

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

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

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Claire Hutcheon

Service Director: Derek James

Service Area: Prosperity & Development

Date: 31/08/2022

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

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

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

Empty Property Strategy 2022-2025

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

The Empty Homes Strategy 2022-2025 sets out the approach Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC will take to address the issues relating to empty private sector homes as defined in paragraph 2.1 of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy (attached). The strategy was developed to promote the holistic Council approach, required to tackle empty homes and to stimulate regeneration in some of our most deprived communities. The draft strategy replaces the previous Empty Homes Strategy, which run from 2018-2022, and hopes to build further on its achievements.

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

or individuals with personnel issues that may be a barrier to accessing services. Each empty homes case is unique and our aim is to ensure that the service we offer is inclusive to all.

The purpose of the strategy is to develop a strong strategic approach to the problem and the overarching aims of the strategy can be outlined as follows:

- To develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty properties being brought back into use.
- To maximise the use of current funding options and to identify future funding models to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use.
- To continue to use a wide range of interventions to ensure that all types of empty homes are targeted and enabled to be brought back into use, and monitor the outcomes related to these closely.
- To undertake further research in communities and evaluate existing approaches to understand why there are high numbers of empty properties in certain locations, and then to identify possible approaches that could prevent homes from becoming empty.
- To identify and develop interventions for different market areas and types of housing to further diversify choice for the residents of RCT.

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

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

- The Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Equality Act 2010
- Town & Country Planning Act 1990, Section 215
- Environmental Protection Act 1990, Sections 79-81
- Housing Act 2004
- Housing Act 1985, Section 17

- RCT Corporate Plan 2020-2024
- Cwm Taf Well-being Plan 2018
- RCT Local Development Plan 2022-2037
- RCT Local Housing Market Assessment 2022
- RCT CBC Warmer Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy
- RCT Council Tax Policy
- RCT Council Tackling Climate Change Strategy
- Various Local Regeneration Strategies

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

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users X
- Employees X
- Wider community X

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

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

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

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

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

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Age (<i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i>)	Positive	<p>There is no indication that the Empty Homes Strategy will have a negative impact on any age specific groups in our communities. Indeed, the expected outcomes of the strategy should enhance choice, funding options and availability of more suitable housing for all age groups.</p> <p>Whilst the Strategy applies across all age groups, young people in particular lack access to housing and are often unable to afford to buy or rent in the private sector. Increasing supply and property types will help young people access the housing market.</p> <p>The Strategy will assist frail and/or elderly people overcome difficulties in selling empty properties and enable them to move forward.</p> <p>The development of new and newly refurbished housing will meet Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR), which ensures homes are</p>	<p>Examples of engagement with internal and external stakeholders includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of promotional literature such as leaflets and a comprehensive empty homes owner pack. • Presentations and displays to strategic partnership groups. • Service users via feedback and satisfaction questionnaires for Houses into homes Loan and Empty Property Grant. • Landlord Forums. • Engagement with owners of empty properties through the proactive work being undertaken. • Regular social media posts and quarterly newsletters. <p>Groups engaged with include:</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>flexible and can be adapted to meet the changing needs of occupants. This ensures that as people get older they can remain or stay in their homes for longer.</p> <p>Equally, any homes refurbished via our various funding options will comply with all relevant building control requirements and there are additional incentives for works, which enhance the energy efficiency and helps to elevate category 1 and 2 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Ratings System. (HHSRS)</p> <p>The Strategy acknowledges the need for affordable housing within RCT. The Strategy will ensure new developments and empty properties brought back into use meet assessed housing need as identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment and by establishing a healthy Social Housing Grant (SHG) development programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Social Landlords. • Private Landlords • Home owners • Service users • Attendance at Welsh Government Property Loans Group to contribute to the development of empty homes work and to support performance reporting. <p>The key themes from stakeholders that have influenced priorities that impact Age and have been incorporated into the action plan include:</p> <p>The local authority's older people's Strategy 'My Own Front Door'; A Plan for Housing in Later Life 2016 . This has helped to inform the strategy.</p> <p>All accommodation developed under funding options must be</p>

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		<p>The Strategy links in with the aims and objectives of RCTCBC Warmer Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy, which aims to alleviate the impact of fuel poverty within the Borough.</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p>	<p>built to Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR) which sets out the minimum standards for new and rehabilitated general needs affordable homes. The WDQR state that 'homes should be flexible, responsive to the changing needs of the occupants, meet the changing needs of a variety of households who will occupy the building over its life and be of sufficient size. This requirement enables people to continue to occupy their own home into later life. Homes are built to meet the Lifetime Homes Standards.</p> <p>The strategy is overseen by the Empty Property Operational Group and is monitored for effectiveness against the outcomes achieved alongside the developed Action Plan. One of the aims of the action plan is for the development of more effective methods of capturing</p>

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			data to adjust our policies and procedures so that service delivery becomes more accessible and relevant to all.
<p>Disability <i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i></p>	Positive	<p>The Strategy reinforces strong proactive approaches to tackling empty properties. For example, if it is recognised that a property is empty due to the owner's disability or due to caring for a disabled relative, this will be noted and the Empty Homes Officer who provides the relevant assistance, will offer to complete funding applications and advice on access to other services. If a disabled person is to occupy an empty home that requires adaptations, the adaptations can be funded through interest free housing loans. A disabled Facilities Grant would only be accessible to current owner-occupiers and therefore not relevant for the draft Empty Homes Strategy.</p> <p>The Strategy also aims to improve the use of data sharing between Health, Housing and other support providers by</p>	<p>RCT has amongst the highest reported incidences of substance misuse, mental illness and poor well-being in Wales. Mental health problems are the most common reason for there being priority housing needs in RCT and housing problems are frequently given as a reason for a person being admitted or re-admitted to inpatient mental health care (RCT HSP Strategy: p15).</p> <p>Support is being offered to those with a disability or whose health has deteriorated to overcome difficulties in selling or renting empty homes by offering</p>

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		<p>building on the success of our targeted healthy homes initiatives.</p> <p>There is a shortage of lifetime homes and enabling the facilitation of more empty homes back into use could help to alleviate this demand. Equally, bringing empty homes back into use can contribute to meeting the needs of homeless households, by increasing the housing supply and providing the Local Authority with nomination rights where incentives, such as grant or loan assistance, has been provided. This could also reduce the need for temporary accommodation.</p> <p>The Strategy will ensure new developments and empty properties brought back into use meet assessed housing need as identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment and by establishing a healthy Social Housing Grant (SHG) development programme</p>	<p>bespoke engagement via home visits.</p> <p>Homelessness data show that in 2020–2021 there were 891 Priority Need homeless cases and of these 87 were households where a household member is vulnerable due to mental health/learning disability/learning difficulties and 79 were households where a household member is vulnerable due to a physical disability (WHO12 Homeless Data Summary).</p> <p>The Strategy states that there needs for a strategic, multiagency approach to create new affordable housing and support options.</p> <p>16% of the Homefinder waiting list are people who require an adapted property (RCT Abritas System: April 2022). The barrier</p>

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			<p>to accessing housing for this characteristic group is the limited availability of adapted housing within RCT's existing housing stock. The existing housing stock is largely unsuitable for people with a physical disability. What this means, is that people on the housing waiting list who require an adapted property will often have to wait for quite some time while a new property is being built; this can sometimes take up to 2 years.</p> <p>All accommodation developed under our funding options for empty homes must be built to Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR), which sets out the minimum standards for new and rehabilitated general needs affordable homes. The WDQR state that 'homes should be flexible, responsive to the changing needs of the occupants,</p>

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			<p>meet the changing needs of a variety of households who will occupy the building over its life and be of sufficient size.</p> <p>In reality, this will mean that all homes will have a shower (in addition to a bath) and are provided with adequate space on the ground floor with plumbing, electrical and mechanical ventilation connections to allow for the future installation of a barrier free shower facility suitable for use by a person in a wheelchair. All flats and bungalows have a shower in addition to a bath and bungalows, ground floor flats and flats served by a lift have a bathroom designed so it is capable of adaptation for use by a person in a wheelchair.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p>Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting our most vulnerable residents, regardless of gender or gender identity.</p> <p>There are no specific impacts on gender reassignment, but the Strategy, by returning empty homes into use, offers a greater choice of housing for those living or wishing to live in RCT. One of the intended outcomes of the strategy is that services are more responsive to the diverse needs of all residents.</p>	<p>Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner or the responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.
<p>Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i></p>	Neutral	<p>The Draft Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to assisting homeowners sell or rent their empty property, regardless of their marital or civil partnership status.</p> <p>Support can be offered to those experiencing marital or relationship breakdown in order to overcome barriers to selling property and moving forward.</p>	<p>Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their</p>

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			<p>lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The Draft Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to assisting homeowners sell or rent their empty property, regardless of pregnancy or maternity.</p>	<p>Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
Race	Positive	The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to assisting homeowners sell or rent their empty	Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i>		<p>property, regardless of race. A person's race will not affect support offered or enforcement actions if required.</p> <p>A number of policy documents underpin this Strategy including the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Strategy, which highlights the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers.</p> <p>Multi-agency discussions and working groups are already in place to meet the needs of Refugees and Asylum Seekers. The Strategy will continue to support the resettlement of Refugees and Asylum Seekers by continuing to deliver additional housing within the Borough.</p> <p>The Strategy will also assist in the rehousing commitments made by the RCTCBC to rehouse Ukrainian refugees fleeing the conflict in their country.</p>	<p>to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	Neutral	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties regardless of religion or belief.</p> <p>There is no specific impact identified. A person's religion or belief will not affect the support offered or any enforcement actions if required. However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.</p>	<p>Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			<p>provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
<p>Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties regardless of their sex.</p> <p>There is no specific impact identified. A person's sex will not affect the support offered or any enforcement actions if required. However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional</p>	<p>Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.	<p>owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
Sexual Orientation	Neutral	The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting	Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i>		<p>homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties regardless of their sexual orientation.</p> <p>There is no specific impact identified. A person's sexual orientation will not affect the support offered or any enforcement actions if required. However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.</p>	<p>to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
			This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.

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

	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Armed Forces Community <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i>	Positive	The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties inclusive of anyone from the Armed Forces Community. A person serving in the Armed Forces will not be negatively affect by the support offered or any enforcement actions if required. However, returning empty	Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes. Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an

		<p>homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.</p> <p>For clarity, the Armed Forces Community should include anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved.</p> <p>Local Authorities and stakeholders need to be aware of their responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant and the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Part 2 of the Act addresses the duties on Local Authorities to provide preventative homelessness services, and other relevant frameworks for good practice.</p> <p>RCTCBC has a strong commitment to supporting the Armed Forces Community and we support the Welsh Government's National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 of the Strategy outlines our promise to maximise the use of current funding models and identify future funding models to increase the number of properties brought back into use. Included in our accompanying action plan is a commitment to exploring</p>	<p>equality monitoring section to see whether the property owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p> <p>People presenting as Homeless are asked whether they served in the armed forces. The data for 2020 – 2021 indicates 3% of homeless applicants stated they did serve in the armed forces. The main reason for</p>
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		<p>with our Registered Social Landlord partners, opportunities to use or adapt specific empty properties for the express purpose of veteran's accommodation. This could be based on the existing Pontypridd Home for Veterans which offers housing and support to ex service personnel who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.</p> <p>The Strategy will contribute to meeting the needs of homeless households by increasing housing supply and providing the local authority with nomination rights where incentives, such as grant or loan assistance has been provided.</p>	<p>homelessness for this group of people is 'prison leaver' (WHO12 Homeless Data Summary).</p>
<p>Carers <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i></p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The Empty Homes Strategy sets out the Council's approach to supporting homeowners to sell or rent their empty properties inclusive of anyone who is a carer.</p> <p>There is no specific impact identified. A person who is a carer will not be negatively affect by the support offered or any enforcement actions if required.</p>	<p>Strategic objective 4 of the Strategy outlines our commitment to undertake further research in our communities and evaluation of existing schemes.</p> <p>Going forward, the Houses into Homes Loans, Empty Property Grants and Empty homes surveys/visits, will include an equality monitoring section to see whether the property</p>

		<p>However, returning empty homes to use will offer additional housing choice to those living or wishing to live in RCT.</p> <p>For clarity, a carer should include anyone of any age, who is providing unpaid care</p>	<p>owner/responsible person, identifies themselves with one or more of the protected characteristics, whether they feel that the empty homes work/Strategy has had a positive, negative or neutral effect on their lives and a comments box to provide any details. This will be periodically monitored by the Housing Strategy Officer to determine if any additional measures are required to support those identified with protected characteristics and to promote a positive impact.</p> <p>This will embed equality monitoring into the service delivery and allow tailored adjustments to be made so that support, advice and funding options become more accessible and relevant.</p>
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If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant please provide an adequate explanation below:

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

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

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

Yes

No

Name: Claire Hutcheon

Position: Head of Housing Strategy & Investment

Date: 31st August 2022

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

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

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

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

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

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single parents and vulnerable families • Pensioners • Looked after children • Homeless people • Students • Single adult households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People living in the most deprived areas in Wales • People with low literacy and numeracy • People who have experienced the asylum system • People misusing substances • People of all ages leaving a care setting • People involved in the criminal justice system 		
<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
Low Income/Income Poverty <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i>	Positive	The principal aim of the Empty Homes Strategies is to help homeowners bring empty properties back into use Rhondda Cynon Taf is the second largest Local Authority in Wales, with a population of 237,700 and 103,300 dwellings. Of these dwellings,92,197 are in the private sector (either owner occupied or privately rented) Strategic priority 1 aims to develop partnerships and vehicles that will enable an increase in the scale of empty properties being brought back into use, whilst Strategic priority 2 aims to maximise the use of current funding and identify further funding models to increase the number of empty	The Empty Homes Strategy has been developed with the aims and objectives contained in the Welsh Government’s “Sustainable Homes – A National Housing Strategy for Wales” and incorporates good practice obtained by working closely with the Welsh Government and other Local Authorities. The latest RCT Local Housing Market Assessment (2022) has indicated an overall shortfall of affordable housing within the Borough, which equates to 263 affordable new homes, per annum for the next 15 years. This shortfall will not be met through new build

		<p>properties that are brought back into use.</p> <p>As at April 2022, there were 2894 empty homes within RCT. This represents 3.13% of the total private housing stock</p> <p>It is always frustrating to see usable houses lying empty when there are residents who do not enjoy the dignity and benefits of having a home.</p> <p>The Strategy acknowledges the need for affordable housing within RCT. Affordable housing is categorised as housing that is provided for sale or rent at below open market prices, and where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market prices.</p> <p>The Welsh Government defines housing need as “households lacking their own housing or living in housing which is inadequate or unsuitable, who are unlikely to be able to meet their housing needs in the housing market without assistance.</p> <p>Whilst most of the new housing will be provided via new build developments, bringing empty homes back into use will offer a more economically viable option for many residents, whilst also contributing significantly to increasing the affordable housing supply.</p>	<p>alone and we have to make better use of our existing housing stock.</p> <p>During this time span, the evidence also strongly suggests that affordability issues will have an even greater impact on resident’s ability to meet increases in prices, both in the rental and purchase market. This will have an obvious impact on low-income households.</p> <p>The LHMA estimates that 6,208 new households will be created within RCT during the next 15 years, 1,951 of which will not be able to afford market-housing costs. This will place further strain on the social housing sector and further reinforce the necessity for investment in the existing housing stock.</p>
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		The Strategy will help RCTCBC respond to the growing need for affordable housing and will have a positive impact on existing communities by improving social and environmental conditions.	
Low and / or No Wealth <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i>	Positive	<p>The principal aim of the Empty Homes Strategies is to help homeowners bring empty properties back into use Rhondda Cynon Taf is the second largest Local Authority in Wales, with a population of 237,700 and 103,300 dwellings. Of these dwellings, 92,197 are in the private sector (either owner occupied or privately rented)</p> <p>As at April 2022, there were 2894 empty homes within RCT. This represents 3.13% of the total private housing stock It is always frustrating to see usable houses lying empty when there are residents who do not enjoy the dignity and benefits of having a home.</p> <p>There has been an exponential increase in the growth in demand of people who need help with housing and the current cost of living crisis will only deepen this need.</p> <p>Strategic aim 4 aims to continue to undertake further research in communities and evaluation of existing schemes to understand why there are</p>	<p>The latest RCT Local Housing Market Assessment (2022) has indicated an overall shortfall of affordable housing within the Borough, which equates to 263 affordable new homes, per annum for the next 15 years. This shortfall will not be met through new build alone and we have to make better use of our existing housing stock.</p> <p>Not only are empty homes a drain on Council's resources and a wasted resource in a time of increasing housing need, they are also a cost burden on the owners of the empty properties, many of whom live or reside within RCT</p> <p>The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation is the official measure of deprivation for small areas in Wales. Two of the top 10 most deprived areas are in RCT. These areas, Tylorstown and Penrhiwceiber, contain some of the highest numbers of empty</p>

		<p>high numbers of empty properties concentrated in deprived communities and the correlation between poor housing, health and deprivation.</p> <p>Fuel poverty and energy efficiency schemes go hand in hand with bringing properties back into use. Often the funding options available allow for an “uplift” when the property is being refurbished, which means that solar panels, internal and external insulation and new doors and windows come as a standard improvement. This can offset some of the living costs for households on low income and increase the amount of disposable income available.</p>	<p>properties at a ward level, within Wales.</p> <p>The principal aim of the Empty Homes Strategies is to help homeowners bring empty properties back into use.</p> <p>To date over 200 units of accommodation have been facilitated via the Houses into Homes Scheme and nearly 400 have benefitted or will benefit from the Empty Property Grant. In addition, other schemes such as Homestep Plus has also resulted in additional affordable housing, but also housing, which has often, achieved the maximum energy efficiency ratings.</p>
<p><u>Material Deprivation</u> <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The principal aim of the Empty Homes Strategies is to help homeowners bring empty properties back into use Fuel poverty and energy efficiency schemes often go hand in hand with bring properties back into use. Often the funding options available allow for an “uplift” when the property is being refurbished, which means that solar panels, internal and external insulation and new doors and windows come as a standard improvement.</p>	<p>The RCT Local Housing Market Assessment indicates that the basic annual income required for someone hoping to buy a new build one bed flat would be circa £36,500. The average annual income for residents in RCT is £27,700. The average rental for a 3-bed family home in RCT is £384 weekly for lone parent or couples and the benefit cap is set at £16,400.</p>

		<p>The strategy will continue to build on the work delivered by the housing solutions team which includes sourcing and securing white goods and furniture for new tenancies and the heat and save team for assistance and advice around energy efficiency and bills.</p>	<p>This reinforces the need for affordable housing and a continued emphasis on energy efficiency measures to help with the raising costs of utility bills and the more general cost of living squeeze.</p>
<p><u>Area Deprivation</u> <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Rhondda Cynon Taf is unique. The borough encompasses both semi-rural and urban communities comprising of huge disparities between affluent areas and some of the most deprived communities in Wales. Rhondda Cynon Taf has significant pockets of deprivation. The area has 26 neighbourhoods categorised within the 10% most deprived in Wales. These neighbourhoods are called Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and are populated by approximately 1,600 residents. The issues most affecting neighbourhoods in Rhondda Cynon Taf are high levels of unemployment, income deprivation, poor health, poor housing and educational attainment. The most acute deprivation is to be found in the central and northern valleys, in particular the Rhondda Valley. Such areas pose a significant challenge to the local authority, and in addition to the characteristics outlined above, are also subject to lower levels</p>	<p>The latest RCT Local Housing Market Assessment (2022) has indicated an overall shortfall of affordable housing within the Borough, which equates to 263 affordable new homes, per annum for the next 15 years. This shortfall will not be met through new build alone and we have to make better use of our existing housing stock. The Council in its strategic housing role will continue to undertake further research to understand why some areas of the Borough are blighted by empty homes, taking into consideration both the micro and macroeconomic drivers. It is possible that empty homes in some of our communities are a symptom of other issues, such as economic and social deprivation, and that an area regeneration approach will need to be considered.</p>

		<p>of economic activity, lower levels of house building and both an aging and declining population.</p> <p>The Strategy highlights the need to build on the partnership working that already exists. This includes continuing to work closely with Registered Social Landlords and Cwm Taf Health Board.</p> <p>Strategy priority 4 stresses the need to undertake further research in communities that suffer from high levels of empty homes, and to apply targeted solutions that adopt a holistic approach to the problem. This would include not only improving the built environment but also improving transport links, job opportunities and delivering on other social/economic improvements.</p> <p>Such a targeted approach was evident in the work carried out in the Tylorstown ward to identify empty properties and to target category 1 and 2 health hazards. This work resulted in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 151 boilers and/or heating systems being installed. • 56 Loft insulations completed. • 643 Housing interventions <p>The strategy also links in with the identified Council's Strategic Opportunity Areas and will ensure that</p>	<p>An example of consultation carried out with residents would be the work undertaken at an area-based level in both Tylorstown and Penrhiwceiber. The aim is to carry out proactive housing interventions to improve housing, health and prosperity. Community consultation included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 501 houses surveys • Community Information Events • Community Health & Well-being events • Family Engagement Events • Cwm Taf Health Board Events. <p>During the Pandemic, a lot of this proactive work within our communities has been severely curtailed.</p>
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		<p>there are improved opportunities within these areas to bring private sector empty homes back into use.</p> <p>The strategy also links in with the Council's tackling climate change strategy and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve EPC ratings on houses benefitting from loans / grants. • Enable residents to improve heating insulation in their homes. • Installing solar panels through heat and save / eco funding. 	
<p>Socio-economic background <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Strategy highlights the need to build on the partnership working that already exists. This includes continuing to work closely with Registered Social Landlords and Cwm Taf Health Board</p> <p>The Strategy's principal aim is to bring properties back into use, thus stimulating the local communities. It will build on the following already achieved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over a 4-year period, 905 empty homes have been brought back into use. • Empty Homes Grant has provided total funding spent or committed of £5.9m 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houses into Homes Loan has spent or committed over £4m • The vast majority of the above capital investment has benefitted local builders/tradespersons and has been spent in the building supply chains within RCT. <p>The Strategy highlights the need for a proactive approach and housing interventions in a specific area, tackling not only problems of localised high number of empty properties, but also the root causes. Below is the link to the assessment carried out at the end of the scheme and cost benefit analysis of savings to both the local authority and the wider community.</p> <p>Shortcut to: W:\HOUSING STRATEGY\Housing and Health\Housing and Health Action Areas 2014\Health Impact Assessment AFD edit.docx</p>	
<p>Socio-economic disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Strategy's aims are targeted to bringing empty properties back into use. This will benefit all residents of RCT regardless of their protected characteristics or socio economic standing.</p>	<p>The latest RCT Local Housing Market Assessment (2022) has indicated an overall shortfall of affordable housing within the Borough, which equates to 263 affordable new homes, per annum for the next 15 years. This shortfall</p>

<p><i>vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>		<p>The Strategy aims to increase the homes that are affordable for all residents, and focuses on energy efficiency measures to alleviate the worst impacts of the cost of living crisis. New housing developments will also be built to meet assessed housing need as identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment and by establishing a healthy Social Housing Grant(SHG) development programme.</p>	<p>will not be met through new build alone and we have to make better use of our existing housing stock</p>
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SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

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

N/A

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

N/A

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

The data use in this report can be found in the RCT Local Housing Market Assessment, RCT Warm Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy, RCT Housing & Health Impact Assessment (Tylorstown) , RCT Civica APP system, Welsh government Housing Statistics.

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

Stakeholders have been engaged in the development of the aims and objectives of the Strategy via the Landlord Forums, Satisfaction Questionnaires and Questionnaires for service users. Groups engaged include.

- RCT Landlords
- Registered Social Landlords
- Housing Support grant Providers
- Cwm Taf Health Board
- Internal RCT Departments
- Empty Property Operational Group

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

Yes

No

SECTION 5 – MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 6 – REVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 7 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL

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

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

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

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

SECTION 8 – AUTHORISATIONS

Lead Officer:

Name: Claire Hutcheon

Position: Head of Housing Strategy & Investment

Date: 31/08//2022

I recommend that the proposal:

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

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name: Derek James

Position: Service Director, Prosperity & Development

Date:

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