

Cabinet

20th April 2026

Empty Homes Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Kit Taylor
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Judith Willis Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services
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Wards Affected	No specific ward relevance
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Not Applicable
Relevant Council Priority	Housing
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council that: -

- 1) **The Bromsgrove District Council Empty Homes Strategy 2026 – 29 be adopted.**

2. **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 According to the national council tax database for 2025, there were 542, 276 empty homes recorded in October across England, representing 2.1 % of all homes. Action to tackle empty homes has a significant potential to address national housing needs.
- 2.2 In October 2025, Bromsgrove District had 635 empty homes, of which 384 had been empty for more than 6 months. At the same time there were 3749 households on the housing register seeking affordable housing.
- 2.3 Bromsgrove District Council is committed to identifying empty homes and developing options for bringing them back into use as quickly as possible. The empty homes strategy sets out priorities and actions to

tackle empty homes across the District and to use the most effective interventions to do so.

2.4 The aim of the strategy is to:

- help alleviate housing need
- improve housing conditions
- offer a wider choice of housing to residents
- minimise the blight that can result where properties are left empty and neglected.

2.5 Empty homes can have a negative impact on a local area for several reasons, they:

- attract pests and vermin
- can become a focal point for illegal activities such as anti-social behaviour, vandalism and fly tipping
- increase the risk of squatting
- fall into disrepair – increasing renovation costs and possible risks to the public if structures are unsafe
- increase pressure on public resources.

2.6 An empty home is a dwelling which is unoccupied and substantially unfurnished. There are two main types of empty homes. Short term empty homes are dwellings which have been unoccupied for under six months. It is often the case that these are in the process of sale. Short term empty homes naturally occur as people's circumstances change, and they move between homes.

2.7 Long term empty homes are dwellings which have been unoccupied and are substantially unfurnished for six months or longer. Bringing long term, privately owned empty homes back into use is the focus of this strategy. Rather than representing a natural process of change, long term empty homes indicate there may be other factors leading to a property remaining empty.

2.8 Residential properties remain empty for various reasons, for example resolving legal ownership as part of an inheritance process. Other factors include new homes waiting for a buyer, owners abandoning properties, owners having a lack of funds for repairs and refurbishment,

waiting for planning consent or decision, repossession and perceived difficulties in renting. There is also evidence that some owners have sentimental attachment to a property and are reluctant to part with it for emotional reasons.

- 2.9 There is no act of parliament that creates a duty on local housing authorities to tackle empty homes. However, Councils do have a general housing duty to review housing conditions and needs as laid out in the Housing Act 1985.
- 2.10 National policy focuses on empowering local authorities to bring vacant dwellings back in to use, guided by a local empty homes strategy. Local authorities have the discretion to charge empty home owners council tax premiums and have a range of legislative powers to tackle empty homes.
- 2.11 Since April 2013 local authorities have been able to charge a council tax premium on homes, empty for more than 2 years, that is, an amount charged on top of the council tax due. In April 2024, this was extended to properties empty for more than one year.
- 2.12 Some empty home owners are exempt from paying council tax. The key reasons for this are the owner: is deceased and the property is subject to probate, has moved to hospital or into a care home or the owner is a charity.
- 2.13 The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed good practice guidance for tackling empty homes. LGA good practice approaches focus on systematically identifying and recording empty homes in their areas and engaging, encouraging and using enforcement (where necessary) to bring homes back in to use. Legislative powers for tackling empty homes can be found in appendix 1 to this report
- 2.14 Across the wider West Midlands, the proportion of empty homes varies widely by local authority area. In October 2025, Stratford upon Avon had the highest number of long-term empty homes per 1000 dwellings at 18.38 and Solihull the least at 5.51. Bromsgrove featured amongst the lowest 10 local authorities at 8.88 empty homes per 1000 dwellings.

- 2.15 The strategic approach to tackling empty homes and delivering on our commitment, is centred around three priority areas:

Priority 1 - Develop systems, processes and multi-agency working

Priority 2 - Improve intervention pathways, resources and performance

Priority 3 - Strengthen early intervention, engagement and monitoring

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 This Empty Homes Strategy will be implemented by the Private Sector Housing Team and additional funding has been provided through Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant to increase an existing officer's part time role in order to provide a pro-active approach to Empty Homes.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A contribution of £7,680 from Bromsgrove District Council's Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (26/27) has been agreed to support the funding of the part-time empty homes officer, referred to above in 3.1. Funding was agreed by Cabinet on the 7th January 26 (Homelessness Prevention, Rough Sleeper and Domestic Abuse Grants Funding 2026/27 Report).

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is no act of parliament that creates a duty on local housing authorities to tackle empty homes. However, councils do have a general housing duty to review housing conditions and needs as laid out in the Housing Act 1985.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 This Strategy meets the Government's requirement that local authorities continue to deliver high quality and sustainable services for residents during local government reorganisation.

Relevant Council Priority

6.2 Tackling Empty Homes positively impacts:

- Housing

Climate Change Implications

6.3 Bringing Empty Homes back into use will include improvements to the condition and efficiency of the private sector housing stock within Bromsgrove which will positively impact on the Council's approach to mitigate Climate Change

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.4 No specific equalities and diversity implications have been identified

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 This strategy aims to mitigate risks to the local community from neglected housing.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Bromsgrove District Council Empty Homes Strategy 2026
– 29

Cabinet

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Kit Taylor Portfolio Holder for Housing	22.02.26
Assistant Director	Judith Willis Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services	26.02.26
Financial Services	Julie Lorraine, Director of Finance	12.02.26
Legal and Democratic Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal Solicitor Governance and Jess Bayley-Hill, Principal Democratic Services Officer	23.02.26
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Matt Bough, Strategic Housing and Business Support Manager	13.02.26