

APPENDIX B

Empty Homes Action Plan: April 2020 – March 2021

Strategic Objective 1 To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty properties being brought back into use					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Establish an Empty Homes Operational Group (EHOG) to deliver the aims and objectives of the Empty Property Strategy	Seek approval for establishment of group and develop Terms of Reference and membership	Group set up and attended by members	First convened on 15/11/18	Housing Strategy	Empty Homes Operational group set up and chaired by Housing Strategy. Terms of reference and membership complete.
	Coordinate EHOG meetings every quarter in order to implement and monitor the delivery of the first year action plan	Key stakeholders embrace and deliver the strategic aims and objectives	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	8 meetings have taken place to date. The meetings have been a successful method of co-ordinating the aims and objectives of the strategy. NB: Continuity of meetings have been through Microsoft Teams due to Covid
Liaise with speculative investors who wish to acquire properties within RCT to let to members of the public	Continue to organise the RCT Landlord Forum, setting agendas, booking venues for meetings and collating minutes.	The number of members attending the Landlord forums. Feedback from the landlords attending the meetings.	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	Landlord Forums have taken place with an average of 40 Landlords in attendance. These are now being conducted online. There is also a Landlord Newsletter.

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	Attend RCT Landlord Forum to present Houses into Homes loans scheme	Increase in the number of Houses into Homes loan applications	May 2019 & March 2020	Housing Strategy	130 grants have now been approved. 86 have been approved since April 2018.
	Maintain database of empty property investors	Increase in the number of empty property referrals to investors	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	The number of referrals is not currently recorded.

Strategic Objective 2 To maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty properties that are brought back into use					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Identify and engage with empty property owners to investigate ways of returning empty homes back into use	To continue to provide Empty Homes Grants to assist owners to renovate empty properties by promoting the scheme through posters/fliers, the council website and social media platforms.	Increase in the percentage of empty properties brought back into use	Ongoing	Housing Strategy and Grants	Increase in the % of empties brought back into use from 6% in 2019/20 to 8% in 2020/21
Deliver the Homestep Plus Scheme	To continue to work with United Welsh to deliver Homestep Plus scheme in CF37 area	Target of 24 properties purchased and sold under Homestep Plus Scheme	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	24 properties have been identified, of which we are awaiting confirmation of the purchase of 2
	Explore opportunities to deliver Homestep Plus in other areas of RCT	Areas identified to deliver Homestep Plus	March 2020	Housing Strategy	Not complete
Identify suitable empty properties and buildings in town centres and key settlements that could utilise funding	Map empty properties in priority regeneration town centres	Empty properties in regeneration town centres identified	Dec-19 - Ongoing	Housing Strategy	Empty properties have been mapped for Porth. All empty properties are mapped on MapInfo however this does not include commercial empty properties.

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	Identify suitable funding opportunities for mapped empty properties	Analysis undertaken of potential funding for each empty property	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	Work continues with Regeneration team to maximise funding opportunities in this area.
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Strategic Objective 3					
To continue to use a range of interventions to ensure all types of empty properties are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use and monitor the outcomes related to these closely					
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
A commitment to use appropriate enforcement powers where suitable	Develop an enforcement approach to deal with owners of empty properties who do not voluntarily engage in the opportunities available to bring their properties back into use	Increase in the use of enforced sales, compulsory purchase and empty dwelling management orders and a subsequent reduction in the number of problem dwellings within RCT	March-20 - Ongoing	EHO	11 properties have had enforcement notices served since priority empty property visits have taken place.
		Decrease in the number of complaints received regarding empty properties	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	Report needs to be set up to record this. Ongoing.
	Establish a more proactive and targeted approach to enforcement	Decrease in the number of empty properties	Ongoing	Public Health and Protection	Slight increase in the number of empty properties recorded
Provide up to date advice and assistance to bring empty properties back into use	Establish an Empty Homes webpage to include an empty property market place where sellers can advertise and buyers make direct contact	Number of web page visits	March-20 - Ongoing	EPOG	Meeting to be set up with Marketing and Customer Service Teams

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	Produce an Empty Property Advice Pack for empty property owners	Number of empty properties brought back into use	Nov-19	EPOG	Completed
	Promotion of Empty Property Advice pack	Empty Property Advice pack available on Council's webpage	Dec-19	Housing Strategy	Completed
		Empty Property Advice pack available on Empty Homes webpage	March-20	Housing Strategy	Completed
		Promotion of Empty Property Advice pack on Council's Facebook page	Dec-19	Housing Strategy	Ongoing
	Develop online reporting of an empty property and a dedicated empty property inbox	Number of empty properties reported on line via Council's website	Marc-20	Housing Strategy	Reporting mechanism ongoing. Inbox is now functioning

Strategic Objective 4	To undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are a high number of empty properties and identify possible solutions that could prevent properties from becoming empty				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Share best practice with other local authorities/WG	Investigate benchmarking opportunities	Better understanding of empty property problem within RCT and neighbouring authorities	March-20	Housing Strategy	Ongoing commitment to use best practice from other local authorities.
	Roll out of Empty Homes Grant to Valleys Task Force	Number of empty home brought back into use across the 9 LA's that make up the Valleys Taskforce	October 2019 – launch month	Housing Grants	As of 31 March 2021, a total of 1076 applications were received of which, 941 were deemed valid. Of the 941 valid applications, 503

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					continued with the grant process and have been approved, with a further 34 at pre-approval stage.
Maintain and monitor the Empty Property database	Record and report on the number of empty properties brought back into use through direct action by the Council	Increase in the number of interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	Number of interventions decreased from 467 in 2019/20 to 357 in 2020/21, however Officer resource was redeployed to track and trace during the Pandemic
		Increase in the number of empty properties brought back into use through interventions undertaken	Ongoing	Housing Strategy/Public Health and Protection	Increase from 179 in 2019/20 to 240 in 2020/21
	Report empty property PI to Welsh Government	Benchmark performance at an All Wales level	Ongoing	Housing Strategy	In 2020/2021 RCT brought a total of 240 (8.4%) empty homes back into use, directly from Council intervention, National Benchmarking data for 2020-21 is not currently available.
Identify the reason why the number of empty properties remains relatively static in RCT	Undertake research to identify the reasons why the same number of empty properties become empty in certain areas	Solutions identified to target the trend of properties becoming vacant	March-20	Housing Strategy	It has generally been accepted through empirical work that the reason for this is natural “churn” within the housing market. This is why we have prioritised the long term empty

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					properties and concentrated on a proactive approach in tackling these.
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Strategic Objective 5	To identify possible solutions that could prevent properties from becoming empty and also develop interventions for different market areas and types				
Actions that will deliver this objective	Milestones/Sub Actions that will achieve the overarching Action	Measures of Success	Delivery Date	Responsibility	Progress
Explore opportunities for Area Based Regeneration	Identify next area to deliver the Health and Housing Action Area scheme	Area identified	March-20	Housing Strategy	Similar project currently being carried out in Penrhiwceiber under the Tackling Poverty agenda