cases for another property to be used as security for the loan. Where the cost of the works exceeds the value of the loan, then the applicant must be able to show that they have adequate funds to complete the development.

Funding will be available in two instalments: 50% up front to provide working capital; 50% when reasonable progress is considered to have been made.

What do I have to do with the property or units after completion of the works?

You can either let the property/units or you can sell the property/units to a new owner. Loans are not available for people wanting to renovate the property and live in it as their principal home.

Does the works/conversion have to be carried out to any sort of standards?

Yes. All work must be carried out in accordance with any planning permissions or building regulation approvals made in respect of the property. Additionally the property/units must comply with the Houses into Homes Standard on completion of the works. Further details about the standard are contained in the loans terms and conditions booklet that will be provided to you by the surveyor.

Are there any conditions attached to approving the loan?

- You must carry out the conversion/repair works within an agreed time period.
- The property/units must be made available for sale or for let within a reasonable period of time after completing the works (12 weeks), and if they are not then the loan may become repayable.
- The loan must be repaid either on or before the date as specified in your Loan Facility Agreement.
- A financial charge will be made on the property for the lifetime of the loan.

When will I have to repay the loan?

- If you are renovating a single property, which is to be sold, the loan must be repaid when the property is sold or up to 2 years from the date of the loan approval, whichever is the sooner.
- If you are converting a property into a number of units, which are to be sold on completion of the works, it is expected that the loan must be repaid on sale of the first unit, or 2 years, whichever is the sooner. However we will endeavour to arrange a mutually agreeable repayment schedule.
- If the property/units are to be made available for letting the loan must be repaid within 5 years from the date of the loan approval.
- All loans can be repaid earlier if the applicant wishes to do so.

Are the loans secured loans?

Yes. All loans approved must be secured by a first or second financial charge being secured against the property. If there is an existing mortgage on the property we will need the lenders consent to secure our charge.

Are there any fees associated with the loan being issued?

Yes. There will be an administration fee based on the loan amount (£295 for up to £50,000, £395 for loans between £50,001-£100,000 and £495 for loans over £100,000). There will also be a Land Registry fee of £50 for loans up to £100,000, £70 for loans between £100,001 and £200,000 and £90 for loans over £200,000. In addition, if you are applying as a Company there is an additional Land Registry fee of £45.

What is the interest rate for the loan?

The loans are interest free, providing there is no default on the loan. Where any sum is required to be paid, but is not repaid in accordance with the loan conditions, a breach of conditions will have occurred. In such instances Bridgend County Borough Council may demand immediate repayment of the loan and this may result in interest being incurred.

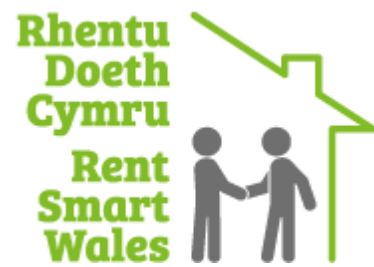
I am interested in applying for a loan, what do I do next?

You will need to complete the enclosed "Houses into Homes Initial Application Form". On receipt of your completed Initial Application Form we will contact you to arrange for a surveyor to visit the property. If you are deemed eligible, the surveyor will determine the works necessary to bring the property back into use in consultation with you and a schedule of works will be agreed prior to the offer of any loan.

Any works that have been carried out prior to the surveyor visiting the property are not eligible for loan assistance. Only works that the surveyor includes in the schedule of works will be eligible for assistance. It is advised not to begin any of the works identified until you have received confirmation that the loan has been approved.

Rent Smart Wales

Under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, there are new legal obligations on landlords who have rental property in Wales. The Rent Smart Wales website www.rentsmart.gov.wales explains these obligations and will help you to understand the process.



Landlords operating anywhere in Wales can comply with the new law by completing the appropriate application on the website. To start the process, you must create an account.

Landlord Registration

Any landlord who has a rental property in Wales which is rented on an assured, assured shorthold or regulated tenancy is required to register. Depending on how a property is owned will determine who needs to register it. All registrations are completed with Rent Smart Wales. Registration costs £33.50 online, however a paper application is also available and registration lasts 5 years.

Landlord Licensing

Landlords who are not involved in setting up tenancies and managing their rental properties do not need a licence; however they must use a licensed agent and register as a landlord declaring their agent on the registration. Landlords who do undertake letting and management tasks at their rental properties in Wales are required to apply for a licence. Such landlords are often described as 'self-managing'. This licence also lasts for 5 years and costs £187.

For more information on how the new law applies to you please go to the Rent Smart Wales website at www.rentsmart.gov.wales.

If you are a Landlord, or an employee of a landlord, who completed training with LAW before the 6th August 2015, you will need to complete the online top up course "Part 1 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014: An Overview". You can book this now by accessing your Training Record in your personal user account. If you completed LAWs training on or after the 6th August 2015 then your training record is sufficient for your Licence. Your training course will have included all the information about the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, so you will not need to complete the further top up training course.

Selling your property by auction

What are the advantages of selling my property at auction?

As the auctioneers require as many bidders as possible to turn up to the event, good advertising is of utmost importance. By selling at auction you can be assured that your property will achieve maximum marketing exposure across a wide range of media.

Unlike selling via an estate agent, once the gavel falls the purchaser has a legal obligation to complete the sale of the property. This eradicates the complication of a prospective purchaser withdrawing from the sale as can happen when a property is sold subject to contract via the estate agency method.

There is also the added benefit of speed of sale by selling at auction. Once the sale has been agreed, it usually only takes 20 working days for completion.

With realistic guide prices it is also the best way to achieve a good sale price.

How do I decide which auctioneer to use?

There are numerous auctioneers that provide services across Bridgend County Borough. Most auctioneers cover South Wales or the whole of Wales and hold auctions on a monthly or quarterly basis in various locations. This list is not exhaustive and Bridgend County Borough Council does not have an affiliation with any of these auctioneers.



Paul Fosh Auctions
87 Church Road
Newport
NP19 7EH
Tel: 01633 254044



Seel & Co
The Crown House
Wyndham Crescent
Canton, Cardiff
CF11 9UH
Tel: 02920 370100



All Wales Auction
Ty Croes Cwrlwys
Cophorne Way
Valegate Retail Park
Culverhouse Cross
CF5 6EH
Tel: 0800 905 905



Property Auctions Wales
3 Kings Road
Llandoverly
Carmarthenshire
SA20 0AW
Tel: 01550 720440



Watts & Morgan
1 Nolton Street
Bridgend
CF31 1BX
Tel: 01656 644288
(ARLA)

Renting or selling your property through the Bridgend Housing Options website

The Bridgend Housing Options website aims to help those looking for a home to make choices about the most suitable housing options available to them. It offers information about private renting, social renting (housing associations), affordable housing and older persons housing in Bridgend County Borough. It is therefore an ideal location for landlords and owners of empty properties to advertise their properties for rent or for sale, completely free of charge.



Advertise your private rented property for free!

To register your interest in advertising your available private rented properties on the Bridgend Housing Options website go to www.bridgendhousing.co.uk. Your application will require approval which may involve us calling or emailing you to confirm your details. Once your property is rented it is your responsibility to remove the property from the website.

Advertise your property for sale for free!

If you own a property that is currently empty and want to sell it you can register and advertise it free of charge on the website. Your personal details or the address of the empty property will never be advertised. They will remain completely confidential. However, the general area, property type and property size will be advertised, including any photos you add. These details will only be available to view by people who have registered on the site as looking to buy an empty property. If someone is interested in buying your property you will be sent a message via the website. Your personal details or the address of the empty property will not be provided unless you choose to respond to the message and provide these details.

If your property is sold it is your responsibility to remove the property from the site. You should also advise your estate agent, if you have one. We do not get involved in any way with the sale of the property and do not offer any advice to sellers or buyers. To register your interest in advertising your properties for sale on the Bridgend Housing Options website go to www.bridgendhousing.co.uk.

What other information can I find on the website?

There is also information on legislation and regulation as well as rents and bonds. If there is any other information you would like to see on the Bridgend Housing Options website, please complete the “contact us” form included in the website. All comments and suggestions will be gratefully received.

Renting your property through a private letting agent

How do I decide which letting agent to use?

There are a number of lettings agents in the County Borough that can assist you in letting and managing a private rented tenancy. Further details of these, including contact information, can be found below. This list is not exhaustive and Bridgend County Borough Council does not have an affiliation with any of these letting agents. Letting agents who have signed up to a scheme such as Rent Smart Wales, the National Approved Letting Scheme (NALS) or the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA) will provide professional standards of service to both landlord and tenant. It is always advisable to check if the letting agent has signed up to any of these and other relevant schemes.

What services can a letting agent provide?

The services letting agents provide may include: advising you on rent levels and insurance; finding tenants and checking references; collecting rent and holding the money in a separate client account; providing a monthly statement; arranging utilities safety checks and transferring bills into the tenants' name; arranging routine maintenance work; arranging regular inspections of the property; and dealing with all legal and administrative paperwork between tenant and landlord. Fees vary from agency to agency. As landlord you would be responsible for insuring the building and major repairs and maintenance.

Who are the letting agents that operate in Bridgend County Borough?



Abode Lets
PO Box 217
Bridgend
CF31 9DS
Tel: 01656 667606



A1 Lettings
Unit 6, Bowrington
Arcade, Neath Road
Maesteg, CF34 9EE
Tel: 01656 737 773
(NALS)



The Letting Company
35 Oxford Street,
Pontycymer, Bridgend
CF32 8DD
Tel: 0330 999 1010
(ARLA)



Chris Packer
20 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 01656 656551
(ARLA)



Payton Jewell Caines
8 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 01656 654328
(RICS & LAW)



Watts & Morgan
1 Nolton Street
Bridgend
CF31 1BX
Tel: 01656 644288
(ARLA)



Ferriers
29 Llynfi Road
Maesteg
CF34 9DS
Tel: 01656 733291
(ARLA)



Gareth L. Edwards
4-6 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 01656 653274
(ARLA)

Selling your property

Who are the estate agents that operate in Bridgend County Borough?

There are a number of estate agents that operate in Bridgend County Borough. Further details of these, including contact information, can be found below. This list is not exhaustive and Bridgend County Borough Council does not have an affiliation with any of the estate agents.

An estate agent with this symbol next to their logo also auction properties.



Chris Packer
20 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 01656 656551



Elite Property
2 Walters Road
Ogmore Vale
CF32 7DN
Tel: 01656 841271



Evans Jones
23 Bridge Street
Kenfig Hill
CF33 6DB
Tel: 01656 742363



Ferriers
29 Lynfi Road
Maesteg
CF34 9DS
Tel: 01656 733291



Gareth L. Edwards
4-6 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 01656 653274



Herbert R. Thomas
59 High Street
Cowbridge
CF71 7YL
Tel: 01656 772911



Pencoed Property
3a Penybont Road
Pencoed
CF35 5PY
Tel: 01656 861010



Payton Jewell Caines
8 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 01656 654328



Peter Alan
22 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 0845 4676357



Porters
38-40 Nolton Street
Bridgend
CF31 3BN
Tel: 01656 766666



Peter Morgan
16 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 01656 667100



Prestons
69a John Street
Porthcawl
CF36 3BA
Tel: 0845 4670973



Reed Evans
7 Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JF
Tel: 0845 2246392



T. Elwood Deere & Son
44 John Street
Porthcawl
CF36 3BB
Tel: 0845 4636094



Thompsons
69 John Street
Porthcawl
CF36 3AY
Tel: 0845 4745736



Watts & Morgan
1 Nolton Street
Bridgend
CF31 1BX
Tel: 01656 644288



Wisemove
57/59 Oxford Street
Pontycymmer
CF32 8DD
Tel: 0845 4636518



Clee Tompkinson Francis
1 b/c Dunraven Place
Bridgend
CF31 1JD
Tel: 01656 653855

VAT discounts for empty homes

What VAT discounts can I obtain?

If you are bringing an empty property back into use that has not been lived in during the 2 years immediately before your work starts and is intended for use solely for a 'relevant residential purpose' you may be eligible for a reduced rate VAT.

How can the Local Authority assist?

The Local Authority can write an official letter to the developer / house owner confirming how long the property has been empty if required. This is the developers or house owners' evidence if Customs need to check. If you require this letter to be sent to you, please contact the Housing Strategy Team using the contact details on page 2 of this information pack.

Who do I contact for further information?

Telephone the Customs and Excise National Advice Service on 0845 010 9000. Alternatively view the Customs and Excise website at www.hmrc.gov.uk and search for Public Notice 708, Buildings and Construction.

Category 1 hazards

What is the Housing Health and Safety Rating System?

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a risk based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. It was introduced under the Housing Act 2004 and came into effect on 6 April 2006. It enables authorities to take action against a range of housing conditions, from very severe hazards to more minor hazards. The HHSRS assessment is based on the risk to the potential occupant who is most vulnerable to that hazard.

What are the 29 categories of housing hazard?

The HHSRS assesses 29 categories of housing hazard. Each hazard has a weighting which will help determine whether the property is rated as having Category 1 (serious) or Category 2 (other). The hazards that can be assessed are those associated with or arising from:

Physiological Requirements	Protection Against Accidents
Damp and mould growth	Falls associated with baths etc.
Excess cold	Falling on level surfaces etc.
Excess heat	Falling on stairs etc
Asbestos and manufacture mineral fibres (MMF)	Falling between levels
Biocides	Electrical hazards
Carbon monoxide & fuel combustion products	Fire
Lead	Flames, hot surfaces
Radiation	Collision and entrapment
Uncombusted fuel gas	Explosions
Volatile Organic Compounds	Position and operability of amenities
	Structural collapse and failing elements
Psychological Requirements	Protection Against Infection
Crowding and space	Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
Entry by intruders	Food safety
Lighting	Personal hygiene, sanitation & drainage
Noise	Water supply for domestic purpose

Enforcement Action

What enforcement action can the Council use?

Bridgend County Borough Council is pro-active in returning empty properties to use. We wish to work with owners of empty properties for the benefit of the community. If, however, people continue to leave their properties empty and derelict, the Council will consider using powers such as:

- Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 80 and the Building Act 1984 Section 76 to deal with nuisance;
- Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 Section 4 to deal with infestations of rats and mice;
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Section 29 and the Building Act 1984 Section 79 to deal with unsecure or dilapidated properties;
- Building Act 1984 Section 77 & 78 to deal with dangerous properties;
- Town & Country Planning Act 1990 Section 215 to deal with unsightly Properties;
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System in the Housing Act 2004 to improve housing conditions;
- Compulsory purchase under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985;
- Enforced sale in the Law of Property Act 1925.

We do, however, consider this to be a last resort, and prefer to work with owners to find the best solution in bringing empty properties back into use.

What is the Enforced Sale Scheme?

The Enforced Sales Scheme is a process by which the Council brings about the sale of a privately owned house. It is used as a means to "sell on" a long-term vacant house to a new owner, in circumstances where the present owner is either unwilling or unable to deal with the house and its associated problems.

An initial assessment will need to take place to consider which of these properties are suitable for inclusion into the Enforced Sales Scheme.

The use of the Enforced Sales Scheme should be seen as a last resort. It is expected that all informal and formal action will have been taken and exhausted by the council in order to resolve the existence of the empty property and its associated problems.

