

Appendix D - Empty Homes Action Plan 2026 -2031

Objective 1 - To maintain accurate information on empty homes in the district

Action Point	Action	Success Criteria/Outcomes	Priority - High, Medium, Low	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource Implications
1.1	To maintain a comprehensive database across all empty homes categories, comprising of council tax information, investigations, complaints and referrals	The creation of a managed and maintained database providing a prioritised list of empty homes for action, along with an overview of all empty homes in Huntingdonshire.	High	01/4/26	Ongoing	Within existing resources
1.2	To risk assess and score priority cases of empty homes, and identify routes for proactive enforcement	A managed, risk assessed empty home database that generates a prioritised list of empty homes for action.	High	01/4/26	Ongoing	Within existing resources

Objective 2 - To raise awareness of empty homes and promote the strategy

Action Point	Action	Success Criteria/Outcomes	Priority – High, low, medium	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource Implications
2.1	To promote the strategy and benefits of bringing empty homes back into use within HDC - to other departments and elected members.	To highlight the issues presented by empty homes, and promote the successes and benefits of bringing empty homes back into use via social media, podcasts, information sessions and HDC website.	Medium	01/4/26	Ongoing	Within existing resources
2.2	To promote the Strategy and benefits of bringing empty homes back into use within the wider community.	To promote the successful stories via social media and highlight issues surrounding empty homes, and call on empty home owners to engage with the service.	High	01/4/26	Ongoing	Within existing resources

Objective 3 - Provide advice, assistance and guidance to landlords and property owners to prevent properties from becoming long term problematic empties.

Action Point	Action	Success Criteria/Outcomes	Priority – High, low, medium	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource Implications
3.1	To explore new and develop existing options and opportunities to support empty home owners, and promote appropriately	To develop a suite of options for empty home owners, and ensure that all avenues and opportunities to offer support and assistance are explored.	Medium	01/4/2026	Ongoing	Within existing resources
3.2	To maintain the Empty Homes pages on HDC website, ensuring all guidance, options and offers of support are up to date	To ensure the first point of contact and information source, is up to date and accurate to encourage engagement and approaches from empty homes owners	Medium	01/4/2026	Ongoing	Within existing resources

3.3	To develop and pilot a grant scheme to support empty home owners bringing properties back into use.	To ensure grant scheme is piloted and refined to maximise opportunities to support empty home owners.	High	01/4/2026	Ongoing	Dedicated budget Officer time within existing resources
3.4	To work with districts, post Local Government Reorganisation to explore the viability of social enterprise scheme.	To establish if a social enterprise lending scheme would be a suitable tool to support bringing empty homes back into use.	Low	01/6/2028	01/07/2029	Officer time with existing resources Budget requirement

Objective 4 - Reduce the number of long term empty homes in the district and return problematic empty homes back in to use.

Action Point	Action	Success Criteria/Outcomes	Priority – High, Medium, Low	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource Implications
4.1	Investigate and prioritise all complaints and referrals of empty homes, and accurately record and categorise monthly council tax reports	To build the reputation and exposure of the service to the community, follow up with progress on complaints, and to actively pursue problematic empty homes.	High	01/4/2026	Ongoing	Within existing resources
4.2	Regular and persistent engagement with empty homeowners listed on the database, following the three-stage letter process.	To allow every opportunity for empty home owners to engage with the authority, and for records to be updated regularly to ensure accuracy	High	01/4/2026	Ongoing	Within existing resources

4.3	Regularly appraise enforcement options for all prioritised empty homes, and pursue the relevant action when suitable	To pursue enforcement action and to progress with the appropriate tools where there is no reasonable prospect of the property being brought back into use.	Medium	01/1/2027	Ongoing	Within Existing resources
4.4	Implement this strategy to tackle problematic cases, and proactively reduce the numbers of empty homes across the district	To consider and use enforcement powers where support and negotiation have stalled, and bring 10 prioritised problematic empty homes back into use annually	High	01/4/2026	Ongoing	Within existing resources

Objective 5 - To maximise income opportunities including Council Tax and Enforcement Debt Recovery

Action Point	Action	Success Criteria/Outcome	Priority – High, Medium, Low	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource Implications
5.1	Maximise debt recovery opportunities when works in default have been carried out	Identify all opportunities for debt recovery. Pursue all suitable cases in conjunction with colleagues in Legal Services and use Enforced Sale powers where necessary	Medium	01/1/27	Ongoing	Within existing resources
5.2	Maximise Council Tax arrears recovery in relation to empty homes cases, in collaboration with Revenues & Benefits Department	Working with Revenue & Benefits, empty homes with large amounts of council tax arrears are identified and pursued as a priority, to achieve debt recovery	Medium	01/1/27	Ongoing	Within existing resources