

Bedford Borough Council
**Empty Homes
Strategy
2007 - 2010**



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Queste informazioni possono essere, su richiesta, tradotte in un'altra lingua o fornite in un altro formato. Scrivete il vostro nome e indirizzo sul tagliando pubblicato qui di seguito e speditele all'Housing Service alla Town Hall.

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درخواست کرنے پر یہ معلومات کسی دوسری زبان یا کسی دوسری شکل میں دستیاب ہو سکتی ہے۔ براہ کرم نیچے دی گئی سلیپ پر اپنا نام اور پتہ فراہم کیجئے اور اسے ٹاؤن ہال میں ہاؤسنگ سروس کو واپس کیجئے۔

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ਮੰਗ ਕੀਤੇ ਜਾਣ 'ਤੇ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ। ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਲਾਈ ਸਲਿਪ 'ਤੇ ਆਪਣਾ ਨਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਪਤਾ ਲਿਖ ਕੇ ਇਹ ਸਲਿਪ ਟਾਊਨ ਹਾਲ ਵਿਚ ਹਾਊਸਿੰਗ ਸਰਵਿਸ ਨੂੰ ਭੇਜ ਦਿਓ।

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এ তথ্যটি অন্য ভাষায় অনুবাদ করা যাবে অথবা অনুরোধক্রমে অন্য মাধ্যমে প্রদান করা যেতে পারে। দয়াকরে স্লিপের নিচে আপনার নাম এবং ঠিকানা দিন এবং টাউন হলের হাউজিং সার্ভিসে ফেরৎ পাঠান।

To: Bedford Borough Council, Housing Service, Town Hall, Bedford MK40 1SJ

Please provide translation services as follows:

Vi preghiamo di fornire un servizio di traduzione in italiano. (Italian)

कृपया हिन्दी में अनुवाद सेवाओं की व्यवस्था करें। (Hindi)

براہ کرم اُردو میں ترجمے کی خدمات فراہم کیجئے۔ (Urdu)

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਦੇਣ ਦੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰੋ। (Punjabi)

দয়াকরে অনুবাদ সেবাগুলো বাংলায় পাঠান। (Bengali)

Please provide the information in format

Name

Address Tel No

Foreword



Like most parts of the UK, Bedford has a shortage of affordable homes. We have over 3500 households waiting for social housing. That's why it's a great waste to have over 800 privately owned homes standing empty for long periods of time.

In November 2003 we produced our first Empty Homes Strategy. Since April 2004 we have brought 233 properties back into use as a direct result of action by the Council and made 205 of those available to homeless households through our successful Rent Deposit Scheme.

This new strategy builds on our experiences of the past 3 years and will help us bring even more empty homes back into use.

Cllr Chris Black
Housing and Planning Portfolio Holder
June 2007



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Introduction

Bedford Borough Council's Empty Homes Strategy is an important element of the Council's overarching Housing Strategy along with other Strategies for Preventing Homelessness and Private Sector Housing. The Council's commitment to delivering the Empty Homes Strategy derives from its Corporate Plan which sets out the Council's Corporate priorities, including; *Delivering Homes for All*.

The Council's corporate priority "Delivering Homes for All" sets out the Council's objective to prevent homelessness, provide sound advice on housing options and reduce the number of empty homes.

This new strategy reports on the effectiveness of the first Empty Homes Strategy (2003 – 2006) and the way forward in dealing with empty homes.

Why do properties become and remain empty?

There are a number of reasons which include:

- Properties pending a change of owner (transitional empty)
- Owners lack information on options available to them
- Owners moving into residential care
- Delays in the administration of the estate where the owner has died
- Perceived problems with renting the property
- Owners awaiting further increases in the market before selling
- Cost of renovation in older & long term empty properties
- Properties awaiting demolition / redevelopment

Why work to get empty properties back in use?

The overriding drive to bring empty property back into use is to increase the amount of decent housing to those in need in order to reduce homelessness and reduce the cost to the Council for providing temporary accommodation.

Other reasons include;

- To discourage crime and vandalism
- To discourage fly tipping on the land of an empty property
- To discourage price devaluation of neighbouring properties
- Expense to the owner – It's less expensive to have a property in use than to leave it empty. It is estimated that the average annual costs of keeping a three bedroom house in Bedford empty can be more than £10,000 per annum.

Table 1: Typical cost of keeping a 3 bedroom house empty

Rent loss	£7,500
Excludes estimated costs of	
Dilapidation	£600
Vandalism & management	£715
Security	£300
Insurance (where obtainable)	£120
Council Tax (based on current band D charge)	£1,000
TOTAL	£10,235



(Source; The Rent Service, Empty Homes Agency, Council Tax)

Should an owner choose to rent out the property, the benefits will be wider than simply the rental income. The tenants normally become responsible for the utilities and council tax and an occupied property is more likely to be secure and less prone to vandalism.



Empty Homes are a national issue. Empty homes statistics from local authorities across England show that, in April 2005, there were 290,862 private properties lying empty.

TABLE 2: EMPTY PROPERTIES OVER 6 MONTHS BY REGION

Region	No Private Empty Homes (Apr 05)
North East	17,014
North West	62,351
Yorkshire & the Humber	31,261
East Midlands	25,493
West Midlands	37,177
East of England	25,707
London	36,164
South East	32,647
South West	23,048
England Total	290,862

Data on empty homes in England has been sourced from the "Housing and Investment Programme: Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2005" by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The number of English empty homes is measured as at April 2005.

Long term empty properties in the East of England alone stand at 25,707.

The Government gives funding to the Empty Homes Agency, a charity campaigning on the issues of empty properties in order to provide advice to local authority's and owners of empty properties.

Best Value Performance Indicator 64

Best Value Performance Indicator 64 (BVPI 64) is the national indicator that measures a local authority's success in bringing empty properties back into use. The definition is as follows:

The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority. An authority should include any dwelling that it considers was re-occupied or demolished during the year directly as a result of action it undertook or initiated.

National Initiatives

There have been a number of important announcements relating to empty property since 2003 which have assisted us towards our success of bringing 202 properties back into use as at December 2006.

- Use of Council Tax Data

Section 85 of the Local Government Act 2003 added Paragraph 18A to Schedule 2 to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to allow the use of Council Tax data by the Council for the purposes of identifying vacant dwellings or taking steps to bring vacant dwellings back into use. Our Empty Homes Officer uses this information to identify empty dwellings and the name and address of the current owner.

- Council Tax discounts

Section 75 of the Local Government Act 2003 inserted Section 11A into the Local Government Finance Act 1992 gives billing authorities a discretionary power to reduce the Council Tax discount on long term empty dwellings. From 1st April 2006 Bedford Borough Council has granted no discount (i.e. charged the full Council Tax) on dwellings which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for longer than six months.

- Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)

Empty Dwelling Management Orders were introduced in July 2006. The Intention of an EDMO is to bridge the gap between voluntary measures and existing enforcement procedures. It will provide an effective back-up to such arrangements where owners turn down offers of assistance and do not have plans of their own to bring the property back into use.

The threat of an EDMO is intended to put pressure on the owner to enter into constructive dialogue with the local authority with the object of agreeing the best course of action to secure occupation, thereby avoiding the need for an order to be made.

- Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)

The Housing Act 1985, section 17 allows the Local Authority to acquire under-used or ineffectively used property for residential purposes if there is a general housing need in the area. In addition section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by section 99 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) allows Local Authorities to acquire land or buildings if acquisition will allow improvements or redevelopment to take place.

CPO can be a lengthy process so again, the threat of a CPO is intended to put pressure on the owner to enter into constructive dialogue with the local authority and to avoid the need to resort to such measures.

The Bedford Picture



Bedford is a Borough with a mix of both urban and rural areas comprising the County town of Bedford, the urban area of Kempston and 45 rural parishes. Bedford Borough is large by district Council standards with around 62,000 households, 64,309 homes and a population of around 153,000.

Bedford sits within the Bedfordshire Sub region along with Mid Bedfordshire District Council, South Bedfordshire District Council and Luton. The Sub Regional Housing Strategy provides a means of influencing both the priorities for Investment and the actual allocation of resources within the East of England Regional Housing Strategy.

Bedford is one of 48 Authorities in the Eastern Region and, after Luton, has the highest ethnic population in the Eastern Region. Over 60 different ethnic groups are represented in the Borough. The 2001 census reveals that 80.77% of Bedford Boroughs population is white British.



Keeping all housing available for use most of the time requires the commitment of all housing providers along with active interventions to reduce the number of long term empty homes.

Key target from Bedford Borough Council's Community Plan 2004 - 2010

Empty Homes in Bedford

The Table below shows the number of empty properties in the Borough vacant for longer than 6 months since April 2004.

Year	Table 3: Number of empty properties over 6 months
2004	1507 (includes 2 nd homes)
2005	1278
2006	922

Source: Council Tax Records

Note : from 2005 2nd homes were not included in the total figure

Housing need in Bedford

As demand for affordable housing outstrips supply, homelessness pressures increase.

- As at October 2006 there were still more than 3,500 applicants on the Housing Register. Excluding applicants who live outside the borough of Bedford, this figure has remained fairly static since 2003.
- Recent forecasts from the Oxford Economic forecasting show that by 2011 the average house price in the Eastern region will have risen to £285,000, around 40% higher than August 2006.
- The average house price in Bedford in 2006 was £193,860 compared with an average income of £27,549.
- Average house prices in Bedford are now 7.9 times average incomes.
- In the Eastern region, affording a home at the cheapest end of the market now requires an income of £35,286, 40% above the regional average income using normal mortgage lending criteria (95% x 3.5 annual income).
- First time buyers only accounted for 30% of all purchases in 2005, compared to 50% in 1995. More and more would be first time buyers are being priced out of the housing market both locally and regionally.
- As at January 2007 there were over 800 privately owned empty properties in Bedford, of which over **390** have been empty for 12 months or more.

Table 4: Number of privately owned empty homes in Bedford as at 28/1/2007

Length of time empty	Total
6 – 12 months	427
1 – 3 years	234
3 – 5 years	72
5 – 10 years	66
10 + years	24
Total	823

Source: Council Tax data as at 28/01/2007

A comparison to our neighbouring authorities in the Herts, Beds and Bucks region, as at April 2005, is as follows;

Table 5: Total number of privately owned empty properties over 6 months in the Herts, Beds and Bucks region as at April 2005

local authority	number of empty properties
BEDFORDSHIRE	
Bedford	1,278 *
Luton	1,238
Mid Beds	415
South Beds	108
HERTFORDSHIRE	
Dacorum	981
East Herts	650
Hertsmere	320
St Albans	103
Stevenage	209
Watford	435
Welwyn Hatfield	328
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	
Aylesbury Vale	1,390
South Bucks	376
Milton Keynes	200
Chiltern	194

Source: Empty Homes Agency Website / Statistics

* NB: As at 28/1/2007 number reduces to 823.

Homelessness in Bedford

The reduction in the number of homeless applications received in 2006/07 (475) compared to those received in 2005/06 (536) can largely be attributed to the Council's rent deposit scheme which also brings empty homes back into use. The Council's rent deposit scheme contributes to the objectives of the Empty Homes Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy by providing a tool to bring empty property back into use and meet housing need through preventing homelessness.

Equality and Diversity

Bedford Borough Council has had a long-standing commitment to equality and diversity evidenced in its Race Equality Scheme 2005-08, Corporate Equalities Plan 2005-08, Equality and Diversity Policy Statement 2006 and its Disability Equality Scheme, 2006-09. We are committed to mainstream equality and diversity in all aspects of our service planning and delivery, employment, partnerships and investments by adopting the Equality Standard for Local Government Framework, which is a Best Value Performance Indicator.

The Empty Homes Strategy assists with meeting housing need and preventing homelessness by enabling, through the rent deposit scheme, empty homes to be re-occupied. This element of the Empty Homes Strategy contributes to the objectives and action plan set out in the Homelessness Strategy 2007-2009 which has been equality impact assessed.

Achievements

Listed below are some of our achievements over the past few years:-

- We are an active member of the Herts, Beds and Bucks Empty Homes Forum where empty homes initiatives and best practice are shared at quarterly meetings.
- The BVPI 64 comparison with other Councils in this benchmarking group shows Bedford as the top performer in 2005/06 out of the 11 local authorities that completed the return. Our performance is in the top quartile compared with other local authorities.
- Empty Homes Hotline established in January 2005
- Empty Homes Hotline number: 01234 227464.
- Empty Homes web pages developed in 2005: www.bedford.gov.uk
- Empty Homes database established in February 2005.
- New Rent Deposit Scheme re-launched in April 2005
- With the help of the Rent Deposit Scheme, since April 2005 we have helped prevent 205 cases of homelessness, 138 of whom were families with children, most of whom the Council would have had a statutory duty to re-house as homeless.
- We have attracted over 100 new landlords with the help of the Rent Deposit Scheme. Landlords benefit by receiving advice support and guidance from the Housing Projects Team lead by Tabitha Resta the Housing Projects Manager.
- Very successful Landlord Forums / Open Evenings held twice yearly since 2005 which have attracted a number of existing landlords and empty property owners interested in becoming landlords. We have developed good working relationships with many small landlords and letting agents.
- In December 2006 we organised our first Landlords Training day in partnership with the Eastern Landlords Association. This generated such an interest that we now have a waiting list of landlords wanting to attend future courses.
- We launched a Landlords newsletter '*Lets Talk*' in April 2006 to help increase the partnership working between private sector landlords / property owners and the Council.
- We launched a high profile Empty Homes publicity campaign in 2005 and in 2006 we targeted property owners and existing landlords by advertising in the '*Lettings Today*' page of the *Times & Citizen*, a local free newspaper.
- In January 2006 we used Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers as a measure of last resort, and the resultant publicity, including a news feature on Anglia Television, has sent out a clear message to empty home owners who have long term empty dwellings with no plans to bring them back into use.

Since the launch of the first Empty Homes Strategy in November 2003 we have been successful in bringing back into use 233 empty properties.

In 2005/06 and 2006/07 we exceeded our target which is indicated in the table below with a comparison to other Local Authorities in are region;

Table 7: EMPTY PROPERTIES BOUGHT BACK INTO USE – BVPI 64								
Year	Bedford		Mid Beds		South Beds		Luton	
	Target	Total	Target	Total	Target	Total	Target	Total
2003/04	20	5	10	17	30	19	60	59
2004/05	30	29	18	15	21	10	60	11
2005/06	35	77	19	31	21	21	60	27
2006/07	45	127	20	26	14	90	60	175

Rent Deposit Scheme

Some of our success has been due to the incentive offered to landlords and property owners to assist with letting their property through our Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS) which was re-launched in April 2005.

The Rent Deposit Scheme is offered as an incentive to private landlords and property owners to let their properties to people on benefits and low incomes who are in housing need. We offer:

- Assistance with finding suitable tenants from our RDS waiting list
- A deposit guarantee
- A rent in advance payment
- On-going tenant and landlord support

Our rent deposit scheme has been a particularly successful initiative in enabling households to access good quality private rented accommodation. We recognise the need to ensure that tenancies are sustainable whilst encouraging private landlords to let accommodation to households whose housing options are limited by their income.

Bedford Borough Council Homelessness Strategy 2007 - 2010

Empty Homes Grants

As at December 2006 three properties have been bought back into use by Bedford Borough Council providing grant funding to the owner so that the property could be let by him to families in housing need who approached the Council for assistance through the Rent Deposit Scheme.

The maximum Empty Homes grant was increased to £20,000 in September 2006.

In January 2006 we took possession of our first long term empty property with the use of Compulsory Purchase Powers. Extensive works have been carried out by a new owner to bring it back into occupation. The property had been empty for more than 30 years.



July 2005 – local newspaper publicity of our application for Compulsory Purchase



Feb 2007 – The compulsory purchased property leading towards re-occupation

The Threat of Compulsory Purchase has also led to renovation works being carried out on another long term empty property, which again will be occupied in the near future.



Inside a long term empty property in Bedford as at Jan 2006



The same property as at April 2006.

Raising Awareness

A key element of our Empty Homes Strategy has been our high profile publicity campaign. We advertise in the Council newspaper and more recently, from 2006 regularly advertise in the 'Lettings Today' pages of a local free newspaper. This has led to a significant increase in the number of private sector landlords and empty home owners expressing an interest in letting their property through our Rent Deposit Scheme.

Empty Homes Charter

In March 2007 we signed up to the Empty Homes Charter which has been produced by the East of England Empty Homes Task Group. The Task Group has a membership that comprises of Local Authority representative from sub regions, Go East, EERA, RSLs and the Eastern Region Landlords Association. The group works to promote good practice and raise the profile of empty homes work at all levels. We already had a number of good practice procedures recommended by the Charter in place and we comply with the 10 point check list contained in the charter. The Charter States every Local Authority should:-

- Have a corporate commitment to tackling empty homes
- Have a lead officer with responsibility for empty homes
- Consider the benefits of a wider sub regional and/or multi partner approach to tackling empty homes
- Have a tool kit of options
- Have a method for identifying, recording and keeping up to date a list of empty properties
- Have a clear strategy for tackling empty homes
- Have a clear framework for communications with owners
- Have a clear framework for communicating with the public, partners and stakeholders
- Have a clear target for bringing long-term empty properties back into use, linked to BVPI 64
- Ensure links to other strategies at a regional, sub-regional and local level.

Empty Homes Strategy 2007 - 2010

Our aim is to bring empty homes back into use and to unlock the housing potential of long term empty homes.

Our key objectives are to;-

1. Reduce the number of empty homes.
2. Raise awareness of empty property as a wasted resource.
3. Improve the supply of decent affordable private sector rented homes available to people in housing need.

Empty homes represent waste, financial expense and missed opportunity. They can blight communities, attract vandals and squatters and tie up the resources of local authorities and the emergency services. Bringing empty homes back into use is a sustainable way to meet future housing demand and helps to alleviate pressure to develop greenfield sites.

Source: Communities & Local Government website

Key Objective 1: Reduce the number of empty homes

We will:-

- Keep a register of empty homes.
- Ensure contact is made with empty home owners keeping them informed of options open to them to bring their properties back into use.
- Pro-actively put to use a range of initiatives aimed at bringing properties back into use.
- Use a range of tools to bring back into use properties that have been empty for 12 months or more.
- Offer Empty Property Grants up to a maximum of £20,000 on qualifying properties that have been empty for more than 12 months. A 5 year nomination agreement will normally be a condition of the grant.

As at January 2007 we had 823 privately owned empty properties empty more than 6 months. 427 of which had been empty between 6 – 12 months and 396 had been empty for more than 1 year. The majority of these will be brought back into use through normal market forces either by being sold, let, or re-let.

Our Rent Deposit Scheme and incentives to private landlords such as, tenancy support, newsletters and Landlord Training will continue to be widely promoted in order to help bring empty homes back into use.

We will concentrate some of our resource as well as co-ordinating resources from other Council Services to bring back into use the 396 longer term empty

properties which have been empty for 12 months or more. We have a range of tools, including:

- Empty Homes Grants
- Rent Deposit Scheme
- Landlord Training
- Free planning Advice
- Empty Dwelling Management Orders
- Compulsory Purchase Orders

which will enable us to take appropriate action in respect of individual properties.

Key Objective 2: Raise awareness of empty property as a wasted Resource

We will:-

- Maintain a high profile publicity campaign.
- Advise empty property owners about the options available to them.
- Publicise on-going successes.

In April 2006 we launched a publicity campaign with a free local newspaper. Our regular adverts and front page editorial appears in the 'lettings today' supplement of the property pages thus achieving high profile coverage.

This publicity has proved to be key in reaching the targeted audience with a noticeable increase of the numbers of private sector landlords joining our successful Rent Deposit Scheme, leading to 90 private sector rented properties being offered to people in housing need from 1st April 2006 – 31st December 2006.

Key Objective 3: Improve the supply of decent affordable Private Sector rented homes and help tenants sustain their tenancies

We will:-

- Advise property owners and existing landlords about the potential of letting property to people on low incomes.
- Work in partnership with other services and organisations to raise awareness of minimum property standards.
- Offer assistance with renting out property.

Providing a dedicated, skilled and knowledgeable team within the council to provide information about letting property has increased confidence amongst existing Landlords and those wanting to become Landlords. This is borne out by a number of positive feedback letters received from Landlords. This has been a crucial success factor resulting in an increase in the number of private sector properties being let to people on low incomes and in housing need.

Very positive feedback has been received from landlords following the launch, in April 2006, of 'Lets Talk', our quarterly Landlords Newsletter. Our first Landlords Training day in December 2006 was sold out with a number of expressions of interest received for future courses.

Delivering our Objectives

Our proposals for delivery of these key objectives are set out in our Empty Homes Action Plan 2007/2010. The target dates for delivery are set out in the action plan.

Our targets are set out in the Best Value Performance Plan and are included in the annual review.

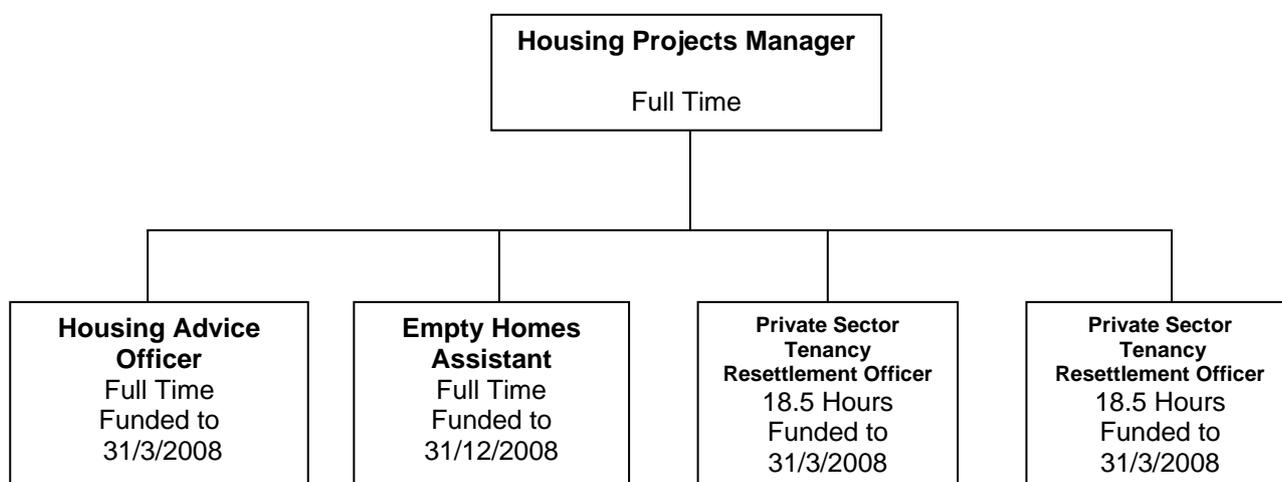
Delivery of the action plan will be formally monitored and reviewed by the Community & Culture Policy Review and Development Committee through annual progress reports.

Resource Implications

The Council has devoted considerable resource to help bring empty homes back into use in recent years and this has resulted in significant outcomes, not least year on year improvement in BVPI64.

Bedford has now earned a reputation as being one of the most progressive authorities in the east of England for its high profile empty homes successes.

However the action plan and this level of performance can only be sustained if long term funding can be identified to bring the temporary funded posts onto the establishment. The current staffing arrangements within the Housing Projects Team are as follows;



Empty Homes Action Plan 2007 - 2010

KEY MILESTONES AND PROJECTS 2007 / 2010

Key Objective 1 – Reduce the number of empty homes

1	Maintain updated monthly records of numbers of long term empty properties in the Borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To identify properties to target for action ▪ Reduction in long term empty homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empty Homes Assistant ▪ Council Tax office staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BVPI 64 ▪ Monthly report to Housing Needs Manager 	on - going
2.	Implement and maintain a monthly rolling program of initial and follow up contacts to empty home owners identified from council tax records (action point 1). Process to initiate contact which escalates from advice to enforcement action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To provide evidence to support enforcement action ▪ Promote council incentives to empty home owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empty Homes Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase take up in Empty Homes Grants and Rent deposit Scheme ▪ BVPI 64 	June 2007
3.	Implement procedures to ensure all applications for financial assistance to bring properties back into use are monitored and processed efficiently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve customer satisfaction ▪ Increase take up of Empty Homes Grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empty Homes Assistant ▪ Housing Grants Team Leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of Empty homes Grants processed ▪ BVPI 64 	August 2007
4.	Keep an updated database of all actions and information received concerning individual properties in order to provide statistical reports of achievements and activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain audit trail to support application for enforcement action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empty Homes Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BVPI 64 	Quarterly and Annual Summary
5.	Review the effectiveness of the grant policy as a tool to bring back into use long term empty properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report identifying accessibility and barriers with appropriate recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Projects Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased take up in Empty Homes Grants ▪ BVPI 64 	September 2007
6.	Identify suitable properties and make recommendations for implementation of Empty Dwelling Management Order's or Compulsory Purchase Orders where all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Target properties where incentives have been ineffective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Projects Manager ▪ Private Sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of successful CPO's and EDMO's ▪ BVPI 64 	on-going

	other incentives or enforcement have failed to bring long term empty properties back into use.		Housing Enforcement Unit		
7.	Maintain an active role representing Bedford Borough Council in the Herts, Beds and Bucks Empty Homes Forum. In order to share information, good practice and benchmark effective use of tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and Share knowledge on good practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empty Homes Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at quarterly meetings and joint promotion of national Empty homes Week BVPI 64 	Quarterly

Key Objective 2 - Raise awareness of empty property as a wasted resource

1.	Maintain regular advertising and editorial space with local free newspaper to promote Empty Homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise public profile of empty homes Inform of progress and achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Projects Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased contacts through empty homes hotline BVPI 64 	on-going
2.	Establish a monitoring procedure in order to review and make recommendations as to the effectiveness of publicity to ensure the target audience is being reached.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective use of resource to promote empty homes hotline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Projects Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of contacta resulting from publicity BVPI 64 	July 2008
3.	Produce an information pack aimed at owners of long term empty properties in Bedford by establishing links with local estate agents, mortgage advisors, insurance brokers and property developers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of an information pack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empty Homes Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of packs distributed BVPI 64 	March 2008
4.	Ensure regular publicity both in 'Bedford News' and through press release to report on the success of long term empty properties as they are bought back into use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of empty homes Inform of progress and achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Projects Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of editorial articles BVPI 64 	on-going

Key Objective 3 - improve the supply of decent affordable private sector rented homes

1.	Maintain high profile publicity promoting the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable homeless households to access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empty Homes Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of empty homes bought 	on-going
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	actively promoting this to owners of empty property as an effective way of letting.	the private rented sector		back into use through rent deposit scheme	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BVPI 64 	
2.	Maintain partnership and establish new links with other services and organisations in order to provide useful and up to date advice to landlords through on-going publication of the Landlords Newsletter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve and maintain standards in the private rented sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Projects Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of publications ▪ Number of each publication circulation ▪ BVPI 64 	At least 2 a year
3.	Maintain an effective link to key objectives in the council's homelessness strategy in order to maximise re-housing options through the private rented sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide housing options and prevent homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing Projects Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BVPI 213 ▪ BVPI 64 	on-going
4.	Secure long term funding for Housing Projects Team posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain resource to deliver effective action to bring long term empty homes back into use ▪ Maintain support to private sector tenants in order to sustain tenancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service Manager (Housing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BVPI 64 ▪ BVPI 213 ▪ Service Plan local indicator H6 	March 2008