

Bridgend County
Borough Council
**Empty Property
Strategy
2019-2023**

Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol



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Introduction

Purpose of the strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to set out how Bridgend County Borough Council (“the Council”) and its partners shall seek to reduce empty properties across the County Borough and help contribute towards increasing the availability of housing for sale or for rent.

The focus of this strategy is empty private sector residential properties that could be brought back into use as residential housing. Whilst commercial properties may also be empty, they require a more specific approach to bring them back into use as economically viable commercial premises and therefore, do not form part of this strategy. However, commercial properties that can be converted into residential accommodation will be considered but are outside of the current Welsh Government definition and national performance indicators for bringing empty properties back into use.

The housing market is quite fluid and there will always be empty properties for sale or rent that do not require any intervention. These are properties that are generally empty for less than six months. Although these properties are not the main focus for the Council, they can still present a concern should they remain empty for a long period of time or their condition deteriorate.

The Council is committed to tackling the blight of empty properties and adopts a proactive approach by working with owners to bring their empty properties back into use. If however, properties continue to remain empty, are in a state of disrepair, are detrimental or a nuisance to the community, the Council will consider using its legislative powers to remedy the adverse impact on the community and bring the property back into use.

Whilst a number of services within the Council have different processes, powers and policies they can use, bringing empty properties back into use is a corporate responsibility. Therefore, these services will work in a

more co-ordinated way as one Council to achieve the aims and objectives of this strategy.

Consequences of empty properties

Empty properties are a wasted resource. Whilst they may not always be left in a state of disrepair, there are always consequences, and these can be summarised into three factors:

- **social**, such as crime including arson, graffiti, squatting, as well as reduced public confidence in the area or the Council
- **environmental**, including rodent infestation, fly tipping, dangerous structures, and a poor impression of the area
- **economic**, such as repair costs, increased burdens on councils' resources, property devaluation, deterred investment

Causes of empty properties

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

- **Individual reasons**, such as unresolved ownership following a death, bankruptcy, owners entering hospital or prison, or a lack of owner knowledge.
- **Property based reasons** such as investments not realised, or repairs and renovations being too expensive.
- **Housing market reasons** such as areas of low demand, areas of over supply or properties with negative equity.

Benefits of bringing empty properties back into use

Bringing an empty property back into use can contribute to:

- Creating rental or sale income, rather than properties being wasted assets
- Increasing property values
- Reducing vandalism, arson or squatting, and the fear of crime

- Enhancing town centres' viability and vitality
- Creating an increased sense of community
- Boosting the supply of good quality affordable housing
- Supporting strong, balanced housing markets and community sustainability
- Improving the local environment
- Creating training and job opportunities
- increasing council tax revenues so the Council can provide a better service

Definition and context

National definition of an empty property

The main focus of this strategy is to bring back into use long-term empty residential properties. These are defined as **private sector residential properties which are liable for council tax and have been unoccupied for a period of six months or more**. This definition is taken from the national Public Accountability Measure that enables local authorities to give account of their performance to the public. The following properties are excluded from this definition:

- 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;
 - 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 Agency¹

¹ Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) 2018-19 Guidance for local authorities (PAM/013)

Information on empty properties is obtained from council tax data, where owners have notified the Council that the property is empty.

The local housing market

There are around 63,762 residential properties in Bridgend County Borough². Approximately, these are:

- 73% owner occupied
- 13% privately rented
- 14% rented from an RSL

The Council is no longer a social housing landlord as it does not own any residential properties, following the transfer of its housing stock in September 2003 to Valleys to Coast Housing Association.

The County Borough area can be identified in two parts. The southern part is a well-populated coastal belt including the towns of Bridgend and Porthcawl, together with the other urban areas close to the M4 Motorway. The northern part is a more rural, mountainous and less accessible area, with three valleys running north-south, the most westerly containing the town of Maesteg. There are major differences in house prices and economic conditions between the southern and northern areas.

There are three housing market areas in the County Borough, namely;

- Western Settlements, Ogmore, Garw & Upper Llynfi Valley (the valleys areas with the lowest house prices)
- Porthcawl and Rural (the coastal areas with the highest house prices)
- Bridgend, Pencoed & Hinterland³

² Welsh Government dwelling stock estimates by local authority and tenure 2016-17
<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Dwelling-Stock-Estimates/dwellingstockestimates-by-localauthority-tenure>

³ Bridgend County Borough Council Local Housing Market Assessment Update 2012

Approximately 60% of private sector residential properties in the County Borough are semi-detached houses or terraced houses. In addition, approximately only 6% of the private sector residential properties is smaller accommodation such as flats. The majority of private sector properties (approximately 80%) are over 40 years old⁴. These are significant factors as they suggest that a majority of empty properties are likely to be larger houses that are over 40 years old.

The number of empty properties

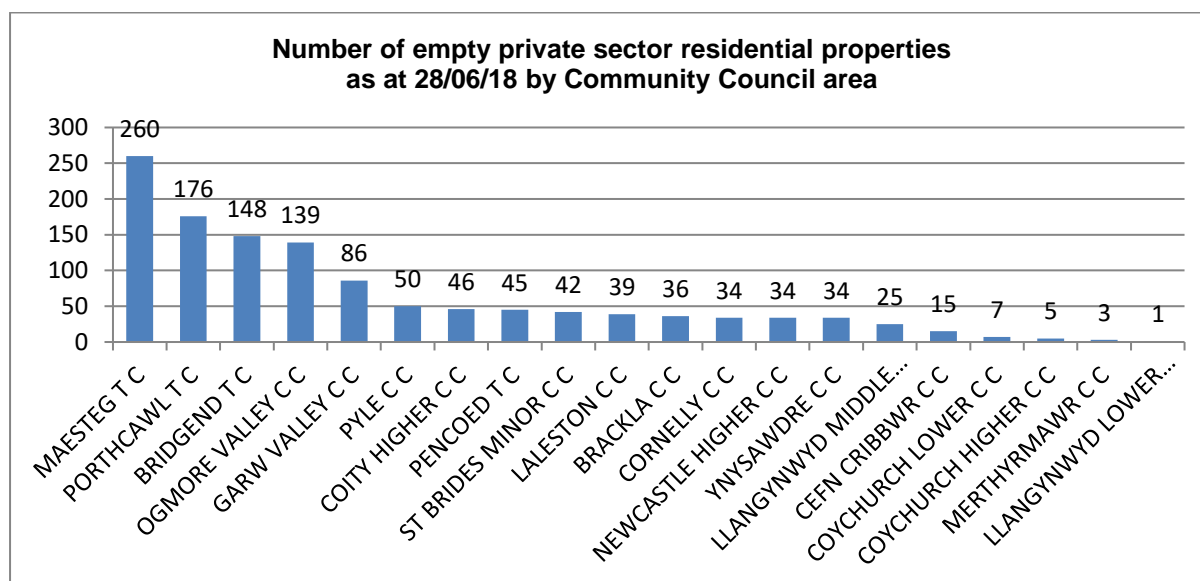
In June 2018 there were 1,225 private sector residential properties empty for six months or more, which accounted for 2% of Bridgend County Borough's residential properties.

The number of empty private sector residential properties has remained relatively consistent over the past few years and therefore, this figure of 1,225 will be used as the baseline on which the Council will measure performance of the strategy. Confirmation that this is an accurate figure will be addressed as an objective within this strategy going forward.

Of these properties, 32% have been empty for six to twelve months and it is acknowledged that these properties need intervention to prevent them from becoming longer term empties. However, 42% of private residential sector properties have been empty for two or more years and these properties are more likely to have negative social, environmental and economic consequences and therefore need a particular focus. This is especially so where there is no plan to bring them back into use.

⁴ Bridgend County Borough council Private Sector House Stock Condition Survey 2009

The location of empty properties



As can be seen on the above chart, most of the empty properties are in and around Maesteg, Porthcawl and Bridgend's town centres, and represent 48% of the empty properties in the County Borough. This suggests that in order to foster vibrant and viable town centres and support a successful economy, it would be beneficial to focus on these areas. Living in close proximity to town centre amenities could also help make a property more desirable to sell or to rent and the property is therefore more likely to be brought back into use.

Whilst it is important to focus on areas that have the greatest number of empty properties and which also have a greater potential of being brought back into use because of their location, it is also important to note that there are areas that have a higher density of empty properties. This is particularly evident in the valleys areas such as the Ogmores Valley where 4.46% of private sector properties are empty and the Garw Valley where 3.16% are empty. In comparison 1.7% of private sector properties are empty in Bridgend Town; 2.38% in Porthcawl and 3.45% in the Llynfi Valley (Maesteg).

Each area of the County Borough has its own particular geographic, social and economic characteristics which will have an impact on the

housing market in those areas. For example, in July 2018 the average value of a property in the Ogmore Valley was £97,036 and in Maesteg £115,730. Both of these areas were well below the average value of a property in Wales which was £190,210. In comparison, the average value of a property in Porthcawl in July 2018⁵ was £251,851. The value of an empty property will be a factor in whether it can be brought back into use, as there may be little or no equity to obtain funding to carry out repair works on the property.

Both the Ogmore Valley and Maesteg were former mining communities and with the decline of the coal industry there is less employment opportunities in these areas. In addition, accessing central rail transport and the M4 motorway is more difficult. These factors have an impact on the housing market in these areas and will need to be taken into consideration when tackling empty properties in these locations.

Conversely, Porthcawl is a more affluent coastal area. Being a holiday resort, tourism plays a large part in Porthcawl's economy and there are more employment opportunities and better transport links. However, as house prices are much higher it can make it difficult for people to enter the housing market in this area and also results in owners holding high value properties with no capital to carry out repair works.

⁵ <https://www.zoopla.co.uk> › House prices › Bridgend

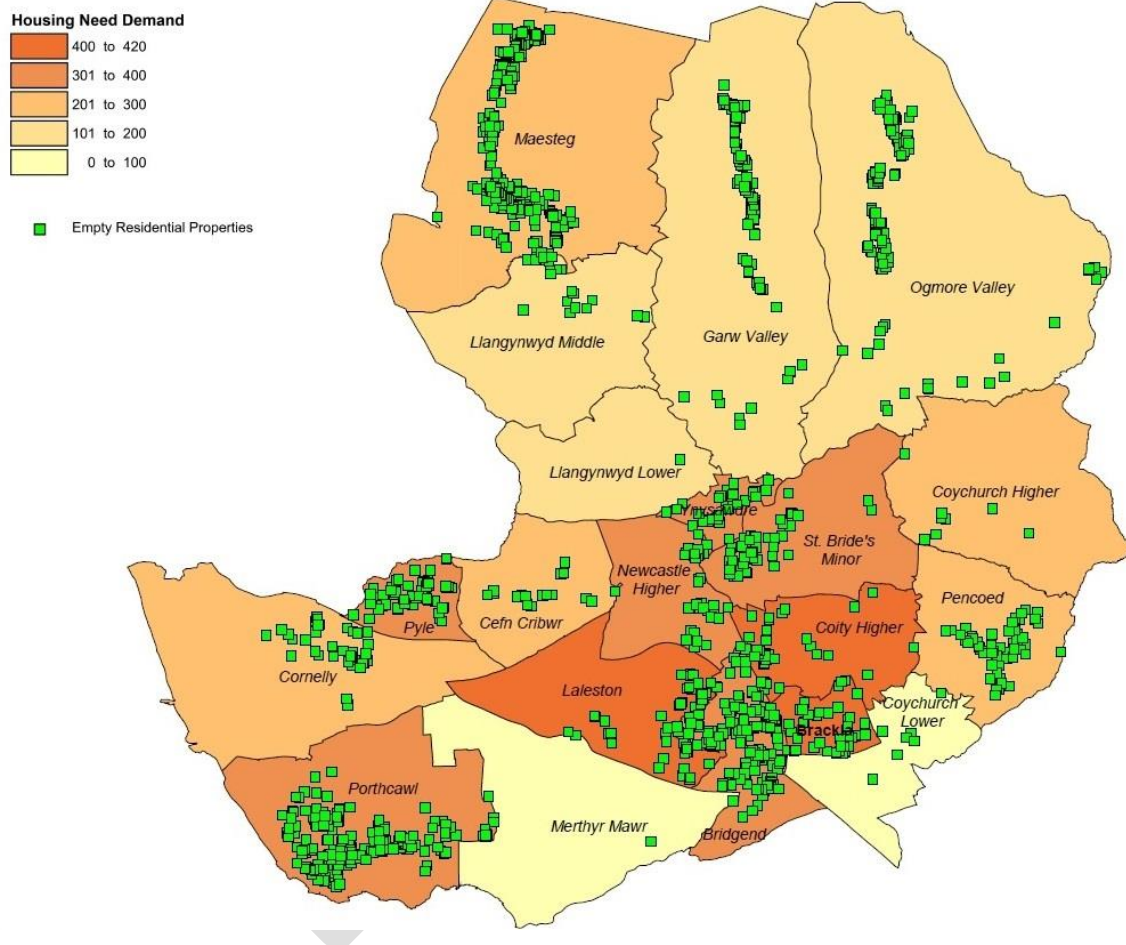
Empty properties and housing need

Bringing empty properties back into use can contribute to meeting housing need in the County Borough. There are different types of housing needs such as the need for homes to buy, the need for homes to rent in the private sector and the need for affordable homes such as social rented housing or intermediate housing (which is housing at a cost above social rented housing, but below private rented housing or housing for sale at market value. Intermediate housing can include low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent).

There is no one solution that meets all these needs and therefore, the Council and its partners will need to work innovatively with empty property owners to meet these needs. For example, bringing back into use a larger property for sale or private rent can help meet the needs of larger families, or changing the use of a larger property into shared accommodation can help boost the availability of accommodation in the private sector for single people aged under 35. The conversion of family homes into single person accommodation such as flats could help to meet the need for both single younger people and older people as they look to downsize. It is acknowledged that such conversions are often complex and have to adhere to relevant planning permission and building regulations.

One consideration is where social housing need on the Bridgend Common Housing Register could be met by bringing back into use empty properties. An analysis of information available is shown on the map below (as at May 2018). It can be seen that the greatest demand for social housing is in and around Bridgend, Porthcawl and Maesteg's town centres and their outskirts, where there are clusters of empty properties. It can also be seen that there are a number of areas where empty properties occur but demand for social rented housing is low and therefore these areas, whilst not excluded, are unlikely to be priority areas to target.

One of the other factors to be taken into account in relation to housing need is that 64% of demand on the Bridgend Common Housing Register is for 1 bed properties. However, it is estimated that a majority of empty properties are 3 bedrooms or more, so these properties would have to be converted into single person accommodation e.g. shared housing or flats to align to the current demand on the Bridgend Common Housing Register.



The Council's approach

The Council and its partners seek to work cooperatively with owners of empty properties to bring their properties back into use. Therefore, regular and effective communication with the owner is paramount, to establish the most appropriate course of action to bring the empty property back into use.

Owners of empty properties are likely to have their own plan or purpose for their properties. They may wish to sell or rent and will make the economic decisions that best meets their circumstances. Therefore, predicting the route an owner may wish to take is difficult and the Council and its partners will need to work closely with owners to determine the best all round solution.

The Council provides owners with help and assistance to bring empty properties back into use, including empty homes grants and empty property loans. For further information about the help and assistance available to owners of empty properties, please contact emptyproperties@bridgend.gov.uk or telephone 01656 646342.

However, where properties continue to remain empty and are in a state of disrepair, are detrimental or a nuisance to the community, the Council will consider using its legislative powers to remedy the adverse impact on the community and bring the property back into use. Appendix 1 sets out enforcement action available to the Council.

Opportunities occasionally occur to bring non-residential properties back into use as residential accommodation. This includes commercial properties, churches, chapels, and those properties which the Inland Revenue's Valuation Office Agency deletes from the Valuation List because they are uninhabitable or in disrepair. Although these properties do not form part of the national definition of empty properties, when such an opportunity arises, they will be considered on a case by case basis with performance and progress measured separately.

How the Council prioritises empty properties

The Council uses an objective scoring mechanism, initially based on desktop information held by services with the Council, to prioritise the empty properties it will focus on. The two key determinations are:

- i. the impact the property has on the community; and
- ii. the location of the property.

An empty property is given a point for each of the scoring criteria relevant to that property. For example, if the Council has received complaints about an empty property, and it has been served a notice because the structure is dangerous, and it is in an area of high housing need, it would be given a score of 3. A property will not be given more than 1 point for each criteria, for example, if numerous complaints are received about a property, it would not receive a point for each complaint. Those properties with the highest score are the highest priority. The criteria, which is in no particular order, is explained in more detail below.

- **If the property is a nuisance** – when there has been a notice served for environmental health reasons e.g. to carry out work for the removal or destruction of rats or mice on land or to secure unauthorised entry to an empty building or prevent it becoming a danger to public health.
- **If complaints have been received** – when there has been a complaint received from a member of the public such as a neighbour, the Police, a Councillor, an Assembly Member (AM), a Member of Parliament (MP), or a Council Officer.
- **If the property is in an area of high housing need** – when the property is located in one of the areas on the Bridgend Common Housing Register that is in the top quarter of demand for social housing.

- **If the property is in disrepair** – when there has been a notice served because the building or structure is dangerous and as such there is an implied duty to address that danger.
- **If the property is detrimental to the local community** – when there has been a notice served because of matters of amenity and issues of aesthetics. This would normally be the removal of curtilage items from the public view or for broken windows to be boarded up and painted. Also included here is when the property is in a conservation area (an area of notable environmental or historical interest or importance which is protected by law against detrimental changes) and the issues are having a negative impact on the area.
- **If the property is in the town centre or outskirts** – where there are a high number of empty properties in a town centre or its outskirts, bringing them back into use could help foster a vibrant and viable town centre and support a successful economy. This is explained further in the section titled “The locations of empty properties” – please refer to page 10.
- **If there is debt owed to the Council** – when there is a council tax charging order on the property for council tax arrears, or when works in default have been carried out following notices that have been served, and a charge placed on the property.
- **The length of time empty** – this is based on the date of the council tax exemption.

Once the properties have been scored, based on the criteria above, they are then prioritised by the length of time empty.

The priority list will be reviewed routinely and, as appropriate, properties will be added or removed. The scoring mechanism enables a blended approach to the prioritisation of the properties where some are more problematic than others.

The Council’s Empty Property Working Group, which consists of representatives from each service within the Authority that work with empty properties, will determine the most appropriate actions to attempt to bring the priority properties back into use.

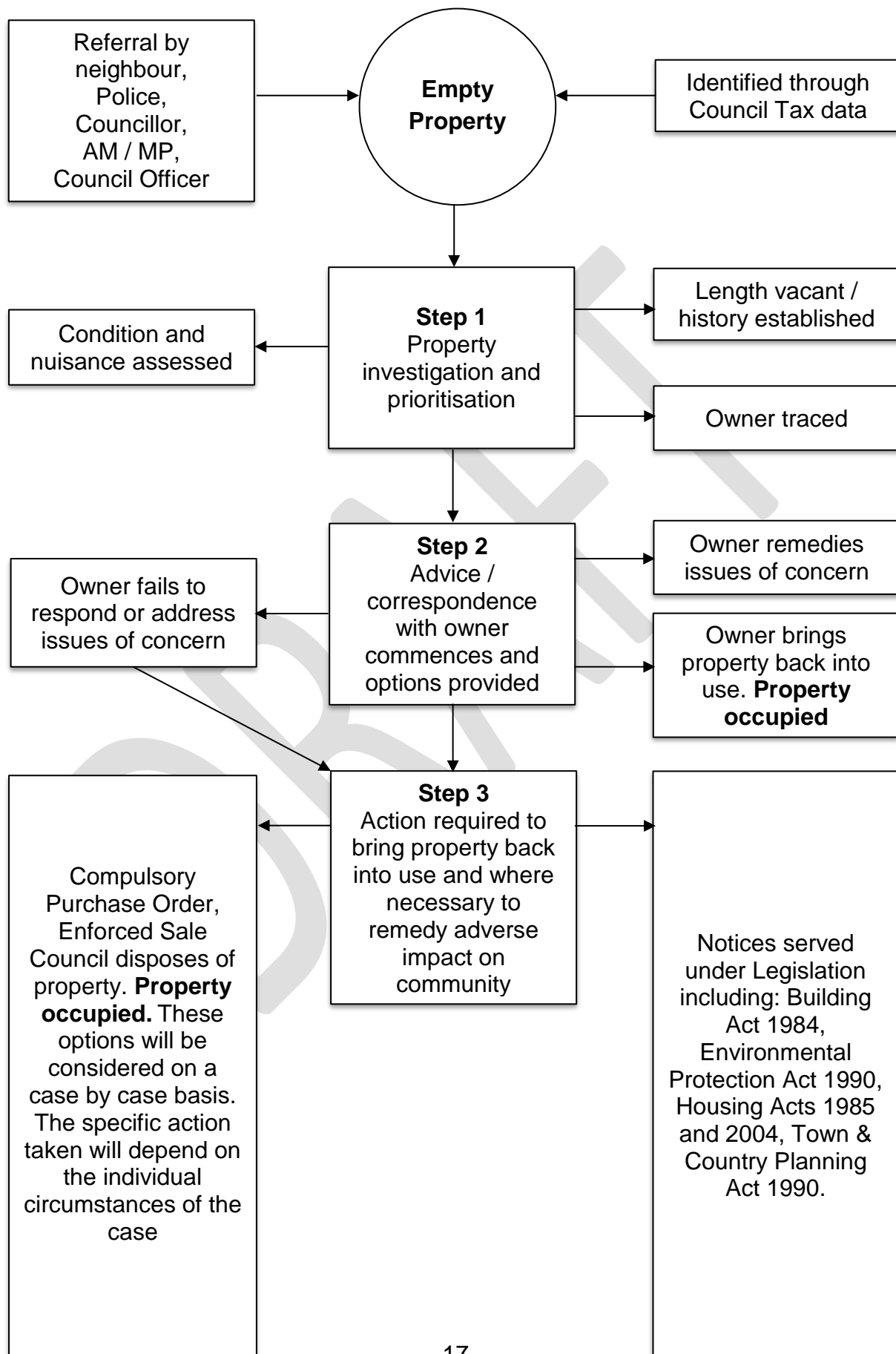
Aims and objectives

Building upon the existing approach and acknowledging the importance of working cooperatively with partners and owners, the Council has identified the following aims and objectives in order to reinforce its commitment to seek to reduce empty properties across the County Borough.

Aims	Objectives
<p>1. Identify and prioritise empty properties.</p>	<p>Ensure Empty Property data is accurate and up to date.</p> <p>Develop and maintain a database of empty properties using council tax data and other sources of information.</p> <p>Develop a referral mechanism for services within the Council to consistently provide information about empty properties to inform prioritisation on the empty property database.</p>
<p>2. Provide help and assistance to owners.</p>	<p>Survey owners to establish why properties are empty to inform the strategy going forward.</p> <p>Make contact with owners of empty properties via a regular mailshot to advise them of the help and assistance available.</p> <p>Review the assistance provided via the Private Sector Renewal & Disabled Adaptations Policy e.g. grants and loans, to ensure it is relevant and fit for purpose.</p>

<p>3. Ensure effective communication is undertaken.</p>	<p>Develop a confidential online reporting service so people are able to report an empty property and associated issues.</p> <p>Develop an empty property web page to communicate the help and assistance available to owners e.g. grants and loans.</p> <p>Identify and share success stories via the empty property web page and via social media.</p>
<p>4. Work closely with internal and external partners.</p>	<p>Collaborate as an Empty Property Working Group to ensure a coordinated approach to tackling empty properties.</p> <p>Develop new initiatives with external partners to offer to empty property owners.</p> <p>Participate in conferences and training events to share best practice and improve knowledge.</p>
<p>5. Consider the use of enforcement action.</p>	<p>Explore options for increasing the council tax premium on properties empty for two years or longer.</p> <p>Consider the use of possible enforcement action open to the Council and take enforcement action where appropriate.</p> <p>Consider the use of enforced sales, Empty Dwelling Management Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders.</p>

Empty property procedure following initial referral



Monitoring the strategy

The strategy will be reported on and updated annually to take into account any new information available, any legislative changes or any new aims and objectives identified.

The success in bringing empty private sector residential properties back into use will be measured using the following Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) and performance will be compared to other Council's in Wales:

- PAM/013 – Percentage of empty private sector properties brought back into use during the year through direct action by the local authority.
- PAM014 – Number of new homes created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use

The work resulting from the Strategy will also be measured and reported on in terms of the quantity of engagement and enforcement carried out, in order to demonstrate the efforts that are being made to bring empty properties back into use.

Contact details

If you have any queries about the strategy or would like to know more about the help and assistance available to owners of empty properties, please contact emptyproperties@bridgend.gov.uk or telephone 01656 646342.

Privacy Notice

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 regulate the processing of information relating to individuals. This includes the obtaining, holding, use or disclosure of such information.

To make sure that the Council handle personal data lawfully and appropriately it must comply with GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and in particular the Data Protection Principles.

You can view the Fair Processing Statement for the Empty Property Strategy here. Alternatively, you can request to view a copy by contacting: Legal and Regulatory Services, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB or emailing foi@bridgend.gov.uk.

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Appendix 1 - Enforcement Action

Where the Council considers enforcement action to be appropriate to bring an empty property back into use or to improve the condition of the empty property so that it is no longer in a state of disrepair or is detrimental / a nuisance to the community, the Council may use one or more of the enforcement powers available to it under legislation. Those enforcement powers are set out below. The decision to use these powers will be made on a case by case basis, taking into consideration the scoring mechanism on page 13, used to prioritise empty properties.

Enforced Sale

Where the local authority has served notice on an owner to carry out works but they have failed to do so, the local authority has the power, under certain legislation, to carry out the works itself and recover the costs by placing a charge on the property.

The local authority can force the sale of a property to recover debts owed to the local authority that are registered as a charge on the property. This power will be used when all other negotiations have failed. Properties that have been prioritised using the scoring mechanism on page 12 will be tackled in the first instance.

Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)

Introduced by the Housing Act 2004, Empty Dwelling Management Orders (“EDMOs”) give the Local Authority the power to take management control of privately owned empty homes to secure occupation of them. The power resides in Sections 132 to 138 of the Housing Act 2004. Interim and Final EDMOs are made against the proprietor of the property, who may be either the owner, or a leaseholder where there are at least 7 years remaining on lease. The Authority, having exhausted all other avenues of encouraging the proprietor to bring the property back into use, can apply to a Residential Property Tribunal for an order.

Interim EDMO

An interim EDMO is defined by Section 132 of the Housing Act 2004 as “an order made to enable a local housing authority, with the consent of the relevant proprietor, to take steps for the purpose of securing that a dwelling becomes and continues to be occupied.”

To make an interim EDMO, the Council must satisfy the following conditions:

- The property is not occupied (whether lawfully or not);
- A public sector body (as defined by the legislation) does not own the property or have a lease(s) over the property with an unexpired term of 7 years or more.

The Council must apply to the Residential Property Tribunal to make an interim EDMO. Before making an application to the Residential Property Tribunal, the Council:

- must make reasonable efforts to notify the owner or the lessee (who has a lease over the property for a term of 7 years or more) that it is considering making an interim EDMO and find out what steps the owner/lessee is taking to secure occupation of the property; and
- take into account not only the rights of the owner/lessee but also the interests of the wider community.

Prior to granting authorisation of an interim EDMO, the Residential Property Tribunal must be satisfied that:

- the property has been wholly unoccupied for at least 6 months or such longer period as prescribed by legislation;
- there is no reasonable prospect of the property becoming occupied in the near future;
- if the interim EDMO is made, there is a reasonable prospect that the property will become occupied;
- that the Council has complied with its obligations under Section 133 of the Housing Act 2004 and any requirements prescribed by legislation;

- does not fall within an exemption specified by the National Assembly for Wales in legislation (for example, it is used as a holiday home, property is for sale or let).

The Residential Property Tribunal must also take into account the interests of the community and the effect the interim EDMO will have on the rights of the owner/lessee and may have on the rights of third parties.

An interim EDMO comes into force when it is made and lasts for 12 months unless the order provides for it to end earlier. Once the interim EDMO is in force the Council must take appropriate steps to secure the occupation and proper management of the property. The Council must work with the owner of the property to agree how the property shall be brought back into use.

Final EDMO

Section 132 of the Housing Act 2004 defines a final EDMO as “an order made, in succession to an interim EDMO or a previous final EDMO, for the purpose of securing that a dwelling is occupied.”

The Council may make a final EDMO to replace an interim EDMO in the following circumstances:

- where it considers that unless a final EDMO is made, the property is likely to become or remain unoccupied;
- where the property is unoccupied, it has taken all appropriate steps under the interim EDMO to secure occupation.

Under the legislation, the Council can make a new final EDMO to replace a final EDMO if the Council considers that unless a new order is made, the property is likely to become or remain unoccupied and it has taken all steps it can under the existing final EDMO to secure the occupation of the property but it remains unoccupied.

In deciding whether to make a final EDMO the Council must take into account the interest of the community and the effect the order has on the

owner/lessee and the effect it may have on the rights of third parties. The Council must also consider whether compensation should be paid to any third party due to an interference with their rights as a consequence of this order. The Council does not need to obtain the consent of the Residential Property Tribunal to make the final EDMO.

Once the final EDMO is in force the Council must take appropriate steps to secure the occupation and proper management of the property. The Council must review, from time to time, how the order operates (particularly the management scheme contained within it), if there are any appropriate steps it can take if the property is unoccupied and whether keeping the order in force is necessary to secure that the property becomes or remains occupied. If it considers that any variations are necessary to the order, it must make them. The order must be revoked if the Council considers, upon review, that there are no appropriate steps to be taken to secure occupation or it is not necessary to keep the order in force.

A final EDMO lasts for a maximum of 7 years. The Council cannot grant a lease or licence to the property unless it has obtained the consent of the owner/lessee.

The final EDMO must contain a management scheme setting out:

- how the Council shall carry out its duties;
- the Council's plan for managing the property which must include (but is not limited to):
 - details of any works to be carried out,
 - estimate the capital and expenditure incurred by the Council while the order is in force,
 - the amount of rent it would expect the property to fetch on the open market;
 - the amount of rent or other payments the Council will seek to obtain;
 - any compensation it intends to pay;
 - how the Council shall pay any surplus to the owner/lessee once deductions have been made to the monies it receives

Appeals

An owner has the right to appeal to the Residential Property Tribunal against the making of the EDMO. A relevant person (which is defined in the legislation as any person who has an estate or interest in the property other than a tenant under a lease granted under paragraphs 2(3)(c) or 10(3)(c) of Schedule 7) may appeal against:

- the decision of the Council to make a final EDMO;
- the terms of the final EDMO; or
- the terms of the interim EDMO in so far as they do not provide for one or both of the provisions of para 5(5)(a) and (b).

An appeal against the terms of the interim EDMO can be brought at any time while the order is in force. Where an appeal is made against a final EDMO, this must be made within 28 days starting with the date specified in the notice served under Schedule 6 of the Act. However, the Residential Property Tribunal may allow an appeal to be made after the end of this period if it considers there is a good reason for the failure to appeal before the end of that period. If no appeal is brought within the period allowed for final EDMOs, then the order is final and conclusive as to the matters which may have been raised on appeal.

An appeal can also be made against a decision made by the Council to vary or revoke the interim or final EDMO or a refusal of the Council not to vary or revoke the interim or final EDMO.

Any affected person may apply to the Residential Property Tribunal for an order to require the Council to manage the property in accordance with the management scheme in the final EDMO where the Council is not doing so.

Compensation

On authorising the Council to make the interim EDMO, the Residential Property Tribunal can order the Council to pay compensation to any third

party specified in the order due to any interference with the rights of the third party in consequence of the interim EDMO.

Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)

Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 gives the Council the power for the purposes of Part II of that Act to acquire:

- a. land to build houses;
- b. houses or buildings which may be made suitable as houses together with any occupied land;
- c. land proposed to be used for any purpose authorised by legislation (facilities to be provided in connection with housing accommodation); and
- d. land to carry out works on it for the purpose of or in connection with the alteration, enlarging, repair or improvement of an adjoining house.

This power also includes the power to acquire land in order to dispose of houses provided or to be provided on that land or to dispose of that land to a person whose intention is to provide housing accommodation on it.

The Council may acquire this land either by agreement or compulsorily by way of authorisation from the National Assembly for Wales. The Council can acquire land with the consent of the National Assembly for Wales (and subject to any conditions imposed by the National Assembly for Wales) even if it is not immediately required for the purposes of Part II of the Act. However, the National Assembly for Wales will not grant the authorisation unless it is likely that the land will be required for those purposes within 10 years from the date the CPO is confirmed.

The Council has to justify its use of the CPO to the National Assembly of Wales. Negotiations should be held with the owner of the land first. The CPO should be the last resort once negotiations with the owner have been exhausted.

Section 215 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

If it appears to the local planning authority that the amenity of a part of their area, or of an adjoining area, is adversely affected by the condition of the land in their area, they may serve on the owner and occupier of the land a notice under this section requiring steps to be taken under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The notice will specify the steps to be taken to remedy the condition of the land. If the owner or occupier does not comply with the terms of the notice within the specified period, the owner or occupier will be guilty of an offence and liable for prosecution in the Magistrates Court (liable to a fine not exceeding level 3 on the standard scale).

Section 217 of the Act provides a right of appeal against the notice under Section 215 of the Act to the person on whom the notice is served or any other person having an interest in the land to which the notice relates. The appeal can be made on the following grounds:

- that the condition of the land subject to the notice does not adversely affect the amenity of any part of the local planning authority's area or of any adjoining area;
- that the condition of the land subject to the notice "is attributable to, and such as results in the ordinary course of events from, the carrying on of operations or a use of land which is not in contravention of Part III" of the Act;
- that the requirements of the notice are in excess of what is necessary to prevent the condition of the land adversely affecting the amenity of any part of the area of the local planning authority or of any adjoining area;
- that the compliance period specified in the notice falls short of what should reasonably be allowed.

Section 219 of the Act provides that if during the compliance period specified in the notice the work is not carried out, the local authority can enter the land, carry out the works itself, and recover any costs in doing so from the person on whom the notice is served.

The Council will, where appropriate, consider serving a notice under Section 215 of the Act. If this notice is not complied with, the Council will consider commencing prosecution proceedings.

Building Act 1984

Section 76 of the Building Act 1984

Section 76 of the Building Act 1984 provides the Council with the power to serve notice where:

- Premises are in a defective state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance, and
- There would be an unreasonable delay in remedying the defective state by following the procedure set out in Section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

The notice shall be served on the person on whom it would be appropriate to serve an abatement notice under the aforementioned legislation and such notice shall state that the Council intends to remedy the defective state and specify the defects it intends to remedy.

The person on whom notice is served is entitled to serve a counter-notice on the Council stating that they intend to carry out works to remedy the defects specified in the notice. If such a notice is served, the Council cannot take any action unless it appears to the Council that no action has been taken within a reasonable period of time or work is not being progressed towards completion as seems reasonable to the Council.

The Council can recover from the person on whom notice is served its expenses for carrying out the work. However, the Council must apply to the Court to recover expenses and the Court may inquire as to whether the Council was justified in its action taken (i.e. was it correct to serve the notice in the first place) and whether the expenses should be borne solely by the defendant or by some other person.

Section 77 of the Building Act 1984

If the Council considers a building or structure, or part of it, to be in a dangerous condition then, under Section 77 of the Building Act 1974, the Council can apply to the Magistrates Court requesting an order be made requiring the owner to carry out works to remove the danger or to demolish the building. If the owner fails to comply with the order within the specified time period, the Council may execute the order and recover its reasonably incurred expenses of doing so from the owner. The owner will also be liable to prosecution.

Section 78 of the Building Act 1984

If the Council considers that a building or structure, or part of it, is in a dangerous condition and immediate action is required, then the Council may take such steps as are necessary to remove the danger. Before exercising this power granted under Section 78 of the Building Act 1984, the Council shall, if reasonably practicable to do so, notify the owner and occupier of the building or the property on which the structure relates of our intention to carry out the work. The Council can recover its reasonably incurred expenses from the owner (unless the Court concludes we could have reasonably proceeded under Section 77 of the Building Act 1984).

If the owner or occupier sustains damage as a consequence of the Council exercising this power, but the owner or occupier cannot claim compensation under Section 106 (1) of this Act because they have been in default, then they may apply to a magistrates court to determine whether the Council was justified in its exercise of the powers. If the Court holds that the Council was not justified, the owner or occupier is entitled to compensation.

Section 79 of the Building Act 1984

The Council may serve notice under Section 79 of the Building Act 1984 on the owner of a building or structure which the Council considers to be seriously detrimental to the amenities of the neighbourhood because of

its ruinous or dilapidated condition. The notice may require the owner to execute repair or restoration works or, the owner may choose to demolish the building or structure or any part thereof and remove any rubbish or other materials resulting from or exposed by the demolition as necessary in the interests of amenity.

Section 99 of this Act provides the Council with the power to carry out the works itself and recover their reasonably incurred expenses. The owner will also be liable to prosecution.

The owner (who has been served with the notice) has a right of appeal in the magistrates' court on any of the following grounds:

- The notice is not justified under the legislation;
- There is an informality, defect or error in connection with the notice;
- The Council has unreasonably refused to approve the execution of alternative works or the works required by the notice are unreasonable in character or extent or the works are unnecessary;
- The time specified for the works to be completed is not reasonably sufficient;
- The notice may lawfully have been served on the occupier instead of the owner or vice versa and it would have been equitable for it to have been served that way;
- Where the works are for the common benefit of not only the property in question but other property, then some other person ought to contribute towards the expenses of executing the required works.

Section 80 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990

If the Council is satisfied that a statutory nuisance exists or is likely to occur or recur in its area, the Council can serve an abatement notice requiring all or any of the following:

- The abatement of the nuisance or prohibit or restrict its occurrence or recurrence;
- Execute works and take other steps necessary for any of those purposes.

The notice must specify the time for compliance and shall be served on the person responsible for the nuisance except if the nuisance arises from any defect of a structural character in which case the notice should be served on the owner of the premises. Where the person responsible for the nuisance cannot be found or the nuisance has not yet occurred, the notice must be served on the owner or occupier of the property.

The person on whom the abatement notice is served may appeal against the notice to a magistrates' court within 21 days of the date on which he was served with the notice.

Failure to comply with the notice can lead to prosecution.

Housing Act 2004

Under the Housing Act 2004, the Council must take the appropriate enforcement action where it considers that either a Category 1 or 2 Hazard exists on residential premises. Appropriate enforcement action can include the serving of an improvement notice or the making of a prohibition order. There are rights of appeal against the service of such a notice or the making of such an order provided for in the Act.

The Council must prepare a statement of the reasons for their decision to take the chosen course of action and this must accompany every notice or copy of an order served in accordance with the relevant parts of the legislation.