

## **COPELAND EMPTY HOMES POLICY 2012 - 2015**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Councillor George Clements  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Julie Betteridge, Head of Regeneration & Community  
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### **WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND RESIDENTS**

The Empty Homes Policy is intended to be a component of the overarching Housing Strategy for the Borough and has the same timeline to 2015. It deals in detail with an enduring issue to which the Housing Strategy refers and is consistent with the overall objective, to “ensure the housing available in the Borough supports the health, safety, welfare, sustainability and distinct economic and social ambitions of our communities.”

### **WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE? (eg Key Decision, Policy recommendation for Full Council, at request of Council,etc.)**

**The Empty Homes Policy has been considered by the Strategic Housing Panel who have referred the document to the Executive for consideration and endorsement.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Executive are requested to endorse the Empty Homes Policy attached as Appendix A.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Full Council adopted the Copeland Housing Strategy, 2011 – 2015 in June 2011.
- 1.3 The strategy comprises four overall objectives:
  - a) Facilitate the right housing offer to support economic growth and community sustainability
  - b) Make the best use of existing stock
  - c) Enable people to access the housing and support they need
  - d) Delivering strategic outcomes by an integrated partnership approach

(mainly through the Copeland Housing Partnership)

## **2. PROPOSALS**

2.1 Beneath the objective in 1.3(b) above, the strategy states the following.

“Build on findings from the empty homes research to develop an Empty Homes Strategy for Copeland that might include:

- identifying long-term empty homes and the reasons for them;
- targeted approaches to owners to facilitate action;
- grants/loans to bring empty homes back into use as affordable housing;
- enforcement actions where empty homes cause a neighbourhood nuisance;
- secure new empty homes funding to support dedicated Empty Homes Officer (possibly through use of new homes bonus).”

2.2 Members are asked to note that the list above was deliberately indicative, reflecting an unstable financial environment. Actions chosen during the lifetime of the strategy to 2015 will essentially depend on circumstances prevailing at the time, particularly resources.

2.3 Appendix A is a policy rather than the stand-alone strategy that was envisaged in June 2011 when the Copeland Housing Strategy was presented to Full Council. This is because, with hindsight, officers recommend that it should fall within the overarching housing strategy for the Borough.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

3.1 No alternatives to a policy were considered but the document itself considers varied alternative options for achieving desired outcomes. This is because we are still operating in an uncertain economic climate and subject to changes in government funding for housing generally and, in particular, for returning empty homes to occupation.

## **4. STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS**

4.1 The Monitoring Officer's comments are: The proposed policy is a robust approach for minimising the impact of empty homes on communities in the Borough.

4.2 The Section 151 Officer's comments are: The report referenced in 2.1 the types of action which could be undertaken to deliver this policy and refers

to need to further develop a costed plan designed around available resources. The source of this funding will need to be identified.

- 4.3 EIA comments are: promoting equality and working to eliminate discrimination were core elements in the design and construction of the Copeland Housing Strategy of which the empty homes policy is a component.

## **5. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?**

- 5.1 The empty homes policy will be project managed by the service manager supported on specific elements by other staff including Head of Regeneration and Community and Director of Services. Existing project management systems will be used alongside reporting regularly to the Strategic Housing Panel and our internal Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.2 The empty homes policy, within the Copeland Housing Strategy, is an element of the Strategic Housing Service Plan, 2012/13 and is subject to the risk assessment and management outlined in that plan.

## **6 WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?**

- 6.1 The number of empty homes returned to occupation.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix A – Copeland Empty Homes Policy, 2012 - 2015

### **List of Background Documents:**

Copeland Housing Strategy, 2011 – 2015.

Copeland Borough Council: Private Sector Housing Stock Condition Survey, April 2012.



# **Copeland Empty Homes Policy 2012 - 2015**

## COPELAND EMPTY HOMES POLICY

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## COPELAND EMPTY HOMES POLICY

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The overall principle of the Empty Homes Policy is to wherever possible, bring empty homes back into residential use. This sits within the overarching aim of the main Copeland Housing Strategy, which is to ensure that the housing available in the borough supports the distinct economic ambitions of our communities as effectively as possible.
- 1.2 The key Policy priorities are:
- 1) A general preference to return empty homes to residential use, except where this is not possible due to economic, technical or social factors, and
  - 2) To give priority to dealing with empty homes on a targeted basis, particularly regarding homes which have a significant negative impact on the local community.
- 1.3 The Empty Homes Policy Action Plan covers the period 2012-15 and sets out 33 actions under the following key action points:
- **Action Point One:** Instigate a corporate approach to empty homes, monitor and report the characteristics of the empty homes sector, and take appropriate action
  - **Action Point Two:** Unlock the potential of empty homes to contribute to meeting the housing needs of the borough
  - **Action Point Three:** Help owners to find residents for empty homes

The complete Action Plan is included in Appendix 1 C, from page 11.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This Empty Homes Policy establishes a framework for intervention to address the issue of empty homes within the Borough. The Policy is designed to fully support the Council's wider corporate objectives. At its core it has been designed to complement the Council's housing strategy<sup>1</sup> to support economic growth within the Borough. It is based on the implementation of a targeted approach towards empty homes and intended to utilize both statutory and discretionary powers to achieve effective solutions.

2.2 In Copeland the Empty Homes Policy has been developed in response to the key issues facing the Council. It has been drawn up at a time of considerable and rapid change both within national and local contexts bringing new strategic considerations for the Council. As part of its response the Council has developed a new Housing Strategy. The Empty Homes Policy has therefore been influenced by not only this strategy but also has cognisance of regional and sub regional strategic objectives.

2.3 Local housing authorities in England and Wales have a statutory duty to monitor housing conditions within their area and to take appropriate measures to deal with unsatisfactory housing. Accurate and up to date housing market intelligence is key to discharging this duty and to the development of effective housing strategies. Within this context, a thorough understanding of the main characteristics of empty homes is essential because empty homes may:

- 1. Provide a productive untapped resource to meet the Borough's housing needs.**
- 2. Have an adverse impact on local communities.**
- 3. Indicate serious movement in housing trends and resident aspirations.**
- 4. Impact the extent of housing market values and demand.**

2.4 Copeland Borough Council has undertaken research to understand the characteristics of empty homes. The data has underpinned the strategic approach to investment in returning empty homes to use set out in this policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Copeland Housing Strategy 2011 to 2015

2.5 The benefits of bringing empty homes back into use are:

- ◆ **Potential income from letting or selling**
- ◆ **Increase in housing supply and choice**
- ◆ **Minimising the negative impact imposed on the neighbourhoods**
- ◆ **Encouraging safer and sustainable communities**
- ◆ **Increased Council Tax revenue & New Homes Bonus resource**
- ◆ **Reduced expenditure on security, dilapidation costs, maintenance and clearing of fly tipping or other criminal activity**

### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 In looking at empty homes it is necessary to distinguish between those which are short term 'transitional vacants' and those which are longer term 'problematic vacants'. The former are homes which are currently empty because of changes in occupancy e.g. for sale or letting, or are undergoing modernisation and/or repair. These empty homes are anticipated to be brought back into use and have been empty for less than six months. Homes which have been empty for more than six months are more likely to be associated with other issues preventing immediate occupation e.g. disrepair or dereliction. These are "problematic vacants."

3.2 Within Copeland, a survey completed in the last quarter of 2010 estimated that 1364 dwellings were empty, representing 4.0% of the total housing stock. Of these 958 dwellings or 70.2% had been empty for over 6 months. This figure excluded holiday lets, residential mobile homes and other temporary non-permanent structures e.g. beach huts, whether they were used as permanent residences or not. It included social housing alongside private sector stock. It is also based on empty homes registered as such on the Council Tax File.

3.3 The 2010 survey identified that empty homes in Copeland exhibit the following key characteristics:

- ◆ **406 homes (29.8%) have been empty under 6 months. 958 (70.2%) have been empty for over 6 months.**
- ◆ **1167 empty homes (85.6%) are houses in type whilst 130 (9.5%) are flats. The remaining 67 empty homes (4.9%) are bungalows.**



- ◆ 872 empty homes (63.9%) are of terraced configuration whilst 382 (28.0%) were semi-detached. 110 empty homes (8.1%) are detached.
- ◆ 722 empty homes (52.9%) were built before 1919 with a further 208 (15.2%) constructed in the inter war period. 267 empty homes (19.6%) were built in the early post war period with 167 (12.3%) built since 1964.
- ◆ 1152 (84.5%) empty homes are privately owned. The remaining 212 (15.5%) empty homes are in the social rented sector.
- ◆ The average estimated outstanding repair cost is £5,731 per vacant dwelling. 106 dwellings require works in excess of £20,000 while a further 187 require between £10,000 and £20,000. 217 require works costing less than £1000.
- ◆ Vacancy rates vary across the 7 Area Forums<sup>2</sup> in Copeland. Frizington, Millom, Cleator Moor and West Lakes exhibit above average rates of vacancy.
- ◆ Rates of transitional vacancy (i.e. vacant under 6 months) are above average in Frizington, Millom, Cleator Moor and Whitehaven Remainder areas.
- ◆ Rates of very long term problematic vacants (i.e. vacant over 5 years) are above average in the West Lakes, Distington, Frizington and Millom areas.

3.4 Numbers of empty homes will be subject to constant fluctuation and surveys are affected by sample sizing and stratification. Vacant dwellings can be difficult to identify with certainty and the most reliable estimates are obtained from a combination of sources including surveys, Council Tax data, the Census and others.

3.5 Research undertaken in other Districts has indicated that Council Tax records on whether dwellings are vacant or not are often inaccurate. There are many reasons but among them is late (or no) notification of changes of circumstances initiated by owners, former owners or those acting on their behalf. A widely admired scheme in Kent (the “No Use Empty” scheme) launched in 2005 found that around 50% of supposed empty homes were not actually vacant.

3.6 The specialized study undertaken by Goose Housing Research in 2010 sought to estimate the total number of empty homes in the Borough regardless of tenure. The following year the Council, in partnership with all other Cumbria District Councils, commissioned a stock condition survey of the private sector (excluding social housing) from Opinion Research Services.

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<sup>2</sup> Area Forums defined in Table 1, Appendix 1

3.7 In April 2012 the estimate of the later survey was that 914 private sector dwellings were vacant in Copeland, 3.4% of the private sector stock. This was lower than the national average of 4.1%. It was further estimated that 702 (2.6%) had been empty for more than 6 months.

#### 4.0 POLICY PRINCIPLES

4.1 The Policy embraces the following general principles:

1. **Recognition that the primary responsibility for maintaining the condition and use of residential property rests squarely with owners.**
2. **At all times pursue a coordinated and consistent corporate approach to send out a clear and unambiguous message to owners.**
3. **The housing market is dynamic and reflects the quality of the local economy. The number of empty homes can change rapidly due to the economic variance. Monitoring the level and characteristics of empty homes is an essential component of housing market intelligence.**
4. **To function at all and to allow residential mobility the housing market needs to include a number of transitional empty homes.**
5. **Any action undertaken by the Council in dealing with empty homes contributes to its wider corporate objectives.**
6. **Recognition that empty homes can represent a wasted resource and can have a negative impact on local communities.**
7. **A preference to return empty homes to residential use unless this cannot be achieved for economic, technical or social reasons.**
8. **That long term empty homes are more likely to exhibit higher multiple symptoms of disrepair, insecurity and vandalism leading to more significant negative impacts on local communities.**

9. That it is not possible to deal effectively with all empty homes in the Borough simultaneously. Effective policy implementation will be based on a targeted approach.
10. A preference to secure remedial solutions through collaboration and joint working using wherever possible incentives and encouragement.
11. Use of enforcement powers be retained and implemented as action of last resort in accordance with the Council's protocols.
12. All actions taken to remedy problems of empty homes are appropriate and deliver best value, having regard to the Council's resources and priorities.
13. Public sector funds in the form of loans will be used where available and if providing value for money. The intention will be to generate a revolving fund into which repaid loans can be recycled.
14. The Council will work with communities and third sector and enable their access to national, regional and local finance.
15. The Council will join with other districts to make partnership bids for resources.
16. The Council will produce an annual delivery plan with targets; monitor performance and review service delivery accordingly.

## **5.0 POLICY PRIORITIES**

5.1 The key priorities for dealing with empty homes in Copeland are:

### **Identifying empty homes and establishing why they are empty**

- i. Identify all empty homes within the Borough, through work with internal and external partners. Identify why the homes are empty and how to resolve reasons which are maintaining this position.

### **Prioritising empty homes for action**

- ii. Prioritise the empty properties for action, considering level of nuisance caused, the condition of the property, length of time empty, whether bringing the property into use can be viable and feasible.
- iii. Give priority for intervention to empty homes on a targeted approach according to an empty property matrix that will include condition, length of vacancy and neighbourhood impact.

#### **Engaging the public** in reporting empty homes

- iv. Publicise the Council's policy on empty homes in the media, on the Council's website and by leaflet distribution to known owners.
- v. Set up mechanisms to encourage the public to report empty homes, particularly those which may not be registered as such on the Council Tax File.

#### **Engaging the owners of empty homes** in bringing them back into use

- vi. Having identified the empty home, trace the owner and make contact. Encourage the owner to consider costs and benefits and to be aware of other relevant issues, such as nuisance and anti-social behaviour.
- vii. Develop a positive approach rather than a confrontational approach with the owner, unless other factors make this impossible – for example serious health & safety issues needing immediate attention.
- viii. Identify the owners own aspirations for the home and assist in developing and enabling them if they offer a realistic solution.

#### Identifying the **most appropriate action** to take forward

- ix. As a last resort consider and implement the most appropriate enforcement option.

#### Identifying **resources** appropriate to tackling the empty homes

- x. Enable the most efficient use of resources available to the Council, utilising best practice advice from other sources including the Empty Homes Agency
- xi. Work wherever possible to maximise the use of government money

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Implementation**

### **Appendix 1 A: Resources**

- 1.A.1 Implementation of the Empty Homes Policy will be the responsibility of the Strategic Housing Team with support as required, from other departments under the general direction of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team.
- 1.A.2 The Council will proactively seek to access external funding where this becomes available and support partners to do this where possible. The Empty Homes Policy Action Plan includes actions on seeking to access funding from government and other sources and supporting partners in their funding bids.

### **Appendix 1 B: Governance**

- 1.B.1 The Empty Homes Policy will be renewed alongside the Copeland Housing Strategy, which covers the period 2011 to 2015.
- 1.B.2 Advisory guidance and monitoring will be undertaken by the Council's Strategic Housing Panel. Progress will be reported to the Executive Committee and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Council's Housing Strategy 2011 to 2015 sets out four strategic objectives supported by a range of key issues and justifications to help economic growth across the Borough. The Empty Homes Policy is designed to assist in the achievement of these objectives with actions identified in support of all relevant key issues and justifications as set out in the following table.

Housing Strategy Objective One: Facilitating the right housing offer to support economic growth			
<b>Empty Homes Policy Action Point One: Instigate a corporate approach to empty homes, monitor and report the characteristics of the empty homes sector, and take appropriate action</b>			
<b>1.1 Facilitate the right supply of new homes</b>			
<b>Action</b>		<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
1.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify all empty homes in the Borough and prioritise for targeted action with the aim of bringing them back into use whether by providing assistance or enforcement (or a combination of both) as appropriate.</li> <li>Support the Whitehaven Foyer Company bid to the National Affordable Housing Programme Empty Homes Community Grants Fund, administered by Tribal, for £30,000 of funding</li> <li>Establish a dialogue with house builders to monitor delays in new housing sales and lettings</li> </ul>	<p>April 2013 and ongoing</p> <p>Community Grant funding allocations to be confirmed by July 2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Copeland Borough Council Housing Services and partners</p> <p>Whitehaven Foyer Company with support from Copeland Borough Council</p>
<b>1.2 Improve the quality of place</b>			
<b>Action</b>		<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
1.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With partners and other housing providers, ensure that where empty homes result from major works, length of vacancy is minimized and safety/security maintained. Ensure that the potential for community disruption is reduced by timely completion.</li> </ul>	April 2013	Copeland Borough Council and partners
1.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and publicise mechanisms for public reporting of empty homes and respond to complaints quickly.</li> </ul>	December 2012	Copeland Borough Council

1.2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-ordinate action taken by all departments in respect of empty homes including notices under various statutory powers (e.g. Environmental Health, Building Control or Planning enforcement)..</li> <li>Respond to the outcome of the bid to the Homes and Communities Agency Clusters of Empty Homes Funding</li> </ul>	<p>by June 2013</p> <p>By June 2012</p>	<p>Copeland Borough Council People and Places Directorate</p> <p>Copeland Borough Council in partnership with two other Cumbria district authorities</p>
1.2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure free access by the public to all relevant data collated on empty homes in the Borough that is not subject to data protection.</li> </ul>	March 2014	Copeland Borough Council
1.2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritise empty homes which have a significant negative impact on the community for intervention. Instigate action to reduce negative impact on local communities where long term solutions are not readily available (e.g. to make empty homes safe and secure)</li> </ul>	ongoing	Copeland Borough Council
1.2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where significant numbers of empty homes are evident consider options for an area based approach.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Copeland Borough Council
<b>1.3 Ensure Sufficient Affordable Housing</b>			
<b>Action</b>		<b>Date</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>
1.3.1	Consider how best the New Housing Bonus scheme could be applied to empty homes.	As per timetable for reviewing New Homes Bonus protocol. Beginning June 2012	Housing Strategy Partnership and communities

1.3.2	Explore opportunities to encourage least cost options (for the Council) to return empty homes to use, through advice and assistance to owners and intending buyers.	Ongoing	Copeland Borough Council & Landlords Forum
1.3.3	Explore the potential for the Registered Providers/Private Landlord sector to acquire empty homes or to provide a management service to the owner.	March 2014	Copeland Borough Council with Registered Providers/ Private Sector Landlords
<b>1.4 Develop the role of the private rented sector</b>			
Action		Date	Lead Partner
1.4.1	When homes are to be brought back into the rental market, negotiate options for nomination rights	Ongoing	Copeland Borough Council and Private Sector Landlords
1.4.2	Consider packages of financial loan support and incentives to bring empty homes up to a satisfactory standard for re-letting	By March 2013	Copeland Borough Council
<b>Housing Strategy Objective Two: Making best use of existing stock</b>			
<b>Empty Homes Policy Action Point Two: To unlock the potential of empty homes to contribute to meeting the housing needs of the borough</b>			
<b>2.1 Focus attention to the energy efficiency of existing stock</b>			
Action		Date	Lead Partner
2.1.1	Promote energy efficiency in all supported improvements to empty homes	Ongoing	Copeland Borough Council



2.2 Reduce the number of empty homes in the borough			
Action		Date	Lead Partner
2.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise awareness of the problems associated with empty homes, support public interest and promote options available.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Copeland Borough Council
2.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an Empty Homes Protocol with the RSL sector (and potentially the Private Rented sector) to set guidelines and targets for re letting and minimising empty homes. Continue to monitor the RSL sector with regard to vacancy rates and re let times to discuss appropriate options for improvement where required.</li> </ul>	Monitor performance quarterly to 2015	Copeland Borough Council, Registered Providers and Landlords Forum
2.2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the other five Cumbria District Councils on the Local Enterprise Partnership Infrastructure proposal for returning long term private sector empty properties to use</li> </ul>	By June 2012	Copeland Borough Council in partnership with the other Cumbria district Councils
2.2.4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set target to reduce the number of empty homes identified in the Council tax file on a snapshot date</li> </ul>	By March 2013	Copeland Borough Council
Housing Strategy Objective Three: Helping people access the housing they need			
Empty Homes Policy Action Point Three: Helping owners to find new residents for empty homes			
3.1 Accessing the support that people need, when they need it			
Action		Date	Lead Partner

3.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the potential for private funding initiatives to bring empty homes into use with banking and financial institutions.</li> <li>Promote incentives that link opportunities to return empty homes to use by target client groups, e.g. older persons, first time buyers, low cost home ownership.</li> </ul>	<p>March 2015</p> <p>March 2015</p>	<p>Copeland Borough Council</p> <p>Copeland Borough Council</p>
3.2 Continue to prevent and deal effectively with homelessness			
Action		Date	Lead Partner
3.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the potential for nomination agreements linked to incentives to bring empty homes into use.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Copeland Borough Council and Landlord Forum
Housing Strategy Objective Four: An integrated delivery approach			
4.1 Working with partners; Monitoring and Reporting			
Action		Date	Lead Partner
4.1.1	Housing Strategy Partnership to carry out an annual review of empty homes	By June 2013/14/15	Copeland Borough Council & partners

**Appendix 1 D: Empty Property Prioritisation Matrix****Guidance Notes**

- Q2 Evidence of smashed windows, graffiti, fly tipping. Severity will determine score.
- Q3 If the accumulated rubbish could result in enforcement action then apply 10 pts score.
- Q4 If house is boarded up. How many times boarded.
- Q5 If house for sale reduce discount to minus 10pts after 6 months of being advertised (reduce to minus 5 pts if deemed to be over priced).
- Q6 For each empty neighbouring property give 5 points (add further 10 points per neighbouring property if each property individually scores over 50. In calculating whether neighbouring properties exceed 50 points remove score from Q6 from each).
- Q7 Is property 2 bedroom, 3 bedroom house etc or 1 bed flat, 2 bed flat (or building containing such).
- Q8 Apply 5 points if empty home is located in one of the worst Wards for empty homes over 12 months vacant.
- Q9 Apply 10 points if located in a target area
- Q10 Apply 5 points if there are other empty homes on the street (do not apply score if this has been covered in Q8)
- Q11 Apply 10 points if the property is a Right to Buy
- Q12 Apply 5 points if complaints have been received. Apply a score of 10 points if there have been a total of three or more separate complaints.
- Q13 Apply 5 points if enforcement action has taken place and for each time it has taken place.
- Q14 Apply scores depending on length of time empty.

**Scoring Matrix**

	<b>Property</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Score</b>
Q1	Garden Overgrown	Yes/No	Slightly 5 pts Very 10 pts	
Q2	ASB at property	Yes/No	Minor 5 pts Major 10 pts	
Q3	Accumulated Refuse/litter	Yes/No	Minor 5 pts Action req 10 pts	
Q4	Boarded up	Yes/No	Boarded 5 pts Repeat Boarding 10 pts	
Q5	Property up for sale	Yes/No	Discount max -20 pts	
Q6	Next door is empty	Yes/No	Left Property + 5 Right Property + 5	
Q7	Property Type			
	<b>Location</b>			
Q8	In worst empty homes Ward	Yes/No	0 or 5	
Q9	Special Target area	Yes/No	0 or 10	
Q10	Other empty homes on street	Yes/No	0 or 5	
Q11	RTB causing problems	Yes/No	0 or 10	
Q12	Complaints	Yes/No	1 or 2 (5pts) 3+ (10 pts)	
Q13	Previous enforcement action	Yes/No	0 or 10	
Q14	Length of time empty		1-2 yrs = 2 pts 2-3 yrs = 4 pts 3-5 yrs = 8 pts 5-10 yrs = 10 pts 10 yrs + = 20 pts	

**TOTAL SCORE**

## **APPENDIX 2: Supporting Evidence**

### **Appendix 2 A: The National and Regional Context**

The (DCLG) Department of Communities and Local Government's vision is:

**'Of prosperous and cohesive communities, offering a safe, healthy and sustainable environment for all....'**

2.A.1 The DCLG are charged with bringing forward sufficient land and housing to meet projected needs. They have introduced a number of policies, initiatives and financial incentives to assist local authorities in their work to bring empty homes back into use.

The following Government documents and legislation reflect this vision:

- ◆ **The Housing Act (2004)**
- ◆ **Planning Policy Statement 3 (as amended in 2011)**
- ◆ **New Homes Bonus: Final Scheme Design**
- ◆ **National Planning Policy Framework (2012)**
- ◆ Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable (2007).  
This states that Councils, as part of their strategic housing role; need to reduce the number of homes that are left empty for long periods of time. This plan reiterates the need to make use of empty homes but goes one step further. It states that Councils need to look towards strategies to reduce the number of long term empty homes.

2.A.2 From an analysis of Council Tax files the Empty Homes Agency has calculated 720,416 vacant homes in England in November 2011, or 3.13% of the stock. Of these, 279,000 had been empty for more than 6 months.

Table 1

English regions	Nos of empty homes	% of total stock
NW	131,135	4.13
NE	45,269	3.83
Yorkshire & Humberside	91,478	3.93
East Midlands	66,406	3.36
East of England	68,835	2.71
London	74,553	2.21
SE	99,569	2.69
SW	69,373	2.89
West Midlands	73,538	3.10
England Total	720,416	3.13

## Appendix 2 B: Local Context

### CORPORATE POLICY

2.B.3 The Copeland Empty Homes Policy is also intended to support the Council in the achievement of its wider corporate objectives. The Council's Corporate Implementation Plan 2011/12 sets out 4 themed goals which are accompanied by a clear set of objectives.

#### **THEME 1 – PEOPLE**

**'To support the development of strong, healthy and engaged communities'.**

#### **THEME 2 – PROSPERITY**

**'To build a sustainable, modern, low carbon economy that delivers economic security to the whole community'.**

#### **THEME 3 – PLACE**

**'To support Copeland in becoming an attractive, safer and greener place to be'.**

#### **THEME 4 – PERFORMANCE**

**'Delivering excellent and value for money services'.**

The Empty Homes Policy Plan also supports the Copeland Partnership Plan, which is the Council's sustainable communities strategy. The Plan concentrates on four key issues that are important to Copeland residents, businesses, agencies and communities. Each is supported by a set of priorities, one of which is shared with the overarching Housing Strategy:

"Enabling people to access the housing and support they need, when they need it."

## Appendix 2 C: Local Evidence on Empty Homes

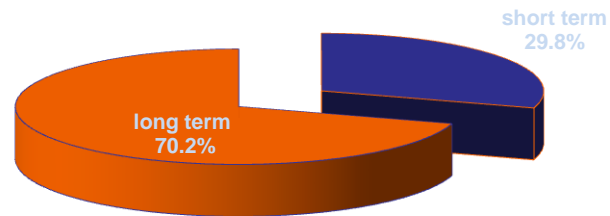
2.C.1 Table 1 indicates the NW region having the highest number and percentage of empty homes. Local evidence is shown in Table 2, which again was taken by the Empty Homes Agency from Council Tax files in November 2011. It shows Copeland with an average number and percentage when compared to all District Councils in Cumbria.

Table 2

Cumbria District	Nos of empty homes	% of total stock	Nos empty over 6 months
Allerdale	1856	4.11	923
Barrow-in-Furness	1736	5.23	685
Carlisle	1836	3.77	741
Copeland	1354	4.13	756
Eden	913	3.62	392
South Lakeland	2062	3.96	1079
Cumbria Total	9797 (Cumbria average = 1633)	Cumbria average 4.11	Cumbria average 763

- 2.C.2 The Goose Housing Research (GHR) survey in 2010 identified significant variances in the rate of empty homes across the borough.
- 2.C.3 The survey found that long term problematic empty homes in Copeland are characterised as pre-war, terraced housing located in Whitehaven, Millom and Cleator Moor areas.
- 2.C.4 Short term empty homes are numerically concentrated in the Whitehaven area. These are associated with older terraced and semi-detached housing and a significant minority are within the Registered Social Landlord sector.
- 2.C.5 Figure 3 below summarises the split between the long and short term vacancies in the borough, and Figure 4 shows the percentages of the empty properties according to their date of construction. Table 3 on the final page sets out the survey data on the length of time empty properties surveyed had been vacant.

**FIGURE 3: SHORT TERM & LONG EMPTY HOMES**



**FIGURE 4: DATE OF CONSTRUCTION – EMPTY HOMES**

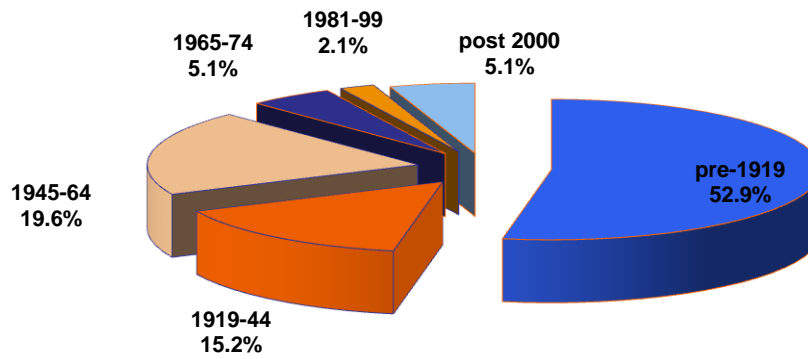


TABLE 3: LENGTH OF VACANCY																
FORUM AREA	TOTAL VACANTS		Under 6 months		6 months – 1 year		1 – 2 years		2 – 3 years		3 – 4 years		4 – 5 years		5 + years	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>West Lakes</b> (Bootle, Ennerdale, Gosforth, Millom Without and Seascale wards)	172	12.6	38	22.1	45	26.2	31	18.0	20	11.6	11	6.4	1	0.6	26	15.1
<b>Millom</b> (Haverigg, Holborn Hill and Newtown wards)	212	15.5	67	31.6	48	22.6	35	16.5	19	9.0	22	10.4	5	2.4	16	7.5
<b>Egremont</b> (Egremont North and Egremont South wards)	140	10.3	39	27.9	41	29.3	27	19.3	19	13.6	3	2.1	7	5.0	4	2.9
<b>Distington</b> (Distington ward)	47	3.4	12	25.5	12	25.5	11	23.4	4	8.5	2	4.3	1	2.1	5	10.6
<b>Frizington</b> (Frizington ward)	75	5.5	28	37.3	14	18.7	15	20.0	7	9.3	4	5.3	1	1.3	6	8.0
<b>Cleator Moor</b> (Cleator Moor North and Cleator Moor South wards)	173	12.7	56	32.4	34	19.7	46	26.6	14	8.1	10	5.8	4	2.3	9	5.2
<b>Whitehaven Remainder</b> (Arlecdon, Beckermeth, Bransty, Harbour, Hillcrest, Kells, Mirehouse, Moresby, Sandwith and St. Bees wards)	545	40.0	166	30.5	139	25.5	98	18.0	69	12.7	15	2.8	24	4.4	34	6.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	1364	100.0	406	29.89	333	24.4	263	19.3	152	11.1	67	4.9	43	3.2	100	7.3



Executive : 10 July 2012

AppendixA