

## **Introduction**

At the end of 2018, Exeter City Council had 403 long term empty homes and approximately 1000 households registered on Devon Home Choice looking for accommodation in Exeter. When taken as a proportion this represents 0.76% homes in Exeter being classed as long term empty. This is below the average for England which is 0.82%.

Empty homes in the City lead to issues relating to anti-social behaviour, are unattractive and a waste of potential housing which could be better utilised. As a result of these issues the Council has identified a number of empty properties in the City. Data is provided to the Government on properties which are 'unoccupied and substantially unfurnished' for a period of longer than 6 months.

The Empty Homes Strategy's over-arching aim is to bring Exeter's empty homes back into use as lived in homes. An action plan contained within section 5 of the Strategy sets out 3 objectives:

Objective 1: Bring empty homes back into use to increase the supply of quality, affordable housing in the city

Objective 2: To continue to raise awareness and address issues relating to empty homes and to provide advice

Objective 3: Improve the quality of neighbourhoods by identifying and tackling the issues associated with empty homes.

The aims of dealing with empty homes in the City will be to reduce the overall number of empty properties, minimise the anti-social behaviour associated with empty homes and recover the costs of enforcement action where possible.

Exeter City Council has a range of tools and powers available including voluntary and enforcement options. These involve teams from across the council and some of the options will involve building effective partnerships with external organisations. These tools and powers will be further explored and developed and barriers to their use challenged.

Exeter City Council is committed to reducing the number of Empty Properties in order to deliver homes that are secure, affordable and healthy in a balanced and connected to great neighbourhoods that supports wellbeing and reduces social isolation.

**Lead officer:** Elaine Oliver, Empty Homes Officer

**Service Manager:** Simon Lane, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

**Stakeholders:** Residents, Elected Members, Property Owners, Residents and Businesses

For each of the areas below, an assessment has been made on whether the policy has a **positive, negative or neutral impact**, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation are included. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

**High impact** – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

**Medium impact** –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

**Low impact** – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Protected characteristic/ area of interest</b> <b>Race and ethnicity</b> (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers asylum seekers etc.)	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
<b>Disability</b> (as defined by the Equality Act - a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This can include mental health conditions, long term illnesses such as cancer and HIV, cognitive issues, learning disabilities and sensory impairments)		The Empty Homes Strategy applies equally to all residents of Exeter irrespective of disability.  Our strategy does not specifically look to bring empty homes back into occupation for the use of disabled persons. Whether a property is suitable for disabled persons or not depends on the type of property and individual requirements.  Where the reason for the property being empty maybe	

		linked to the need for adaptations, owners will have access to information concerning the disabled facilities grant.	
<b>Sex/Gender</b>	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
<b>Religion and belief</b> (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions)	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
<b>Sexual orientation</b> (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual)	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
<b>Age</b> (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults aged 25 – 50, younger older people aged 51 – 75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).		Empty properties negatively affect all age groups. Where owners of empty properties are elderly we will offer advice and assistance.  Owners who are in care are not pursued via enforcement action, nor are properties under probate. Elderly people may be more sensitive to the fear of	

		<p>crime that empty properties are known to engender.</p> <p>Improvements stipulated by us consider hazards for the over 60s who are classed as a vulnerable age group. The hazards likely to affect both younger and older age groups are taken into consideration where opportunities arise for us to be involved in the improvement of empty homes.</p>	
<b>Community relations</b>		<p>We believe that the new strategy will have a positive impact on areas of deprivation as properties that are improved will result in additional accommodation, less Anti Social Behaviour and increased sale prices.</p>	
<b>Human Rights</b>	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.</p>		
<b><u>Actions identified as a result of the impact assessment (these should be SMART):</u></b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>By when</b>	

1.	<p>Describe the piece of work you are assessing and the reason it is being carried out. Are you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Making a strategic budget proposal</li> <li>○ Developing a new policy, strategy or project</li> <li>○ Reviewing and revising a policy, strategy or project</li> <li>○ Reviewing a function or a service</li> <li>○ Restructuring a service.</li> </ul> <p>Include any options appraisal and if you have a preferred option explain why.</p>
2.	<p>What are the timescales for completing the work? What committee deadlines do you have to meet?</p>
3.	<p>What are the aims and objectives of the work? How do these link to wider council or strategic objectives.</p>
4.	<p>Who will be the main beneficiaries of the piece of work and in what way? All people in Exeter? Council staff? A specific stakeholder group? A combination of these?</p>
5.	<p>What data do you have on how different groups would be affected by the work?</p>
6.	<p>What research studies or reports have been carried out in other areas of the country or nationally that provide information about the likely impact of your work on equality groups?</p>
7.	<p>What consultation has taken place or is planned with customers (individuals and groups) from equality groups?</p>
8.	<p>What does the consultation indicate about any differential positive or negative impact(s) of this piece of work?</p>
9.	<p>If there are gaps in your previous or planned consultation and research are there any experts/relevant groups that can be contacted to get further views or evidence on the issues? If so please explain who they are and how you will obtain their views.</p>
10.	<p>If you have indicated there is a negative impact on any group, is that impact Legal; Intended; of high or low impact?</p>
11.	<p>If you identified any negative impact that is of low significance, can you minimise or remove it? If so how?</p>
12.	<p>Could you improve the strategy/policy/project's positive impact and if so how?</p>
13.	<p>How do you intend to continue monitoring the impact of this strategy/policy/project?</p>
14.	<p>If there are gaps in your evidence base, do you need to carry out any further research about the likely impact of your work on equality groups?</p>

	<b>There might be a time delay here as you will need to get the results of your consultation before you can continue working your way through the questions.</b>
<b>15.</b>	As a result of this assessment and available evidence collected, including consultation, what if any changes do you need to make to the strategy/policy/project?
<b>16.</b>	Will the changes planned ensure that the negative impact is: Legal; Intended; of low impact?
<b>17.</b>	What monitoring/evaluation/review process have you set up to check the successful implementation of the strategy/policy/project?
<b>18.</b>	How will this monitoring/evaluation further assess the impact on the equality groups/ensure the strategy/policy/project is non-discriminatory?
<b>19.</b>	Please provide an action plan showing any recommendations that have arisen from the assessment and how you plan to take them forward. Are your actions SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based).
<b>20.</b>	When will you next review this work and the impact assessment?