



Glasgow City Council

**Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration
City Policy Committee**

**Report by George Gillespie, Executive Director of
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability**

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Item 6

22nd April 2025

Empty Homes Action Plan - Update

Purpose of Report:

To update on the progress of the Glasgow's Empty Homes Action Plan.

Recommendations:

That Committee

1. consider the contents of this report.
2. note that Glasgow's Empty Homes strategy and action plan have been incorporated within the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 with an annual update on progress being presented to Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☒ consulted: Yes ☐ No ☒

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1. Background and Strategic Context

- 1.1 In March 2021 the Scottish Government published Scotland's first long-term national strategy '[Housing to 2040](#)'. The priorities identified for empty homes are as follows:
- Work with local authorities to audit empty homes and determine those that should be brought back into use and support the work of the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership.
 - To give councils the powers they need to regulate and charge owners appropriately for homes lying empty and ensure that they have the mechanisms to bring them back into productive use
 - Create a support package for homeowners in trouble to help them stay in their home if that is right for them and to prevent homes falling into disrepair or becoming empty in the first place
 - Establish a new fund for local authorities to apply to in order to bring empty homes and potential empty homes back into residential use and convert suitable empty commercial properties in town centres. This fund will be flexible and adaptable allowing local authorities to purchase the homes themselves for use as affordable housing or provide grants to private owners to renovate the home on the condition that the home is rented out at an affordable rent for a set period of time.
- 1.2 In November 2021 in response to the Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 document the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership (SEHP) in collaboration with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) published its paper 'Why Empty Homes Matter' the aim of which was to further develop the work of local authorities on empty homes through an awareness campaign to highlight the benefits of empty homes work. [FINAL-Why-Empty-Homes-Matter-March-2022.pdf \(emptyhomespartnership.scot\)](#)
- 1.3 [A review of Glasgow's Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2022](#) was approved by the Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee on 30th May 2023 and an [Empty Homes Action Plan - Update](#) was presented to committee on the 23rd April 2024.
- 1.4 Glasgow's Empty Homes strategy and action plan is now incorporated within the [Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028](#) which was approved by the City Administration Committee on the 18th May 2023.

- 1.5 Statistics taken from Council Tax records across Scotland at September 2024 identified a total of 43,538 properties empty for 6 months or more, with 31,596 of these properties being empty for 12 months or more.
[Second homes and empty properties in September 2024 - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/second-homes-and-empty-properties-in-september-2024/pages/2/)
- 1.6 The Scottish Government announced in 2023 that local authorities will be able to increase the amount of council tax paid on second homes from April 2024. Councils now have the power to charge up to double the full rate of council tax on second homes bringing this into line with the premium charged on long-term empty homes which are lying empty for more than 12 months. Glasgow will apply the premium charge to Second Homes from the 1st April 2025. Council Tax records at 31st March 2025 show that 406 properties are recorded as second homes.

2. Empty Homes Statistics

- 2.1 At 28th February 2025 Council Tax records showed that there was a total of 3030 non-exempt long term empty homes in Glasgow, lying empty for more than 6 months with 1805 of these being empty for more than 12 months. In addition to the number of homes lying empty for more than 6 months there was a further 828 newbuild properties that have been entered on council tax records in the past six months most of which are located in the city centre. There are also properties contained in the list where the viability of investment is being considered, so will not be targeted for bringing back into use at this time.
- 2.2 The length of time that these long-term empty homes have been empty is shown in figure 2 below. Figure 3 shows the long term empty properties broken down by Ward.

Figure 2: The duration breakdown for Glasgow's empty homes

Duration	Number of Empty Homes
< 6 Months	10
6-12 Months	1215
1-2 years	784
2-5 years	489
5-10 years	335
>10 years	197
TOTAL	3030

*This figure does not contain newbuild properties

Figure 3: The breakdown of long term empty homes by Ward

Ward Number	Number of Empty Homes
1 - Linn	95
2 - Newlands/Auldburn	82
3 - Greater Pollok	79
4 - Cardonald	120
5 - Govan	220
6 - Pollokshields	145
7 - Langside	181
8 - Southside Central	234
9 - Calton	125
10 - Anderston/City/Yorkhill	283
11 - Hillhead	157
12- Victoria Park	103
13 - Garscadden/Scotstounhill	99
14 - Drumchapel/Anniesland	93
15 - Maryhill	63
16 - Canal	153
17 - Springburn/Royston	108
18 - East Centre	122
19 - Shettleston	125
20 - Baillieston	63
21 - North East	60
22 - Dennistoun	132
23 - Partick East/Kelvindale	188
TOTAL	3030

- 2.3 Figure 3 above outlines that ward 10, which covers the City Centre out to Anderston/City/Yorkhill area, has the highest number of long term empty properties. This figure, as explained above, does not contain newbuild properties which Empty homes officers will monitor and engage with the developers for updates on sales/letting information.
- 2.4 The focus for Empty Homes Officers remains on properties which are empty for more than 12 months. Scottish Government figures show that in September 2024 empty homes lying empty for more than 12 months, across Scotland, had increased by 12% from the previous year. At April 2024 Glasgow recorded 1845 homes which had been empty for more than 12 months. The figure at the end of February 2025 was 1805, a reduction of only 1.6%, despite bringing back 546 empty properties back into use over the same time period. This indicates the scale of the challenge.

3. Housing Priorities and Empty Homes Action Plan (EHAP)

- 3.1 Residential Repurposing and Empty Homes is identified as one of the 10 strategic and crosscutting critical success factors for delivering housing priorities outlined in the Local Housing Strategy (LHS).
- 3.2 The Glasgow City Centre Living Strategy (2024-2030), which has been incorporated into the Local Housing Strategy, contains 6 key objectives two of which are:
 - To increase the city centre's population from just over 20,000 to 40,000 by 2035.
 - To find productive outcomes for vacant commercial space, with a particular focus on upper floors.
- 3.3 The repurposing of vacant buildings and former office accommodation for housing in the City Centre is a key action within the EHAP. A City Centre Development Team Housing Sub-Group has been established and a number of potential key housing sites have been identified. West of Scotland Housing Association is currently taking forward our first housing pilot project at St Enoch Square where the vacant upper storey floors will be converted into 26/28 flats. The planning application is due to be submitted within the next few weeks with a proposed site start in 2025/26.
- 3.4 Smaller bespoke conversions are also due to be taken forward in the coming months in Trongate and Duke Street (at the corner of High Street). A partnership approach involving Glasgow City Council, City Property, the Wheatley Group and Health and Social Care Partnership will see former vacant upper storey premises being brought back into residential use for social housing and will assist in providing accommodation for homeless families.
- 3.5 The Empty Homes Team continue to work successfully with Registered Social Landlords (RSL) partners in acquiring empty flats or shops that can be converted into housing, in pre- 1919 tenement properties, in order to facilitate common repair works and enable factoring arrangements to be put in place. In addition, action is being targeted at bringing larger family homes back into use which are long term empty and impacting negatively on adjoining properties and causing environmental blight. Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) will continue to be promoted where there is no opportunity to acquire a property on a voluntary basis. Committee authority has been obtained to promote a further 5 CPOs across the city since our last report in April 2024 bringing the total number up to 70. Of this total, 41 CPOs have been completed and properties transferred to RSLs with a

further 22 being the subject of a voluntary sale or owners occupying the property. 7 CPOs are ongoing.

- 3.6 The Strategic Housing Acquisition Strategy has been reviewed to enable RSL partners to better target the acquisition of empty private sector stock for social housing use, delivering on a number of LHS priorities including the provision of larger family accommodation which is in short supply.
- 3.7 The Strategic Agreement between the Council and Wheatley Group includes commitments to a targeted area-based approach to tackling empty homes in Wheatley Group areas of operation by accessing acquisition funding to support the acquisition empty homes and repurposing projects either on a voluntary basis or via compulsory purchase.
- 3.8 The Council has continued to work with RSLs to help tackle the problem of long term empty voids in their stock. In April 2024 council tax data showed that RSLs had a combined total of 641 non-exempt long term empty properties. At 28th February 2025 this figure had reduced to 473. With additional funding provided by the Scottish Government in October 2024, to help with the housing emergency response, the Council has provided financial support to help tackle long term empty void properties which were requiring significant investment due to their condition to enable them to be brought back into use. Many of these properties have now been repaired and have been let to homeless households. With this targeting of resources, long term RSL empty homes will come back into effective use over the next couple of months.
- 3.9 Key Empty Homes Targets identified in Empty Homes Review report submitted to committee on the 30th May 2023 were as follows:
- *‘To engage with at least 1500 owners of Long-Term Empty properties annually through a variety of means including the issuing of monthly mailshots to owners’.* Empty Homes Officers have engaged with a total 4456 owners from 1st April 2024 to 28th February 2025. This is a significant increase on previous year’s figures. A letter was issued in January 2025 to every owner with a non-exempt long term empty property. 579 enquiries were received as a consequence and to date 13 cases have been closed off as a direct result of this intervention. Officers have now been provided with updated contact details for many of these owners with whom they will continue to engage.
 - *To bring a minimum of 1800 empty properties back into use over the 5 year period of the Glasgow’s Local Housing Strategy.’* From 1st April

2023 up to 28th February 2025, 1125 empty homes have been brought back into use.

- 3.10 The second Empty Homes workshop was held on 27th November 2024, where Elected Members, RSL partners and other relevant stakeholders were invited to attend. Officers provided an update on the Empty Homes Action Plan and discussed the further use of Compulsory Purchase Powers and the introduction of a grants scheme to support owners in bringing their properties back into use. Officers received positive feedback and delegates were supportive of these actions being taken forward.

4. Actions and Next Steps.

- 4.1 During the course of the past 12 months, the Empty Homes team has further updated the EH database to increase the number of reporting outcomes. The website has been updated and there is now an email contact addresses for circa 2,500 owners of empty homes. The reporting of empty homes and owners seeking advice has now been made easier via our website [Empty Homes - Glasgow City Council](#)
- 4.2 Over the period of our Empty Homes Strategy April 2019 to March 2022, a total of 677 empty homes were brought back into use. From 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 a total of 454 empty homes were brought back into use and from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 the number increased to 579. In the last financial year 2024/2025 a total of 616 empty homes have been brought back into use. With almost 1200 empty properties having been brought back into use in the past 2 years, we remain on track to surpass the 1800 target set in our current Local Housing Strategy.
- 4.3 A national CPO 'Reform Practitioner Advisory Group', established in March 2024, is planning to present findings and hold a public consultation with stakeholders later this year. The promotion of CPOs remains a key action for the Council and officers will welcome a streamlined process.
- 4.4 A new Strategic Acquisitions Officer was appointed in October 2024 to oversee all RSL acquisitions and co-ordinate funding from the Council's Affordable Housing Supply budget. All acquisitions will provide social housing for homeless households with a particular focus on larger family homes. Around 20% of the acquisition budget has been targeted at bringing RSL voids back into use with 90% of these voids being classed as long term empty. All void properties brought back into use will be allocated to homeless persons. The postholder is also working closely with the Empty Homes team, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), other housing teams and partnering RSLs across the city to identify long term

empty properties which will need CPOs to be promoted to bring them back into use for social housing.

- 4.5 The Council's Statement (Scheme) of Assistance (SOA) as agreed by the Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee on the 11th March 2025 [Committee Information - Submission Documents](#) has recently been updated to reflect Council priorities going forward and highlight the growing need to tackle the problems of long-term empty properties. The Council will consider taking statutory action where empty homes are impacting negatively on adjoining properties and a strategy will be put in place to bring these properties back into use.
- 4.6 Within the Empty Homes Action Plan there is a commitment to investigate the use of grants to bring more empty homes back into use. Within the updated SOA the Council may now consider applications for grant from the Private Sector Housing Grant (PSHG) programme, targeting properties which having been lying empty for 12 months or more. The full details of the scheme will be published on our website. Grant assistance will not exceed 50% of approved costs.
- 4.7 The Scottish Government has advised that Compulsory Sales Orders (CSOs) remain the subject of consideration. Officers estimate that if CSOs are introduced and give local authorities the necessary powers then this could be an effective mechanism for tackling up to 50% of the long term empty homes in Glasgow. Officers will continue to press for these powers.
- 4.8 The repurposing of vacant buildings/upper storey floors in the city centre remains a key priority within the EHAP. A list of key sites is being progressed and the aim is to identify funding opportunities for properties which would be suitable for conversion and brought back into use for affordable housing. The Sauchiehall Street Culture and Heritage District will become the next area of focus. Officers from NRS Housing Services are working closely with colleagues in Glasgow Life on a future funding bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund targeting this area. In addition the Council has recently introduced funding for a number of city centre initiatives [City Centre Funding - Glasgow City Council](#) which will help to support our housing proposals.
- 4.9 Our Empty Homes team continue to work with colleagues in legal services on agreeing a procedure for promoting CPOs where there is no suitable RSL partner available to enter into a 'back to back agreement'. Officers are exploring different scenarios for promoting a CPO over an empty property/building; where the council is keen for the property to be brought back into use and would look to enter into a back to back agreement with a

‘preferred development partner’ or where an approach is received direct from a developer or other interested party. Where there are barriers to bringing properties back into use for social housing the alternative would be for the property to be brought back into use for owner occupation or for private let at an affordable or market rent. These considerations will also be applicable where a property is targeted for improvement for sale. CPOs will also be considered to support our repurposing strategy in the city centre.

- 4.10 Empty homes which are causing environmental blight in local communities remain an area of focus. Joint working between Empty Homes officers and Environmental Health colleagues have delivered some positive results, however, in order to make any significant impact in this area, the work on CPOs will require to be progressed and CSOs will require to be introduced.
- 4.11 Appendix 1 is attached showing that the progress of the Action Plan.
- 4.12 Further outcomes will be reported back annually through performance updates of the Local Housing Strategy.

5. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	Funding required for acquisitions is met from the Affordable Housing Supply Programme budget. Works and grant funding for empty homes will be met from PSHG or other Council budgets identified for this area of work.
<i>Legal:</i>	Support is provided by Legal Services with the promotion of compulsory purchase orders.
<i>Personnel:</i>	Staffing will be met from existing resources.
<i>Procurement:</i>	Where applicable, works and services would be procured from current frameworks which are in place.

Council Strategic Plan:	The measures outlined in the report will contribute towards the following Grand Challenges and Missions.
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Grand Challenge 4 – Enable staff to deliver Essential Services in a Sustainable, Innovative and Efficient way for our Communities:

Mission 1 – Create safe, clean and thriving neighbourhoods.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.

Bringing empty homes back into use is a priority within the Local Housing Strategy which is subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

There are no potential equality impacts due to this report.

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.

Key policy actions within the report will help tackle housing pressures in Glasgow and support vulnerable groups.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

Glasgow's Housing Strategy supports the following themes identified in Glasgow's Climate Plan and this report supports the following specific actions:

Action 8: Continue to work with Scottish Government to maximise funding for Area Based schemes to invest in improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty in private sector housing.

Action 9: Prepare an investment improvement plan for older (pre1919) tenements and private sector housing

Action 39: Encourage and enable retrofit of all existing owner-occupied housing to EPC level C or above.

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

There is evidence that building a new home creates more than three times the level of greenhouse gas emissions than renovating an empty property.

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

Over the course of the housing strategy it is estimated that there will be a saving of 63,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

No data protection impacts identified.

5. Recommendations :

Committee is asked to:-

1. consider the contents of this report.
2. note that Glasgow's Empty Homes strategy and action plan have been incorporated within the Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 with an annual update on progress being presented to Economy, Housing, Transport and Regeneration City Policy Committee

Appendix 1- Empty Homes Action Plan Progress 2023/2024

Item	Action/Issue	Description	Outcomes	Progress	Timescale
1.	Property Repurposing for the City Centre	The Repurposing of vacant buildings, within the City Centre to bring back into use as housing.	<p>Increase the supply of housing in addition to tackling existing residential empty homes. Links to the City Centre Strategy 2024-2030 and City Centre Living Strategy/LHS 2023-2028.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the residential population of the City Centre to 40,000 by 2035 	<p>The working group for the Residential Repurposing Action Plan for the City Centre has been integrated into the City Centre Development Team and progress is reported into this group.</p> <p>A Development Team Housing sub-group has been established to determine key sites for housing in the city centre and work with partners to deliver this.</p> <p>A pilot affordable housing project within the City Centre is currently being progressed.</p>	Ongoing
2.	Expand our Empty Homes work and align the Strategic Acquisition Programme priorities with Empty Homes outcomes	<p>LHS 2023-28 Action regarding Empty Homes was to review the Empty Homes Strategy and to Expand our Empty Homes work to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> making greater use of compulsory purchase orders, supporting the acquisition of tenements by RSLs, improving the performance of factors and enabling whole-block retrofits commitment to a targeted area-based approach to tackling empty homes in Wheatley Group areas of operation <p>The Strategic Acquisition programme will be reviewed to enable RSL partners to better target the acquisition of empty private sector stock for social housing use which delivers on LHS priorities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing affordable housing supply in priority areas across the city; enabling investment and facilitating common repairs in tenement properties; providing suitable accommodation for larger households and homeless persons in areas where there are 	The key outcome will be to increase the housing supply by bringing more empty homes back into use .	<p>Since 2019, authority has been sought from Committee to promote 70 Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) across the city.</p> <p>Since 2017 Glasgow has brought back 2449 empty homes. From 1st April 2023 until 28th February 2025, the number of empty properties brought back into use was 1125.</p> <p>The new Strategic Acquisitions Officer post was filled in October 2024 and the postholder oversees all acquisitions and the co-ordination of funding from the Council's Affordable Housing Supply budget. The officer is working closely with Empty Homes officers, HSCP colleagues, Investment team officers and partnering RSLs across the city to bring empty properties back into use for social housing, targeting properties in designated priority areas and properties to meet the needs of priority groups such as the homeless and larger families.</p>	Ongoing

		shortages and limited options for development.			
Item	Action/Issue	Description	Outcomes	Progress	Timescale
3.	To tackle environmental blight	To address the concerns of owners staying in properties which are affected by empty homes and in order to tackle environmental blight and improve the amenity of neighbourhoods.	Empty Homes officers will continue to work closely with Environmental Health, Planning and Building Control colleagues in order to tackle these issues and take corrective action where appropriate.	A further example of this was a CPO which has recently been promoted by the Contracts and Property Committee for a large, terraced house in Ibrox Terrace which is a long-term empty property causing neighbourhood blight and was impacting negatively on adjoining properties. This matter was first raised by colleagues in Environmental Health due to the water ingress affecting the adjoining property. Due to the poor condition of the property, officers from Private Sector Housing have served a works notice on the estate to make the building structurally stable and wind/watertight. Officers are also working with partner RSL in the area in order to take forward the CPO to bring this property back into use as a family home.	Ongoing
4.	Other Initiatives	<p>Officers will continue to explore a range of other initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pilot for the improvement of empty properties for sale and/or use of other CPO powers to bring back properties into use where there are no RSL partners for 'back-to-back' agreements. the provision of grants to owners to bring redundant properties back into use Officers will continue to provide the evidence to Scottish Government to support the case for additional powers such as compulsory sales orders to help tackle those long-term empty properties where currently it is difficult to find a solution. 	The key outcome will be to increase the housing supply by bringing more empty homes back into use at pace.	<p>In the absence of Scottish Government funding we now propose to pilot grant assistance for empty homes through our PSHG programme, targeting properties which having been lying empty for 12 months or more. Once the full details of the scheme have been agreed they will be published on our website. Grant assistance will not exceed 50% of approved costs.</p> <p>Officers are continuing to work on procedures with colleagues in legal services on how a pilot could be progressed if the Council was to enter into a back to back agreement with a 'preferred development partner' following the promotion of a CPO to enable empty properties, where there are barriers to bringing these back into use for social housing, to be brought back into use for owner occupation or at an affordable or market rent. This also applies to properties which may be targeted for improvement for sale.</p> <p>A CPO 'Reform Practitioner Advisory group' are continuing to meet and the group hope to present their findings and hold a public consultation with stakeholders later this year.</p>	Ongoing

				<p>The Scottish Government has advised that Compulsory Sales Orders (CSOs) are still under consideration. No timescales have been provided in relation to this. Officers will continue to pursue.</p>	
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