

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	16 September 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen City Empty Homes Policy
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/21/189
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Derek McGowan
REPORT AUTHOR	Mel Booth
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of Aberdeen City Council's Empty Homes Policy.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Approve the Aberdeen City Empty Homes Policy which can be found at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Instruct Chief Officer – Early Intervention and Community Empowerment to provide an annual update report to Operational Delivery Committee in relation to empty homes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council is committed to bringing residential empty properties back into use in response to the negative impact unoccupied homes have on communities. One of the strategic outcomes of the Aberdeen City Local Housing Strategy 2018-2023 is to provide an adequate supply of housing across all tenures and to make sure that homes are the right size, type and location that people want to live in with access to suitable services and facilities. Bringing empty homes back into use represents an important and progressive part of this.
- 3.2 The Aberdeen City Empty Homes Policy sets out the detail on how the Council will work with owners to help them to bring privately owned empty residential properties back into use. The aims of the policy are to:

- Work with owners of empty homes to bring them back into residential use.
- Work with owners of empty homes to match existing housing supply with housing demand in the city through the Matchmake to Rent and Matchmake to Sell schemes.
- Ensure there is a coordinated approach between Council services to tackle empty homes.
- Continue to raise awareness of issues relating to empty homes in Aberdeen City.

3.3 An Empty Homes Officer was recruited on a two-year temporary basis in October 2018 to reflect the changing requirements of empty homes across the city and to ensure empty homes are brought back into use. The post was initially funded on a 50:50 basis with kick-starter funding from the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership. In October 2020, City Growth & Resource Committee agreed to fund the Empty Homes Officer post on a permanent basis using Council Tax Second Homes funds.

3.4 Some of the highlights of the work carried out by the Empty Homes Service include:

- Working with landlords and letting agents across the city to “match” people from our housing waiting lists with owners/letting agents of empty private rented sector properties through the Council’s Matchmake to Rent Scheme.
- National recognition when the service won the Best Empty Homes Partnership award which recognises the team that has made an outstanding contribution to reducing the number of empty homes.
- Working with Aberdeen Cyrenians to bring empty homes back into use for people who may otherwise have been homeless, through their “Settled Homes for All” project which is the establishment of a social lettings’ agency.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	The number of empty homes affects the supply of housing.	L	The Empty Homes Officer works with owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use.
Compliance	Not applicable		
Operational	Provision of housing is a priority for residents of Aberdeen City. Failure to ensure there is an adequate supply may result in more people seeking to be housed by the council.	H	The Empty Homes Officer works with owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use.
Financial	Not applicable		
Reputational	Failure to work with owners to bring empty homes back into use may harm the Council's reputation when the property causes housing blight.	H	A cross service group to deal with long standing empty homes has been established.
Environment / Climate	Bringing existing homes back into use has a positive impact on carbon reduction. Failure to effectively implement the policy may result in supply of housing that is not necessary.	L	The Empty Homes Officer works with owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use.

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The proposals within this have no impact on the Council Delivery Plan.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposal within this report supports the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 – 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026. Carrying out repairs and maintenance to homes contributes to the local economy by keeping people in work.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposal within this report supports the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 11 - Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026. Living in good quality housing contributes to improved health and wellbeing outcomes.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 14 – Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate. It takes more than 50 tonnes of CO2 to build an average UK house, therefore bringing empty homes back into use also contributes to carbon reduction through making better use of existing housing stock.
Regional and City Strategies	The proposals within this report have no impact on the Regional and City Strategies.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	Not applicable.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	DPIA completed.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Not applicable.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Aberdeen City Empty Homes Policy.

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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