



**COFNOD O BENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO GAN SWYDDOG
RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION**

Penderfyniad Allweddol | Key Decision ✓

Mae'r Penderfyniad Wedi'i Ddirprwyo hwn wedi'i bennu yn 'Benderfyniad Allweddol' gan ei fod yn debygol o:

This Delegated Decision has been established as a 'Key Decision' as it is likely:

a) arwain at y Cyngor yn ysgwyddo gwariant sylweddol neu wneud arbedion sylweddol;
to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant;

neu / or:

b) fod yn arwyddocaol o ran sut mae'n effeithio ar gymunedau sy'n byw neu'n gweithio mewn ardal sy'n cynnwys dwy etholaeth neu adran etholiadol neu ragor.
to be significant in terms of its effects on Communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral wards.

c) Eraill / Other:

PWNC | SUBJECT:

New Empty Homes Strategy For 2026-2031

DIBEN YR ADRODDIAD | PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

The purpose of the report is to:-

Provide an update on progress made in bringing empty homes back into use, in line with the current Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Empty Homes Strategy (2022-2026) and to seek approval to undertake a 6-week public consultation on the proposed RCT Empty Homes Strategy (2026-2031).

PENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO | DELEGATED DECISION:

It is **AGREED** that:

The Council will undertake a 6-week public consultation on the proposed RCT Empty Homes Strategy (2026-2031).

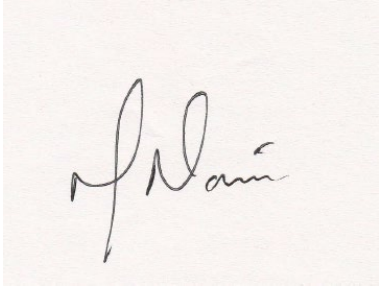
Llofnod y Prif Swyddog
Chief Officer Signature

	Mr Simon Gale Director – Housing & Regeneration	29.06.26
Enw (priflythrennau) Name (Print Name)	Swydd Designation	Dyddiad Date

Mae'r penderfyniad yn cael ei wneud yn unol ag Adran 15 o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000 (Swyddogaethau'r Corff Gweithredol) ac yn y cylch gorchwyl sy wedi'i nodi yn Adran 5 o Ran 3 o Gyfansoddiad y Cyngor.

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

YMGYNGHORI | CONSULTATION

	Councillor M Norris Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing	29.06.26
LLOFNOD YR AELOD YMGYNGHOROL O'R CABINET CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE	ENW A SWYDD NAME AND DESIGNATION	DYDDIAD DATE

LLOFNOD YR AELOD YMGYNGHOROL O'R CABINET CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE	ENW A SWYDD NAME AND DESIGNATION	DYDDIAD DATE

LLOFNODSWYDDOG YMGYNGHOROL CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE	ENW A SWYDD NAME AND DESIGNATION	DYDDIAD DATE

A FYDD Y PENDERFYNIAD YMA'N CAEL EFFAITH AR Y WARD?
WILL THIS DECISION HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE WARD?

BYDD | YES ✓ **NA FYDD | NO**

Unrhyw sylwadau pellach/Oes angen rhoi gwybod i'r Aelod Lleol: ✓
Any further comments/Need for Local Member to be informed:

RHEOLAU'R WEITHDREFN GALW-I-MEWN | CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.

A YW'R PENDERFYNIAD YN UN BRYN A HEB FOD YN DESTUN PROSES GALW-I-MEWN GAN Y PWYLLGOR TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU?:

IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

YDY | YES NAC YDY | NO ✓

Rheswm dros fod yn fater brys | Reason for Urgency:

Os yw'n cael ei ystyried yn fater brys - Ilofnod y Llywydd, y Dirprwy Lywydd neu Bennaeth y Gwasanaeth Cyflogedig yn cadarnhau cytundeb fod y penderfyniad arfaethedig yn rhesymol yn yr holl amgylchiadau iddo gael ei drin fel mater brys, yn unol â rheol gweithdrefn trosolwg a chraffu 17.2:

If deemed urgent - signature of Presiding Member or Deputy Presiding Member or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:

.....
(Llywydd | Presiding Member)

.....
(Dyddiad | Date)

DS - Os yw hwn yn benderfyniad sy'n cael ei ail-ystyried yna does dim modd galw'r penderfyniad i mewn a bydd y penderfyniad yn dod i rym o'r dyddiad mae'r penderfyniad wedi'i lofnodi.

NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision Cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.

DYDDIADAU CYHOEDDI A GWEITHREDU | PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES

CYHOEDDI | PUBLICATION

Cyhoeddi ar Wefan y Cyngor | Publication on the Council's Website:- 30.06.26

DYDDIAD | DATE

GWEITHREDU'R PENDERFYNIAD | IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

Nodwch: Fydd y penderfyniad hwn ddim yn dod i rym nac yn cael ei weithredu'n llawn nes cyn pen 3 diwrnod gwaith ar ôl ei gyhoeddi. Nod hyn yw ei alluogi i gael ei "Alw i Mewn" yn unol â Rheol 17.1, Rheolau Gweithdrefn Trosolwg a Chraffu.

Note: This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 3 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Yn amodol ar y drefn "Galw i Mewn", caiff y penderfyniad ei roi ar waith ar:

Subject to Call In the implementation date will be:

06.07.26
DYDDIAD / DATE

WEDI'I GYMERADWYO I'W GYHOEDDI: ✓ | APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION :✓

Rhagor o wybodaeth | Further Information:

Cyfadran Directorate:	Housing and Regeneration
Enw'r Person Cyswllt Contact Name:	Claire Hutcheon
Swydd Designation:	Head of Housing Strategy and Investment
Rhif Ffôn Telephone Number:	01443 281114

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

KEY DELEGATED DECISION

NEW EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY FOR 2026-2031

JUNE 2026

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND REGENERATION, IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REGENERATION AND HOUSING

AUTHOR: Claire Hutcheon, Head of Housing Strategy and Investment

Appendices:

Appendix A: Empty Homes Strategy (2026-2031)

Appendix B: Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix C: Welsh Language Impact Assessment

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an update on progress made in bringing empty homes back into use, in line with the current Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Empty Homes Strategy (2022–2026).
- Seek approval to undertake a 6-week public consultation on the proposed RCT Empty Homes Strategy (2026–2031).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended to:

- 2.1 Review the information contained within this report and the positive progress made in bringing empty homes back into use in line with the current Empty Homes Strategy (2022 – 2026).
- 2.1 Approve the Housing Strategy team to undertake a 6-week public consultation on the Council’s new Empty Homes Strategy (2026-2031).

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The development of a new Empty Homes Strategy (2026–2031) is essential to sustain and build upon the positive progress achieved under the current strategy (2022–2026). The Council remains committed to addressing the

challenges associated with empty properties across Rhondda Cynon Taf and to increasing the number of homes brought back into productive use.

- 3.2 The proposed strategy will provide a clear framework, direction, and support to enable the Council to continue delivering this work effectively and at scale.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Empty private sector homes represent a wasted resource and are a financial expense both to the owners and the Council and in many cases a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for residents. Not only are they a waste of a valuable housing resource, but they can cause blight to communities and distress to residents affected by their unsightly appearance and propensity to attract crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 4.2 Council Tax records, from 1st April 2017, revealed that there were 3,556 private sector homes that had been vacant for six months or more in RCT. This equated to 3.8% of Rhondda Cynon Taf's private housing (owner occupied and private rented) stock. The average for Wales in 2017/2018 was 2.4%.
- 4.3 To address this issue, Cabinet has approved two successive Empty Homes Strategies. The first in 2018 and subsequently in 2022, both of which were designed to reduce the number of empty homes across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 4.4 Further to this, the Council undertook a public consultation on 18th January 2023, which informed the introduction of a Council Tax Premium on long term empty properties and second homes. A long term empty property is defined as a dwelling that has been both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least one year. The premium for long term empty properties was implemented from 1st April 2023, followed by the introduction of a premium for second homes from 1st April 2024. These measures have acted as a strong incentive for property owners to take action and engage with the Council, contributing to a **25% reduction** in long term vacant properties.
- 4.5 Council Tax records as of 1st April 2026 indicate that there are 2,687 private sector homes that have been vacant for six months or more. This represents a reduction of 869 empty homes since the introduction of the Council's Empty Homes Strategies, demonstrating the positive impact of the Council's sustained interventions in this area.

5.0 IMPACT OF THE EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY (2022 – 2026)

- 5.1 Activities and outcomes since the introduction of the RCT Empty Homes Strategies include:
- The number of empty properties across RCT has reduced from 3,556 in April 2017 to 2,687 in April 2026. This represents a reduction of 869 empty homes.

- 1,930 interventions delivered resulting in 725 properties being brought back into use.
- Delivered the Welsh Government's Houses into Homes loan scheme, which has provided £1.85M in loans and funding to private owners. This has leveraged a total investment of £2.21 million in private housing stock, while also supporting local supply chains and sustaining employment within the local labour market.
- The Council has led the delivery of the Welsh Government Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme, securing funding to bring 263 empty homes back into use, representing an investment of £4.6M across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Led the delivery of the Welsh Government National Empty Homes Grant Scheme, which has enabled 121 empty homes to be brought back into use in RCT alone, representing a grant investment of £2.8M. This has leveraged a total investment of £3.9M in private housing stock, while also supporting local supply chains and sustaining employment within the local labour market.
- The Council has worked in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to secure £7M of Welsh Government Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme funding, enabling empty properties to be brought back into use and contributing to a reduction in the number of households in Temporary Accommodation or at risk of homelessness.
- Delivered the Homestep Plus scheme in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), supporting 24 first-time buyers to purchase a property and bring 24 empty homes back into use.
- Developing an in-house RCT Social Lettings Agency which manages and lets 54 private rented properties which were previously empty on behalf of private landlords to those that are currently in Temporary Accommodation.
- Introduced a Council Tax Premium for long term empty homes and second homes, which has contributed to a 25% reduction in long term empty homes.

5.2 Whilst good progress has been made in bringing empty homes back into use across Rhondda Cynon Taf, it is recognised that further work is required to address the scale and complexity of the issue. As such, it is important that we continue to take a robust and forward looking strategic approach, underpinned by clear, deliverable objectives that will drive continued progress and deliver meaningful, long-term impact.

6.0 THE EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY (2026 – 2031)

6.1 This RCT Empty Homes Strategy sets out how the Council will build on the success of the previous strategy and continue to take a proactive, intelligence led, and partnership driven approach over the next five years to reduce the number of empty properties, prevent homes from becoming long term vacant, and ensure that all properties contribute positively to their communities.

6.2 Through a balanced approach that combines support with appropriate enforcement, the Council will work collaboratively with property owners and key

partners to unlock the potential of empty homes, helping to alleviate housing pressures and enhance the sustainability and quality of local neighbourhoods.

6.3 In recognition of this, the proposed vision is to:

‘Bring empty homes back into use as safe, good quality housing that meets local need, supports thriving communities and makes the best use of our existing stock across Rhondda Cynon Taf.’

6.4 To achieve this vision, the Strategy is supported by four strategic objectives that will drive its delivery:

1. Strengthen partnerships with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the private sector that will support empty homes being brought back into use.

This will include:

- Working in partnership with a range of partners including Registered Social Landlords, the private and voluntary sectors to identify and deliver additional models of returning empty properties back into use.
- Continuing to deliver and scale up the RCT Social Lettings Agency to support empty property owners through the leasing process.
- Exploring multi-agency partnership opportunities with estate agents and probate solicitors to identify, assess and resolve cases of empty homes more effectively.

2. Provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty property owners to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.

This will include:

- Leading, monitoring, and evaluating the Welsh Government National Empty Homes Grant Scheme, which offers grants of up to £25,000 to prospective homeowners, alongside delivering the Welsh Government Houses into Homes loan scheme to support the reuse of empty properties and ensuring opportunities in RCT are maximised under these initiatives.
- Exploring opportunities to bring empty properties back into use within town centres through the utilisation of Welsh Government Transforming Towns funding.
- Further developing the Empty Homes dedicated website/webpage which provides a ‘one stop shop’ of information on available support and advice in one place for empty homeowners.

3. Deliver proportionate and effective enforcement powers to bring empty homes back into use.

This will include:

- Continuing to enforce the improvement of empty homes to increase the supply and choice of housing across RCT.
- Enforcing sales where the Council has secured a debt against an empty home.
- Utilising data analytics to develop and implement a risk-based prioritisation model for empty properties, enabling a more targeted and intelligence-led approach to intervention.

4. Support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes interventions for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.

This will include:

- Implementing a targeted renovation programme focusing on older vacant homes with priority given to those of strategic or community significance.
- Delivering 'Healthy Homes Action Areas' in strategically targeted areas to take action on empty homes through specific housing interventions that are bespoke to the challenges facing individual communities.
- Recruiting a HDRC Graduate officer to focus on the collection and collation of data in order to establish a Power BI dashboard and create interactive reports and dashboards targeted for specific communities.

Expected outcomes and outputs

6.5 By delivering the four objectives we will seek to achieve the following outcomes and outputs:

- Reduce the number of empty homes
- Increase the housing supply
- Maximise available funding streams
- Improve the standard of housing stock
- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Utilise trend-based data in order to target interventions
- Improve local pride with residents feeling more positive about their community

6.6 The Empty Homes Strategy will provide a clear framework to guide future activity, enabling the Council to build on the positive progress achieved in recent years and drive further improvements in performance in bringing empty homes back into use.

6.7 An annual empty homes strategy action plan will be developed and monitored by the RCT Empty Property Operational Group which will ensure that the strategic aims of the Strategy are delivered and key actions are undertaken to the specified timescales.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/ SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 An equality and diversity screening exercise has been complete (Appendix B) and identifies positive and neutral impacts, with no negative impacts upon the protected characteristics.
- 7.2 The Empty Homes Strategy outlines the Council's approach to bringing empty properties back into use, via a variety of funding offers, advice, support and guidance. The Council's services aim to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, sex, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, and/or gender reassignment, has access to affordable, safe and warm homes.
- 7.3 The impact on age and disability is positive, explicitly because of the impact that developing new affordable homes will have on future housing supply and by offering diverse housing tenure and types. How the Council plans for future housing needs will have a huge impact on a diverse group of residents of all ages. Equally, developing "homes for life" standard housing will mean that incorporating new designs into refurbished properties will enable residents to live longer in their own homes and easily adapt them as their mobility changes with time.
- 7.4 The Equality Impact Assessment will be updated following the 6-week public consultation and then presented to the Equality review panel for final approval.

8.0 CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 A 6-week public consultation is being proposed. All feedback will be considered and used to refine the final Strategy, which will then be presented to Cabinet.

9.0 WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been complete (Appendix C). The Empty Homes Strategy and its aims and objectives will have a positive effect on the Welsh language, Welsh speakers and Welsh learners, and any plans or developments that stem from the Strategy will fully comply with the Welsh Language Measures and the Welsh Language Standards.
- 9.2 The Strategy's objectives will promote initiatives through the medium of the Welsh language and we will ensure that all information is produced bilingually and is accessible in Welsh. When offering our empty homes services, we ensure that all needs are taken into account, including how the service user requests to engage with us. We will further focus on training and developing the Welsh language skills of our staff by encouraging them to take up Welsh language courses or to utilise their existing skills.

9.3 The Welsh Language Impact Assessment will be updated following the 6-week public consultation and then presented to the Welsh Language review panel for final approval.

10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

10.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report, however if the Strategy is adopted the following will apply:

- Welsh Government funding has been awarded to the Council to support a range of property loan products, including the Houses into Homes loan (landlord loan), the Home Improvement Loan (owner-occupier loan), and the Property Appreciation Loan (owner-occupier financial assistance). This comprises £1.59M in repayable funding and £1.57M in grant funding.
- Additional Welsh Government grant funding has been secured through the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme, which is currently available until September 2027, providing continued support to bring empty properties back into use.
- The Council has further strengthened its commitment by allocating £1M of capital funding to support the Empty Homes Grant Scheme in 2026–2027.

11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

11.1 The delivery of the strategy will in some cases require the utilisation of existing Housing and Planning legislation where enforcement action in relation to an empty home is required.

12.0 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

12.1 Investment in housing continues to provide a significant stimulus to the local economy by driving expenditure and supporting local supply chains. Increasing the availability of affordable homes also plays a key role in improving the prosperity and wellbeing of residents, enabling a wide range of households, who may otherwise be unable to meet their needs through the market, to access suitable housing. In doing so, it promotes greater independence and supports individuals and families to lead positive, sustainable lives.

12.2 As such, the RCT Empty Homes Strategy contributes to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 'Working with our Communities 2024 – 2030'. Within the Corporate Plan there are four well-being objectives to help improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Rhondda Cynon Taf; these are:

- People and Communities
- Work and Business
- Nature and the Environment
- Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language

- 12.3 Housing cuts across three of these strategic priorities, People and Communities, Work and business and Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language. The Strategy fulfils a basic need for shelter with good quality homes that are warm and safe and contribute significantly to improving health, wellbeing, educational attainment and the economy. Housing therefore supports many wider strategic agendas and has a key role in the creation of balanced and sustainable communities.
- 12.4 This Strategy contributes particularly to the 'people and communities' objective by delivering the priority;
'residents will have access to affordable, good quality and energy efficient homes'.
- 12.5 The Strategy also assists the Council to contribute to three of the seven wellbeing goals that 'The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:
1. A healthier Wales
 2. A prosperous Wales
 3. A Wales of cohesive communities
- 12.6 Finally, the Strategy strongly supports the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development approach and the way in which it has been developed reflects the 'five ways of working' which include:
- **Involvement:** With a wide range of internal and external stakeholders being involved in the development of the Strategy and supporting the development of a sense of local ownership.
 - **Long-term:** The Strategy provides a long-term sustainable vision for the future of housing in RCT and outlines how this will be achieved through the strategic objectives.
 - **Prevention:** The Strategy aims to help prevent homes from becoming empty and support the homelessness agenda by providing a framework via which targeted future investment can be focused and coordinated to address challenges.
 - **Integration:** The Strategy is synonymous with both corporate and national priorities specifically regarding addressing empty properties. It is important to note that the Strategy provides a framework via which achievement of corporate and national priorities can be achieved at a 'local-level'.
 - **Collaboration:** The Strategy promotes a collaborative way of working and the way in which it has been developed reflects the Council's commitment to working with public, private and third sector partners.

13.0 CONCLUSION

- 13.1 This report highlights the positive progress made by the Council and its partners to reduce the number of homes across RCT. It also sets out the Council's vision and strategic objectives for the new Empty Homes Strategy. If the proposed strategy is approved, the Council will undertake a 6-week public consultation.

Other Information: -

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee



RESTORING EMPTY HOMES PROSPEROUS LIVES

Rhondda Cynon Taf Empty Homes Strategy



DRAFT

2026-2031

Delivering the priorities of the
Council's Housing Strategy
**PROSPEROUS HOMES,
PROSPEROUS LIVES**



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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg
Mae croeso i chi gyfathrebu â ni yn y Gymraeg

This document is also available in Welsh
You are welcome to communicate with us in Welsh

FOREWORD

In Rhondda Cynon Taf, we recognise that empty homes are not just unused properties, they are missed opportunities to provide safe and secure houses for our residents. At a time when demand for affordable homes continues to grow, it is more important than ever that we make full use of the properties we already have.



Through this next phase of our Empty Homes Strategy, we are reaffirming our commitment to bringing empty properties back into use and ensuring that every home plays its part in supporting thriving, sustainable communities.

Building on a strong track record of delivery, the Council has already worked with partners to return hundreds of empty properties to occupation - helping to improve communities across RCT and increase the supply of housing.

This Strategy sets out our clear forward direction for the next 5 years, guided by strong partnership working, targeted intervention, and a growing focus on prevention. It reflects our ambition not only to tackle the challenges associated with long-term empty properties, but also to address the factors that cause homes to become empty in the first place.

Above all, this presents a continued commitment to our residents. It is about ensuring that communities are supported, that housing opportunities are maximised, and that as many properties as possible are able to provide a home.

Together, through sustained action and shared responsibility, we can ensure that more homes are brought back into use, supporting stronger communities across Rhondda Cynon Taf, both now and into the future.



Councillor Mark Norris
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rhondda Cynon Taf comprises of a mixture of urban, semi-urban and rural communities and according to the 2021 National Census, is home to 237,700 residents. It covers an area of 424 square kilometres and stretches from Bannau Brycheiniog in the North to the Southern outskirts of Cardiff.

Within this region there are large disparities between affluent communities and some of the most deprived communities in Wales. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) ranks small areas (LSOAs) in Wales from most to least deprived. The 2025 data confirms that Rhondda Cynon Taf contains a significant number of areas within the most deprived deciles nationally, demonstrating that deprivation remains both concentrated and persistent across parts of the County Borough.

The poor quality of housing in some of our communities, coupled with high levels of empty properties and derelict buildings, adds to the general sense of decline and represents a wasted resource in a time of increased housing demand. The importance of having a distinct empty homes strategy is in recognition of the increase in demand for housing, and the Strategy sets out how, over the next five years, the Council plans to reduce the number of empty properties, whilst increasing the supply of quality housing for our residents. In acknowledgement of this, the Empty Homes Strategy mirrors the vision of the Council's overarching Housing Strategy; Prosperous Homes, Prosperous Lives (2024-2030) to ensure that...

The housing market in RCT offers our residents access to good quality, affordable homes, in the right place at the right time.

This Strategy will provide a framework for all activity within RCT aimed at bringing empty homes back into use.

To achieve this, we have identified four strategic objectives...

- 1. STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS...**
with Registered Social Landlords and the private sector that will support empty homes being brought back into use.
- 2. PROVIDE...**
advice, assistance and financial support to empty property owners to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.
- 3. DELIVER...**
proportionate and effective enforcement powers to bring empty homes back into use.
- 4. SUPPORT...**
regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes interventions for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.



INTRODUCTION...

Empty homes represent a wasted resource, financial expense and in many cases, a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing for people in Wales.

Empty properties have negative effects on neighbouring properties such as damp, pests and devaluing a home, and can also impact the wider community, potentially attracting anti-social behaviour.

In Wales, demand for housing has outstripped supply for many years. This extra necessity for housing is driven by an increase in households, a growing population and changing demographics. The Welsh Government had an ambitious target of delivering an additional 20,000 new affordable homes by 2026. Whilst this target relates to new build homes, it is acknowledged that better utilisation of the existing housing stock can help ease some of the burden to delivering homes whilst also acting as a catalyst for area regeneration and community sustainability.



OUR VISION...

To bring empty homes back into use as safe, good quality housing that meets local need, supports thriving communities and makes the best use of our existing stock across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

This strategy outlines how the Council will take a proactive, intelligence-led and partnership-based approach to reduce the number of empty properties, prevent homes from becoming vacant long term and ensure that all homes contribute positively to the local area.

Through a balance of support and enforcement the Council will work with property owners and partners to unlock the potential of empty homes, helping to address housing pressures and improve communities.



BACKGROUND..

Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) is one of the largest authorities in Wales with a population of 237,700 and 103,339 homes, with the majority of housing in the private sector (either owner occupied or privately rented) at 86% (89,164 homes)*.

According to the Census 2021, there were 120,450 vacant dwellings in Wales, a vacancy rate of 7%. The total number of empty properties in RCT, as at March 2026 is 2,687, representing a rate of 2.6%, which is below the national average.

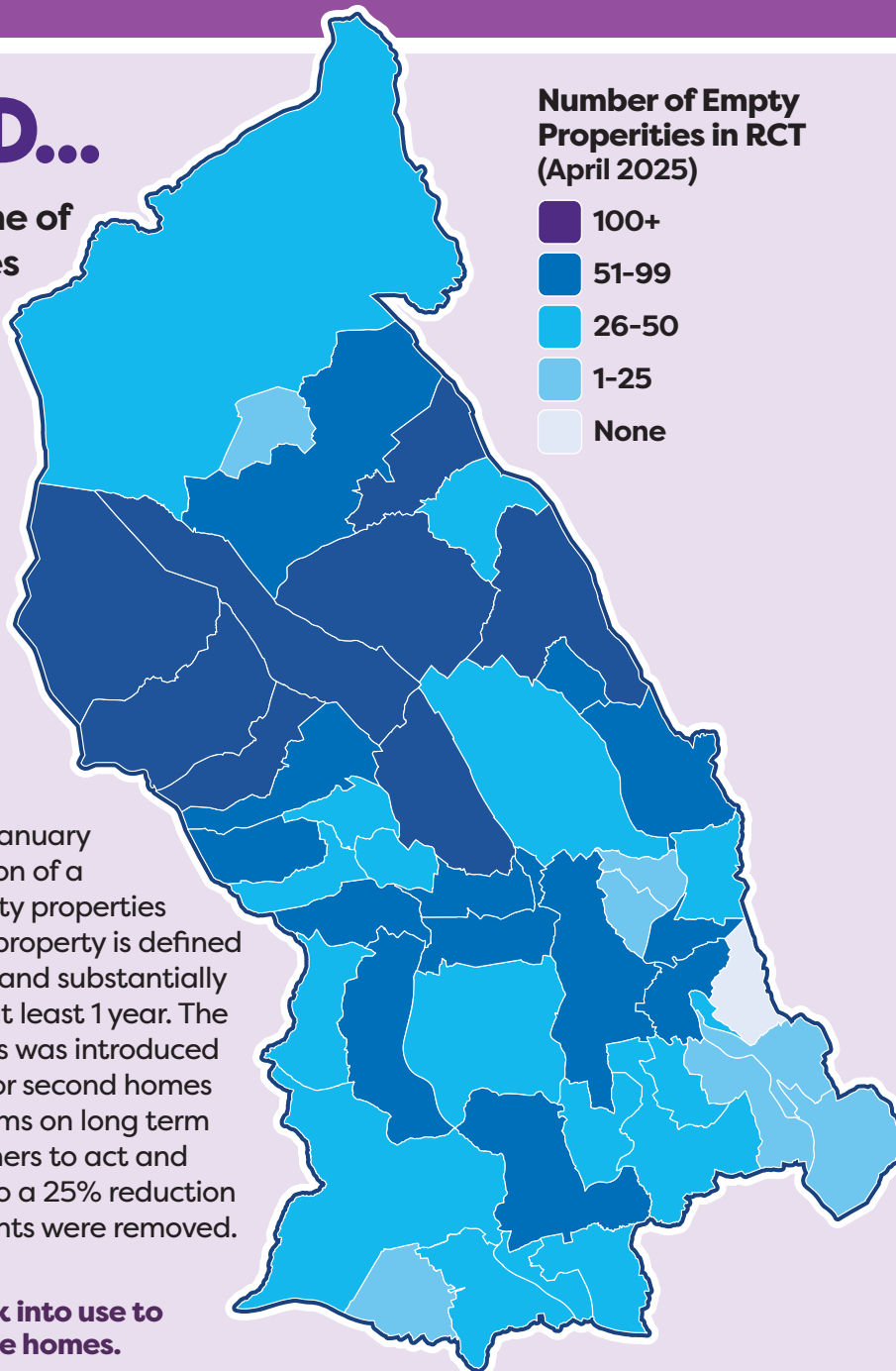
Following public consultation, on 18th January 2023 the Council agreed the introduction of a Council Tax Premium for long term empty properties and second homes. A long term empty property is defined as a dwelling which is both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of at least 1 year. The premium for long term empty properties was introduced from April 1st, 2023, and the premium for second homes from April 1st, 2024. Council tax premiums on long term empty properties have incentivised owners to act and engage with the Council, contributing to a 25% reduction in long-term vacancies since the discounts were removed. The premiums are intended to:

- **Bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes.**
- **Support the Council in increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.**

It is accepted that there will always be a number of empty properties within the housing market due to a churn in the market. However, in RCT, the distribution of empty homes is not balanced, with a concentration in the North of the borough of 74% compared to 26% in the South of the Borough as outlined in Figure 1.

There are several different reasons why homes become empty, including macroeconomic factors, demographic shifts and local housing market conditions, which can vary across the Borough. Tackling empty properties will therefore require a range of different methods depending on the location to bring them back into use to meet local housing need.

Number of Empty Properties in RCT (April 2025)



* Source: Census 2021

OUR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Activities and outcomes since the introduction of the previous RCT Empty Homes Strategy include:

- » The number of empty homes across RCT has reduced from 3,556 in April 2017 to 2,687 in April 2026. This represents a reduction of 869 empty homes.
- » 1,930 interventions delivered resulting in 725 properties being brought back into use.
- » Delivered the Welsh Government's Houses into Homes loan scheme, which has provided £1.85M in loans and funding to private owners. This has leveraged a total investment of £2.21 million in the private housing stock, while also supporting local supply chains and sustaining employment within the local labour market.
- » The Council has led the delivery of the Welsh Government Valleys Taskforce Empty Homes Grant Scheme, securing funding to bring 263 empty homes back into use, representing an investment of £4.6M across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- » Led the delivery of the Welsh Government National Empty Homes Grant Scheme, which has enabled 121 empty homes to be brought back into use, in RCT alone, representing a grant investment of £2.8M. This has leveraged a total investment of £3.9M in private housing stock, while also supporting local supply chains and sustaining employment within the local labour market.
- » The Council has worked in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to secure £7M of Welsh Government Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme funding, enabling empty properties to be brought back into use and contributing to a reduction in the number of households in Temporary Accommodation or at risk of homelessness.
- » Delivered the Homestep Plus scheme in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), supporting 24 first-time buyers to purchase a property and bringing 24 empty homes back into use.
- » Developing an in-house RCT Social Lettings Agency which manages and lets 54 private rented properties, which were previously empty, on behalf of private landlords to those that are currently in Temporary Accommodation.
- » Introduced a Council Tax Premium for long term empty homes and second homes which has contributed to a reduction of 25% in long term empty homes.

However, we recognise that there is always more to be achieved.



NATIONAL POLICY

The new Strategy supports Welsh Government's focus of bringing empty homes back into use and responds to the following legislation used to deal with empty homes:

- » Environmental Protection Act 1990, Sections 79-81
- » Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949
- » Building Act 1984, Sections 77-79
- » Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Section 29
- » Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215
- » Housing Act 2004, Part 1
- » Law of Property Act 1925, Section 103
- » Housing Act 1985, Compulsory Purchase Orders
- » Housing Act 1985, Demolition Orders
- » Housing Act 2004: Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)
- » Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

LOCAL POLICY

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Corporate Plan

Working with our Communities 2024 – 2030

This is the Council's key strategic document. It has four well-being objectives to help improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Rhondda Cynon Taf.

These are:



PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

Supporting and empowering RCT residents and communities to live safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.



WORK & BUSINESS

Helping to strengthen and grow RCT's Economy.



NATURE & THE ENVIRONMENT

A green and clean RCT that improves and protects RCT's environment and nature.



CULTURE, HERITAGE & WELSH LANGUAGE

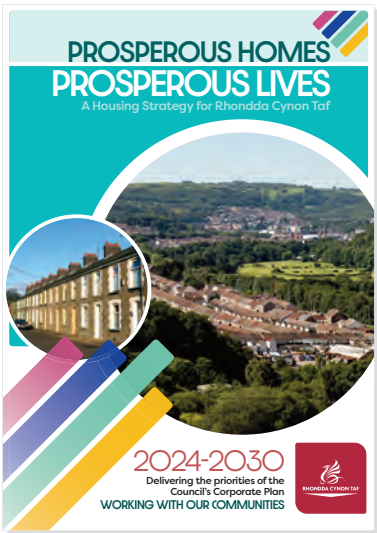
Recognising and celebrating RCT's past, present and future.



Rhondda Cynon Taf County
Borough Council Housing Strategy
**Prosperous Homes,
Prosperous Lives 2024 – 2030**

This strategy sets out how the Council will work with partners to shape and deliver safe, good quality, affordable homes and housing services.

The Strategy has established the following four key objectives:



- 1. TO ENABLE...**
a functional housing market that meets the needs of our communities.
- 2. TO PROMOTE...**
sustainable communities and create homes that are safe, warm and healthy by improving housing conditions and investing in community regeneration.
- 3. TO ENABLE...**
access to all types of suitable and affordable housing that meets the needs of residents.
- 4. TO CREATE...**
prosperous communities by ensuring residents have access to housing advice and support that meets their needs.

This Empty Homes Strategy contributes to all objectives.

➔ www.rctcbc.gov.uk/HousingStrategies

This Strategy also works alongside the following Council strategies and policy documents:

- » Local Development Plan
- » Town Centre Regeneration Strategies
- » Housing Investment Policy
- » Environmental Health/Public Health policies

THE STRATEGY

There is clear evidence that good progress has been made in bringing empty homes back into use in RCT. However, the scale of the problem persists and continues to create issues for some of our communities.

A strong strategic approach is required which has objectives that are clear, deliverable and will make a difference to the scale of empty homes that are brought back into use.

To deliver our vision, we have identified four strategic objectives. These are:

1 STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS...

with Registered Social Landlords and the private sector that will support empty homes being brought back into use.

2 PROVIDE...

advice, assistance and financial support to empty property owners to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.

3 DELIVER...

proportionate and effective enforcement powers to bring empty homes back into use.

4 SUPPORT...

regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes interventions for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Strengthen partnerships with Registered Social Landlords and the private sector that will support empty homes being brought back into use.

Partnership working, both internally across Council services and externally with key stakeholders, is fundamental to effectively tackling empty properties and bringing them back into use.

RCT's Empty Property Operational Group (EPOG) brings together a range of Council departments to take a coordinated and strategic approach to addressing empty homes. The Group facilitates the sharing of intelligence, knowledge, and best practice to identify and respond to emerging issues, and plays a central role in driving forward delivery. It is collectively accountable for overseeing and implementing the Empty Homes Action Plan, ensuring a consistent and targeted approach to intervention.





Effective collaboration with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), Welsh Government and the private sector drives the improvement and/or conversion of empty homes that increases the supply and choice of housing across RCT thus reducing the number of empty properties within the County Borough. Partnership working across Rhondda Cynon Taf has already delivered tangible outcomes, including enabling redevelopment projects and maximising the use of Welsh Government Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme funding. This programme supports the reuse of empty properties while increasing the supply of affordable housing. In addition, collaborative delivery has facilitated initiatives such as the Homestep Plus scheme, whereby a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) identifies and acquires empty homes, undertakes refurbishment, and makes them available for sale at 70% of market value. This approach not only brings vacant properties back into use, but also supports access to affordable home ownership.

It is recognised that increased awareness of the issue can help identify properties of concern to residents and also encourage the owners to come forward and seek advice and guidance. To raise awareness of the empty homes problem, a number of publicity and educational initiatives will continue to be employed, such as linking in with RCT's Landlord Forum and the Landlord Newsletter. Building positive relationships with empty property owners and offering productive advice and support is essential to bringing empty properties back into use.

HOW WILL WE DO THIS...

- Work with partners to bring empty homes back into use through the delivery of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy 2026 – 2031 and monitoring of the Empty Homes Action plan.
- Work in partnership with a range of partners including Registered Social Landlords, the private and voluntary sectors to identify and deliver additional models of returning empty properties back into use.
- Continue to work with the RCT Landlord Forum to raise awareness of available advice and assistance.
- Continue to deliver the RCT Social Lettings Agency to support empty property owners through the leasing process.
- Explore multi-agency partnership opportunities with estate agents and probate solicitors to identify, assess and resolve cases of empty homes more effectively.
- Explore the opportunity to develop and implement an RCT Transitional Capital Homes Grant to enable RSLs to purchase empty homes off the open market to be used for temporary accommodation.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty property owners to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.

Not only are long term empty homes a drain on council resources and a wasted source of housing in a time of increased housing need, but they are also a cost burden on the owners of the properties.

Figure 2 shows that keeping a dwelling empty, costs the owner an average of £12,280 per annum. This is based on a three-bed council tax band A property, which has been empty for 3 years or more and is subject to a +200% (triple Council tax total) council tax premium. The rental loss is established by determining the Local Housing Allowance, currently £113.92 per week.

A recent survey carried out by RCT Council (2025) identified that empty property owners cited financial constraints as the primary barrier to bringing empty properties back into use.

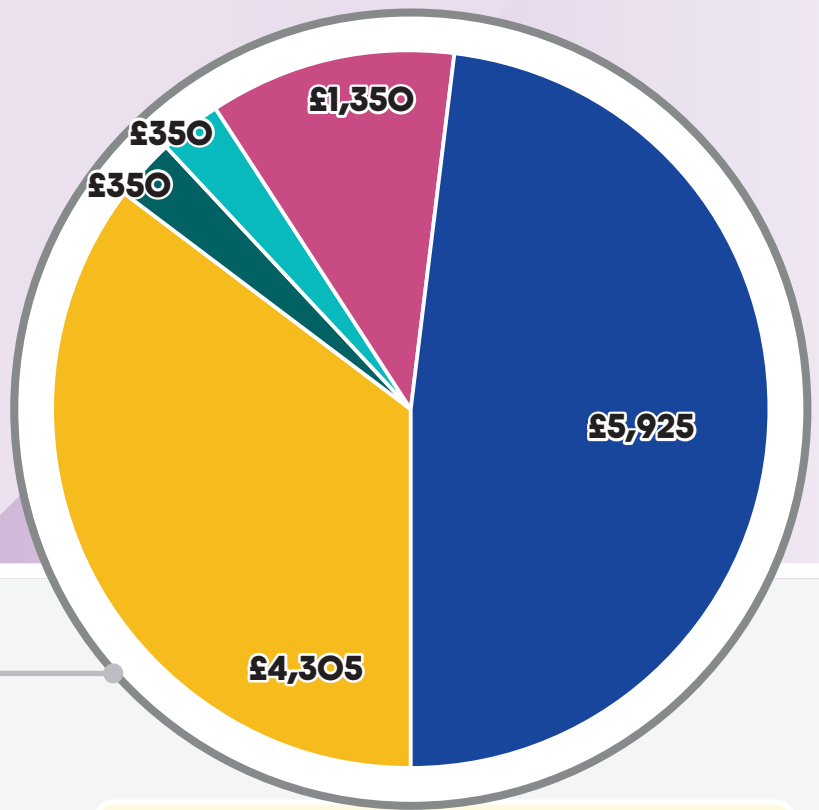
The work of the EPOG ensures that a wide range of interventions are used to support bringing empty homes back into use. Dedicated Environmental Health Officers conducting home visits and other office-based interventions, have assisted owners of long-term empty properties in the process of finding outcomes that enable their homes to be brought back into use.

The types of interventions that these officers undertake are:

- **Proactively identifying and visiting empty homes.**
- **Serving notices on owners of empty homes where they are having a detrimental effect on the locality.**
- **Undertaking works in default.**
- **Securing empty properties.**
- **Enforced sales where the Council has secured a debt against an empty home.**
- **Providing advice and information.**



**Figure 2:
Cost implications to owners
of empty properties in RCT
April 2025**



The Council will continue to make available (subject to funding) and ensure effective management of grants and loan schemes, and will provide advice and support to facilitate owners to bring their empty homes back into beneficial use.

HOW WILL WE DO THIS...

- Lead, monitor and evaluate the National Empty Homes Grant Scheme, which provides a grant of up to £25,000 to prospective homeowners.
- Deliver, monitor and evaluate the Houses into Homes loan.
- Review the Houses into Homes loan to ensure that private landlords can access the loan in order to assist the Council to discharge its homelessness duty.
- Explore opportunities for empty properties to be brought back into use in our town centres through the use of Welsh Government Transforming Towns funding.
- Revise the Empty Property pack, which provides an overview of the initiatives available to help owners bring their properties back into use.
- Further developing the Empty Homes dedicated website/webpage which provides a 'one stop shop' of information on available support and advice in one place for empty home owners.





STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Deliver proportionate and effective enforcement powers to bring empty homes back into use.

Whilst the previous strategy targeted interventions at empty properties that had been consistently vacant over a four year period, going forward, home visits and interventions will concentrate on the properties where Council tax premiums apply.

This will simplify the methodology, while still concentrating on the most problematic, long-term empty properties.

The Council will continue to encourage or enforce the improvement or conversion of empty homes to increase the supply and choice of housing across RCT. Priority will be given to those properties which have the greatest detriment to the surrounding community and/or those properties which can most effectively be returned to use in terms of contributing usefully to housing supply.

HOW WILL WE DO THIS...

- Continue to proactively identify and visit empty homes.
- Serve notices on owners of empty homes where they are having a detrimental effect on the locality.
- Enforce sales where the Council has secured a debt against an empty home.
- Continue to enforce the improvement of empty homes to increase the supply and choice of housing across RCT.
- Utilise Power BI to develop and establish a risk/priority scoring system for individual empty properties to be targeted.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes interventions for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.

The Council in its strategic housing role will undertake further research to understand why some areas are blighted by empty homes, taking into consideration both the ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ social-economic considerations. It is possible that empty homes in some communities are a symptom of other issues, rather than the problem.

Outmigration in the North amongst younger and working age residents and a reduction in an aging population has reduced the demand for specific property types. This lower market demand has resulted in a high prevalence of long-term empty stock which is in poor condition. In contrast, the South has a more diverse economy, greater employment opportunities and better transport links to Cardiff and the M4 corridor, resulting in a higher demand for housing. Empty homes here are more transitional and linked to development cycles and “natural churn in the housing market”.

There are some reasons for homes becoming empty which are evident in both the North and South of the Borough. These include owner inertia where an owner may lack the necessary knowledge or skills to refurbish or manage a property but still unwilling to sell. There may be disputes regarding inheritance, which require the outcome of a legal remedy before rent or sale can be considered. There is a high number of homes that are empty due to their dilapidated condition where the owners are unable to carry out the necessary remedial works because of a lack of funds.

The various reasons why properties become empty may require tailored, area-specific interventions and action planning. Bespoke incentives can facilitate the refurbishment and subsequent occupation of targeted empty properties, thereby underpinning broader regeneration initiatives.

Undertaking in depth research and consolidating data sources strengthens the ability to identify, track, prioritise and respond to vacancy trends, and enable proactive, targeted and evidence-based interventions.

HOW WILL WE DO THIS...

- Conduct proactive outreach and targeted owner engagement to identify problematic empty homes.
- Utilise Power BI and Microsoft analytical service to monitor empty properties and build automated data matching systems between Council Tax records, housing databases, Public Health and Land Registry and Revenue.
- Recruit a HDRC Graduate officer to focus on the collection and collation of data in order to establish a Power BI dashboard and create interactive reports and dashboards.
- Develop tailored incentives and strategic action plans to address local drivers more effectively.
- Implement a targeted renovation programme focusing on older vacant homes, with priority given to those of strategic or community significance.
- Establish bespoke incentive packages for areas with persistent vacancy to assist those property owners with greater financial hardship.
- Deliver ‘Healthy Homes Action Areas’ in strategically targeted areas to take action on empty homes through specific housing interventions that are bespoke to the challenges facing individual communities.
- Adopt an operational typology (e.g., condition, transactional, owner-choice, legal/probate) and standardise templates of responses per typology to identify the most effective mix of interventions (grants/loans, marketing, enforcement).

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Delivering on the 4 objectives, we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

1 By strengthening partnerships with RSLs and the private sector that will support empty homes to be brought back into use...

we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduce the number of empty homes in RCT.
- Increase the number of affordable homes made available by bringing empty homes back into use.
- Develop and deliver collaborative models of returning empty homes back into use through new and established partnerships.
- Increase awareness of RCT's Social Lettings Agency to support empty property owners through the leasing process.

2 By providing financial support, advice and assistance to empty property owners to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use...

we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduce the number of empty homes.
- Maximise available funding streams to continue to provide grants and loans to support empty homeowners to bring their properties back into use.
- Faster delivery in bringing empty homes back into use.
- Support the use of local contractors used to bring empty homes back into use.
- Improve the overall standard of the housing stock.
- Increase awareness of available grants and loans.



3 By delivering proportionate and effective enforcement powers to bring empty homes back into use...

we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduce the number of empty homes.
- Enforce the improvement or conversion of empty homes.
- Supplement the broader strategic aim of focused interventions on properties subjected to the council tax premiums.
- Reduce Anti-social behaviour.

4 By supporting regeneration and community wellbeing and providing targeted empty homes interventions for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes...

we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Reduce the number of empty homes.
- Increase housing supply.
- Improve trend-based data to target interventions.
- Maximise use of Power BI to transform raw data into actionable insights for making data driven strategic decisions.
- Ensure that interventions respond to the diverse housing needs of all our residents.
- Increase the demand for housing in areas where the housing market has been affected by depopulation in recent years.
- Establish interventions and strategic action plans to target empty homes depending on their locality.
- Improve local pride with residents feeling more positive about their community.



MAKING IT HAPPEN!

This Strategy will provide the impetus for delivering on the Council's priorities, contained within the Corporate Plan "Working with our communities 2024-2030". The Council will provide a strategic and operational focus across all departments with responsibility for reducing the numbers of empty properties within RCT.

The Strategy strongly supports the Welsh Government's sustainable development approach, and it has been developed to reflect the "five ways of working", which include:

1. INVOLVEMENT:

A wide range of internal and external stakeholders have been involved in the development of the Strategy, and this will provide a sense of local ownership.

2. LONG-TERM:

The Strategy has been developed to provide sustainable objectives for the future of empty property work within RCT, and outlines how this will be achieved.

3. PREVENTION:

The Strategy aims to help prevent properties from becoming empty, by engaging with owners and targeting interventions to enable them to bring properties back into use.

4. INTEGRATION:

The Strategy is synonymous with both corporate and national priorities, including the wider strategic aims associated with the delivery of affordable housing, prevention of homelessness, providing housing support and alleviating fuel poverty in our communities.

5. COLLABORATION:

The Strategy promotes a collaborative method of working and further reflects the Councils' commitment to working with our residents and both private and third sector partners.



ACTION PLAN AND MONITORING

An Empty Homes Action Plan accompanies this Strategy, with the purpose of driving forward its strategic aims, whilst also developing mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the pro-active work being undertaken.

The Action Plan echoes the strategic aims outlined above and is monitored by the Empty Property Operational Group (EPOG). The EPOG meets quarterly and provides cross team governance for all works relating to empty properties.

Monitoring reports will capture both quarterly and annual performance data and contribute to national performance indicators and delivery plans. Success will also be reflected in the positive outcomes and impact that our work has on the lives of people living in RCT.



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The [‘A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties’](#) guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Peter Lewis

Service Director: Derek James

Service Area: Housing & Regeneration

Date: 01/05/2026

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

Rhondda Cynon Taf Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

The Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 sets out the approach Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC will take to address the issues relating to empty private sector homes as defined in the executive summary of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy (attached). The strategy was developed to promote the holistic Council approach, required to tackle empty homes and to stimulate regeneration in some of our most deprived communities. The draft strategy replaces the previous Empty Homes Strategy, which ran from 2022-2025, and hopes to build further on its achievements.

The Empty Homes Strategy will assist many different types of individuals in different circumstances. These could include bereaved relatives with no knowledge or experience of the probate process or of selling or renting a home, homeowners in care and their families, individuals with disabilities, individuals with financial issues, individuals with mobility problems, or

individuals experiencing other welfare concerns that may be a barrier to accessing services. Each empty homes case is unique, and our aim is to ensure that the service we offer is inclusive to all.

The purpose of the strategy is to develop a strong strategic approach to the problem, and the overarching objectives of the strategy are as follows:

1. Strengthen partnerships with Registered Social Landlords and the private sector that will support empty homes being brought back into use
2. Provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty property owners to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use
3. Deliver proportionate and effective enforcement powers to bring empty homes back into use.
4. Support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes interventions for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.

Our vision ...

To bring empty homes back into use as safe, good quality housing that meets local need, supports thriving communities and makes the best use of our existing stock across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6850323f29fb1002010c4ece/Census_2021_General_report_for_England_and_Wales.pdf

[DataLibrary - Power BI](#)



RCT LHMA 2023 -
2028.pdf

- 1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

Tackling empty homes will require a joined-up Council approach to make the best use of our existing housing stock. As such, the draft strategy will link with several key Council documents, strategies and plans. It will similarly be affected by statutory requirements as outlined below:

- The Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Equality Act 2010
- Town & Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215
- Environmental Protection Act 1990, Sections 79-81
- Housing Act 2004
- Housing Act 1985, Section 17
- RCT Corporate Plan 2024-2030
- Cwm Taf Well-being Plan 2023-28
- RCT Local Development Plan 2022-2037
- RCT Local Housing Market Assessment 2022-2028
- RCT Local Housing Strategy; Prosperous Homes, Prosperous Lives 2024 - 2030
- RCT Affordable Warmth Strategy; Warm Homes, Prosperous Lives 2025 – 2030
- RCT Council Tax Policy
- RCT Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy
- Various Local Regeneration Strategies

It will also contribute to Welsh Government set targets for the numbers of homes brought back into use.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users X
- Employees X
- Wider community X

SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i>)	Positive	There is no indication that the Empty Homes Strategy will have a negative impact on any age specific groups in our communities. Indeed, the expected outcomes of the strategy should enhance choice, funding options and availability of more suitable housing for all age groups. Currently, (April 2026) there are 4,678 households on RCT waiting list for	Age Specific Data: RCT Between the last two census, the average (median) age of RCT increased by 1 year from 40 to 41 years of age. RCT had a slightly lower average age than Wales (41 as opposed to 42 years). The number of people aged 65 to 74 years rose by just over 4,000 (an increase of 18.3%), while the number of residents between 35

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>accommodation. Whilst the Strategy applies across all age groups, young people in particular lack access to housing and are often unable to afford to buy or rent in the private sector. Increasing supply and property types will help young people access the housing market.</p> <p>The Strategy will assist frail and/or elderly people overcome difficulties in selling empty properties and enable them to move forward.</p> <p>The development of new and newly refurbished housing will meet Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR), which ensures homes are flexible and can be adapted to meet the changing needs of occupants. This ensures that as people get older, they can remain or stay in their homes for longer.</p> <p>Equally, any homes refurbished via our various funding options will comply with</p>	<p>and 49 years fell by around 4,800 (10%).</p> <p>Examples of engagement with internal and external stakeholders includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of promotional literature such as leaflets and a comprehensive empty homes owner pack. • Presentations and displays to strategic partnership groups. • Service users via feedback and satisfaction questionnaires for Houses into homes Loan and Empty Property Grant. • Landlord Forums. • Registered Social Landlords • Housing & Homelessness Teams • Engagement with owners of empty properties

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>all relevant building control requirements and there are additional incentives for works, which enhance the energy efficiency and helps to alleviate category 1 and 2 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System. (HHSRS). This has proven to help prevent accidents in the home and in turn, decrease the number of long stay hospital admissions due to home accidents.</p> <p>The Strategy acknowledges the need for affordable housing within RCT. The Strategy will ensure new developments and empty properties brought back into use meet assessed housing need as identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment and by establishing a healthy Social Housing Grant (SHG) development programme</p> <p>The Strategy links in with the aims and objectives of RCTCBC Affordable Warmth Strategy, which aims to</p>	<p>through the proactive work being undertaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular social media posts and quarterly newsletters. <p>Groups engaged with include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Social Landlords. • Private Landlords • Homeowners • Service users • Attendance at Welsh Government Property Loans Group to contribute to the development of empty homes work and to support performance reporting. <p>All accommodation developed under funding options must be built to Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR) which sets out the minimum</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>alleviate the impact of fuel poverty within the Borough.</p> <p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>standards for new and rehabilitated general needs affordable homes. The WDQR state that 'homes should be flexible, responsive to the changing needs of the occupants, meet the changing needs of a variety of households who will occupy the building over its life and be of sufficient size". This requirement enables people to continue to occupy their own home into later life. Homes are built to meet the Lifetime Homes Standards.</p> <p>Equally, the Adult Social Care Strategy lays out the Council's priorities and vision up to 2030. In particular, it notes that the population of RCT is projected to increase by 4.1% before 2030. However, the increase of residents over 65 will increase by 13% and the over 85 age group by 25.4%. It is also estimated that 10% of people over 65, and 50%</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>of people over 85 will live with frailty.</p> <p>The strategy is overseen by the Empty Property Operational Group and is monitored for effectiveness against the outcomes achieved alongside the developed Action Plan. One of the aims of the action plan is for the development of more effective methods of capturing data to adjust our policies and procedures so that service delivery becomes more accessible and relevant to all.</p>
<p>Disability <i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Strategy reinforces strong proactive approaches to tackling empty properties. For example, if it is recognised that a property is empty due to the owner's disability or due to caring for a disabled relative, this will be noted and the Public Health Officer who provides the relevant assistance, will offer to complete funding applications and advice on access to other services.</p>	<p>RCT has amongst the highest reported incidences of substance misuse, mental illness and poor well-being in Wales. Mental health problems are the most common reason for there being priority housing needs in RCT and housing problems are frequently given as a reason for a</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>If a disabled person is to occupy an empty home that requires adaptations, the adaptations can be funded through interest free housing loans or grants. The Strategy also aims to improve the use of data sharing between Health, Housing and other support providers by building on the success of our targeted healthy homes initiatives.</p> <p>There is a shortage of lifetime homes and enabling the facilitation of more empty homes back into use could help to alleviate this shortfall. Equally, bringing empty homes back into use can contribute to meeting the needs of homeless households, by increasing the housing supply and providing the Local Authority with nomination rights where incentives, such as grant or loan assistance, has been provided. This could also reduce the need for temporary accommodation.</p> <p>The Strategy will ensure new developments and empty properties</p>	<p>person being admitted or re-admitted to inpatient mental health care (RCT HSP Strategy: p15).</p> <p>Disability Statistics/Data Attendance Allowance is payable to people over the age of 65 who are so severely disabled, physically or mentally, that they need a great deal of help with personal care or supervision. In RCT (Nov 22), 6,802 claimants of Attendance Allowance. That's 14.5% of people in RCT. Personal Independence Payments (PIP) was introduced after April 2013 and replaces disability Living Allowance for all new claimants. PIP helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term disability, ill-health or terminal ill-health. 22,068 individuals received Personal</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>brought back into use meet assessed housing need as identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment and by establishing a healthy Social Housing Grant (SHG) development programme</p> <p>The strategic objectives of the Strategy outline our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>Independence Payment (PIP), as of April 2023, which is 14.7% of the population of RCT. Of the 22,068 individuals, 9,916 were men and 12,152 were female. Those receiving PIP with mental health</p> <p>Interestingly, the percentage of people who were identified as being disabled and limited a lot in RCT decreased by 3.6 percentage points between the 2011 and 2021 census. As of the 2021 census, 12% of people identified as 'Disabled and Limited a lot', 11.8% Disabled and limited a little' and 76.2% identified as 'not disabled'. The percentage of people in good health in RCT increased by 21 percentage points at the last census.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>Support is being offered to those with a disability or whose health has deteriorated to overcome difficulties in selling or renting empty homes by offering bespoke engagement via home visits.</p> <p>Homelessness data show that in 2025–2026 there were 1532 homeless applications, 575 of which were deemed to be in Priority Need; 81 were households where a household member is vulnerable due to mental health/learning disability/learning difficulties and 72 were households where a household member is vulnerable due to a physical disability (Community Housing Services Data Summary).</p> <p>The Strategy states that there is a need for a strategic, multiagency</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>approach to create new affordable housing and support options.</p> <p>632 households on the Homefinder waiting list are people who require a partially adapted property and a further 83 require a fully adapted home. (RCT Community Housing Services Data). The barrier to accessing housing for this characteristic group is the limited availability of adapted housing within RCT's existing housing stock. The existing housing stock is largely unsuitable for people with a physical disability. What this means, is that people on the housing waiting list who require an adapted property will often have to wait some time while a new property is being built; this can take up to 2 years.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>All accommodation developed under our funding options for empty homes must be built to Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR) or comply with the standards laid out in the houses into homes loans criteria and the NEHG – these set out the minimum standards for new and rehabilitated general needs affordable homes, and the grants/loans comply with the Hazard Ratings System. The WDQR state that ‘homes should be flexible, responsive to the changing needs of the occupants, meet the changing needs of a variety of households who will occupy the building over its life and be of sufficient size’.</p> <p>In reality, this will mean that all homes new will have a shower (in addition to a bath) and are provided with adequate space on the ground floor with plumbing,</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>electrical and mechanical ventilation connections to allow for the future installation of a barrier free shower facility suitable for use by a person in a wheelchair. All flats and bungalows have a shower in addition to a bath and bungalows, ground floor flats and flats served by a lift have a bathroom designed so it is capable of adaptation for use by a person in a wheelchair.</p> <p>Equally, the Adult Social Care Strategy lays out the Council's priorities and vision up to 2030. In particular, it notes that the population of RCT is projected to increase by 4.1% before 2030. However, the increase of residents over 65 will increase by 13% and the over 85 age group by 25.4%. It is also estimated that 10% of people over 65, and 50%</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			of people over 85 will live with frailty.
<p>Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i></p>	Positive	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting our most vulnerable residents, regardless of gender or gender identity.</p> <p>There are no specific impacts on gender reassignment, but the Strategy, by returning empty homes into use, offers a greater choice of housing for those living or wishing to live in RCT. One of the intended outcomes of the strategy is that services are more responsive to the diverse needs of all residents.</p> <p>The objectives of the Strategy outline our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the</p>	<p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>The 2021 Census indicates that whilst 93.6% of respondents stated that their gender was the same as at birth, within RCT, 0.5% identified with a gender that was different to that at birth.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner or the responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics,</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
<p>Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i></p>	Positive	The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to assisting homeowners sell or rent their empty property, regardless of their marital or civil partnership status.	The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>Support can be offered to those experiencing marital or relationship breakdown in order to overcome barriers to selling property and moving forward.</p> <p>The objectives of the Strategy outline our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>During the period between 2011-2021 Census, Rhondda Cynon Taf overtook Ceridigion, Blaenau Gwent and Newport to become the Welsh local authority area with the fifth-highest percentage of adults who had never been married or in a civil partnership.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to assisting homeowners sell or rent their empty property, regardless of pregnancy or maternity.</p> <p>The objectives of the Strategy outline our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the</p>	<p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>During 2024, the ONS indicates that there were 2,080 live births within RCT.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person,</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
<p>Race (<i>ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers</i>)</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to assisting homeowners sell or rent their empty property, regardless of race. A person's</p>	<p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>race will not affect support offered or enforcement actions if required.</p> <p>Multi-agency discussions and working groups are already in place to meet the needs of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. The Strategy will continue to support the resettlement of Refugees and Asylum Seekers by continuing to deliver additional housing within the Borough.</p> <p>The Strategy will also assist in the rehousing commitments made by RCTCBC to rehouse Ukrainian refugees fleeing the conflict in their country.</p> <p>The objectives of the Strategy outline our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the</p>	<p>In 2021, 96.7% of people in Rhondda Cynon Taf identified their ethnic group within the "White" category (compared with 97.4% in 2011), while 1.5% identified their ethnic group within the "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" category (compared with 1.3% the previous decade).</p> <p>The percentage of people who identified their ethnic group within the "Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African" category decreased from 0.6% in 2011 to 0.4% in 2021.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
<p>Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties regardless of religion or belief.</p> <p>There is no specific impact identified. A person's religion or belief will not affect the support offered or any enforcement</p>	<p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes. Religion data in Rhondda Cynon Taf</p> <p>In 2021, 56.2% of Rhondda Cynon Taf residents reported</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>actions if required. However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.</p> <p>The objectives of the Strategy outline our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>having "No religion", making it the most common response in this local authority area (up from 40.8% in 2011). Because the census question about religious affiliation is voluntary and has varying response rates, caution is needed when comparing figures between different areas or between censuses.</p> <p>Across Wales, the percentage of residents who described themselves as having "No religion" increased from 32.1% to 46.5%.</p> <p>In 2021, 36.4% of people in Rhondda Cynon Taf described themselves as Christian (down from 50.5%), while 5.8% did not state their religion (down from 7.4% the decade before).</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
Sex	Positive	The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting	The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>		<p>homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties regardless of their sex.</p> <p>There is no specific impact identified. A person's sex will not affect the support offered or any enforcement actions if required. However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.</p> <p>The objectives of the Strategy outline our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing</p>	<p>research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>RCT Sex Specific Data: RCT has a population of 237,651, as of June 2023, of which 48.9% are male and 51.1% are female.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		market areas and improve community outcomes.	characteristics and to promote a positive impact. This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.
Sexual Orientation <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>	Neutral	The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties regardless of their sexual orientation. There is no specific impact identified. A person's sexual orientation will not affect the support offered or any enforcement actions if required. However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.	The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes. Source: Census 2021 In total, 2.4 million usual residents in Wales (92.4% of the population aged 16 years and over) answered the question on sexual orientation. 2.3 million people (89.4% of the population aged 16 years and over) described themselves as

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>The objectives of the Strategy outline our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>“Straight/Heterosexual”, 38,000 (1.5%), described themselves as “Gay or Lesbian”, and 32,000 (1.2%) described themselves as “Bisexual”. A further 7,000 (0.3%) chose to write in their sexual orientation.</p> <p>Overall, 77,000 usual residents in Wales (3.0% of the population aged 16 or over) identified with an LGB+ sexual orientation in 2021. This is a smaller proportion than in England (3.2%).</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive,</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>

In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?

<p>Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties inclusive of anyone from the Armed Forces Community.</p> <p>A person serving in the Armed Forces will not be negatively affected by the support offered or any enforcement actions if required. However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.</p> <p>For clarity, the Armed Forces Community should include anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved.</p> <p>Local Authorities and stakeholders need to be aware of their responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant and the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Part 2 of the Act addresses the duties on Local Authorities to provide preventative homelessness services, and other relevant frameworks for good practice.</p> <p>RCTCBC has a strong commitment to supporting the Armed Forces Community and we support the Welsh Government's</p>	<p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding</p>
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		<p>National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 of the Strategy outlines our promise to maximise the use of current funding models and identify future funding models to increase the number of properties brought back into use.</p> <p>The Strategy will contribute to meeting the needs of homeless households by increasing housing supply and providing the local authority with nomination rights where incentives, such as grant or loan assistance has been provided.</p> <p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>options become more accessible and relevant.</p> <p>Currently, people/households presenting as Homeless are asked whether they served in the armed forces. The data for 2025-2026 indicates 3.5% of homeless applicants stated they did serve in the armed forces. The main reason for homelessness for this group of people is 'prison leaver' (WHO12 Homeless Data Summary).</p> <p>The Strategy states that there is a need for a strategic, multiagency approach to create new affordable housing and support options. This will increase the options for all residents of RCT and help reduce homelessness in the Borough.</p>
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<p>Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties inclusive of anyone who is a carer.</p> <p>There is no specific impact identified. A person who is a carer will not be negatively affect by the support offered or any enforcement actions if required. However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.</p> <p>For clarity, a carer should include anyone of any age, who is providing unpaid care</p> <p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty</p>	<p>Unpaid care in RCT: In 2021, 4.5% of RCT residents (aged five years and over) reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week. This figure decreased from 7.2% in 2011. The Welsh average fell from 7.4% to 4.7% in the same period. In 2021, around 1 in 40 people (2.5%) reported providing between 20 and 49 hours of unpaid care each week, compared with 2.1% in 2011. The proportion of RCT residents (aged five and over) that provided at least 50 hours of weekly unpaid care decreased from 4.5% to 4.2%.</p> <p>The Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see</p>
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		<p>homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
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If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant, please provide an adequate explanation below:

The Empty Homes Strategy outlines the Council's approach to helping homeowners bring empty properties back into use. The Council's Services aim to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, sex, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, and/or gender reassignment, has access to good quality, affordable housing.

Therefore, the Equality Impact Assessment screening form highlights either a positive or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics groups and also the armed forces community and carers.

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes

No

Name: Peter Lewis

Position: Housing Strategy Officer

Date: 5th May 2026

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a ‘strategic nature’ is available on page 6 of the [Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty](#) Welsh Government Guidance.

SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single parents and vulnerable families • Pensioners • Looked after children • Homeless people • Students • Single adult households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living in the most deprived areas in Wales • People with low literacy and numeracy • People who have experienced the asylum system • People misusing substances • People of all ages leaving a care setting • People involved in the criminal justice system 		
<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<u>Low Income/Income Poverty</u> <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Positive	<p>The principal aim of the Empty Homes Strategy is to help homeowners bring empty properties back into use. Rhondda Cynon Taf is the second largest Local Authority in Wales, with a population of 237,700 and 103,300 dwellings. Of these dwellings, 92,197 are in the private sector (either owner occupied or privately rented)</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing</p>	<p>Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11 Making a Difference. The Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 Future Generations (Wales) Act – 2015. 2021 National Census data.</p> <p>The % of residents over 16 who were economically active within RCT rose slightly to 51.9%. 23.2% were retired and 7.6% were classed as inactive due to long term health issues.</p> <p>The Empty Homes Strategy has been developed with the aims and objectives contained within the Chartered Institute of Housing's 'Wales Housing Strategy 2025 –</p>

		<p>market areas and improve community outcomes.</p> <p>As of April 2026, there were 2,687 empty homes within RCT. This represents 2.6% of the total private housing stock</p> <p>The Strategy acknowledges the need for affordable housing within RCT. Affordable housing is categorised as housing that is provided for sale or rent at below open market prices, and where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market prices.</p> <p>The Welsh Government defines housing need as “households lacking their own housing or living in housing, which is inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their housing needs in the housing market without assistance. This is specifically the case for people in need of adapted housing.</p> <p>Whilst most of the new housing will be provided via new build developments, bringing empty homes back into use will offer a more economically viable option for many residents, whilst also contributing significantly to increasing the affordable housing supply.</p>	<p>2030’ and incorporates good practice obtained by working closely with the Welsh Government and other Local Authorities.</p> <p>Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to access the level of housing need in their area.</p> <p>The latest RCT Local Housing Market Assessment (2022-28) has indicated that there is a gross need for 1,457 new homes per annum, 1,119 of which should be affordable accommodation. Any shortfall in demand will not be met through new build alone and we have to make better use of our existing housing stock</p> <p>During this time span, the evidence also strongly suggests that affordability issues will have an even greater impact on resident’s ability to meet increases in prices, both in the rental and purchase market. This will have an obvious impact on low-income households. The LHMA estimates that 6,208 new households will be created</p>
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		<p>The Strategy will help RCTCBC respond to the growing need for affordable housing and will have a positive impact on existing communities by improving social and environmental conditions.</p>	<p>within RCT during the next 15 years, 1,951 of which will not be able to afford market-housing costs. This will place further strain on the social housing sector and further reinforce the necessity for investment in the existing housing stock.</p> <p>Equally, the Adult Social Care Strategy lays out the Councils priorities and vision up to 2030. In particular, it notes that the population of RCT is projected to increase by 4.1% before 2030. However, the increase of residents over 65 will increase by 13% and the over 85 age group by 25.4%. It is also estimated that 10% of people over 65, and 50% of people over 85 will live with frailty.</p>
<p>Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The principal aim of the Empty Homes Strategies is to help homeowners bring empty properties back into use Rhondda Cynon Taf is the second largest Local Authority in Wales, with a population of 237,700 and 103,300 dwellings. Of these dwellings,92,197 are in the private sector (either owner occupied or privately rented)</p>	<p>The latest RCT Local Housing Market Assessment (2022-28) has indicated that there is a gross need for 1,457 new homes per annum, 1,119 of which should be affordable accommodation. Any shortfall in demand will not be met through new build alone and we have to make better use of our existing housing stock</p>

		<p>As of April 2022, there were 2,686 empty homes within RCT. This represents 2.6% of the total private housing stock</p> <p>It is always frustrating to see usable houses lying empty when there are residents who do not enjoy the dignity and benefits of having a home.</p> <p>There has been an exponential increase in the growth in demand of people who need help with housing and the current cost of living crisis will only deepen this need.</p> <p>One of the underlying aims of the strategy is to continue to undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are high numbers of empty properties concentrated in deprived communities and the correlation between poor housing, health and deprivation.</p> <p>Fuel poverty and energy efficiency schemes go hand in hand with bringing properties back into use. Often the funding options available allow for an “uplift” when the property is being refurbished, which means that solar panels, internal and external insulation and new doors and windows come as a standard improvement. This can offset</p>	<p>Not only are empty homes a drain on Council’s resources and a wasted resource in a time of increasing housing need, but they are also a cost burden on the owners of the empty properties, many of whom live or reside within RCT</p> <p>The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation is the official measure of deprivation for small areas in Wales. Most wards in the North of the borough have a 70% level of households in deprivation. Penywaun has 77.4% of all households’ in deprivation, whilst Maerdy has 75.9% and Glynoch 73.9%. These contain some of the highest numbers of empty properties at a ward level, within Wales.</p> <p>The principal aim of the Empty Homes Strategies is to help homeowners bring empty properties back into use.</p> <p>To date 289 units of accommodation have been facilitated via the Houses into Homes Scheme and nearly 200 have benefitted or will benefit from</p>
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		<p>some of the living costs for households on low income and increase the amount of disposable income available.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>the Empty Homes Grant. In addition, other schemes such as Homestep Plus has also resulted in additional affordable housing, but also housing, which has often, achieved the maximum energy efficiency ratings.</p>
<p><u>Material Deprivation</u> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The principal aim of the Empty Homes Strategies is to help homeowners bring empty properties back into use Fuel poverty and energy efficiency schemes often go hand in hand with bring properties back into use. Often the funding options available allow for an “uplift” when the property is being refurbished, which means that solar panels, internal and external insulation and new doors and windows come as a standard improvement.</p> <p>The strategy will continue to build on the work delivered by the housing solutions</p>	<p>The RCT Local Housing Market Assessment indicates that the medium price for a property in RCT is £123,604. The latest Census showed that 68.3% of the population were owner occupiers (owning the property outright or with a mortgage). Further, the LHMA indicates that the basic annual income required for someone hoping to buy a new build one bed flat would be circa £36,500. The average annual income for residents in RCT is £27,794.</p>

		<p>team which includes sourcing and securing white goods and furniture for new tenancies and the heat and save team for assistance and advice around energy efficiency and bills.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 aims to provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty homeowners to increase the number of empty homes brought back into use.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the strategy will support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes initiatives for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.</p>	<p>Whilst house prices vary on location, so do market rents. The average rental for a 3-bed family home in RCT is £810 monthly and the benefit cap is set at £1,835 per month.</p> <p>In RCT economic inactivity is a significant concern, particularly amongst the young. The Census (2021) shows that 13.5% of residents aged 16-24 were classed as NEET (Not in full time education or training). This further reinforces the need for affordable housing and a continued emphasis on energy efficiency measures to help with the raising costs of utility bills and the more general cost of living squeeze.</p>
<p><u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Rhondda Cynon Taf is unique, in that the borough encompasses both semi-rural and urban communities comprising of huge disparities between affluent areas and some of the most deprived communities in Wales. Rhondda Cynon Taf has significant pockets of deprivation. The area has 26 neighbourhoods categorised within the 10% most deprived in Wales. These neighbourhoods are called Lower-layer</p>	<p>RCT's Local Housing Market Assessment (2022-28) has indicated that there is a gross need for 1,457 new homes per annum, 1,119 of which should be affordable accommodation. Any shortfall in demand will not be met through new build alone and we have to make better use of our existing housing stock</p>

	<p>Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and are populated by approximately 1,600 residents. The issues most affecting neighbourhoods in Rhondda Cynon Taf are high levels of unemployment, income deprivation, poor health, poor housing and educational attainment. The most acute deprivation is to be found in the central and northern valleys, in particular the Rhondda Fach and parts of the Cynon Valley. Such areas pose a significant challenge to the local authority. In addition to the characteristics outlined above, these areas are also subject to lower levels of economic activity, lower levels of house building and both an aging and declining population.</p> <p>The Strategy highlights the need to build on the partnership working that already exists. This includes continuing to work closely with Registered Social Landlords and Cwm Taf Health Board, especially when planning for the future housing needs of elderly, vulnerable or adults with complex needs.</p> <p>The Strategy stresses the need to undertake further research in communities that suffer from high levels of empty homes, and to apply targeted solutions that adopt a holistic approach to the problem. This would include not</p>	<p>The Council in its strategic housing role will continue to undertake further research to understand why some areas of the Borough are blighted by empty homes, taking into consideration both the micro and macroeconomic drivers. It is possible that empty homes in some of our communities are a symptom of other issues, such as economic and social deprivation, and that an area regeneration approach will need to be considered.</p>
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		<p>only improving the built environment but also improving transport links, job opportunities and delivering on other social/economic improvements.</p> <p>The strategy also links in with the identified Council's Strategic Opportunity Areas and will ensure that there are improved opportunities within these areas to bring private sector empty homes back into use.</p> <p>The strategy also links in with the Council's tackling climate change strategy and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve EPC ratings on houses benefitting from loans / grants. • Enable residents to improve heating insulation in their homes. • Installing solar panels through heat and save / eco funding. 	
<p>Socio-economic background <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Strategy highlights the need to build on the partnership working that already exists. This includes continuing to work closely with Registered Social Landlords and Cwm Taf Health Board</p> <p>The Strategy's principal aim is to bring properties back into use, thus stimulating the local communities. It will</p>	<p>The latest RCT Local Housing Market Assessment (2022-28) has indicated that there is a gross need for 1,457 new homes per annum, 1,119 of which should be affordable accommodation. Any shortfall in demand will not be met through new build alone and we</p>

		<p>build on the previous strategy, which delivered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over a 4-year period, 905 empty homes have been brought back into use.• Empty Homes Grant has provided total funding spent or committed of £1.9m• Houses into Homes Loan has spent or committed over £5.6m• The vast majority of the above capital investment has befitted local builders/tradespersons and has been spent in the building supply chains within RCT. <p>The Strategy highlights the need for a proactive approach and housing interventions in a specific area, tackling not only problems of localised high number of empty properties, but also the root causes. Below is the link to the assessment carried out at the end of the scheme and cost benefit analysis of savings to both the local authority and the wider community.</p>	<p>have to make better use of our existing housing stock</p>
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<p>Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Strategy's aims are targeted to bringing empty properties back into use. This will benefit all residents of RCT regardless of their protected characteristics or socio-economic standing.</p> <p>The Strategy aims to increase the homes that are affordable for all residents and focuses on energy efficiency measures to alleviate the worst impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. New housing developments will also be built to meet assessed housing need as identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment and by establishing a healthy Social Housing Grant (SHG) building development programme.</p>	<p>The latest RCT Local Housing Market Assessment (2022-28) has indicated that there is a gross need for 1,457 new homes per annum, 1,119 of which should be affordable accommodation. Any shortfall in demand will not be met through new build alone and we have to make better use of our existing housing stock</p>
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SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified. **Attach a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.**

N/A

- 4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.

N/A

- 4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.

The data use in this report can be found in the RCT Local Housing Market Assessment 2022/23 – 2027/28, RCT Affordable Warmth Strategy 2025 - 2030, RCT Civica APP system, Welsh government Housing Statistics.

- 4.d) Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.

To date, the draft Strategy has been developed with the Empty Property Operational Group. Wider consultation of the Strategy will be undertaken to ensure engagement with service users/staff.

- 4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?

Yes

No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

The Council will monitor, steer and review progress of the aims and objectives of the Empty Homes Strategy via the Empty Property Operational Group, which convenes on a quarterly basis. Annual progress reports are also submitted to scrutiny committee and SLT.

5b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

In addition to the above, a formal review of progress and an evaluation of the impact of the Strategy will take place every two years as a minimum but may be reviewed more frequently should it be deemed necessary.

5c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

The permanent attendees of the Empty Property Operational Group are responsible for the delivery of the Strategy, and the Chair is responsible for updates of action plan and day to day monitoring requirements for internal and external funding sources.

5d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

A key objective of the Strategy is to improve the information that is collected on outcomes across all our funding programmes, explicit to bringing empty homes back into use. Specifically, we will improve the data collection on vulnerable groups and socially or economically disadvantaged groups.

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Diversity and Inclusion team – equality@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. See our guidance document for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in equality/Socio economic considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments

Diversity and Inclusion team Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations

SECTION 7 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment, to include some of the main positive and negative impacts along with an overview of actions taken since the impact assessment to better contribute to more positive impacts. This summary must be included in the Equality Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. It is not suitable to only write 'please see full report at Appendix x' in the body of the report. The impact assessment must be published alongside the report.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and the main findings are as follows:-

In summary, the Equality Impact Assessment identifies positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts upon the protected characteristics.

- The Empty Homes Strategy outlines the Council's approach to bringing empty properties back into use, via a variety of funding offers, advice, support and guidance. The Council's services aim to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, sex, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, and/or gender reassignment, has access to affordable, safe and warm homes.
- The impact on age and disability is positive, explicitly because of the impact that developing new affordable homes will have on future housing supply and by offering diverse housing tenure and types. How the Council plans for future housing needs will have a huge impact on a diverse group of residents of all ages. Equally, developing "homes for life" standard housing will mean that incorporating new designs into refurbished properties will enable residents to live longer in their own homes and easily adapt them as their mobility changes with time.
- Accommodation will be developed and refurbished to meet the needs identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment and will be built to Welsh Development Quality Requirements which sets out minimum standards for affordable homes. Homes will be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of applicants and will be adaptable to meet physical disabilities.

SECTION 8 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer:

Name:

Position:

Date:

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
- Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name:

Position:

Date:

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.

WELSH LANGUAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

This Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIS) tool enables RCT Council to consider the principles and requirements of the [Welsh Language Standards \(No.1\) Regulations 2015](#) to ensure compliance with the [Welsh Language \(Wales\) Measure 2011](#).

Stage 1 – Information Gathering

NOTE: As you complete this tool you will be asked for **evidence to support your views**. Please see [Welsh Language Impact Assessment Guidance](#) for more information on data sources.

Proposal Name:	Rhondda Cynon Taf Empty Homes Strategy (2026-2031)
Department	Housing & Regeneration - Housing Strategy & Investment
Service Director	Derek James
Officer Completing the WLIA	Peter Lewis
Email	Peter.G.lewis@rctcbc.gov.uk
Phone	01443 281136
Brief Description	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy 2026-2031 sets out the approach Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC will take to address the issues relating to empty private sector homes as defined in the introduction of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy (attached). The strategy was developed to promote the holistic Council approach, which is needed to tackle empty homes and to rejuvenate our communities. The draft strategy replaces the previous Empty Homes Strategy, which ran from 2022-2025, and hopes to build further on its achievements.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Our vision ...</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>To bring empty homes back into use as safe, good quality housing that meets local need, supports thriving communities and makes the best use of our existing stock across Rhondda Cynon Taf.</i></p>

Date	01/05/2026
Please outline who this proposal affects? (Service Users, Employees, Wider Community)	The Strategy will affect service users, employees and the wider community.
What are the aims of the policy, and how do these relate to the Welsh Language?	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy forms a key element to the way that RCTCBC tackles the problem of empty properties within the Borough. Currently, there are 2,687 empty private sector homes within RCT and a large number of which have been empty for 3 years or more. Empty homes represent a wasted resource in a time of increased housing need and a missed opportunity to provide much needed affordable housing.</p> <p>The Strategy acknowledges the need for good quality, energy efficient, affordable housing and that new build developments alone will not meet future demand; especially for affordable housing. Affordable housing is defined as housing, which is provided for sale or rent at below open market prices and where there are mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing. RCT Local Housing Market Assessment indicates that there is a gross need for 1,457 new homes per annum, 1,119 of which should be affordable housing.</p> <p>Contained within the Empty Homes Strategy are four key strategic objectives; these aim to allow the Council to develop a strong strategic approach to the problem.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen partnerships with Registered Social Landlords and the private sector that will support empty homes being brought back into use • Provide advice, assistance and financial support to empty property owners to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use • Deliver proportionate and effective enforcement powers to bring empty homes back into use. • Support regeneration and community wellbeing by providing targeted empty homes interventions for different housing market areas and improve community outcomes.

	<p>The objectives reflect the need to proactively assist the housing market by focusing on the most problematic empty homes and offering advice, guidance and assistance to enable owners of empty properties to make the right choices. We will achieve this by drawing on best practice and identifying new funding models and opportunities. All literature, advice and guidance available for service users, staff or our partner groups is available and offered via a bilingual service in accordance with the Council's Welsh Language duties. Our newsletter, empty Homes Pack, Houses into Homes application and booklet, together with information and application forms for the Empty Property Grant, are all offered bilingually. A multi-agency approach to the problem will ensure that all services involved are working in accordance with Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Strategy supplements the Local Housing Market Assessment and the Local Development Plan in so much that it assists in the development of new affordable homes. The Local Development Plan includes planning policies and site allocations, which are used to determine planning applications. When determining planning applications, the local planning authority should take into account Technical Advice note 20: Planning and the Welsh Language.</p> <p>It is documented that second homes in Wales and the lack of affordable housing can have a negative impact on the Welsh Language and on Welsh speaking communities, especially with regards to Welsh Medium Education. Through the Welsh Language Community Housing Plan, from 2023 the Welsh Government has given Local Authorities additional powers to increase council tax on second homes and long-term empty properties, by up to 300%. Since 2024, this option has been applied and is assisting in helping local Welsh speaking residents access housing in their preferred localities.</p>
<p>Who will benefit/Could the policy affect Welsh language groups? If so, list them here.</p>	<p>The strategy aims to benefit owners of empty properties, first time buyers and other residents hoping to obtain housing. Equally, it will assist local builders and building merchants/suppliers by stimulating demand. The wider community will also benefit from the paybacks associated with bringing empty homes back into use. The various options available in RCT for grants and loans to assist homeowners bring empty properties back into use; will also aide residents who speak Welsh to access affordable housing by increasing the net housing supply. The Strategy can therefore benefit everyone because all residents could find themselves living in a street or a community that is blighted by large numbers of empty properties. The Strategy will only have a positive impact on any Welsh Language groups as the development of the Strategy and its associated working practices, will all abide by the Council's Welsh Language policy and standards, in particular in exercising the Council's policy on the distribution of grants (Standard 94). Equally, any partner organisations will be expected to operate in a manner that should reflect the high values set in Local Authorities vis a vis the Welsh Language Standards.</p>

<p>Current linguistic profile of the geographical area(s) concerned</p>	<p>Every ten years the nation sets aside one day for the Census, a count of all people and households. The Census is a key source of information about the number of people who can speak Welsh. The 2021 Census indicated a slight increase in RCT – the percentage of residents of the borough who can speak Welsh rose to 12.4% from 12.3% in 2011. This can be compared to the all-Wales data which showed of the 3,107,000 residents living in Wales, 19% (562,016) were able to speak Welsh. RCT was only one of four Local Authorities in Wales to see an increase from the previous Census and there are now 28,556 Welsh speakers in total, living in the Borough.</p> <p>The other areas to see an increase were Cardiff, the Vale of Glamorgan and Merthyr Tydfil, all neighbouring local authorities. This could demonstrate that our region is seeing some positive trends in terms of increases in Welsh speakers, and that there may also be an increase in the demand for services through the medium of Welsh. As further, more detailed data becomes available from the 2021 Census (i.e. LSOA data) we will need to consider what impact this may have on the services we currently provide.</p>
<p>Other relevant data or research</p>	<p>2021 National Census RCT Local Housing Market Assessment 2022/2028</p> <p>Ensuring positive well-being outcomes for individuals, is something which underpins the Well Being (Wales) Act 2014. The Codes of Practice under the Act require local authorities to ensure Welsh language services are built into service planning and delivery and that services are offered in Welsh, to Welsh speakers, without them having to request it as required by the 'Active Offer'. Legislation and policy in Wales require that Welsh language services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the same standard and are as easily and promptly available as English medium services • As wide-ranging and thorough • Organisations shouldn't assume English as the default languages when providing their services. Welsh speakers should not be required to ask for a service in Welsh. • Any partner organisations that will be involved in this service on the Council's behalf, will be bound by the same standards.
<p><u>Stage 2 – Impact Assessment</u></p> <p>In this section you need to consider the impact, the evidence and any action you are taking for improvement. This is to ensure that the opportunities for people who choose to live their lives and access services through the medium of Welsh are not inferior to what is afforded to</p>	

those choosing to do so in English, in accordance with the requirement of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

Please note there is a separate impact assessment for Equality and Socio-Economic duty that must also be completed for policy proposals.

Remember that effects that are positive for some groups could be detrimental to others - even among Welsh language groups. Consider the effects on different groups. For example, a proposal may be beneficial to Welsh learners, but not to Welsh speakers.

Previous Welsh Language Impact Assessments can be found on Inform by [clicking here](#).

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language</p> <p>e.g. staff, residents and visitors</p> <p>The rights of Welsh speakers and learners to use Welsh when dealing with the council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>During the pandemic we had to embrace new methods of working and new technology in order to initially sustain our service but subsequently to enhance it. This has afforded us opportunities to promote the Welsh Language as more service users access the Council's website, complete application forms, and obtain information online. All Council websites and key partners' websites have access to all services in the Welsh Language.</p>	<p>Increase in the number of service users using online tools to access services through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Both staff and service users are able to engage digitally and have their service requirements meet through this method.</p> <p>An increase in the supply of good quality, affordable housing which has been developed in accordance with</p>	<p>Review how we have embraced technology and provided services that are innovative and further enhance delivery methods and information in the Welsh Language.</p> <p>Develop digital inclusion skills across services as well as the residents we are supporting. This will be linked into Digital Communities Wales. We will also work with local libraries, community groups, schools and</p>

		<p>The Council has responded to service users' needs by using new technologies to unlock the ability to support people in new and innovative ways, therefore providing Welsh speakers and learners with the opportunity to use the Welsh Language.</p> <p>The Empty Homes Strategy aims to ensure that homeowners who have an empty property can access all our services, including funding options and further advice and guidance. This includes ensuring that Welsh speakers and learners, not only have access to, but also are given a pro-active offer to all available information in Welsh.</p> <p>Through collaborative working with our partners, we will provide a holistic, person centred support with effective officer interventions where necessary. This will promote the Welsh Language and allow us access to a larger pool of staff in order to fully utilise their Welsh language skills. Where an individual requests to have a meeting in Welsh, we would adhere to standards 26/26A by utilising</p>	<p>the Council's Local Development Plan. The LDP has been produced in accordance with TAN20 and Planning Policy Wales.</p> <p>New multi-agency approaches to the planning and commissioning of services to ensure that the Welsh Language is promoted.</p>	<p>colleges to deliver classes through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Develop training, updates and briefings to staff and providers to keep abreast of service developments, good practice, innovation and new practices via joint training sessions, Empty Property Operational Group meetings and local, regional and national forums. Some of our partners are already subject to the Welsh Language Standards, for example, Cwm Taf Health Board and 6th form colleges. Equally, because the standards are strongest within RCT, then partner organisations would have to abide by these standards whilst working with us or if in receipt of social housing grants.</p> <p>The empty homes information pack is already available in a bilingual format but going forward we will ensure that applicants have an active offer to receive the pack in Welsh.</p>
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		<p>Welsh Language resources from our internal staff resources or alternatively arranging for a translator.</p> <p>The Empty Property Operational Group, as “overseers” of the strategy, will take responsibility for ensuring compliance with Welsh Language Standards and ensuring that there is an understanding amongst all partner groups that there is a requirement to provide services in Welsh.</p> <p>Any staff training provided will undergo an assessment on whether the training should be delivered in Welsh, where there is a need to do this and resources allow.</p>		
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive,	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better
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	negative or neutral impacts?			contribute to positive impacts?
<p style="text-align: center;">Numbers and / or percentages of Welsh speakers</p> <p>e.g Welsh Medium Education / Study Opportunities. Links with the Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Strategy / RCTCBC Five Year Welsh Language Strategy</p>	Positive	<p>The Welsh Government's prime objective is to see the number of people able to enjoy speaking and using the Welsh Language, reach a million by the year 2050. RCTCBC hopes to contribute and encourage this ambition by providing the conditions to facilitate an increase in the use of the Welsh Language in line with our 5-year Welsh Language Strategy.</p> <p>This Strategy supports these goals, by ensuring, wherever possible, that Welsh speakers have access to warm, safe and affordable housing in a location that affords them the opportunities to continue to use or learn the Welsh language.</p> <p>Developing the skills of staff and service users will help to increase the numbers of Welsh speakers by ensuring training is offered in Welsh and by ensuring Welsh language, courses are promoted.</p> <p>There is also a wider issue to consider when examining issues</p>	<p>In line with the Council's Welsh Language Promotional Strategy and our Welsh Language Standards, this strategy will ensure bilingual text (Welsh first) on all Council documentation.</p> <p>Increase in the number of staff and service users accessing Welsh language courses. RCTCBC will encourage staff and partners to enable staff to have access to Welsh Language courses and we will monitor this to ensure its effectiveness.</p>	<p>RCTCBC will ensure its key partners will provide and promote information through the medium of Welsh.</p> <p>RCTCBC will review the number of new housing developments, which are near Welsh Medium schools and will work with colleagues in Education who are leading on the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Promote Welsh language courses to staff and service users; particularly promote free Welsh lessons for 16 – 25-year-olds, which will be provided by Welsh Government.</p> <p>Work with the Welsh Language team to develop briefing notes to inform staff of the Welsh Language services that they need to offer customer/clients.</p>

		of affordability and access to housing. By restoring empty homes into use and therefore increasing the access of housing to local residents, this in turn would have a positive impact in terms of retaining Welsh speakers in their communities.		
<p>Opportunities to promote the Welsh language e.g. status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work and in the community</p> <p>Actively encourage and promote the use of our services in Welsh to see an increase in demand over time</p>	Positive	<p>All promotional material to access funding options for empty homes loans and grants and all promotional material relating to the advice and assistance offered to help owners bring their properties back into use, will be bilingual. An active offer will be made to clients to use these services in Welsh and to receive Welsh language materials. One of the main themes of the Empty Homes Strategy, is the redevelopment and re-use of existing underutilised, vacant or derelict buildings, which will help to accommodate a new, diverse housing choice. Several large-scale properties within our town centres remain vacant and/or underutilised and have the potential to be redeveloped to provide a mix of amenities to help diversity the boroughs offering. A key priority, under this</p>	<p>Increase in empty homes brought back into use by encouraging and developing bilingual information and promotional material and information and advice around empty properties.</p> <p>The Empty Homes strategy ties in with The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. ▪ Well-Being Goal - A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language. Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 ▪ The Welsh Language and Placemaking. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022 2017 (RCTCBC) ▪</p>	<p>Ensuring that all material is bilingual with both Welsh and English published in line with the Welsh Language Standards.</p> <p>While the Empty Homes Strategy does not provide detail of specific projects or interventions, due to these being the subject of further development, mitigation to prevent any negative impacts will be carefully considered. Conversely, where opportunities are identified to strengthen potential positive impacts on the Welsh Language, during the development of projects/initiatives, these will also be explored fully. Examples of how this can be achieved include: Identifying spaces, either</p>

		<p>theme, is to reduce the size of current large-scale retail units to provide smaller, more affordable spaces for local businesses to let. Increasing the number of smaller, locally owned businesses can subsequently increase opportunities for increased use of the Welsh Language within our town centres and elsewhere. Locally owned businesses, in comparison to large multinational companies, are more committed to the place in which they become established. In this context, all opportunities to support the use of the Welsh Language, by existing and new businesses, will be explored fully. This ties into key priorities under The Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. ▪ Well-Being Goal - A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language. Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 ▪ The Welsh Language and Placemaking. Welsh Language Promotion Strategy 2022 2017 (RCTCBC) ▪ Theme 2 – Increasing the Use of Welsh ▪ Aims: Social Use of Welsh</p>		<p>indoor or outside, that can provide opportunities to deliver projects that ensure that the Welsh Language can thrive. Exploring opportunities for the Welsh Language to be given prominence and promoted as part of the delivery of any targeted activities.</p>
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		<p>Conversely, where opportunities are identified to strengthen potential positive impacts on the Welsh Language, during the development of projects or initiatives, these will also be explored fully. Examples of how this can be achieved include: Identifying spaces, either indoor or outside, that can provide opportunities to deliver projects that ensure that the Welsh Language can thrive. Exploring opportunities for the Welsh Language to be given prominence and promoted as part of the delivery of any targeted activities.</p>		
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Stage 2 – Impact Assessment

Will the proposed action affect any or all of the following?

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts?	Describe why it will have a positive/negative or neutral impact on the Welsh language.	What evidence do you have to support this view?	What action(s) can you take to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

<p style="text-align: center;">Compliance with the Council's Statutory Welsh Language Standards</p> <p style="text-align: center;">e.g increasing or reducing the Council's ability to deliver services through the Medium of Welsh.</p> <p>Consider the rights of Welsh speakers to use Welsh when dealing with the Council and for staff to use Welsh at Work</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Welsh language impact assessment has carefully considered the various ways in which the Empty Homes Strategy will have an impact upon the Welsh language and the opportunities to use and promote it in RCTCBC. There needs to be a clear understanding of the relevant Welsh language standards, and their relationship with housing provision, to ensure a thriving Welsh-speaking community. The development of this Strategy will increase the Council's ability to deliver services through the medium of Welsh by:</p> <p>Considering the rights of Welsh speakers to use the Welsh language when dealing with the Council and for staff members who wish to use Welsh at work. The development of bilingual services will allow staff members to utilise the Welsh language at work.</p> <p>The Council will procure services in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards, specifically Standards 76-80</p>	<p>Increase in services through the medium of Welsh will be evidenced by the increase in the digitalisation of the service, which will be accessible bilingually.</p> <p>Increase in the number of service users accessing grants and loans for empty properties in Welsh. The Strategy will be made available to the public in Welsh.</p> <p>The Council has already developed a Contract Strategy Document that includes a section on the Welsh Language Standards that officers must complete before inviting supplier to tender for a contract. Officers are required to list all the relevant standards in this section to ensure that suppliers are made aware of the Welsh language requirements of the contract.</p>	<p>Ensure that all services relevant to this Strategy are promoted bilingually with Welsh first.</p> <p>Actively promote both Council services and services offered by key partners that are available in Welsh.</p> <p>There are currently active discussions taking place around how the empty property grant will be offered in the future, taking account of the requirements of standard 94 (and 70-75) and how this may be affected. RCT are to offer the National Empty Property Grant on behalf of 22 Welsh Local Authorities.</p>
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		<p>which will allow suppliers to tender for a contract in Welsh if that is their wish. Additionally, all relevant standards will be listed in the Invitation to Tender document so that our suppliers - when acting on our behalf or providing a service on our behalf - comply with our statutory responsibilities. Standard 94 requires the Council to publish a policy on awarding grants – all grants the Council awards must consider how the proposed use will influence the Welsh language. This will ensure that any identified negative or neutral impacts are mitigated, therefore having positive outcomes for the language.</p> <p>Back-office services, such as complaints handling and, any correspondence, publicity, websites and phone services – where these are procured or provided directly by the Council will be available in Welsh in line with the Welsh Language Standards</p>		
Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably than the English language	Positive	The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 gives legal effect to the official status of the Welsh language by enabling the	Increase in services through the medium of Welsh will be evidenced by the increase in the	During the development of individual projects, engagement with appropriate Welsh language

		<p>imposition of Welsh language standards ('standards') on bodies. The Council as a public service is required to meet certain Standards in terms of the Welsh language. The standards are listed in the Council's Compliance Notice which is drawn up under Section 44 of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, 2011 which was issued to the Council on 30th September 2015. Specific projects and interventions that result from the Empty Homes Strategy, will be subject to further development and consultation and will comply with the Council's Compliance Notice – Section 44 Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. During the development of individual projects, engagement with appropriate Welsh language organisations/groups (such as Menter Iaith RCT and Dysgu Cymraeg) will be sought to ensure that projects fully maximise all opportunities to support and promote the Welsh Language. Those developing such projects will also get in touch with the council's Welsh</p>	<p>digitalisation of the service, which will be accessible bilingually.</p> <p>Increase in the number of service users accessing grants and loans for empty properties in Welsh. The Strategy will be made available to the public in Welsh.</p> <p>The Council has already developed a Contract Strategy Document that includes a section on the Welsh Language Standards that officers must complete before inviting supplier to tender for a contract. Officers are required to list all the relevant standards in this section to ensure that suppliers are made aware of the Welsh language requirements of the contract.</p>	<p>organisations/groups (such as Menter Iaith RCT and Dysgu Cymraeg) will be sought to ensure that projects fully maximise all opportunities to support and promote the Welsh Language. Those developing such projects will also get in touch with the council's Welsh Language service to assist in this process.</p>
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Language service to assist in this process.

Stage 3 - Strengthening the proposal

Having listed actions in section 2 which may mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts – please record below which ones you will imbed into the policy proposal and who will be responsible for them.

Also consider is the proposal necessary? Would it be possible to meet demand without any new developments? Could other existing provision be used? Where should the development be?

What are you going to do?	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible?
Review the services we currently provide with particular emphasis on how we have embraced technology and provided services digitally. We will further enhance best practice by ensuring that we deliver information in the Welsh language.	Ongoing – to be reviewed at completion of strategy (March 2031)	Housing Strategy Officers Housing Grants Officers Environmental Health Officers Members of Empty Property Operational Group
The Council will establish a vibrant development programme for Social Housing Grant by accessing and prioritising schemes based on their accessibility to local facilities. This will, include access to libraries, schools, and colleges (and other facilities) which provide Welsh language services.	Ongoing – to be reviewed at completion of strategy (March 2031)	Housing Strategy Officers Housing Grants Officers Environmental Health Officers Members of Empty Property Operational Group
Develop training and provide updates and briefings for staff and providers to keep abreast of any service developments, good practice, innovation and new ventures via joint training sessions, Empty Property Operational Group meetings and local, regional and national forums.	Ongoing – to be reviewed at completion of strategy (March 2031)	Housing Strategy Officers Housing Grants Officers Environmental Health Officers Members of Empty Property Operational Group

RCTCBC will ensure its key partners provide and promote information through the medium of Welsh.	Ongoing – to be reviewed at completion of strategy (March 2031)	
Ensure that all material relating to empty homes loans, grants and advice or support are bilingual with the Welsh promoted before the English.	Ongoing – to be reviewed at completion of strategy (March 2031)	Housing Strategy Officers Housing Grants Officers Environmental Health Officers Members of Empty Property Operational Group
Ensure that all services relating to empty homes, including promotional literature, newsletters, application forms and information leaflets are promoted bilingually with Welsh first Actively promote both Council services and services offered by key partners that are available in Welsh	Ongoing – to be reviewed at completion of strategy (March 2031) Ongoing – to be reviewed at completion of strategy (March 2031)	Housing Strategy Officers Housing Grants Officers Environmental Health Officers Members of Empty Property Operational Group
If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible to implement, please explain why. Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning.		
What was identified?	Why is it not possible?	
Offering all services in accordance with the Welsh language standards	Not all of the Council's partners are required to comply with the Welsh language standards; however, we will encourage our partners who aren't subject to the standards to promote the Welsh language whenever practical to do so. Acknowledge the link between housing and Welsh as a community language – perhaps this is not so pressing an issue in RCT, but it would	

	<p>be good to note that there are wider concerns regarding this that we can help address even on a small scale.</p>
<p>Offering housing that is in a location that affords people the opportunity to continue to use or learn Welsh.</p>	<p>Housing is a limited resource and there is not enough affordable housing to satisfy the needs to every applicant on our waiting lists or aspiring to buy or rent. For example, if affordable housing was not available near a Welsh language school, then the Council would have difficulty affording people the opportunity to continue to use/learn Welsh.</p>

Stage 4 – Review

For all policy proposals, whether it is a Significant Key Decision or not, you are required to forward this assessment to Welsh Language services – welshlanguageofficer@rctcbc.gov.uk and the Consultation and Engagement team – consultation@rctcbc.gov.uk in the first instance for some initial guidance and feedback.

As part of the Welsh Language, Equalities and Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment Process all proposals that fall within the definition of Significant Key Decision should present at the Officer Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your report is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Strategic Decision please forward your completed (Stage 1>6) impact assessment, policy proposal/report and consultation report to CouncilBusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk for an Officer Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. [See our guidance document](#) for more information on what a Significant Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable Welsh language considerations wherever possible. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below in collaboration with the relevant departments.

Welsh Language Services Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Welsh Language Services feedback
Officer Review Panel Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations
Consultation Comments	Date Considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consultation

Stage 5 – Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing

How and who will you monitor the impact and effectiveness of the proposal?

The adoption of the Empty Homes Strategy will be supplemented by the Action Plan. The Council will monitor, steer and review the progress of the Strategy via the Empty Property Operational Group, with particular emphasis on the action plan. The EPOG meets every quarter or when necessary. Monitoring and outcomes in line with the action plan will be a standing item at these meetings.

Whilst a formal review of the Strategy will take place every two years as a minimum, the actions identified in this impact assessment will be reviewed more frequently because many of the actions outlined are ongoing and form part of our key performance indicators.

A key commitment of the Empty Property Operational Group will be to improve the information that is collected across all strands of investment, using empty property loans and grants to support those who are looking to bring their properties back into use.

Stage 6 – Summary of Impacts for the Proposal

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment, to include some of the main positive and negative impacts along with an overview of actions taken since the impact assessment to better contribute to more positive impacts. This summary must be included in the Welsh Language Considerations section of the SLT/Cabinet report template. It is not suitable to only write 'please see full report at Appendix x' in the body of the report. The impact assessment must be published alongside the report.

A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been completed, and the main findings are as follows –

The Empty Homes Strategy and its aims and objectives will have a positive effect on the Welsh language, Welsh speakers and Welsh learners, and any plans or developments that stem from the Strategy will fully comply with the Welsh Language Measures and the Welsh Language Standards.

Our vision is....

To bring empty homes back into use as safe, good quality housing that meets local need, supports thriving communities and makes the best use of our existing stock across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

This vision is facilitated by offering grants, loans, advice and guidance and where necessary enforcement action. We aim to provide high quality support to people whether they aim to rent or sell their empty property, and we further aim to utilise all available technology, ensuring effective delivery of our service and providing person centred support.

All of the Strategy's objectives will promote the service through the medium of the Welsh language and we will ensure that all information is produced bilingually and is accessible in Welsh. When offering our empty homes services, we ensure that all needs are taken into account, including how the service user requests to engage with us. We will further focus on training and developing the Welsh language skills of our staff by encouraging them to take up Welsh language courses or to utilise their existing skills.

Stage 7 – Sign Off			
Name of Officer completing the WLIA	Peter Lewis	Service Director Name:	Derek James
Position	Housing Strategy Officer	I recommend that the proposal: (Highlight decision)	Is implemented with no amendments
			Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
			Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on the Welsh language
Signature		Service Director Signature	
Date		Date	