

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
Date:	26 June, 2017
Subject:	Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cynghorydd Llinos Medi
Head of Service:	Shan LI Williams, Head of Housing Services
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Local Members:	n/a

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s
<p>The Corporate Scurity Committee is recommended to:-</p> <p>R1.support the Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022 and recommend to the Executive for adoption.</p> <p>Reasons</p> <p>To establish a method of dealing with empty homes and make use of alloction by WG initiatives and allocations available by the Council.</p> <p>1.0 Background</p> <p>The Empty Homes Strategy is the second strategy for the Housing Services to produce. The Executive Summary provides an overview of the Strategy as well as the five strategic objectives. The Strategy was developed in consultation with our key partners who attended a workshop, with the aim of building on what was already working well, sharing new ideas and rooting any actions in terms of what is possible and realistic. Ynys Mon Housing Partnership has also been consulted on the proposed Strategy</p> <p>Overview of the Strategy</p> <p>As stated above the Executive Summary provides an overview of the strategy with emphasis placed on 5 strategic objectives:</p> <p>1. Intelligence and Targeting - to maintain and improve the accuracy of empty</p>

homes data

2. Working Together - to strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to reduce the number of long term empty properties, adopting a whole council approach to tackling empty homes.
3. Publicity- To raise awareness of empty homes issues
4. Innovative Approaches - Increasing options in the "Toolkit" to encourage empty homes owners to return them back into use
5. Enforcement - To prioritise empty homes for enforcement action and promote and strengthen the existing whole council approach to tackling empty homes.

The Strategy demonstrates what has been achieved to date and how resources will be targeted going forward.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

Not having a Strategy to deal with Empty Homes would mean a waste of resource on the Island and increase in complaints from residents

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

It ensures a Strategic approach to encourage empty homes back into use

D – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

Yes

DD – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

All initiatives relating to Empty Homes have been approved by the Council with funding provided via the approved Housing Business Plan or Welsh Government funded schemes which is administered by the Empty Homes officer

The Policy to increase Council Tax on second homes owners and owners of long term empty properties contributes to the funding stream within this Strategy and will be implemented from 2017 onwards.

E – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	
4	Human Resources (HR)	
5	Property	
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	
7	Scrutiny	
8	Local Members	
9	Any external bodies / other/s	

F – Risks and any mitigation (if relevant)		
1	Economic	Positive effect
2	Anti-poverty	Positive effect
3	Crime and Disorder	Positive effect
4	Environmental	Positive effect
5	Equalities	See appended impact assessment
6	Outcome Agreements	n/r
7	Other	n/r

FF - Appendices:
Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022 Impact Assessment

G - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):



CYNGOR SIR
YNYS MÔN
ISLE OF ANGLESEY
COUNTY COUNCIL



EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2017 - 2022



VERSION 2

MARCH 2017

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Anglesey, there are currently around 840 homes which have been empty for six months or more, with 61% empty over two years. These “long term” empty properties are the main focus of this strategy.

Over the past four years 389 empty homes have been returned to use, due in no small part to the work of the Empty Homes Service, however, the waste of good housing and blight associated with empty homes remains.

There are also around 380 applications on Isle of Anglesey County Council’s waiting list with a need for social housing, ably demonstrating the wasted resource that empty homes represent and the role they have in meeting need.

The introduction of the Houses into Homes loan scheme by the Welsh Government to support the renovation of existing empty properties or the conversion of redundant commercial buildings added a new dimension to Councils for dealing with empty properties. Continued investment in the scheme demonstrates the recognition and value placed by the Welsh Government in the role empty homes returned to use have in meeting housing need not only in the social and private rented sector but also affordable homes to buy.

In Anglesey alone 55 properties have undergone or are undergoing renovation/ conversion through the Houses into Homes loan scheme. Through conversion of redundant commercial buildings, 29 additional units of accommodation have been created in the private rented sector. These provide additional revenue to the Council through the Council Tax collected. By working with the landlords and the Housing Options Team, many of these properties have been let at affordable rents to persons who have approached the Council for social housing.

With the aid of a renovation grant, 75 first time buyers in Anglesey have been able to get their foot on the first rung of the housing market by purchasing a low cost, long term empty property in need of renovation.

Working in partnership with Registered Social Landlords, 12 long term empty properties have been purchased through social housing grant subsidy, thus increasing the availability of social housing on the Island. More recently the Council has been purchasing long term empty ex council houses in order to return them to their social housing stock.

The Council is also piloting a new scheme involving the purchase of an empty property in need of renovation. The property is to be renovated by the Council and sold as an affordable home on a shared equity basis.

When dealing with empty property owners, a voluntary way forward through negotiation and persuasion is always preferred. Advice, assistance and incentives reduce demand on the Council’s resources and the need for enforcement action at a later date. In the vast majority of cases this is sufficient, but there are occasions

when owners cannot be traced or are unwilling to enter into a voluntary dialogue. In these circumstances, the use of enforcement action needs to be considered. Though used as a last resort, Isle of Anglesey County Council has nevertheless been very successful in the use of enforcement powers, particularly enforced sale.

With effect from 1st April, 2017, Isle of Anglesey County Council will charge a Council Tax premium of 25% of the standard rate of Council Tax on long-term empty homes on the Island. In February 2017 the Council approved a Policy for the implementation of two schemes to help first time buyers, funded from these additional premiums. The schemes are i) a grant to help first time buyers purchase and renovate an empty home and ii) equity loans to help first time buyers.

This strategy provides the framework to ensure that Isle of Anglesey County Council remains at the forefront of empty homes best practise and continues to be pro-active in its approach to returning empty homes back into use, thereby maximising the benefits for the people of Anglesey.

Its five strategic objectives are:-

1. Intelligence and Targeting - to maintain and improve the accuracy of empty homes data
2. Working Together - to strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to reduce the number of long term empty properties, adopting a whole council approach to tackling empty homes.
3. Publicity- To raise awareness of empty homes issues
4. Innovative Approaches - Increasing options in the "Toolkit" to encourage empty homes owners to return them back into use
5. Enforcement - To prioritise empty homes for enforcement action and promote and strengthen the existing whole council approach to tackling empty homes.

2 INTRODUCTION

Empty homes are a wasted housing resource, when many people and families need good quality housing. Empty homes brought back into use will provide safe, secure and affordable homes for the people of Anglesey.

Even a single empty home, which has been allowed to deteriorate, can blight a whole street or community, reducing the values of surrounding properties, causing nuisance to local residents and contributing to an area's decline. A home that's lived in enhances a community. It will be looked after and its residents will contribute both economically and socially to the community.

In addition, to attracting crime and anti-social behaviours such as arson, vandalism, squatting, trespass and theft, increasing the burden on the police and fire, empty homes can pose more serious problems by attracting vermin, fly tipping and damp. These hazards often require local authority intervention, which is a costly waste of resources, tackling only the short term effects of an empty property whereas the best long term solution would be the property's return to use.

Isle of Anglesey County Council's first Empty Homes Strategy was published in 2009 and was centred on understanding the impact of empty homes on communities and reasons why homes are left empty. This second strategy will:-

- define and build on the progress already made;
- incorporate the key messages from the internal stakeholder workshop;
- set out how the Council will seek to work with owners of long-term empty properties in the future;
- focus on working together with both internal and external partners to define and deliver solutions for returning empty properties back into use;
- Inform empty home owners on the options available to them.

3 DEFINING AN EMPTY HOME

Empty homes can be divided into six categories:-

Transactional empty properties - these are properties that are empty for a short period, largely between ownership or tenancies and are part of the normal cycle of people moving houses. Although less of a priority for the Council, they would be dealt with should they be causing a hazard or a nuisance.

Long term empty properties - these are properties that have been empty for six months or more and are the main focus of this strategy, as they are likely to remain empty without intervention by the Council to bring them back into use.

A true empty home - empty homes are perceived to be located in run down areas, semi-derelict, boarded up or causing problems but in reality empty properties can be divided into problematic, non-problematic but nevertheless empty when they could house someone and thereby a wasted resource.

Unused non-residential space - these can range from a whole building which is no longer feasible for its previous use or under-utilised upper floors of buildings above commercial accommodation that may be suitable for conversion into properties.

Second homes - properties that are defined in Council Tax terms as being second homes, holiday homes and annexes to other properties are excluded but it is not always easy to differentiate between those which are unoccupied and those which fall into the latter categories.

Dwellings removed from Council Tax listing - these are properties which it isn't possible to live in, for example because they have been damaged by weather, rot or vandalism and would require major structural works to make them "wind and watertight" again.

4 EMPTY HOMES - THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

4.1 Long Term Empty Homes

According to the Dwelling Stock Estimates for Wales, produced by the Welsh Government, there were an estimated 1.4 million dwellings in Wales on 31 March 2016, was 1.4 million. On average over the last 5 years, around 26 thousand dwellings a year have been vacant for more than 6 months, representing just over 1.85% of the total housing stock.

~~According to the Chartered Institute of Housing in Wales, there are an estimated 31,644 empty homes in Wales, representing 34% of the total housing stock. 22,000 of these are considered to be unoccupied long-term, hence the issue of empty homes has been rising up the political agenda.~~

The Welsh Government, in recognition of the contribution that the re-occupation of empty homes can make to meeting housing needs, has introduced a number of measures to support local authorities, resulting in 7,560 long-term empty homes back in use. This includes the "Houses into Homes" loan scheme which saw a total of £30 million investment so far.

An evaluation¹ of the scheme undertaken by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam concluded that the scheme provided both impact and value for money, including:-

- leveraging in 83 pence of additional private sector and personal funding for every £1 of loan approved
- 144 empty properties (280 units of accommodation) returned to use by 31 March, 2015.
- £46.0 million in economic output provided directly and indirectly through the full cost of works.
- Providing rental and sales income to owners.
- Benefitted the local communities who resided within the immediate vicinity of problematic empty homes.

4.2 Key changes to Empty Homes Legislation

¹ <http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/houses-homes-final-eval-report.pdf>

From 1 April, 2017, local authorities will be able to charge a premium of up to 100% of the standard rate of Council Tax on long-term empty homes in their areas. The legislative changes were made by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The discretionary powers given to local authorities to charge a premium is intended to be a tool to help them to:-

- bring long-term empty homes back into use to provide safe, secure and affordable homes; and
- increase the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the sustainability of local communities.

5 THE CORPORATE AND LOCAL CONTEXT

Understanding Anglesey's specific empty homes situation and housing need is vital if we are to recognise the contribution returning empty homes can make towards regenerating communities and increasing housing options; two objectives identified in the Council's five-year Corporate Plan (2013 - 2017).

5.1 Housing Need, and Political/Market Forces

Additional Homes - The Housing Strategy (2014 – 2019) has identified a need for around 240 additional homes on the Island each year. Returning empty homes back into use can contribute to meeting this need, is far less controversial than building new homes and takes fewer resources.

Affordability -As house prices are increasing faster than any rises in income, mortgages are difficult to access for low income first time buyers. Since it was established in 2012, 325 people from Anglesey, interested in home ownership but unable to afford market prices, have registered their wish to be considered for assisted home ownership, on the Tai Teg register. Empty properties in need of renovation can offer a low cost home purchase option, particularly if linked with a first time buyer renovation grant.

Homeless - As the Council makes use of the new power in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to discharge its duty to accommodate those who are homeless and in priority need into a private rented tenancy, a further need for privately rented properties is created. The conversion of redundant commercial buildings and rehabilitation of empty properties can help meet this demand.

Increased Demand - With major global energy companies working towards a significant investment in Anglesey, the associated influx of workers will also place greater pressures on demand for both market and private rented sector housing. The Council must ensure it works with developers to bring empty homes back into use. Areas that are likely to be impacted can be prioritised over the period of the development

Public Service Delivery - The Council is now entering a period of unprecedented financial challenge and uncertainty in terms of the Welsh Government's proposal for change in how public services are delivered. This strategy therefore focuses not only on maintaining the momentum already created but on finding new and innovative ways to tackle the return to use of empty residential and commercial properties. To do this effectively, best use must be made of all the resources

available across the Council, funding opportunities maximised and partnership working increased.

5.2 What have we achieved so far in Anglesey?

Considerable progress has been made in implementing the delivery plan outlined in the first Empty Homes Strategy:-

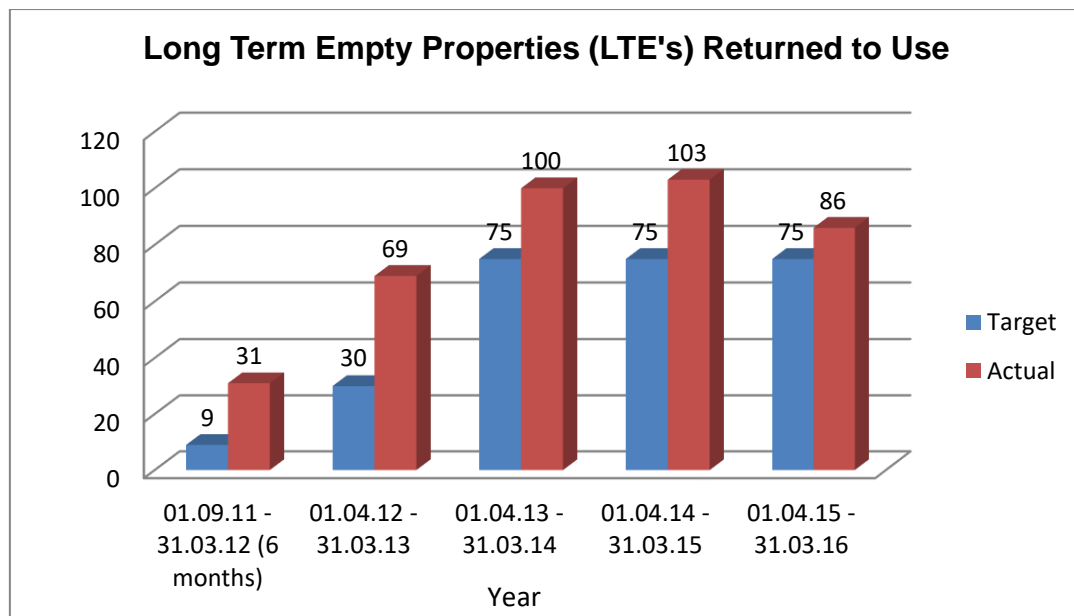
(i)	Creation of a database of empty properties
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A database of empty properties has been created and is updated annually. The best statistical source available to Isle of Anglesey County Council for information about empty homes is held on the Council Tax database. Whilst this information is as up to date as possible, exceptions do exist, and these may cause the data to be incomplete in certain circumstances.

(ii)	Number of empty properties returned to use versus annual targets set
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389 properties returned to use over the last four years

The graph below shows the number of properties returned to use. Increased numbers returned to use on in 13 - 14 and 14 – 15 is a clear indicator of the impact and benefits gained from securing funding from various different streams to finance the First Time Buyer Empty Homes Renovation Grant and the Welsh Government Houses into Homes Loan Scheme.



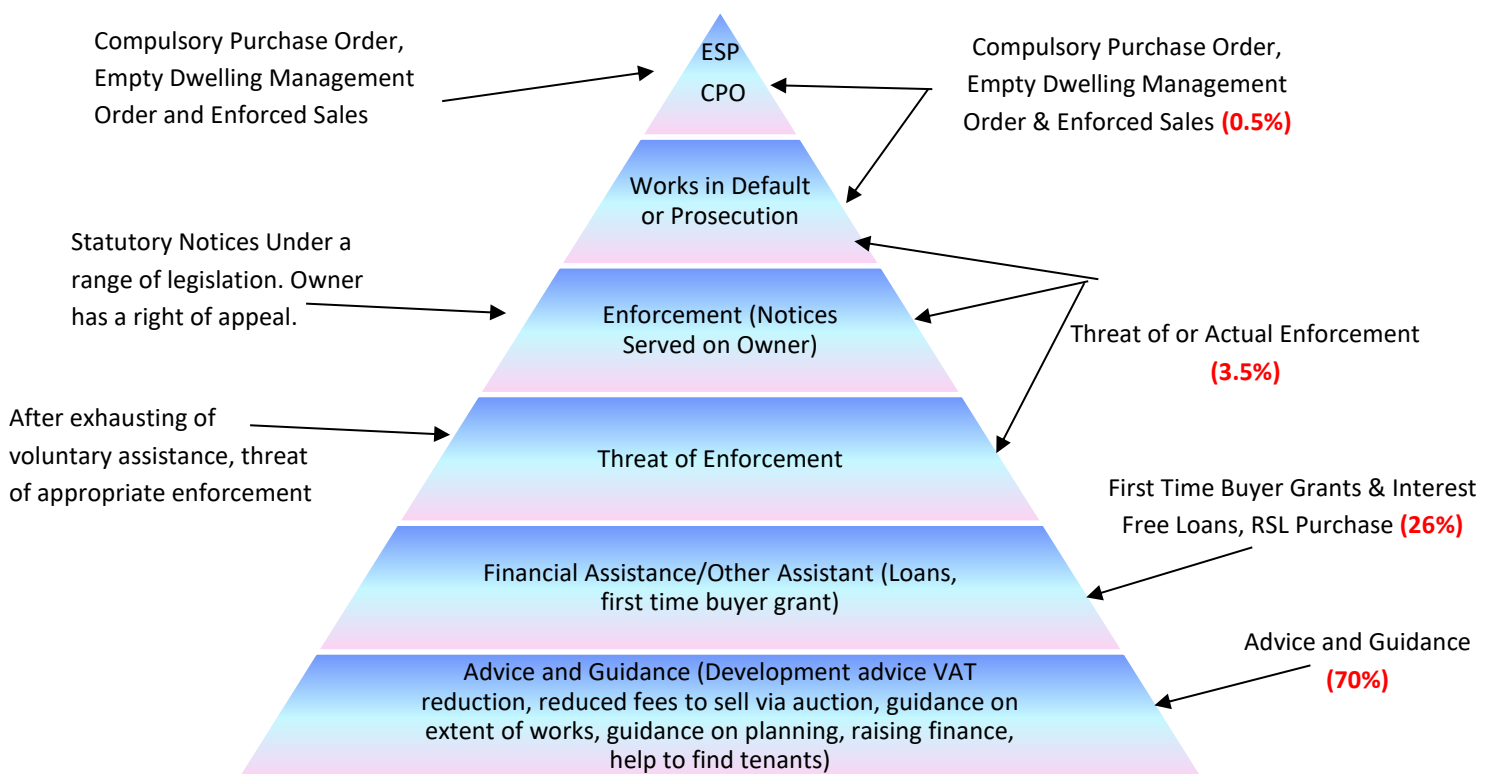
Each year the number of empty homes returned to use has exceeded the target set.

During the course of the next strategy, the Council intends to tackle the longer term empty properties which may be in need of extensive renovation or properties where there is no incentive for the owner to return them to use as they have been removed from the Council Tax system. Tackling these properties will be resource effective and may result in a lower number of properties returned to use.

(iii)	Development of an Empty Homes “Toolkit of Options”
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Behind every home, there lies a different story requiring a bespoke solution. By listening to owners, the Council has developed a “Toolkit”, enabling support and intervention to be individually tailored. The preferred course of action is to return properties to use through negotiation and agreement with an owner, avoiding the need for more time consuming and costly enforcement measures. However, where negotiation fails and an approach is refused or frustrated, the Council may, as a last resort, adopt enforcement action.

The success of this approach is evident in the chart below, which demonstrates the percentage of empty properties returned to use through different approaches.



(iv)	Dissemination of Information – Advice and Guidance
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The Council has a page dedicated to empty homes initiatives on its website. In addition all owners of empty properties on the Island have been offered written guidance, help advice and information to bring their homes back into use, having

been contacted at least annually. Further information is available on the Council website by following the link below:-

<http://www.anglesey.gov.uk/searchresults?qsearch=1&qkeyword=empty+homes>

(v)	Financial Assistance and Incentive Schemes
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The Council has a number of schemes offering financial support to owners of empty properties to return them to use.

- 58 first time buyers purchased an affordable property, supported by a First Time Buyer Empty Homes Renovation Grant funded by the Council and the Mon & Menai Partnership Fund.
- 17 first time buyers purchased an affordable property, supported by a First Time Buyer Empty Homes Renovation Grant funded through the Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Scheme. An evaluation of the scheme noted that each £1 of grant spent levered in private sector investment of £4.31.
- 55 properties to be returned to use/created through the Houses into Homes loan scheme.
- 12 empty homes purchased by a Housing Association using Social Housing Grant Subsidy
- 1 problematic, long term empty property purchased, renovated and sold on as affordable housing on a shared equity basis as part of the Compulsory Purchase Order/Purchase by Agreement Pilot. The proceeds of sale to be re-invested into the scheme.

(vi)	Enforcement
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Viewed as a last resort and used only where negotiations have failed or there is no other real prospect of an empty property being returned to use. An Enforced Sales Policy is in place and two properties have been sold in order to recover debts owed to the Council for works undertaken in default. One of these properties is under renovation, the other is occupied.

(vii)	Empty Homes Surgery
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Statutory powers and intelligence surrounding empty properties are shared across services. An Empty Homes Surgery has been set up in order to establish a coordinated approach across all services within the Council. This makes more effective use of limited resources both financially and in terms of manpower, focussing on a long term solution rather than reacting to specific complaints.

This approach was recognised as an example of Good Practice by Chartered Institute of Housing Wales and has been adopted by other Councils

(viii)	Property Matching Service
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The aim of the property matching service is to put owners of empty properties wishing to sell in touch with prospective buyers.

(x)	Cross Boundary Working
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The Council is represented by the Empty Homes Officer at Regional and National Empty Homes events and workgroups.

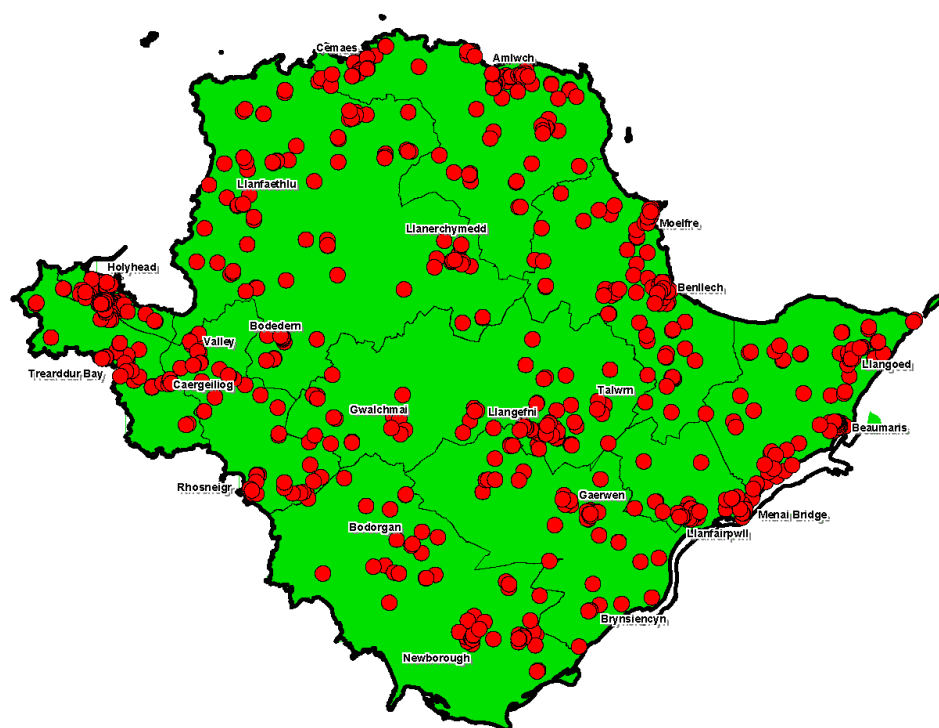
5.3 The Current Empty Homes Picture in Anglesey

On the 1st April, 2016, 842 properties were recorded on the empty homes database. These are properties that have remained empty for six months or more according to Council Tax records – the true number is likely to be significantly higher as many will not have been reported as empty.

Distribution of Empty Homes by Post-code

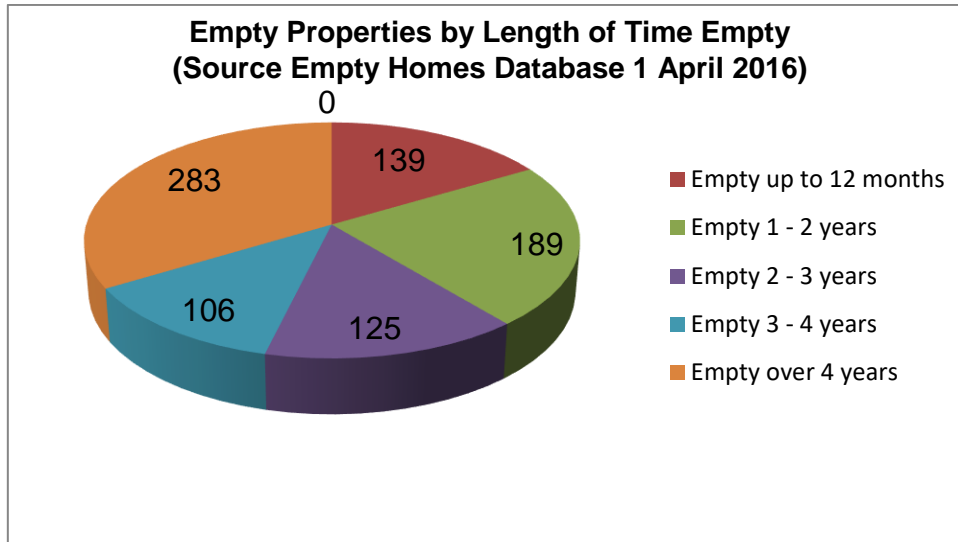
When plotted on a map, it is evident that empty homes are widely dispersed across the Island. Even one empty home returned to use in a community significantly helps meet the need for housing within that community, enabling people to remain in their locality, close to their family network and supporting the preservation and sustainability of the Welsh language. (Source: empty homes database 1.4.16).

Distribution of Empty Homes by Post-code



The significance of early intervention

Evidence suggests that the longer a property is empty, the more difficult it is to engage with the owner. In view of this, significant work has been undertaken to tackle properties empty up to two years and over five years. Despite this, the chart below demonstrates that 514 (or 61%) of long term empty properties on the Island have been empty for more than 2 years, with 283 recorded as being empty over 4 years.



Bespoke Solutions - Whilst some may consider Anglesey to be fortunate in that it does not have streets of derelict and boarded-up empty properties as can be found in other areas, tackling single properties widely dispersed throughout urban, semi-rural and rural locations can be just as challenging. Tailoring support for such properties requires an individual approach, involving persuasion and negotiation, as they fall outside large scale regeneration projects and their associated funding streams.

Remote locations - Empty properties located in very rural areas often lack basic facilities such as water or electric and are so remote that they are not noticeable and do not create a problem. These properties would currently only be dealt with should they become a source of complaint.

Flats above shops - Anglesey has a number of non-residential spaces above shops which are either used as storage (and may therefore be considered to be in use) or may have previously been used as living accommodation. Some are in disrepair but renovation or conversion becomes unattractive to owners because of the high cost involved. Regeneration of town centres is about a lot more than filling empty shops. It is about creating a vibrant town centre. By ensuring that any future funding bids across the Council include for bringing flats over shops back into use, we can bring added value to a scheme, increasing both housing supply and town centre footfall.

Commercial Conversions – Due to economic downturn, Anglesey has its fair share of redundant commercial buildings. These sites are candidates for re-development but such projects are resource intensive and require the input of both internal and external partners if such properties/sites are to be unlocked and viable alternative uses and funding streams identified and realised.

Requiring Modernisation - Some properties across the Island have benefitted from a combination of enveloping and group repair schemes. Visually many of these

properties appear tidy but this often masks the need for internal modernisation. The sale of such properties may stall or fail at the survey stage, when the cost of remedial works becomes a barrier to accessing a mortgage.

Problematic and Removed from Council Tax - A proportion of the most problematic empty properties on the Island have been removed from the Council Tax list. In these instances, the absence of a Council Tax charge becomes a disincentive for owners to take positive action and because of their poor condition, they are the most likely source of complaint to the Council. Intervention can be resource intensive and requires a multi-departmental approach, but where successful, can provide additional Council Tax revenue not only to the County Council but also to the Police and Community /Town Councils, as demonstrated in the chart below.

Number of properties returned to use when the Council has taken enforcement action	*Additional Council Tax Revenue
4	£5,362

*Based on an average Council Tax for a Band D Property of £1340.57 in 2016/17, of which £1061.46 is levied by the Council/ £240.12 set by the Police and Crime Commissioner North Wales and £38.99 average precept set by Community/Town Councils.

Council Tax Premium on Empty Properties - With effect from 1st April, 2017, Isle of Anglesey County Council will charge a Council Tax premium of 25% of the standard rate of Council Tax on long-term empty homes on the Island. This will apply to all long-term empty properties which have been empty for a continuous period since the 1st April, 2016. However, there will be a number of exception classes, which apply specifically to long term empty properties. Where an empty home falls into one of these classes, the Council will not be able to charge a Council Tax premium. A list of Exceptions is available in Appendix 1. As this does not come into force until 1st April 2017, it will be some years before the Council can assess the impact such an increase will have in reducing the number of empty properties.

The Council has been encouraged to invest a proportion of the additional revenue in schemes to support a reduction in the number of empty properties on the Island and to meet the affordable housing needs of its residents. In February 2017 the Council approved a Policy for the implementation of two schemes to help first time buyers. Both schemes will be funded from the Council Tax premium which will be raised on second and empty homes from April 2017. The schemes are:

- 1) Grant to help first time buyers purchase and renovate an empty home
- 2) Equity loans to help first time buyers

5.4 The reasons why homes remain empty in Anglesey

Some properties are empty due to the normal processes of buying, selling and letting properties. These are known as transactional empties and would only be targeted if they were causing a problem.

Other common reasons include:-

- **Death of the occupant**
- **Occupant moving to hospital or institution**
- **Eviction or repossession**
- **Need for repair and refurbishment** beyond budget of owner
- **Fears about renting the property** - the owner may have had a former bad experience though letting and not wish to risk repeating this. Others have unfounded perceptions of problems with renting. Owners lack the knowledge and have concerns about responsibilities of being a landlord.
- **Selling the property** - these properties can be in good condition but owners have been trying but have been unable to sell for various reasons. Other reasons include waiting for better market conditions or concerns about the tax implications.
- **Inherited properties** - the owner may lack the knowledge or the inclination to do anything with inherited properties. Some keep them in case their children choose to occupy them in future.
- **Their property/their business** - owners choose not to engage with the Council as they believe that as the property is privately owned, the Council do not have the right to require action to return it to use. They may be unaware or have no concern for the effect the property is having on the local area and surrounding properties. These are usually the properties which are likely to be left empty for many years and fall into disrepair. As they are deliberately kept empty by the owner, they are viewed as “intentional empties”.
- **Speculative purchases** - Properties bought as an investment by buyers who have no inclination to do anything with them.
- **Legal issues** - for example delays and/or disputes in the administration of the estate when an owner has died can lead to probate not being sought or granted. Ownership may be in dispute or there are multiple owners and thereby agreement on what to do with the property cannot be reached. In certain instances, debts are already owed to the Council, e.g. care home fees or the cost of works in default previously undertaken if a property has already been a source of complaint.
- **Absent/untraceable owners** - it may not be immediately evident who the owner of a property is or where they are, as they may have moved away with little information available to trace them. Whilst the Land Registry holds ownership details of all registered properties, a significant number of properties on the Island have not changed ownership since registration became compulsory and therefore information on their ownership is not readily available. Where information regarding the property is not available from this source, identifying the owner becomes difficult.

6 THE EMPTY HOMES TOOLKIT

Isle of Anglesey County Council will always seek to work with owners of empty properties in the first instance, offering advice, assistance and options designed to help empty property owners as outlined in the toolkit below. The Council expects owners of empty properties to fully engage with the process of returning them back to use and to co-operate with the Council.

If this advice and assistance is consistently refused, the Council may have no option but to take enforcement action to resolve the problems associated with the property and to ensure its return to use. Adding to the toolkit is an on-going feature which will remain a priority throughout the terms of the new strategy. By making owners aware of the tools which the Council has at its disposal, this Strategy is achieving its fourth objective that of encouraging empty home owners to return their properties back into use.

6.1 Advice

The Council will do its utmost to resolve an empty homes issue by co-operation, finding a mutually beneficial solution which allows the owner to keep hold of the property.

In addition to offering bespoke advice to owners of long term empty properties the Council offers a number of schemes aimed at helping to incentivise owners of empty properties to make the most of their unused resource.

Advice and information	
To empty property owners and members of the public	
Help owners to sell property	Help owners to rent property
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on: selling privately, estate agents or auction. • Property matching service – matching empty property sellers with prospecting empty property buyers. • Advertise low cost empty properties for sale on the “Tai Teg” Affordable Housing Website” and when opportunities exist offering financial support towards the cost of renovation, thereby linking people in need of affordable housing with opportunities to purchase. • Identifying and referring suitable properties for purchase as social rented housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral of rental properties to Housing Solutions to help find a tenant. • Providing information on becoming a landlord, private lettings agents and acceptable housing standards. • Advice regarding obligation to register with Rent Smart Wales.
Financial Incentives (Discretionary)	Help owners wishing to renovate

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest free loans available to landlords/owners of empty properties in need of renovation who intend either to let them or sell them on. • Home improvement loans available to owners of empty properties in need of renovation to owner occupy. • First time buyer empty homes renovation grant available to first time buyers purchasing an empty property requiring renovation to owner occupy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information on the services of Planning and Building Control Services. • Provide project management options and signposting to available good practise guides and websites. • Provide information on the reduced VAT scheme available to owners renovating a property empty over two years.
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6.2 Financial Incentives and Assistance

The Council offers a number of discretionary financial support schemes to support owners of empty properties to return them to use.

<p>Houses into Homes Loan to let</p>	<p>Available to landlords/owners of empty properties requiring renovation to let.</p> <p>Loan of up to £25,000 per unit of accommodation returned to use up to a maximum of £150,000.</p> <p>Interest free, repayable at the end of 3 years.</p> <p>Secured against the property, loan to value, including mortgage cannot exceed 80% of property's current value. Property must meet Decent Homes Standard</p>
<p>Houses into homes loan to sell</p>	<p>Available to landlords/owners of empty properties requiring renovation prior to selling.</p> <p>Loan of up to £25,000 per unit of accommodation returned to use up to a maximum of £150,000.</p> <p>Interest free, repayable at the end of 2 years.</p> <p>Secured against the property, loan to value, including mortgage cannot exceed 80% of property's current value. Property must meet Decent Homes Standard.</p>
<p>Home Improvement Loan</p>	<p>An interest free loan of up to £25,000 available to owners of empty properties which require renovation prior to owner occupation.</p> <p>Administration fee of 15% of total loan can be added to the loan itself.</p>

	Secured against the property, loan to value, including mortgage cannot exceed 70% of property's current value. Property must be made "Warm, Safe and Secure".
First time buyer empty homes renovation grant (Restricted to Holyhead area funded via Vibrant and Viable Places Project)	A grant of up to £20,000 available to first time buyers purchasing an empty property requiring renovation to owner occupy. Property must have been empty for six months or more prior to purchase and applicants are subject to an affordability assessment Grant is secured against the property as a local land charge for a set period of time from completion of works.

Added Value - Financial investment in the above scheme not only benefits the owners and improves the amenity of an area but also:-

- The local economy – work is undertaken by local contractors therefore the money is invested in the local workforce and business supply chain.
- Homes are let to local people who can remain in their community.
- Increased footfall in town centres and villages supporting retail sustainability.
- The 27 additional units brought into use through conversion of redundant buildings or renovation of existing properties, provides additional revenue for the Council at a time when budgets are reducing.

Additional Units	Approximate additional Council Tax revenue per annum based on a band D property
27	£36,195

6.3 Enforcement

Where negotiations have failed and owners of a long term empty property refuse the assistance of the Council or fail to return their property back into use within a reasonable timescale, firmer measures may be pursued which would require the owner to engage or risk losing their property. When such action is required, the Council undertakes to adhere to its enforcement principles, which provide for fair and consistent enforcement.

The enforcement tools available to the Council are: Enforced Sales Procedure, Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) and Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Enforcement action can be halted at any time should the owner wish to engage with the Council to return their property back into use. There is a raft of legislation available to the Council to tackle problems associated with an empty property and the diagram below sets out some of the legislation available to the Council to use in order to help tackle long-term empty properties. (Appendix 2 provides further information on available legislation)

Enforcement Action	Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s215 – an adverse effect on the amenity of the area (appearance of property)	Planning Enforcement
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	Building Act 1984 S77,78,79 – dangerous structures	Building Control
Improving condition of property	Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 – pests Environmental Protection Act S.80 – refuse Housing Act 2004 – housing disrepair or dilapidation Environmental Protection Act 1990 s.80 – nuisance Public Health Act s.79 – removal of noxious materials Local Government (MP) Act 1982 s.29 – secure property Building Act 1984 S78 Ruinous and Dilapidated	Environmental Health

Works in default – securing the debt as local land charge under the above legal notices (excluding LG1979 s.29)

Enforced Sale

Where an unpaid debt to the council has been secured by a local land charge on a long term empty property (possibly through enforcement action outlined above) the Council can force the sale of the property to a third party.

Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)

The property must be in an area of housing need with no prospect of becoming occupied under the current owner. Council would facilitate works needed to allow the property to be used to accommodate people in housing need and resources would be required to meet the cost of updating the property to lettable standards.

Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Where the property is long term empty, in poor condition (and in an area of housing need), the ultimate sanction for those owners who fail to bring their property back into use, the threat and use of compulsory powers will be considered. Used only as the last resort.

(i) Enforced sale

The enforced sale procedure can be used when the owner of an empty property has outstanding debts with the Council. Where the Council undertakes “works in default” to ensure that an empty property is made safe or does not impact negatively on the locality, the costs incurred will be charged against the owner. Should the owner not pay these debts, the Council will sell the property in order to recover the costs.

An enforced sale can also be used to recover Council Tax arrears. This process can be halted at any point if the owner decides to engage and pay off their debts with the Council. Appendix 2 provides a list of legislation which allows the Council to carry out works in default.

Case Study



History: Property empty since 2002 and a source of repeated complaints to the Council including overgrown gardens, sightings of rodents and break-in. Attempts to trace the owner proved inconclusive. The Council served a notice under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1943 to clear the overgrowth. The work was subsequently undertaken in default by the Council and the property was sold via the enforced sale process to recover costs. New owner benefitted from a “Houses into Homes” loan and benefitted from paying reduced VAT on renovation costs prior to selling the property.

Community benefits: Neighbours were satisfied that action had been taken by the Council and the amenity of the area improved. Renovation work undertaken by a local Company providing work for local tradesmen.

Benefits to the Council: The benefits to the council were the resolution of the problems associated with the empty property, its ability to recover costs, the collection of Council Tax for the first time since 2002 and no further need to spend resources dealing with further complaints.

(ii) Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO)

An EDMO involves the Council taking over the management of an empty property. The Council can take action against an empty property which has been unoccupied for over six months, bringing it up to the Decent Homes Standard before letting it at an affordable rate. Any costs incurred in renovation and management of the property are recovered from the property rental. A full EDMO may be granted for seven years, after which time responsibility can be handed back to the owner.

Whilst this is a course of action which has not yet been taken by the Council, it is an option which could be exercised during the course of the next Strategy subject to start-up funding being identified.

(iii) Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

A CPO is the firmest measure available to the Council. It involves the Council acquiring an empty property but, unlike with the enforced sale, its use does not require debts to be initially owed to the Council by the Owner.

One advantage of compulsory purchase is that it offers the Council more flexibility in determining the future use of the property e.g. the option of returning the property to the social rented rather than the private rented sector.

As an alternative to a CPO, the Council would as a first step, try to acquire the property by agreement with the owner, without the need for a more formal CPO.

6.4 Prioritisation for Enforcement

Long-term empty properties whose owners prove uncooperative or are absent, will be prioritised for enforcement action.

To ensure a consistent and fair approach a prioritisation matrix will be developed as a tool for determining which problematic empty properties to target and prioritise for action when taking into account the limited resources available.

6.5 Resources for Enforcement

Although enforcement action is seen as a last resort, Isle of Anglesey County Council acknowledges that in some cases, enforcement action will be the only option available where owners fail to work with the Council.

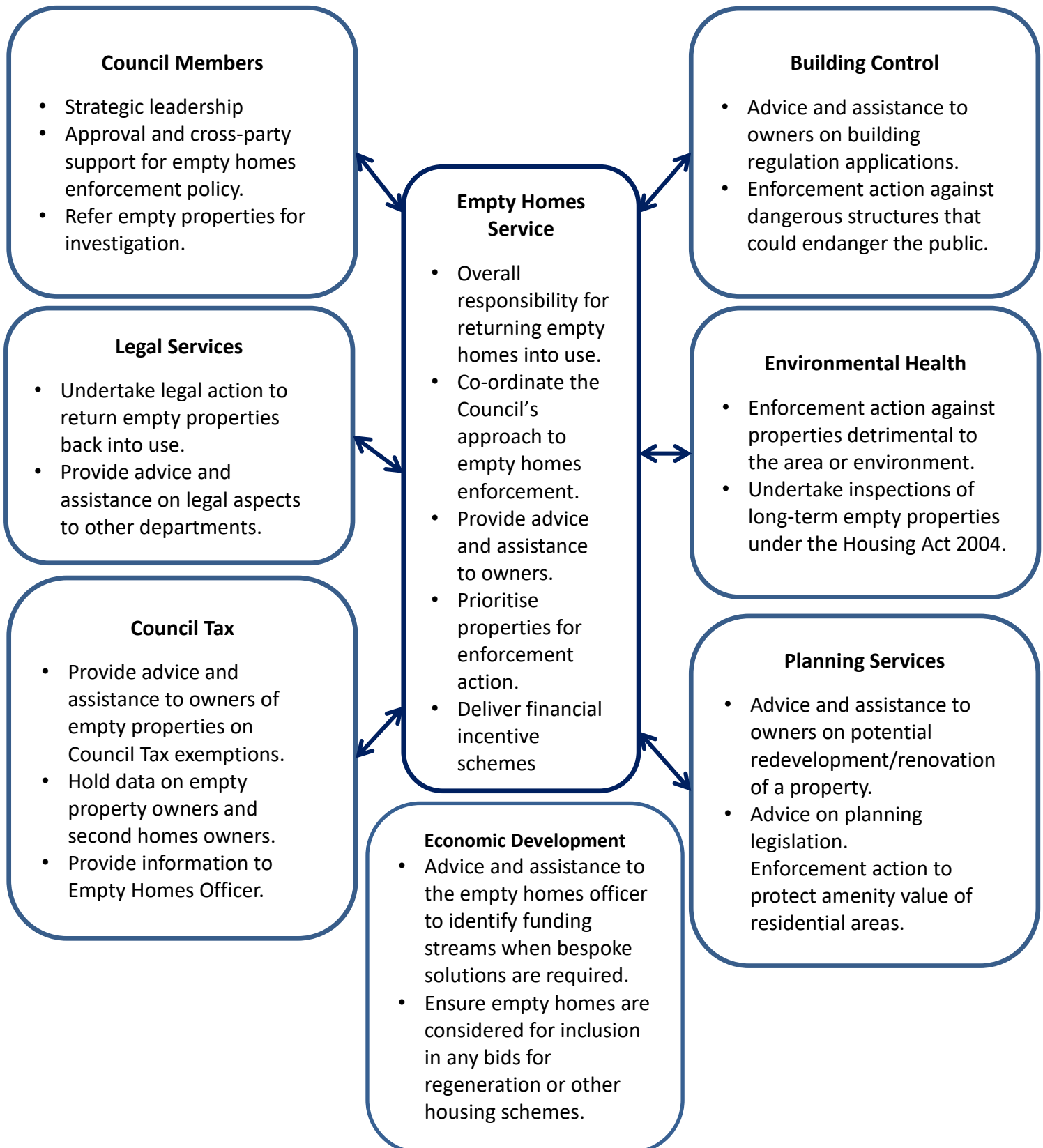
Where enforcement action is taken and the owner fails to comply with the requirements of a Notice, funding is available to the Council to undertake the works in default through the Houses into Homes Loan Scheme and the debt may be recovered through the enforced sale process.

The decision to charge a Council Tax premium on properties which have been empty for more than one year, may present an opportunity for further investment to support the return of empty homes into use, for example by providing funding for EDMO's or to develop a type of renovation/rental model which could increase the availability of rental properties.

7. WORKING TOGETHER

A great deal of officer time is spent on reacting to complaints and incidents at individual empty homes. Without a coherent approach, officers from different services may duplicate or even undermine efforts.

This strategy will include an action to work together across services as outlined below.



8. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES MOVING FORWARD

8.1

AIM

Working Together - To reduce the number of long term empty properties in Anglesey

Despite the proposals for change in how public services are delivered, the Council must be ambitious in its approach to finding new and innovative ways to tackle the problem of empty properties and this is reflected in its five objectives.

8.2 Strategic Objectives

OBJECTIVE 1

Improved Intelligence - To maintain and improve the accuracy of empty homes data

The basis of intelligence about empty homes is largely from the Council Tax exemptions list. There are limitations about how this data is used as the information changes on a daily basis and can quickly become out of date as it relies on home-owners updating the Council when changes are made to their properties.

Information for Council Tax use can only be shared in certain circumstances set out below:-

For general purposes section 85 of the Local Government Act 2003 is used in order to share Council Tax information with empty property officers. Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2003 allows information on property details, address, owners name and contact information obtained from Council Tax to be used to identify vacant properties and take steps to bring vacant dwellings back into use.

Where enforcement action is being considered, however, Section 237 of the Housing Act 2004: Council Tax & Housing Benefit, (Part 1 to 3 Act – Enforcement/EDMO etc.) allows for all information to be shared.

OBJECTIVE 2

Working Together - to strengthen existing and develop new internal and external partnerships to reduce the number of long term empty properties, adopting a whole council approach to tackling empty homes.

Empty properties affect the work of many parts of the Council, external organisations and residents. In implementing this Empty Homes Strategy, the Council will ensure that there is a strategically led approach to tackling the issue so that efforts are co-ordinated and coherent. Members of the Empty Homes Surgery will all have a role in delivering the actions within this strategy and carry out periodic reviews of the action plan.

Different powers and duties are available to members of the Empty Homes Surgery and by taking action together, many hours of enforcement activity can be reduced. The potential savings to the Council, are significant in terms of complaint handling.

The Council shall also work with external partners – registered social landlords, the fire services, police, local landlords and other councils in order to ensure that advice is shared and continuity achieved.

OBJECTIVE 3

Publicity- To raise awareness of empty homes issues

The Council must ensure that it is publicising the issue of empty homes in the most effective way. A higher profile for the problem of empty homes may encourage both owners and concerned neighbours to engage with the Council in reporting long-term empty properties and returning them to use.

The public will be actively encouraged to report empty homes that they become aware of, rather than waiting for a complaint to be made.

Part of the awareness raising about the problems associated with empty homes will take place within the Empty Homes Surgery. Being aware of the impact on other services as well as the one that officers work in has already been quite a revelation.

Through extensive use of social media, the Council will highlight the problems associated with empty homes and the help available to owners to bring them back into use

OBJECTIVE 4

Innovative Approaches - Increasing options in the “Toolkit” to encourage empty homes owners to return them back into use

Making owners aware of the potential benefits of renting or selling their empty home, as well as how the support the Council can offer may help to achieve this, is a huge step towards addressing the problem of empty long term empty properties.

It is recognised that many owners need some assistance in order to take action, they may have chosen to ignore the issue for some years and cannot see a way forward.

The Council must continue to be proactive in adding to the Toolkit over the terms of the strategy, finding new ways and developing new initiatives to persuade owners of long-term empty properties to take action and promote the unacceptability of homes left unused.

OBJECTIVE 5

Enforcement - To prioritise empty homes for enforcement action and promote and strengthen the existing whole council approach to tackling empty homes.

The Council will undertake a risk assessment of long-term empty properties in order to prioritise those properties where enforcement action will be undertaken. The prioritisation process will take into account factors such as

- Property condition and whether it is causing harm to other properties;
- The length of time empty;
- The number of complaints received by the Council or other agencies;
- Whether the property is causing a detrimental environmental impact;
- Whether the property is already facing enforcement by the Council;
- Whether the owner owes money to the Council;
- Whether the owner owns multiple empty properties.

An action plan, based on these five objectives is set out at the end of this Strategy.

9. CAN YOU HELP

Owners of Empty Properties

For further information on the content of this strategy and/or to seek assistance with bringing the property back into use, owners of empty properties are advised to contact the Empty Homes Officer.

Members of the Public

If members of the public are concerned about an empty property or consider that the owner may not be in a position to return it to use without some help, they are advised to contact the Empty Homes Officer.

Please contact the Empty Homes Officer on the number below or go to www.ynysmon.gov.uk and enter “empty homes” in the search box.

Empty Homes Officer Contact Details:-

Telephone: 01248 752283

Email: emptyhomesofficer@ynysmon.gov.uk

In writing: Empty Homes Officer
Housing Services
Isle of Anglesey County Council
Llangefni
Ynys Môn
LL77 7TW

ACTION PLAN

The action plan brings together the Strategy’s five objectives, allocating each one key actions for future monitoring purposes. Its aim is to ensure that we continue “doing what we do” but that, as we move forward, we also develop new and innovative ways to accelerate the rate at which empty properties are returned to use.

Objective 1: Intelligence and Targeting - To maintain and improve the accuracy of empty homes data

	ACTION	WHAT WE WILL DO	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	MONITORING/MEASURE
1.1	Encourage owners to inform the Council when there is a change in status of the property, i.e. when a property becomes unoccupied and occupied. This to be done through effective marketing and publicity.	I. Correspond with owners of new properties entered on the Empty Homes Database on 1 st April each year. II. Review the status of historical empty properties database. III. Advise Council Tax Section when a property is reported back into use.	Empty homes Officer Empty Homes Officer	Annually Annually	Reduction in the number of recorded empty homes.
1.2	Agree on the information to be collected on the empty homes database.	Establish a protocol for including properties which have been exempted from payment of Council Tax and remain empty for a long period.	Empty Homes Officer Council Tax Supervisor	December 2017	Protocol in place
1.3	Explore the option to develop a SMART targeting plan.	Initial pilot working with internal stakeholders	Empty Homes Officer/Council Tax	July 18 and ongoing	Evaluation report
1.4	Review Empty Homes Database to ensure resources are targeted on homes which will have the greatest impact.	Regular input of data on properties returned into use onto the Empty Homes Database.	Empty Homes Officer	Quarterly.	
1.5	Measure the effect of charging 25% premium on the standard rate of Council Tax on empty homes.	Analyse performance indicators on empty properties and empty properties returned to use up from April 2016 to April 2019.	Council Tax	April 2019/2020	Report to the Strategic Housing Partnership.

Objective 2: Working Together - To strengthen existing and develop new internal and external partnerships to reduce the number of long term empty properties, adopting a whole council approach to tackling empty homes.

1	Maintain clear strategic leadership	Support all stakeholders with a role to reduce the number of long-term empty homes	Housing Strategy Manager Empty Homes Officer	Ongoing	Report annually to the Anglesey Housing Partnership
2	Improve partnership working with fire service/police on long-term empty properties	Seek a long term solution for returning problematic long term empties back into use rather than deal with reported "incidents" by outside agencies.	Empty Homes Officer/Environmental Health Services	Ongoing	The number of properties returned to use where other agencies have had input.
3	Maintain and improve links with landlords, letting and property management agencies through improved information and attendance at Landlords Forum meetings.	Investigate new ways of improving links with the private rented sector	Empty Homes Officer/Landlord Liaison Officer/Landlord Forum	Ongoing	Attendance at landlord events.
4	Regular meetings between empty homes officers regionally.	To share advice in difficult cases, look at best practise solutions, ensure consistency in approach and for training purposes.	Empty Homes Officer/Environmental Health Service	Ongoing	Number of meetings attended
5	Ensure that opportunities to identify solutions with Registered Social Landlords are maximised.	To explore opportunities for joint-working that will result in empty homes being returned to use.	Empty Homes Officer	Ongoing	Opportunities realised.

Objective 3: Publicity - To raise awareness of empty homes issues

	ACTION	WHAT WE WILL DO	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	MONITORING/MEASURE
1.	Review and improve publicity material in the Empty Homes Information Pack to highlight the issue of empty homes together with options available to owners of empty properties to return them to use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Review and update existing literature to ensure it is accurate and current. II. Dedicated empty homes section on Council website – updated regularly. III. Regular use of social media (Twitter, Facebook) to highlight the empty homes initiative. IV. Develop an on line form for reporting empty homes. 	Empty Homes Officer	1 January 2018 and ongoing	Number of properties returned to use by type of intervention recorded
2.	Communicate with Community and Town Councils and Councillors to highlight the issue of empty homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Circulate information to all parties, encouraging the reporting of empty homes in their communities. 	Empty Homes Officer	1 st January 2018	
3	Contribute to regional and national consultations on empty homes policy and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Attend regional and national empty homes events and meetings II. Respond to National Consultations on Policies affecting empty homes 	Empty Homes Officer	As they occur	Number of meetings attended and contribution made. Percentage of responses against number of consultation documents received.

Objective 4: Innovative Approaches - Increasing options within the “Toolkit” to encourage empty homes owners to return them back into use

	ACTION	WHAT WE WILL DO	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	MONITORING/MEASURE
1	Inform and advice to all owners of possible options available to them to bring their empty homes back into use via frequent and regular communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Distribute the Empty Homes Information Pack. II. Contact owners to discuss their empty property to develop a bespoke solution. III. Analyse responses to the survey questionnaire and respond positively and swiftly to owners who have returned them. 	Empty Homes Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Annually II. Ongoing on a case by case basis. III. Ongoing 	<p>Number of questionnaires distributed, returned and actioned.</p> <p>No. of properties returned to use by type of intervention.</p>
3	Explore other funding opportunities with a view to developing further financial schemes to incentivise and support owners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Establish what other sources of public, private or charitable funding may be available. II. Explore funding opportunities to undertake EDMO's. 	Housing Services/Empty Homes Officer	1 May 2018	
4	Seek innovative new ways to provide additional options for owners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Explore good practise in other Councils across the UK. II. Develop our own creative new solutions. 	Empty Homes Officer	Ongoing	

Objective 5: Enforcement - To prioritise empty homes for enforcement action and promote and strengthen the existing whole council approach to tackling empty homes

	ACTION	WHAT WE WILL DO	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	OUTCOME/MEASURE
1	Apply a risk based assessment process for prioritising problematic empty homes for action/implementation.	Review and implement the current risk based prioritisation matrix to identify those properties requiring intervention.	Empty Homes Officer and Empty Homes Surgery Members	1st January 2018	Revised matrix agreed and implemented.
2	Establish protocols for determining and applying the most appropriate course of enforcement action likely to resolve a problematic empty property and lead to its return to use.	<p>I. Review the terms of Reference of the Empty Homes Surgery to ensure effectiveness, accountability and clear objectives.</p> <p>II. Have an agreed and recorded plan of action for each property prioritised for enforcement action with designated officers to enforce where appropriate</p> <p>III. Develop an escalation mechanism where higher level support is required.</p>	<p>Empty Homes Surgery/Housing Strategy Manager</p> <p>Empty Homes Surgery Members</p> <p>Empty Homes Officer</p>	<p>1st January 2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>1st April 2018</p>	<p>TOR reviewed</p> <p>Mechanism agreed and adopted.</p>
2.	Proactively investigate all problematic long term empty properties reported using the prioritisation matrix where appropriate and investigate all reported empty homes	Investigate all reported empty homes promptly, undertaking initial assessment as a priority. Maintain the current proactive and reactive approach to dealing with empty properties.	Empty Homes Officer/ Environmental Health Officer	As required	Number of empty properties returned to use
3	Prioritise for action and recovery, empty properties where there is an existing debt owing to the Council for consideration of enforced sale process.	Develop a process to identify and assess empty properties where there is an existing debt owing to the Council. Agree and implement a plan for recovering the debt.	Empty Homes Officer/ Head of Revenues and Finance/Section 151 Officer	1 December 2019	Process developed and implemented.

GLOSSARY

Affordable Housing – Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Affordable rented housing – housing let by local authority or private registered provider of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing.

Decent Homes Standard – the governmental criteria necessary for a liveable property. The property must:-

- Be in a reasonable state of repair.
- Meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing.
- Have reasonably modern facilities and services
- Provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

Dwelling – since 2001 a dwelling is defined as a self-contained unit of accommodation, where all the rooms (including kitchen, bathroom and toilet) are behind a door that only the household can use.

Empty Homes Service – The service aims to reduce the number of homes and buildings standing empty or becoming empty and to preserve and improve the Island's housing stock. Owners of empty, residential properties and, where appropriate commercial properties considered suitable for conversion into dwellings, are provided with guidance and assistance to develop a plan for returning them back into use.

Household – One person or a group of people who have the accommodation as their only or main residence **AND**

- Either share one meal a day or
- Share the living accommodation, that is, a living room or sitting room.

Houses into Homes Scheme – a loan scheme offered by the Council to owners of empty properties requiring renovation or conversion to let or to sell on.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HSSRS) – criteria by which councils evaluate potential risks to health and safety arising from property deficiencies and take appropriate enforcement action.

Long term empty property – A property left unoccupied for six months or more

Tai Tag – An independent register of people interested in home ownership but who cannot currently afford to buy outright on the open market with the aim of identifying and matching people to homes that are currently or known to be becoming available.

Transactional empty property – Properties which have become empty naturally through the operation of a normal property cycle. These may remain empty for a period of time, typically up to six months.

APPENDIX 1 –
COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTIONS

Class A	Vacant dwelling requiring or undergoing major repairs or alterations – maximum 12 months exemption.
Class B	Unoccupied dwelling owned by a charitable body
Class C	Vacant Dwelling – maximum period 6 months
Class D	Dwelling unoccupied because former resident in detention
Class E	Dwelling unoccupied because former resident in hospital or care home
Class F	Unoccupied dwelling in which someone has died
Class G	Dwelling in which occupation is prohibited by law
Class H	Unoccupied dwelling held for a minister of religion
Class I	Unoccupied dwelling because former resident receiving care elsewhere
Class J	Unoccupied dwelling because former resident providing care elsewhere
Class K	Dwelling left unoccupied by a student owner
Class L	Unoccupied dwelling where mortgagee in possession
Class M	Student – halls of residence
Class N	Dwelling wholly occupied by students
Class O	Armed forces accommodation
Class P	Visiting forces accommodation
Class Q	Unoccupied dwelling held by trustee in bankruptcy
Class R	Unoccupied Pitch or Mooring
Class S	dwelling wholly occupied by people under 18
Class T	Unoccupied annexe which cannot be let separately
Class U	Dwelling occupied by a severely mentally impaired person
Class V	Dwelling occupied by people with diplomatic immunity
Class W	Dwelling occupied by a dependant relative (granny flat)

EXCEPTIONS – COUNCIL TAX PREMIUM ON EMPTY HOMES

Classes of Dwellings	Definition
Class 1	Dwellings being marketed for sale – time limited for one year
Class 2	Dwellings being marketed for let – time-limited for one year
Class 3	Annexes forming part of, or being treated as part of, the main dwelling
Class 4	Dwellings which would be someone’s sole or main residence if they were not residing in armed forces accommodation.

APPENDIX 2 – Legislation to support Councils to resolve problematic properties

Problem	Legislation	Power Granted
Dangerous or dilapidated building structures	Building Act 1984, ss77 & 78	Section 77 – requirement for owner to make property safe
Dangerous or dilapidated building structures Unsecured properties (risk that it may be entered or suffer vandalism, arson etc.)	Housing Act 2004, Part 1 Building Act 1984, s79	Section 78 – Enables Council to take emergency action to make building safe Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) enables councils to evaluate potential risks to health and safety arising from property deficiencies and take enforcement action. Requirement for owner to repair, restore or demolish.
Unsecured properties (risk that it may be entered or suffer vandalism, arson etc.)	Building Act 1984, s78 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, s29	To allow councils to fence off property. To allow councils to take steps to secure property
Blocked or defective drainage or private sewers	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976), s35 Building Act 1984 s59 Public Health Act, 1961, s17	To require owner to address obstructed private sewers. To require the owner to address blocked or defective drainage To require the owner to address defective drainage or private sewers.
Vermin (either present or there is a risk that they will be attracted)	Public Health Act 1961, s34 Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, s4 Public Health Act 1936, s 83 Environmental Protection Act 1990, s.80 Building Act 1984, s76	To require the owner to remove waste so that vermin is not attracted to the site, to destroy an infestation and to remove any accumulation prejudicial to health
Unightly land and property affecting the amenity of an area	Public Health Act 1961, s34 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s215	To require the owner to remove waste from the property To require the owner to take steps to address a property adversely affecting the amenity of an area through its condition.

Isle of Anglesey County Council - Equality Impact Assessment Template

Revision history:		
Version	Date	Summary of changes
0.1	26.6.17	

Step 1: Background	
1 - What are you assessing?	Empty Homes Strategy 2017-22
2 - Is this a new or existing proposal?	This is an update on the previous strategy
3 - What are the aims and purpose of this proposal?	<p>Its five strategic objectives are:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intelligence and Targeting - to maintain and improve the accuracy of empty homes data 2. Working Together - to strengthen existing and develop new partnerships to reduce the number of long term empty properties, adopting a whole council approach to tackling empty homes. 3. Publicity- To raise awareness of empty homes issues 4. Innovative Approaches - Increasing options in the “Toolkit” to encourage empty homes owners to return them back into use 5. Enforcement - To prioritise empty homes for enforcement action and promote and strengthen the existing whole council approach to tackling empty homes.

Step 1: Background	
4 - Who is responsible for the proposal you are assessing?	Head of housing Services
5 - Who is the Lead Officer for this assessment?	Housing Strategy, Commissioning and Policy Manager
6 - Who else is involved in undertaking this assessment?	Empty Homes Officer Housing Business Manager Ynys Mon Housing Partnership Environmental Health Officers Planning and Planning Policy Officers Benefits Officers and Council Tax
7 - Is the proposal related to other areas of work? For example, are there other proposals of policies that should be taken into consideration as part of this assessment?	Housing Strategy 2014-19 HRA Business Plan Cod of Practice for Enforcement
8 - Who would be affected by the proposal(s) (adversely or positively, directly or indirectly)?	Targeting of resources to increase the supply of affordable housing on the Island Residents on the Island benefit from properties being improved and decrease in anti social behaviour and nuisance that arises from properties being empty for a long period of time Occupiers receiving assistance to improve their properties Opportunities for local tradesmen to carry out renovation works

9 - Is the proposal relevant to how the Authority complies with the public sector general duty relating to people who are protected by the Equality Act 2010?	Yes	
The elimination of discrimination and harassment	yes	
The advancement of equality of opportunity	yes	
The fostering of good relations	yes	
The protection and promotion of human rights	yes	
Note: As a general rule, any policy that affects people is likely to be relevant across all protected groups		

Step 2: Information Gathering	
10 - Does this proposal ensure that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language, in accordance with the Council's Welsh Language Policy?	services are offered bilingually
11 - Is there an opportunity here to offer more opportunities for people to learn and / or use the Welsh language on a day-to-day basis?	It will assist people to live within their communities by bringing empty homes back into use
12 – Will this area of work proactively offer services in Welsh for users?	Yes
13 – Is this proposal likely to protect and promote the Welsh language within communities?	Bydd
<p>Appendix 1 to the Impact Assessment Guidance lists a series of questions which should be considered when assessing how proposals impact on the Welsh language in general. The extent to which these questions are relevant will depend on the proposal in question. The purpose of these questions is to make you think about the wider impact or contribution and these questions could be used as a prompt when responding to questions 10 – 13 above.</p> <p>However, when assessing how the Council's main policies and strategies impact on the Welsh language, it is recommended that these questions are considered in more detail so that comprehensive assessment is undertaken – a separate template is available with these papers on MonITor, for you to complete, if appropriate.</p>	
14 - Are there any Human Rights issues? If so, what are they? (For example, could this proposal result in the failure to safeguard the right to privacy?) (The 16 basic rights are listed at Appendix 1).	no

15 – Does this proposal meet any of the seven national well-being goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015? (Discriptions of the wellbeing goals are listed at Appendix 2)	A prosperous Wales	Yes
	A resilient Wales	Yes
	A healthier Wales	Yes
	A more equal Wales	Yes
	A Wales of cohesive communities	Yes
	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	Yes
	A globally responsible Wales	yes
16 - What has been done to date in terms of involvement and consultation with regard to this proposal?	Workshop held with key stakeholders to discuss objectives of the Strategy and opportunity to provide feedback on final version	
17 – Have you used any other information that is relevant to the proposal to inform your assessment? If so, please detail:	The Strategy includes information on data and legal actions available to the Council Information from the Common Allocations Register proves the need for	
18 - Are there any gaps in the information collected to date? If so, how will these be addressed?	no	

Step 3: Considering the potential impact and identifying mitigating action

19 — Note below any likely impact on equality for each individual group, and identify what action could be taken to reduce or improve the impact. *For determining potential impact, please choose from the following: **Negative / Positive / No impact**

Protected group	*Potential Impact	Details of the impact	Actions to mitigate negative impact
Age	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Disability	Positive	Properties could be adapted during renovation stage	
Gender	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Gender Reassignment	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Pregnancy & Maternity	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Race / Ethnicity / Nationality	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Religion or Belief	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Sexual Orientation	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Welsh language	Positive	Encourages people to remain within their native communities	
Human Rights	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Marriage or Civil Partnership	Positive	There is no limitations on this	
Any other relevant issue, eg poverty, access to services in rural areas	Positive	Increase in opportunity for people to remain within their rural communities	

Step 4: Outcome of the assessment	
20 - Note the impacts identified and how it is intended to mitigate any negative impact (ie a summary of the above table)	None identified
21 - Is there a strategy for dealing with any unavoidable but not unlawful negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?	
22 - Describe any actions taken to maximise the opportunity to promote equality and/or the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (sustainability). (The seven well-being goals are listed in Appendix 2)	
23 – Is there a need to reconsider the proposal as a result of conducting this assessment? (Evidence of negative impact could render the proposal or decision unlawful. If you have identified negative impact, you should consider at this stage whether it is possible to proceed with the proposal).	no
24 - Will the proposal be adopted / forwarded for approval? Who will be the decision-maker?	Scrutiny Committee
25 - Are there monitoring arrangements in place? What are they?	Action plan proposed as part of Strategy which will be reviewed regularly

Step 5: Action Plan

Please detail any actions that are planned following completion of your assessment. You should include any changes that have been made to reduce or eliminate the effects of potential or actual negative impact, as well as any arrangements to collect data or to carry out further research.

Ref	Proposed actions	Lead officer	Timescale

Appendix 1 – Human Rights

Human rights are rights and freedoms that belong to all individuals, regardless of their nationality and citizenship. There are 16 basic rights in the Human Rights Act – all taken from the European Convention on Human Rights. For the purposes of the Act, they are known as ‘the Convention Rights’. They are listed below:

(Article 1 is introductory and is not incorporated into the Human Rights Act)

Article 2: The right to life

Article 3: Prohibition of torture

Article 4: Prohibition of slavery and forced labour

Article 5: Right to liberty and security

Article 6: Right to a fair trial

Article 7: No punishment without law

Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life

Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Article 10: Freedom of expression

Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association

Article 12: Right to marry

Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination

Article 1 of Protocol 1: Protection of property

Article 2 of Protocol 1: Right to education

Article 3 of Protocol 1: Right to free elections

Article 1 of Protocol 13: Abolition of the death penalty

Appendix 2 - Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

This Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals:

Goal	Description of the goal
A prosperous Wales	An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.
A resilient Wales	A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).
A healthier Wales	A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
A more equal Wales	A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).
A Wales of cohesive communities	Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
A globally responsible Wales	A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.