

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	21 OCTOBER 2025
Report Title:	EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2025 - 2030
Report Owner Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member:	CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING CHIEF OFFICER – FINANCE, HOUSING & CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	MARTIN MORGANS INTERIM HEAD OF OPERATIONS, COMMUNITY SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	This strategy replaces the Bridgend County Borough Council Empty Property Strategy 2019–2023. It builds on the progress made under the previous framework and introduces updated measures that reflect current priorities, consultation feedback, and housing need across the borough.
Executive Summary:	<p>This report seeks Cabinet approval for Bridgend County Borough Council’s Empty Homes Strategy 2025–2030, which outlines a targeted and sustainable approach to reducing long-term empty properties across the borough. The strategy has been shaped by a public consultation held in 2024, with feedback from residents, stakeholders, and property owners helping to identify key priorities and improve the way the Council works with empty homes. It builds on the progress of the previous 2019–2023 strategy.</p> <p>Empty homes represent a wasted housing resource at a time of growing housing pressure. The strategy focuses on methods of engagement, financial support, and targeted enforcement. A range of initiatives are in place to support property owners, including access to grants, loans, and leasing schemes. Where informal approaches are unsuccessful, enforcement action will be considered. This allows the Council to prioritise properties for action.</p> <p>A detailed Empty Homes Action Plan sets out clear responsibilities and ensures delivery is supported</p>

	<p>through a coordinated approach, involving both internal departments and external partners.</p> <p>This strategy also supports wider objectives to increase affordable housing, tackle homelessness, regenerate town centres, and address climate change by promoting the reuse of existing buildings and improving energy efficiency.</p> <p>Performance will be monitored through national and local indicators, with an annual review and a full assessment in 2030 to ensure the strategy remains effective and relevant.</p> <p>Approval of this strategy will enable the Council to take a proactive, collaborative approach to bringing empty homes back into use and supporting stronger, more sustainable communities.</p>
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval of the Empty Homes Strategy 2025-2030 attached as **Appendix A**.

2. Background

- 2.1 Bridgend County Borough Council's previous Empty Homes Strategy concluded at the end of 2023. Although the development of such strategies is not a statutory requirement for local authorities, the Welsh Government strongly encourages their adoption as best practice to support housing and regeneration objectives.
- 2.2 To ensure the strategy reflects local needs, a consultation was undertaken in 2024 the results of which are attached in **Appendix B**. In collaboration with the consultation team, the consultation was divided into two streams to enable more targeted questioning. One stream focused on empty property owners whose homes had been vacant for 12 months or more. This approach aimed to gather detailed insights into why these properties remain vacant and explore ways to prevent long-term empties in the future.
- 2.3 As part of the empty property owners' consultation, bilingual Welsh and English letters were sent to 650 empty property owners inviting them to complete an online survey. This consultation ran over a twelve-week period and concluded on 9th September 2024.
- 2.4 The second stream was a residents' consultation, made available online in both English and Welsh via Bridgend Council's website. To maximise participation, this consultation was promoted through social media and newsletters. It was open for six weeks and concluded on 16th September 2024.

- 2.5 A total of 170 online responses and one written response were received from the residents' survey, along with 40 responses from empty property owners. Respondents were asked about the strategy's aims, the effectiveness of current Council communications such as mailouts, websites, and reporting mechanisms, and invited to suggest improvements and ways the Council could better support empty property owners.
- 2.6 The feedback received was key to shaping the final strategy. The Council has developed an Empty Homes Action Plan to guide efforts over the next five years, focusing on reducing long-term vacancies, returning empty properties to use, and supporting broader community and housing goals.
- 2.7 The development of the new Empty Homes Strategy has also been made with consideration to Bridgend County Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2023–2028, particularly supporting Wellbeing Objective Seven: 'to improve the way we work with empty properties.'

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 Bridgend County Borough continues to face high levels of long-term empty properties, which places pressure on housing supply and negatively impacts communities. The previous strategy made progress in reducing these numbers, but further action is needed to respond to increasing demand for housing and associated social and environmental impacts.
- 3.2 The proposal is to approve and implement the new Empty Homes Strategy 2025–2030. This updated strategy outlines a coordinated, multi-service approach focused on early engagement, financial assistance, targeted enforcement, and improved data sharing. It includes an action plan that prioritises high-risk properties and aims to return more empty homes to use.
- 3.3 The Empty Homes Strategy has been developed and agreed upon through the Empty Homes working group, with input received from all relevant departments involved in managing empty properties across the Authority.
- 3.4 Performance will be monitored through national and local indicators, with an annual review and a full assessment due in 2030 to ensure the strategy remains effective and relevant.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantages or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 **Long Term:** The strategy aims to reduce the number of long-term empty properties, creating much-needed accommodation for individuals and families. By addressing current housing need while making best use of existing stock, the strategy supports the development of sustainable communities and balances short-term actions with long-term impact.
- 5.2 **Integration:** The strategy supports the Council's well-being objectives by improving homes in disrepair, positively impacting families and communities. It also contributes to wider goals by creating housing opportunities and enhancing neighbourhoods in line with wider authority objectives.
- 5.3 **Involvement:** A public consultation helped shape the strategy's priorities, with respondent feedback leading to improvements now embedded in the five-year action plan. Ongoing engagement continues through internal working groups and external outreach to empty property owners, ensuring the strategy remains responsive to local needs and supports inclusive, community-led solutions.
- 5.4 **Collaboration:** Delivery of the Empty Homes Strategy's action plan requires close collaboration across multiple internal departments, including housing, planning, environmental health, and regeneration, to successfully implement the proposals. Additionally, the Council will work in partnership with external stakeholders such as landlords, Welsh Government, and housing associations. This coordinated approach maximises resources, expertise, and community engagement, ultimately supporting improved housing outcomes and the development of stronger, more resilient communities.
- 5.5 **Prevention:** The Empty Homes Strategy supports the principle of prevention by proactively addressing vacant properties before they deteriorate or cause wider community issues. Through early intervention, the strategy aims to help avoid costly repairs, reduce risks of antisocial behaviour and crime, and protect neighbourhood amenity. By bringing empty homes back into use, it also increases housing supply, alleviating pressure on homelessness services. This preventative approach ultimately reduces long-term costs and contributes to safer, more sustainable communities.

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 6.1 The strategy supports the Council's commitment to addressing climate change by promoting the re-use and restoration of existing empty homes, rather than relying solely on new development. Re-using existing buildings reduces demand for undeveloped land and helps to preserve green spaces.
- 6.2 Where possible, the strategy also encourages the delivery of energy efficiency improvements as part of refurbishment works, supporting long-term sustainability by ensuring that housing meets future environmental standards and helps to alleviate fuel poverty.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The Empty Property Co-Ordinator role enables the delivery of the frontline elements of the service and is funded from existing revenue budgets within the Chief Executive's Directorate. However, the anticipated increase in activity around empty properties will place additional pressure on other departments across the Authority. Any associated work will need to be absorbed within existing departmental resources.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Empty Homes Strategy 2025-2030.

Background documents

None.