



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 8 June 2026

Report of Councillor Moran - Cabinet
Member for Housing

Empty Homes Update

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To give an overview of empty homes within the district, and the work undertaken in the past year in relation to the four priorities listed within the Empty Homes Strategy 2024.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of the report for information only as an update on work undertaken to tackle private sector empty homes within the district.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	Housing Effective council
Which wards are impacted?	All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however members are reminded, where homes are classed as long-term empty homes which are both unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a continuous period of a least 1-year, a Council Tax premium can be charged.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer.

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 This report is provided to the committee for information and oversight purposes only and so there are no substantive legal and governance implications arising.
- 1.3 The Council's work in relation to empty homes engages a number of statutory functions and powers relating to housing, public health, planning and enforcement activity. Any enforcement or intervention activity undertaken in relation to empty homes must be exercised in accordance with the relevant legislative framework and public law principles, including proportionality and reasonableness.
- 1.4 Any processing or sharing of information relating to property owners or occupiers must be undertaken in accordance with the Council's data protection obligations.

Completed by: Graham Kitchen, Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 South Kesteven District Council updated its Empty Homes Strategy in 2024 which set out four priorities.

Priority 1: The Council will identify and work with owners of long-term empty properties to bring them back into use for re-occupation.

Priority 2: Develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders to bring empty properties back into use.

Priority 3: Improve our neighbourhoods by addressing long term empty homes that have become the focus of anti-social behaviour and neglect.

Priority 4: Provide advice and information to help raise awareness around empty homes.

2.2 In April 2025 a part-time Empty Homes Officer was appointed. In addition, a working group has been established consisting of Officers from the following service areas:

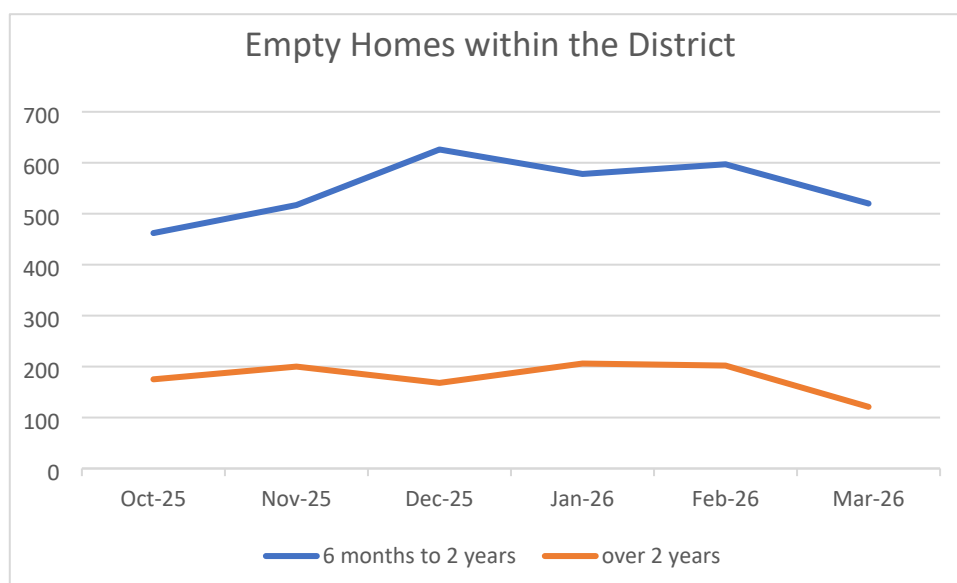
- Public Protection – Private Sector Housing and Neighbourhoods Teams
- Housing
- Planning and Building Control
- Council Tax

This working group meets quarterly and has established a joined-up approach to tackling empty homes, including establishing clear processes for similar cases

2.3 Empty Homes are primarily identified via complaints directly from members of the public, or via Council Tax records, with a list of empty homes being provided to the Empty Homes Officer every month. At the beginning of this financial year (2026/2027) a total of 641 homes were classified as empty, meaning they have been empty for six or more months. Of those, only 121 homes are classified as long term empty homes as they have been empty for two or more years. The number of empty homes fluctuate constantly as homes are continuously filled and vacated.

2.4 Figure 1 below provides a visual presentation of the number of private sector empty homes within the District between October 2025- March 2026.

Figure 1



- 2.5 The Empty Homes Officer has developed processes for investigating empty homes, which includes inspecting, identifying the owner, engagement and working with owners to bring them back into use. Where necessary options around enforcement are explored, paying particular attention to those longer term and problematic empty homes.
- 2.6 Since the appointment of the Officer in April 2025 the following actions have been taken:
- 92 visits to assess the condition of the homes reported as empty.
 - 37 empty homes questionnaires have been completed – to understand from the owner why the home is empty and their long-term intentions.
- 2.7 The assessments undertaken have identified that some homes are within the following stages:
- Potentially occupied,
 - New builds,
 - Awaiting demolition and re- development.
- Where this is the case, the Empty Homes Officer provides relevant information to Council Tax colleagues to update the records kept.
- 2.8 The work has identified several homes where planning has since been granted for demolition and redevelopment, for example a problematic empty home on Meadowgate in Bourne has been demolished and is due to be replaced with three new homes.
- 2.9 The Council faces limitations when dealing with empty homes that are well maintained and are up to date with Council Tax payments. In these types of cases, the only action the Council can take is to approach the owner and try to work with them. Therefore, the Empty Homes Officer prioritises homes that are causing problems, such as due to disrepair, or are accruing any unpaid Council Tax debt.
- 2.10 A range of enforcement options are available when dealing with empty homes, and these are detailed within the Empty Homes Strategy 2024 (See Background Papers). An example of a case where an enforcement notice was served related to a home where pests (vermin) were reported and defective rainwater goods were causing damp to the neighbouring house. The owner did not comply with the notice served, and the Council undertook the necessary works in default. Alongside following the process of recovering the debt, the Council is currently pursuing the legal process for a potential enforced sale which, if successful, would enable the house to be auctioned.

- 2.11 Legal enforcement action is a complex and lengthy process. To recover unpaid Council Tax, the Council may secure any unpaid council tax debt via charging orders and seeking orders for sale against long-term empty homes. These orders enable the Council to sell the home to clear the debt, though navigating this legal process does take considerable time.
- 2.12 Alongside building on the work undertaken within 2025/2026, the Empty Homes Officer is working towards launching an Empty Homes Open Day in 2026. This is where homeowners will be invited to speak with a range of stakeholders, including industry leaders in selling homes. The aim of the event is to break down the barriers between empty homeowners and homes being brought back into use.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Homes are empty for a variety of reasons, and it is often difficult to tackle the root cause of this. In many cases an empty home does not directly cause an issue to a community.
- 3.2 Whilst Officers are unable to track the exact number of homes that have been brought back into use as a direct result of the work carried out, major strides have been taken in tackling problematic empty homes. Officers remain committed to continuing this work, and tackling the most problematic empty homes, though legal procedures do take time.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 No other options considered, the report is for noting only.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 None, the report is for noting only.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 Empty Homes Strategy 2024 - [Empty Homes Strategy July 2024.pdf](#)