



CORPORATE POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA

Thursday, 30th November 2023 at 7.15pm

**Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,
Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB**

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to this meeting via YouTube.
To access the meeting please use the link below:

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/youtube>

Members of the Corporate Policy Development Committee are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.

Councillor M Ault
Councillor J Bond
Councillor G Courtauld (Chairman)
Councillor J Edwards
Councillor M Fincken
Councillor J Hayes
Councillor L Jefferis

Councillor S Rajeev (Vice Chairman)
Councillor M Staines
Councillor B Taylor
Councillor P Thorogood
Councillor E Williams
Councillor T Williams

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email governance@braintree.gov.uk by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

D GASCOYNE
Chief Executive

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS – DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), Other Pecuniary Interests (OPI) or Non-Pecuniary Interests (NPI).

Any Member with a DPI, OPI or NPI must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a DPI or OPI or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the Chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

Public Question Time – Registration and Speaking

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes for Public Question Time. Members of the public may ask questions or make statement to the Committee on matters listed on the agenda for this meeting.

All questions or statements should be concise and should be able to be heard within the 3 minutes allotted to each speaker.

Anyone wishing to ask a question or make a statement is requested to register their interest by completing the Public Question Time registration [online form](#) by **midday on the second working day** before the day of the meeting.

For example, if the meeting is on a Tuesday, the registration deadline is midday on Friday, (where there is a Bank Holiday Monday you will need to register by midday on the previous Thursday). The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time.

When registering for Public Question Time please indicate whether you wish to attend the meeting 'in person', or to participate remotely. People who choose to join the meeting remotely will be provided with the relevant link and joining instructions for the meeting.

Please note that completion of the on-line form does not guarantee you a place to speak during Public Question Time. You will receive email notification from the Governance Service confirming whether your request is successful.

The Chairman of the Committee has discretion to extend the time allocated to registered speakers and to amend the order in which they may speak.

In the event that a registered speaker is unable to connect to the meeting, or if there are any technical issues, their question/statement may be read by a Council Officer.

Further information on Public Question Time is available on the [Council's website](#).

Health and Safety

Anyone attending a meeting of the Council is asked to make themselves aware of the nearest available fire exit. In the event of an alarm sounding, you must evacuate the building immediately and follow all instructions provided by staff. You will be directed to the nearest designated assembly point where you should stay until it is safe to return to the building.

Documents

Agendas, Reports and Minutes may be accessed via www.braintree.gov.uk

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https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200136/access_to_information/376/privacy_policy

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Webcast and Audio Recording

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The meeting will also be broadcast via the Council's YouTube Channel.

Comments and Suggestions

We welcome comments to make our services as efficient and effective as possible. If you have any suggestions regarding the meeting you have attended you may send these to governance@braintree.gov.uk

PUBLIC SESSION

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1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declaration of Interests

1. To declare the existence and nature of any interests relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice (where necessary) before the meeting.
2. To declare the existence and nature of any instruction given by or on behalf of a political group to any Councillor who is a member of that group as to how that Councillor shall speak or vote on any matter before the Committee or the application or threat to apply any sanction by the group in respect of that Councillor should he/she speak or vote on any particular matter.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy Development Committee held on 11th October 2023 (copy previously circulated).

4 Public Question Time

Only Registered Speakers will be invited by the Chairman to speak during public question time.
Please see the agenda notes for guidance.

5 Review of the Draft Household Waste and Collections Policy 5 - 27

6 Draft Empty Homes Policy 28 - 48

7 Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 49 - 63

Report Title: Review of Draft Household Waste & Recycling Policy	
Report to: Corporate Policy Committee	
Date: 30 th November 2023	For: Noting
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: N/A
Report Presented by: Paul Partridge, Head of Operations	
Enquiries to: Samir Pandya, Strategy & Policy Manager, Operations E-mail: Samir.pandya@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider Braintree District Council's (the Council) draft Household Waste & Recycling Policy (the Draft Policy) in advance of its consideration by Cabinet on 18th December 2023.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Corporate Policy Committee is asked to consider the Draft Policy as set out in Appendix A and make any recommendations as part of the finalisation of the Draft Policy in anticipation of its approval by Cabinet.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 The service standards for household waste collection were last updated in 2014 and various aspects of the service have changed in the intervening years including:-
- Bulky Waste (Special Collection) Service brought back in-house;
 - Collection of up to 4 small items of WEEE (waste from electrical and electronic equipment) included free of charge with Special Collections;
 - Introduction of bring banks for food and drink cartons;
 - The type and quality of recyclable materials that are accepted by the reprocessors (Suffolk County Council contract) and the income derived from the sale of recyclates;
 - Requirement to source a clinical waste collection service;
 - Growth in digital communications which has changed the way the Council interacts with its customers;
 - Introduction of a subscription-based garden waste collection service from March 2024; and
 - Impact of new area-based collection routes on meeting missed bin targets.
- 3.2 There are also various factors that have driven a renewed demand for waste reduction/minimisation and increased recycling in recent years including:-

- **Climate Change:** Government aims to achieve net zero by 2050 and the Council has a target to become carbon neutral by 2030;
- **New waste legislation:** Environment Act 2021 sets out a legal framework for setting long-term, legally binding targets for environmental improvements including waste management;
- **The Waste Hierarchy and Circular Economy:** Designed to extract maximum value from virgin resources and keep them in use for as long as possible through repair, repurposing, reuse, recycling and recovery;
- **Cost/affordability** of the collection, treatment and disposal of waste; and
- **New Waste Strategy for Essex** aimed at progressively reducing the amount of residual waste generated across the county; recycling, reusing or composting 65% of waste by 2035; and becoming a zero-waste county by 2055.

3.3 The Council has a contract in place for the disposal of recyclable materials and, in recent years, the processing plants have imposed tighter restrictions on the quality of the materials they will accept. In some cases, this has resulted in whole vehicle loads being rejected owing to high levels of contamination. The Council has always provided guidance on what materials can be accepted for recycling, but some households still present items that are deemed ‘contaminants.’ The policy clarifies the Council’s expectations and makes it clear that contaminated waste will not be collected, nor will the crews return to collect this waste.

3.4 The Draft Policy captures long-established practice in terms of delivery of the Council’s Waste Management Service, but also seeks to clarify the service standards where the Council may have to deviate from the norm such as where vehicle access difficulties arise or where there are issues outside of the Council’s control that impinge on service delivery. It also includes some new proposals which have the potential to impact all customers, as follows:-

1. Cessation of the collection of side waste which reflects the issues outlined at 3.2 above.
2. A requirement to report missed collections by noon the day following the scheduled collection to reflect area-based working (currently there is no deadline). This is because as the crews move on to other areas, it becomes more difficult for them to return and collect. This will maximise opportunities for the Council to meet its published service standard of returning to collect missed waste within 2 working days.
3. The introduction of a subscription-based garden waste collection service to commence 4 March 2024 as agreed by Cabinet earlier this year.

3.5 The drive for waste reduction/minimisation and the importance of resource recovery have been prompted by the environmental impact and ever-

increasing costs of dealing with waste. Processing and treating just the residual element of waste in Essex this year will cost the Essex taxpayer £40million.

- 3.6 Benchmarking has shown that, within the Braintree District, the volume of waste generated by each household is far in excess of that generated by households in many other Essex authorities. For example, Colchester City Council has more residential properties than the Braintree District, yet our residual waste equates to 463.58 kgs of waste per household compared to just 332.31 kgs in Colchester. Last year, the Braintree District generated the fourth highest volume of residual waste in Essex. This has necessitated the inclusion of a policy which is deemed essential if the Council is to meet its own, the County's and the Government's waste minimisation and recycling objectives.
- 3.7 The Draft Policy lays clear the Council's current approach to waste management and the standard of service that customers can expect to receive in the future.
- 3.8 There will be a positive financial impact arising from (i) the No Side Waste policy and (ii) requirements around avoiding contamination of recyclable waste, as follows:-
- Increased Recycling Credits if more waste recycled;
 - Reduced disposal costs (ECC) if less waste goes to landfill; and
 - Increased income from sale of materials owing to improved quality of recyclates (fewer loads rejected).
- 3.9 The costs associated with the introduction of this policy are covered within existing operational budgets.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Any recommendations made by the Corporate Policy Committee will be considered by the relevant officers in the finalisation of the policy ahead of its consideration by Cabinet. The report to Cabinet will set out the recommendations made by the Corporate Policy Committee.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council has considered all avenues available in ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and will continue to educate residents about the impact of non-compliance with its waste collection service. However, the Council, through its collection monitoring, will be able to identify where there are incidents of side waste occurring or incidents where households are not placing waste into the correct waste containers.
- 5.2 The Environmental Protection Act 1990 states that a person is guilty of an offence if they throw down, drop or otherwise deposit any litter in any place and leave it. Accordingly, where there are incidents of side waste and informal approaches fail, the Council may consider bringing enforcement

action under this provision. In doing so, the Council would look to issue a Penalty Charge Notice, for which the current level of penalty is £100 (reduced to £75 if paid within 10 days). The maximum fine for this offence is £2,500, if the matter proceeds through a prosecution.

- 5.3 The Environmental Protection Act 1990, further provides that it is an offence if an individual fails to comply with the requirements to place waste for collection in receptacles identified by them. Failure to do so could result in a fixed penalty in the sum of £60. Continued failure to comply could result in a prosecution which holds a maximum fine of £1,000.
- 5.4 However, it is important to note that any enforcement action taken by the Council will be dependent on a full review of the merits of the individual case, and this will be seen very much as a last resort on the basis that we will seek to use other measures i.e. education and intervention in an effort to secure compliance.

6. Other Implications

- 6.1 Households that receive wheeled bin collections have limited black bin capacity based on the size and particular circumstances of their household. However, there are approximately 1,700 households that have remained on black sack collections and, although they are allocated a finite number of black sacks per annum, there is nothing to stop residents from purchasing their own additional supplies in order to dispose of larger quantities of waste via the Council's Waste Collection Service. These households will be encouraged to reduce their waste where it is evident that excessive quantities are being presented for collection.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 7.1 These are set out in the attached Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix B).

8. List of Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A - Draft Household Waste & Recycling Policy.
- 8.2 Appendix B - Equalities Impact Assessment.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 [Draft Essex Waste Strategy](#)
- 9.2 [Cabinet Reports –13th March 2023 and 10th July 2023](#)
- 9.3 [Braintree District Council Climate Change Policy](#)
- 9.4 [Environmental Protection Act 1990](#)
- 9.5 [Environment Act 2021](#)



Household Waste & Recycling Collections

Policy and Procedures

6 November 2023

1. Legislative Powers

Braintree District Council is a Waste Collection Authority under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) and has a statutory duty to collect household waste from all domestic properties under Section 45 of the Act.

The term “household waste” is defined in Section 75(5) of the EPA 1990 as being waste from:

- a domestic property, that is to say, a building or self-contained part of a building which is used wholly for the purposes of living accommodation.
- a caravan.
- a residential home.
- premises forming part of a university, school or other educational establishment.
- premises forming part of a hospital or nursing home which are used to provide a care home service.

Section 45A (3) of the EPA 1990 requires Waste Collection Authorities to collect at least two types of recyclable waste together or individually separated from the rest of the household waste.

Section 46(4) of the EPA gives the Council specific powers to stipulate:

- The size and type of collection containers
- The materials or items which may or may not be placed within the containers
- The collection point for waste materials

The frequency of collections is currently a matter for local authorities to determine. While section 45 of the EPA 1990 imposes a duty on Waste Collection Authorities to collect household waste, there is no provision in this Act or associated secondary legislation that imposes an explicit frequency of collection on authorities.

Section 45(3) of the EPA 1990 provides that ‘no charge shall be made for the collection of household waste except in cases prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State.’

Local authorities have powers under section 46A of the EPA 1990 to issue written warnings and penalties for failure to comply with requirements relating to household waste containers.

Paragraph 4 of Schedule 1 to the Controlled Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/811), as amended, provides for these exceptions. It includes (among other things):

- Household waste that is generated from certain non-domestic properties such as universities, hospitals and prisons.
- Waste that weighs more than 25kg or that cannot fit into the bin provided.
- Asbestos.
- Garden waste.

This policy sets out the service standards that apply to the provision of household waste collections in the Braintree District.

2. Provision of Containers

Type of Waste	Standard Container Provided Per Household
Food waste	23L kerbside bin.
Garden waste	180L green bin (additional bins provided on request on a chargeable basis).
	Biodegradable sacks from March 2024 for households not on wheeled bin collections.
Refuse	180L (or optional 140L) black bin.
Refuse (if property not suited to bins)	Black sacks - 2 rolls of 26 sacks delivered to households (including flats) p.a. No additional supplies provided.
Mixed Recycling	Clear sacks – 3 rolls of 26 sacks delivered to each household p.a. Additional supplies available on request.

3. Type of Container

Where the Council considers it impractical for residents to use the standard containers it provides owing to access or storage issues, a site assessment will be made to determine if an alternative can be offered. This will be based primarily on health and safety or access grounds.

Residents living at properties which, in the opinion of the Council, are unable to accommodate wheeled bins will be offered a black sack collection service for general household waste and, from March 2024, a biodegradable sack collection for garden waste if they wish to subscribe to that service. Residents will be expected to participate in the other elements of the recycling service.

4. Type and method of collection

Type of Waste	Method of Collection
Food waste	Green kerbside bin
Dry Mixed Recycling	Clear sacks (unrestricted quantity)
Garden Waste	Green wheeled bin *
General rubbish	Black wheeled bin (or black sacks if bins unsuitable)
Glass bottles/jars	Bring banks at various sites across the District
Food/drink cartons	Some bring banks (mainly at larger supermarkets)
Textiles/shoes/handbags	Some bring banks
Bulky household waste	Up to 6 or max. 12 items collected from outside premises
Clinical waste arising from self-treatment in the home	Subject to medical condition but could include sacks or sharps containers.
Small electrical items	Up to 4 items collected free of charge with any booking for a Special Collection. There are also collection points at all libraries in the District.

* Subscription-based service only from March 2024 using 180L green wheeled bins. Households on black sack collections will need to purchase biodegradable sacks from the Council if they wish to receive this service, the cost of which includes collection and disposal.

5. Frequency of collections

The Council operates an alternate-weekly collection of refuse/recycling and garden waste and a weekly collection of food waste, the collection dates for which are publicised on the Council's website.

The non-chargeable garden waste service will be withdrawn at the end of November 2023 and replaced with a subscription-based service from March 2024 which will operate throughout the year with a two-week suspension over Christmas/New Year.

On Bank Holiday weeks, collections are normally a day later than usual with Friday's collection being completed on the Saturday. However, there may be exceptions to this rule (including some advance collections), particularly over Christmas/New Year and other festive periods, and residents are advised to check our website for changes.

6. Collection point

Collections are made from the front boundary of each property (where it meets the public highway) unless otherwise agreed with or designated by the Council.

Where properties do not have pavements or a kerb adjoining their boundary, bins/sacks may be presented at the inner boundary of the property where they are visible from the road.

7. Private/Unadopted Roads

Where possible, the Council will endeavour to collect from the boundary of properties via private/unadopted roads (unless directed otherwise) if safe for the collection vehicle to do so.

However, if conditions are not suitable, for example, narrow access, unkempt verges, overhanging trees, weak road surface, potholes, lack of turning point (if no-through road) etc., the Council will require that waste is presented for collection on the pavement or verge nearest to the public highway to which the collection vehicle has access.

The Council reserves the right to review existing arrangements and may designate an alternative collection point in the event of access issues.

8. Presenting waste for collection

It is the householder's responsibility to place their refuse and recycling at their designated collection point by 7am on the day of collection and no earlier than the evening before. All waste should be contained within the bin with the lid shut and sacks should be tied securely to prevent littering and contents getting wet.

The crews will empty the bins and return them with the lids shut to their original collection point after emptying. Food bins will be laid down.

At the earliest opportunity following collection, the householder should retrieve their bin/s and store them within the curtilage of their property until the next scheduled collection. Bins must not be left on the pavement, highway or other public area or right of way as this can constitute an obstruction.

9. Flats/communal bin stores

Flats usually have a communal bin store/area from where we will collect waste on a weekly basis. Some management companies/social landlords provide bulk bins for the convenience of their tenants which we will empty (subject to access), however, these are managed and maintained privately.

The removal of fly-tipped waste (e.g., bulky waste) from bin stores is the responsibility of the management company/landlord, although the Council can provide a clearance service on a chargeable basis on request.

The collection crews will not collect where fly-tipped waste prevents access to bulk bins and recycling sacks and, in these circumstances, the onus will be on the managing agents or landlord to clear the offending items to facilitate access. The Council will collect on the next scheduled collection day following clearance unless the managing agents/landlord wish to pay for a return visit before that date.

10. Business Premises with Domestic Dwellings attached

By law, the collection of commercial (business) waste attracts a charge and so separate bins must be used for domestic and business waste. Disposing of business waste in a domestic waste stream is a criminal offence which could leave the business owner liable to prosecution. Any domestic bins found to contain business waste will not be emptied and the Council may take enforcement action if appropriate.

11. Assisted collections

An assisted collection service is available to residents who are unable to put out their waste and recycling owing to ill health, infirmity or disability and who have no other person aged 16 yrs or over resident at the property who can assist. In these circumstances the collection crew will collect bins/sacks from an agreed location on the property and return bins to that point after emptying.

The link below will take you to a simple application form that needs to be completed before this service can be authorised.

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/bins-waste-recycling/assisted-collections/1>

We ask householders to notify us of any change in their circumstances. However, the Council reserves the right to review these arrangements from time to time and may withdraw this service if circumstances have changed such that assistance is no longer deemed necessary.

12. Clinical waste

Clinical waste is any waste from healthcare activities that could pose a risk to public health or the environment if not disposed of correctly. The Council engages a contractor to provide a collection service for residents who are self-treating at home. It is the responsibility of the householder to notify the Council that they require a collection.

Responsibility for disposal of waste arising from treatment by NHS workers in the home rests with the NHS.

Some clinical waste is hazardous and poses a risk of infection, so it requires specialist receptacles for storage which are available from your healthcare provider. You must never put hazardous waste into your normal household bins. This waste includes any medical instruments that could cause punctures or cuts, or anything that could be harmful to others such as needles, sharps, waste arising from infectious diseases, swabs, and wound dressings.

Non-infectious waste may be offensive in nature but has no identified risk of infection such as incontinence wear/pads, colostomy bags and catheters. If the waste is not infectious, it should be double-bagged and put into your household waste bin.

13. Bulky waste (Special Collection) service

A chargeable collection service is available to all residents for bulky items of household waste such as household and garden furniture and equipment, white goods, carpets, etc. There is a two-tier charge based on up to 6 items and a maximum of 12 items and we will also take up to 4 small waste electrical items/appliances at no extra cost with any booking. A list of items that we do and don't collect as part of this service can be viewed on the Council's website.

Items must be left in an accessible location outside the property by 7am on the day of collection and only those items listed at the time of booking will be removed.

The service operates by area on weekdays only and we will confirm your collection date at the time of booking.

14. Ad-hoc Services

(1) Amenity Collections

The Council provides a commercial service to town and parish councils who, from time to time, arrange local collections of household waste within their area. Prices are available on request. The Council does not collect POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants) waste as part of this service. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Sofas, sofa beds and futons.
- Armchairs.
- Padded kitchen and dining room chairs.
- Padded stools and footstools.
- Home office chairs.
- Bean bags, floor, and sofa cushions.

(2) Christmas Tree Recycling Service

In the New Year, the Council will collect real Christmas Trees from designated collection points free of charge. Details are available on the Council's website.

15. Recycling 'bring banks'

The Council provides c.90 local bring banks across the District, primarily for the collection of glass bottles and jars, although some sites also include facilities for food/drinks cartons and textiles/clothes/shoes (the latter being owned and maintained by third parties).

These sites are inspected, and the banks emptied regularly to maintain sufficient capacity for materials. As with the kerbside collections of recyclables, it is important to deposit the correct materials in the right banks to avoid loads being rejected by the processing plant.

Residents must not leave items on top of or around the containers as this constitutes fly-tipping and can result in enforcement action being taken and a fine incurred.

16. Disruption to service

The crews endeavour to keep to scheduled collections but occasionally this may not be possible owing to inclement weather, road closures, vehicle breakdowns or other reasons outside of the Council's control. Where delays arise, residents are asked to leave their waste at their normal collection point and crews will work as quickly as possible to catch up. Regular service updates will be posted on the Council's website and via social media.

17. Missed collections

The crews aim to return and collect missed waste within 2 working days of receiving a report where the crew has overlooked a collection.

Residents are required to report missed collections after 3pm on the day of collection (to allow for any delays), but in any event **no later than 12 noon on the next working day after collection** and should leave their waste container/s at their normal collection point to facilitate access.

The collection crews will not return to collect waste in the following circumstances:-

- The waste is not at the normal collection point when the crew call.
- The waste is not household waste.
- The containers are too heavy to be lifted/tipped.
- The waste has been stickered as 'contaminated'.
- The waste is excess (side) waste.
- The bin is unauthorised.
- The contents are compacted or frozen inside the bin.

- The bin has no subscription sticker and there is no valid subscription in force (garden waste only w.e.f. March 2024).

Missed bin reports may be verified by the crew records including photographs taken at the time of their visit.

18. Restricted Access

When a collection cannot be made due to access being restricted by parked vehicles, the crew will inform their manager/supervisor. Two further attempts will be made to complete the collection over the next 2 working days, but if access is still not possible, the crew will not return until the next scheduled collection. A postcard will be left on the windscreens of the offending vehicles asking the driver to park elsewhere on collection days to avoid causing an obstruction and inconvenience to residents.

Where there are repeated access problems, the Council may seek the following solutions:-

- on-street parking restrictions
- change of collection time/day
- change of collection point

19. Contamination

Black bins found to contain waste which is not household waste (e.g., vehicle parts, hazardous waste, builder's rubble, concrete, commercial/business waste, etc.) will not be emptied. Householders must make alternative arrangements for the proper disposal of this waste.

Bins/sacks must not be contaminated with incorrect materials: only deposit waste in a container that the Council has provided for that particular type of waste. This is particularly important to ensure that we maximise the amount of waste that can be recycled.

Where any container (including clear sacks) includes items that are not accepted, the waste will be left by the crew and the container stickered to explain why. In these circumstances, the onus is on the resident to either remove the contaminants and re-present the waste on the next scheduled collection day or take it to their local Household Waste & Recycling Centre.

Information on what the Council can/can't collect is available to view on our website.

20. Spillages

The crews are required to clear any spillages for which they are responsible and may request Street Cleansing staff to attend if necessary. For this reason, we ask that residents do not place liquids (oils/paint etc.) in their bins.

Any spillages that occur in advance of collections are the responsibility of the householder to clear.

21. Excess waste or side waste

For the purpose of this policy, the term 'side waste' refers to excess waste in bags or boxes or loose rubbish that is presented either alongside or on top of the black wheeled bin/s.

The Council will only collect waste contained in council-issue wheeled bins or sacks (including garden waste sacks from 2024) for which the appropriate charge has been paid where appropriate. Waste placed alongside or on top of bins will not be collected as this does not support our waste minimisation objectives or encourage residents to reduce and recycle as much of their waste as possible. In these circumstances, the crews will photograph and sticker the side waste, empty the bin and leave the side waste in-situ.

Given the environmental impact of disposing of waste, we require residents to manage their waste and keep this to a minimum wherever possible. Residents are also expected to participate fully in the recycling elements of the service to ensure that they have adequate capacity within their residual waste bins. Residents who generate additional waste will need to take this to their nearest Household Waste and Recycling Centre or store it within the curtilage of their property and present it for collection on their next scheduled collection day.

EXCEPTIONS

The Council may exercise its discretion to remove side waste, for example over Christmas/New Year when households traditionally generate more waste than is normal.

Side waste will also be removed if it arises because of prolonged delays in collecting caused for example by restricted access, road closures or during periods of inclement weather (icy conditions/floods, etc.)

We recognise that larger households and those with special (medical) needs may require additional bin capacity despite fully recycling, and the Council makes provision for this as set out in para. 22 below.

22. Additional bin capacity

Requests for additional bin capacity for general household waste will be assessed using the following criteria:-

- The number of people living at the property on a permanent basis providing every effort is made to maximise recycling.
- Medical circumstances that generate additional waste e.g., incontinence pads.
- Larger households with children using nappies day and night.
- Other exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Council.

In all cases, residents will be required to complete an application form (available on-line or via Customer Services) and applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

It is the responsibility of the householder to let us know of any changes in their circumstances that may affect their eligibility for extra bin capacity. The Council reserves the right to review these arrangements from time to time and may withdraw this service if extra bin capacity is no longer deemed necessary.

Additional garden waste bins are available on a chargeable basis and, from 4 March 2024, on a subscription basis only. There is a separate charge to purchase a bin and an annual fee/subscription to empty each bin.

23. Damaged/lost/stolen containers

Requests to provide a replacement wheeled bin for refuse or garden waste owing to damage can be made on-line or via the Customer Services Centre on 01376 552525.

Wheeled bins damaged or accidentally tipped into the collection vehicle will be replaced free of charge. If a householder deliberately damages their bin/s, a charge may apply.

Garden waste bins: N.B. From March 2024, damaged garden waste bins will only be replaced if a subscription fee has been paid. A charge may apply.

Where a bin has been stolen, the Council will replace the bin free of charge if the theft has been reported to the Police and a Police Incident reference number is obtained.

We aim to provide new or replacement bins within 10 working days of receiving a request.

24. Subscription-based Garden Waste Service (commencing March 2024)

From 4 March 2024, the Council will offer a subscription-based garden waste collection service only. This requires residents to buy both a 180L green bin (one-off cost) and pay an annual subscription to have the bin emptied. *Existing bins may be used until such time as they are no longer serviceable and need replacing.*

Additional bins may be purchased but a separate subscription is required for each bin to be emptied.

The service will operate all year round, except for a two-week period over Christmas/New Year.

The Council will collect unwanted bins free of charge from households who do not wish to take out a subscription, providing they are empty and are left for collection

at the normal collection point on the agreed date. Requests to have a bin collected should be made on-line. **Residents should not use their garden waste bin once the winter suspension starts unless they intend to subscribe to the new service, as it will not be emptied.**

Households who have relinquished their bins and then decide they would like to use the garden waste service will need buy a bin from the Council.

A sticker authorising collection will be provided for each subscription purchased, and this must be affixed to the rear of the bin underneath the handle. The bin must be positioned with the sticker facing towards the public highway when presented for collection so that it can be seen clearly by the crew.

It is the householder's responsibility to:-

- Look after the bins they own and store them within the curtilage of their property in between collections to minimise the risk of theft.
- Report any damage to the garden waste subscription sticker. Bins not displaying a sticker will not be emptied.
- Ensure that the sticker is clearly visible to the crew on collection day.
- Tell us if they move out of the District so that we can cancel the subscription.
- Tell us if they move within the District and wish to cancel or transfer their subscription to their new address so that we can update our records.
- Ensure that garden waste is only put into the garden waste bin or biodegradable sacks and not presented for collection in any other receptacle/s.

25. If you move house

Other than bins owned (purchased) by the resident, all bins should be left at the property ready for the new residents. The only exception to this is if residents are relocating to another property within the District and wish to transfer their garden waste subscription to their new address, in which case they should take their garden waste bin/s with them.

26. Looking after your bins

Residents are responsible for the storage and safe keeping of bins provided by the Council and for maintaining them in a hygienic condition.

Residents may personalise bins by affixing the number of their property but must not cover the Council's logo.

27. Enforcement

The Council aims to offer advice and guidance in the first instance to secure compliance with its Household Waste & Recycling Collection Service. However, we recognise that enforcement powers may be necessary in some circumstances and, where this is necessary, we will exercise those powers in a transparent, reasonable, and proportionate way. Enforcement action may be taken if:-

- Waste is left on the public highway (pavement/road) on non-collection days.
- Waste is left in a place other than the designated collection point.
- There has been unauthorised use of another person's bin.
- Waste is persistently contaminated with incorrect materials.
- Excess waste is persistently presented alongside wheeled bins.

Some offences relating to the incorrect disposal of household waste - for example, littering and fly-tipping - are criminal offences and the Council will not hesitate to take formal action against the perpetrator/s where the source of the waste is established and seek to recover the full costs of clearing and disposing of the waste.

28. Complaints

We aim to deliver our services correctly first time but accept that things occasionally go wrong. We ask residents to let us know as soon as possible if this happens so that we can put it right.

If the issue is not rectified and a formal complaint is lodged, we will investigate and respond in accordance with the Council's formal complaints procedure.

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/council/make-complaint>

Service Standards – Household Waste & Recycling Collections

Service	Target
Collection of refuse and recycling.	Alternately weekly from designated collection point on scheduled collection day
Collection of food waste	Weekly from designated collection point on scheduled collection day
Collection of garden waste (chargeable service)	Fortnightly from designated collection point on scheduled collection day where a subscription has been purchased.
Provision of garden waste subscription bin sticker	Within 10 working days of subscribing to the service.
Missed collections of any waste type (where the Council is at fault)	Collect within 2 working days of receiving a report
Notify residents of changes to collection days	Planned Changes: Within 1 working day via re-text and the Council's website. Unplanned Changes: As soon as possible via the Service Update page of the Council's website.
Replace damaged/missing bins (subject to authorisation by the Waste Management Team). <i>N.B. A charge may apply for the bin.</i>	Within 10 working days of receiving request.
Deliver appropriate bins/sacks to new housing developments	Within 10 working days of notice of occupancy (subject to refuse and recycling storage and collection points complying with Planning Regulations.)
Empty overflowing banks at Recycling Banks	Within 1 working day of receiving a report.
Determine applications for additional grey bin capacity and notify applicant.	Within 2 months of receiving application.
Determine applications for Assisted Collections and notify applicant.	Within 14 working days of receipt.
Annual supplies of black sack (for refuse)	Max. 2 rolls of 26 sacks (total 52) delivered to door nearest to public highway. No additional supplies provided.
Annual supplies of clear sacks (for recycling)	3 rolls of 26 sacks (total 78) delivered to door nearest public highway. Ad-hoc supplies delivered within 10 working days of receiving request.
Biodegradable sacks for garden waste (non-wheeled bin households only).	Delivered within 10 working days of receiving order.
Special Collections of bulky household waste (chargeable service)	Completed within 3 weeks of receiving request.
Clinical Waste Collections	Referral to external service provider within 5 working days of receiving a request.

PROPOSED PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH SIDE WASTE PRESENTED ALONGSIDE GREY WHEELED BINS

For the purposes of this procedure, the term 'Side Waste' refers to excess waste in bags or boxes or loose rubbish that is presented either alongside or on top of grey wheeled bin/s.

Households with wheeled bins are required to contain their residual waste within their grey bin/s and present them for collection with the lid shut. Any side waste presented will not be removed.

Where waste collection crews encounter side waste, the following procedure will apply during any 3-month period:-

- Step 1:** Bin emptied; **side waste removed as 'one-off'** and **standard letter sent** to householder asking them not to put out any side waste for collection.
- Step 2:** Bin emptied; **side waste photographed, stickered and left.** Customer Service Centre (CSC) notified via in-cab technology and **standard reminder letter sent to householder asking not to present side waste** for collection and offering advice/guidance on managing waste if required. Letter to explain consequences of continuing to present side waste.
- Step 3:** Bin emptied; **side waste photographed, stickered and left.** Address referred to Waste Minimisation & Recycling Team for **personal intervention** to engage with the resident and offer support.
- Step 4:** Bin emptied; **side waste photographed, stickered and left.** Address referred to **Street Scene Protection Team** to investigate as an unauthorised deposit of waste under S.87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 part IV which **may result in the issue of a fixed penalty notice.**
- Step 5:** In the event of **non-payment of an FPN** by the due date a **prosecution may be taken.**

Equality Impact Assessment

Full



Service

OPERATIONS

Title of policy, strategy, project or service

Household Waste & Recycling Policy

Is the policy, strategy, project or service new or existing?

The document formalises existing operational practices and also includes some new policies.

Q 1. Aim of the policy, strategy, project or service

This policy provides a framework for the Council to achieve its objectives of delivering an efficient and cost-effective household waste collection service using a proportionate and considered approach to service delivery. The policy provides clarity on the respective roles and responsibilities of the Council and its residents and explains the consequences if residents fail to comply.

Much of the policy sets out existing practice, but there are some new elements specifically designed to encourage waste minimisation and maximise levels of recycling, as well as improve service efficiency, as follows:-

- How the Council will deal with excess (side waste).
- Reporting missed collections.
- The Council's approach to restricted access that hampers/prevents collection on scheduled collection days.
- The consequences of failing to comply with this policy.
- Subscription-based garden waste service (*subject to a separate EQIA*).

The Council restricts the volume of household waste that residents may present for collection by limiting the size of the black bin and the number of black sacks provided to each household (where wheeled bin collections are not suitable). However, we know that excess (side) waste is being collected from some households within the District, despite informal measures taken to prevent this, and this is having an adverse impact on the tonnage of residual waste collected and the District's recycling performance as well as being unfair to those who do not present any side waste.

We offer a comprehensive household recycling service (including food waste and garden waste) and so there should not be any need for excess waste if residents make full use of the facilities available. The policy therefore includes provision to cease the collection of side waste.

There will be some exceptions to this, for example those in larger households, children in disposable nappies and those with medical conditions, which will generate additional waste. We fully understand the extra refuse produced under these exceptional circumstances and will support these residents in terms of advice and additional bin capacity where required.

The Council has a service standard to return and collect missed waste within 2 working days of receiving a report. However, there has never been any restriction in terms of when residents should report a missed collection. This can make it difficult to meet the service standard owing to the way the routes are planned, as the crews move further away from the original route as the week progresses and it may necessitate employing additional staff to ensure that the standard is met. To address this, there is a new requirement for residents to report missed collections by 12 noon the next working day which will put less pressure on crews. In addition, we are seeing an increased number of abortive missed bin reports, as residents become accustomed to seeing the crews at a particular time of day and assume they have been missed if they don't arrive at their 'usual' time, whereas it is simply a case of the crew being delayed. For this reason, we will be asking residents not to report missed collections before 3pm on the scheduled day of collection, by which time we would expect the crews to have completed their routes. There is a page on the Council's website which updates customers on any unplanned delays to service.

The crews routinely experience problems with fly-tipped waste in communal bin stores serving flats which prevents access to the refuse and recycling. This is not only frustrating for the crews, but also generates complaints from the tenants because the waste has not been collected. Responsibility for clearance of fly-tipped waste rests with the managing agents or landlords and currently staff liaise with them to get the waste cleared so that the crews can return to collect. This is not cost effective, as the Council incurs additional expense in making return visits. The policy therefore includes a new provision that the crews will not return to collect before the next scheduled collection day unless the managing agents/landlords covers the cost. This may encourage them to take a more robust approach to preventing fly-tipped waste in the first place.

Similarly, some collections cannot be completed because access to a road (or bin store) is obstructed by parked vehicles. In such situations, the crew return as many times as is necessary to gain access, incurring additional cost for each visit. The policy now restricts this to 2 further visits, failing which the waste will be collected on the next scheduled day.

The majority of households present their waste for collection in accordance with the guidance provided, but some households persistently ignore requests to comply. This is mainly in respect of side waste, but can also include contaminated waste. The policy makes provision for a more formal approach (enforcement) to secure compliance where this proves necessary. This will only be used as a last resort where informal approaches (education/guidance) have failed.

Q 2. Give details of existing information, data and consultations you have used to consider the impact this policy, strategy, project or service is likely to have on the protected characteristic

Existing practice and research with other authorities in relation to side waste.

Q3. If there are gaps in this information, data and consultations how will you address this?

E.g. if you are planning to carry out a consultation, tell us who you will consult with and when.

No consultation proposed.

Q 4. Thinking about each of the protected characteristics what impact does or could the policy, strategy, project or service have on each? How will you address this?

Group	Impact (positive or negative)	Proposed action (including by whom, by when)
Age	Possible impact in relation to side waste policy depending on circumstances. These groups may have medical conditions that generate additional non-recyclable waste, and this must be considered.	The Council makes provision for exceptional circumstances that result in more waste being generated and will continue to offer advice/guidance and/or additional bin capacity where a need is justified. An Assisted Collection service is available to residents who are unable to put out their waste or recycling owing to ill health, infirmity or disability and who have no other person resident at the property who is able to do this.
Disability		
Pregnancy & maternity		
	Residents with poor eyesight or mental health conditions may need help in understanding the changes in service provision.	Printed versions in larger typeface can be provided on request. Our staff will continue to work with residents to offer guidance and support where needed.
Race	Some residents may have difficulty understanding the policy if English is not their first language and they have no family members who can assist.	To ensure that all publicity and information concerning the policy is accessible to all ethnic groups, we will provide a translation or printed material in another language on request. The most recent Census results show ethnicity in the Braintree District as follows:- 94.7% White British 1.7% Asian/Asian British/Asian Welsh 1.2% Black, Black British/Black Welsh, Caribbean or African 1.9% Mixed or multiple ethnic groups 0.5% Other ethnic groups
Gender reassignment	No negative impact for this equality strand.	
Marriage & civil partnership (only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination).	No negative impact for this equality strand.	

Religion or belief	Potential for additional waste to be generated over religious festivals e.g., Christmas.	The Council acknowledges that some residents may generate additional waste at these times and will adopt a flexible approach to side waste.
Sex	No negative impact for this equality strand.	
Sexual orientation	No negative impact for this equality strand.	
Other	<p>This policy sets out the Council’s obligations and the requirements expected of residents in relation to household waste collections. These include placing stipulated materials in the appropriate bin or sack, placing bins or sacks at the designated collection point and ensuring that all waste is fully contained in the correct waste receptacle.</p> <p>In respect of side waste, some residents may experience difficulty in reducing the volume of waste they generate, as it may necessitate a change of behaviour in their shopping habits.</p> <p>Some residents may simply opt to dispose of their additional waste at their local Household Waste & Recycling Centre. This may not be an option for all residents if they do not have a car or drive.</p> <p>The restricted access policy will have the greatest impact on (1) residents who live in flats with communal waste storage; and (2) those who live in roads/streets with little or no off-street parking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of flats, the policy places the onus on the managing agents/landlords to implement measures to facilitate clear access to the waste and decide whether a 	<p>The Council will communicate changes to residents and the policy will be available to view on the Council’s website.</p> <p>The Council will work with residents to help them adjust to the change and provide guidance and advice on reducing their waste. Provision has been made to fund a robust campaign on the No Side Waste policy and residents will be given ample advance notice to give them time to adapt to the change.</p> <p>This should not be necessary if residents consider options to reduce the amount of waste they produce and make full use of the recycling facilities available to them.</p> <p>(1) The Council provides a separate service for the collection of bulky items of household waste, which is reduced in price for those in receipt of means tested benefits. Alternatively, items can be disposed of free of</p>

	<p>return visit is required before the next scheduled collection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where indiscriminate parking is the cause of the restricted access, our crews will make two further attempts to gain access, failing which the waste will be left until the next scheduled collection. <p>All households have the potential to be impacted by the side waste policy, depending on their circumstances. This may be owing to medical conditions or simply because they have larger families which produce additional non-recyclable waste.</p>	<p>charge at local Household Waste & Recycling Centres.</p> <p>(2) Crews will continue to place cards on the windscreens of offending vehicles asking the driver to park with more consideration on collection day. We may also write to all households in the vicinity asking them and their visitors to leave clear access on collection days.</p> <p>The Council makes provision for exceptional circumstances that result in more waste being generated and will continue to offer advice/guidance and/or additional bin capacity where our criteria is met.</p>
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Completed by Carol Clayman
PA to Head of Operations



Approved by Paul Partridge
Head of Operations



Date: 3/10/23

Report Title: Draft Empty Homes Policy	
Report to: Corporate Policy Development Committee	
Date: 30 th November 2023	For: Discussion
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/62
Report Presented by: Carly Jones, Strategic Business Support Manager carly.jones@braintree.gov.uk	
Enquiries to: Carly Jones, Strategic Business Support Manager carly.jones@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To engage with the Corporate Policy Development Committee (the Committee) on the development of Braintree District Council's (the Council) draft Empty Homes Policy (the Policy).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider the draft Empty Home Policy as set out in Appendix A and the principles of the future management of empty homes within the District.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Empty properties are a national issue and housing continues to be a key Government priority. The Government has indicated that it wants to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use, as a sustainable way of increasing the overall supply of housing, and to reduce blight on neighbourhoods. The Government has set out that it expects this to be achieved by builders, investors, and local councils increasing the supply of repurposed empty homes. As a result, the Council has reviewed how it aligns its approach to tackle empty homes.
- 3.2 In March 2023, the Council adopted the Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028. As part of the public consultation, 80% of respondents rated 'Reducing the number of empty properties in the District by exploring options to bring them back into use' as important (highest). This is important because it illustrates that empty properties are a real issue within the District and cause concern for the public.
- 3.3 There is a high demand for housing within the Braintree District. Empty properties which could otherwise be made available for sale or rent are a wasted resource. In July 2023, there were 2,235 active applications on the housing register. Bringing empty properties back in to use will increase the supply of housing to help to meet local housing need and demand.
- 3.4 Previously, the Council's powers were limited with the only enforcement action available being compulsory purchase. Historically, the Council has not

exercised this power due to its complexity and the resource required to complete the compulsory purchase process. The Housing Act 2004 saw the introduction of the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO's). EDMOs provide an additional enforcement tool to assist with bringing empty homes back into use.

- 3.5 Whilst there is no statutory requirement to have an Empty Homes Policy, it is recommended that the Council has one in place in order to reduce the number of long-term empty properties within the District by bringing empty properties back into use and discouraging owners from leaving them empty long term. The implementation of an Empty Homes Policy will aid the Council in delivering an effective future housing service over the next five years (in line with the Healthy Housing Strategy 2023-2028), supporting the current and future housing offer and needs for those choosing to live in the Braintree District.
- 3.6 According to the Council's Council Tax database, as of 1st September 2023 there were 2,647 empty properties within the Braintree District. 1,016 of these empty properties are long term unfurnished and unoccupied. Long term unfurnished and unoccupied properties are properties that have been unfurnished and unoccupied for six months or longer.
- 3.7 Providing advice and assistance, where possible, to those wishing to bring empty homes back into use will assist in reducing the number of long-term empty properties within the District. Where necessary, the Council will use appropriate engagement to return properties to use. Empty homes are a wasted resource, particularly when considered against the ever-growing need for housing. Bringing empty properties back into use and discouraging owners from leaving them empty will:
- Maximise the existing housing resource.
 - Increase the provision of good quality, affordable housing.
 - Minimise adverse environmental, social and local impacts.
 - Encourage growth, betterment and investment within communities.
 - Support other corporate priorities, objectives and strategies.
- 3.8 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- A well connected and growing District with high quality homes and infrastructure.
 - A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities.
 - Enhancing our environment.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 In the preparation for the draft Policy, the Council has undertaken extensive research with other Local Authorities in order to ascertain what their approaches are to tackling empty homes. Between April – September 2023, the Council reached out to seventeen Local Authorities that are successfully tackling empty properties within their areas.
- 4.2 This consultation provided the Council with insights on successful and unsuccessful strategies for addressing empty properties. This information has greatly enhanced the Council's comprehension of effective approaches adopted by each Local Authority. The insights gathered from this research phase have significantly shaped and assisted in formulating the Council's proposed Empty Homes policy. The details of the research and finding can be found at Appendix B.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Following the consideration of the draft Policy by the Committee, the feedback received will be considered by the lead officer, in the finalising of the Policy in preparation for its consideration and approval by Cabinet.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising out of the recommendations set out in this report.
- 6.2 The implementation of the Policy will result in future financial consequences for the Council if enforcement action becomes necessary. Where additional funding is required beyond the current resources available, these will be brought to the Cabinet or Council as required.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There is no statutory requirement for Councils to have an Empty Homes policy in place, although it is considered good practice to do so.
- 7.2 As set out in this report, the Council has some powers available to it for the management of empty homes within the District. However, through this Policy, the Council is seeking to establish a process of engagement and be able to provide advice and assistance that will encourage people to bring empty homes back into circulation. This would avoid the requirement of engaging in lengthy and costly legal proceedings, which would be reserved for the more severe instances.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 None.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 9.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 9.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 9.3 The Council will undertake an Equality Impact Assessment in preparation for the Policy coming before Cabinet for approval.

10. List of Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix A –Draft Empty Homes Policy.
- 10.2 Appendix B – Research and Good Practice Other Local Authorities.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 None.

DRAFT Braintree District Council

Empty Homes Policy V.1

Introduction

This policy sets out the measures that Braintree District Council will employ to bring empty properties back into use and is primarily focussing on privately owned empty homes that are long term empty. This means homes that have been empty for at least six months but with the main focus being on homes that have been empty for at least two years. These two-year empty homes have not come back into use with the normal operation of the housing market and are likely to need support or intervention. However, we maintain an interest and oversight of all empty properties in the district including second homes and furnished empties.

The government wants to increase the number of empty homes that are brought back into use, as a sustainable way of increasing the overall supply of housing, and to reduce blight on neighbourhoods. The government wants builders, investors, and local councils to increase the supply of repurposed empty homes.

Aim & Objectives

Braintree District Council's aim is to reduce the number of long-term empty properties within the district by bringing empty properties back into use and discouraging owners from leaving them empty.

In order to achieve this aim, Braintree District Council's objectives are to provide advice and assistance, where possible, to those wishing to bring empty homes back into use. Also, where necessary, Braintree District Council will use appropriate enforcement action to return the property to use.

Braintree District Council recognises the importance of bringing empty properties back into use and is committed to this objective. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to officers, partners and the general public on the council's approach to bringing empty homes back to use.

Background

In March 2023 Braintree District Council adopted the Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028. As part of the public consultation, 80% of respondents rated 'tackling empty homes' as a priority.

There is a high demand for housing within the Braintree District. Empty properties which could otherwise be made available for sale or rent are a wasted resource. In July 2023, there were 2235 active applications on the housing register. Bringing

empty properties back in to use will increase the supply of housing to help to meet local housing need and demand.

Initially, the Council's powers were limited with the only enforcement action available being compulsory purchase. Historically, Braintree District Council has not exercised this power due to its complexity and the resource required.

The Housing Act 2004 saw the introduction of the use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO's). Empty Dwelling Management Orders provide an additional enforcement tool to assist with bringing empty homes back into use.

Under the Housing Act 2004 and associated legislation government encourages councils to take action to bring empty homes back into use.

Empty Homes within the Braintree District

Within the Braintree District there are approximately 1004 long-term empty homes (June 2023). Council Tax legislation identifies a property as a long-term empty home when it has been empty of people, furniture and/or possessions for six months or more.

The total number of empty homes in the district is approximately 2,588 (June 2023). See the below table for a breakdown of empty homes.

Short term empty	992
Long term second homes	197
Long term exempt	395
Long term unfurnished and unoccupied	1004

Owning an empty home is not an acceptable choice for an owner, as all too often, the empty property becomes an eyesore and becomes an attraction for anti-social behaviour. The garden becomes overgrown, and the house begins to slip into a state of accelerating disrepair. A slipped slate or clogged gutter may cause rainwater to penetrate an adjoining property, whilst doing untold damage to the vacant house. Neighbours will become disgruntled at the increasing eyesore and local children may develop an interest in playing around the garden. Eventually someone may break in causing vandalism and anti-social behaviour, sometimes being occupied by squatters or a venue to sell or use drugs.

An empty, perhaps fire damaged, property may prevent a neighbour from selling or letting out their property. Consequently, a second house may become vacant in what ought to be a desirable street. If the council does not tackle empty homes, an increasing number of houses will fall into a state of dilapidation and anti-social behaviour will increase.

Why it is important to Bring Empty Homes back into use?

Empty homes are a wasted resource, particularly when considered against the ever-growing need for housing.

Empty homes can have an adverse impact on the local community, such as:

- community safety issues (e.g. anti-social behaviour and vandalism). unsightliness.
- environmental issues (e.g. pest and vermin infestations).
- reducing the value and ease of sale of neighboring properties.

By bringing empty properties back into use we can:

- maximise the existing housing resource.
- increase the provision of good quality, affordable housing.
- minimise adverse environmental, social and local impacts.
- encourage growth, betterment and investment within communities.
- support other corporate priorities, objectives and strategies.

Measures to bring properties back into use

The Council's approach to bring homes back into use is based on four components comprising a staged approach and an ongoing awareness raising programme. This is set out in more detail below:

- **Identification** – proactively investigating and responding to referrals to understand where our problematic long term empty properties are located and who owns them.
- **Support** – developing a package of support for empty home owners to encourage them to bring homes back into use.
- **Taking action** – where providing support has failed, taking appropriate enforcement action to ensure the home is brought back into use.
- **Raising awareness** – ensuring residents, businesses, stakeholders and empty property owners know what they can do and who to contact if they are aware of, or own an empty property.

Stage One: Identification

Empty homes are identified through:

- Council Tax records
- Referrals from the public via telephone, email, website or post
- Referrals from Parish/ Town Councils
- Owner referrals

- Referrals via other departments within the Council (such as Environmental Health or refuse collection team)

In the first instance an external visual inspection of the property is carried out to determine if the property is actually empty and to assess its impact upon its local community.

Properties that receive a high number of complaints, once inspected and confirmed empty, are brought to the Empty Property Working Group for discussion and assessment of options.

Stage Two: Support for Owners

Our aim is always to provide advice and assistance to the owner to bring the empty property back into use by utilising whichever mechanism suits the particular circumstances of each empty property. For example, this could be supporting the owner to sell the property, advice and assistance on renting out the properties or identifying what is necessary for the reoccupation of the property by the owner.

Equally it is important the owner is made aware of any issues with the appearance and condition of the property that require actions, such as overgrown gardens, rodent infestation or other nuisances.

Initial contact with the owner is made via letter, employing a three stage engagement letter process. If no response is received within 28 days of the third letter, the property will be evaluated for potential enforcement action if necessary.

Support for owners includes:

- VAT reduction or exemption for empty 2 year and 10 year properties where owners are refurbishing the property to either rent, sell or living in themselves.
- Arranging and preparing Schedules of Works inspections to ensure properties are free of category 1 and 2 hazards as described in the Housing Act 2004 to ensure properties will be safe to occupy.
- Arranging pre-planning meetings and assessments for building control approval for proposed works/refurbishments.
- Advice on becoming a landlord or providing information about long term leasing either privately or with the Council's Housing Team.
- Advice finding local estate agents, property auctioneers and online sales websites.
- Advice on managing and employing trades people and building companies to undertake works at their property.

Stage 3: Taking Action

Where the owners are not willing to engage proactively with the Council and the Empty Property Working Group agree that the property and any issues of concern are unlikely to be dealt with voluntarily, the Council will consider taking enforcement action.

There are a wider range of enforcement actions with issues associated with empty homes such as requirements to tidy up the exterior of the property, ensure the building is safe etc.

These powers and procedures for the Council include:

- Town and County Planning Act 1990 – section 215
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004
- Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1991
- Building Act 1984 – section 76-80
- Housing Act 2004 – Parts 1-4
- Local Government Act 2003
- Local Government (Misc. Prov) Act 1982
- Local Government Act 2000
- Prevention of Damage by Pest Act 1949 – section 4
- Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Part 2 and section 80
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 – Part 1

Possible enforcement options include:

- Serving notices such as Section 215 to undertake works to improve the appearance of the property's garden.
- Requiring works to be undertaken to the property to ensure it is secure and not dangerous.
- Compulsory Purchase Orders.
- Empty Dwelling Management Orders.
- Enforced Sale or Order for Sale Procedure.

Enforced Sale or Order for Sale Procedure may be generated due to:

- Prosecution leading to a charge against the owner and property.
- Works in Default that have been undertaken by the Council to ensure the property is safe leading to a charge against the property and owner to recover the expense of the work.

- Non-payment of Council Tax.

Ongoing Activity: Raising Awareness of Empty Homes

The Empty Homes Officer seeks to raise awareness of the empty homes issue and advise how the Council can assist. This process includes:

- Contact with Town and Parish Councils requesting information on any empty homes issues within their locality.
- Publicity about empty homes activities in local media.
- Enhanced publicity during national Empty Homes Week which seeks to spotlight the issue across the country.
- Annual reviews which include mail outs, phone call or site visits as required. These are intended to identify homes which are no longer vacant, and to promote the support the council is able to offer.
- Referrals and complaints can be received via numerous mechanisms. Referrals are investigated by the Empty Homes officer, and any concerns identified.
- Referrals are sometimes anonymous, and as such no update can be given, however, referrals made by neighbours or local residents affected by the empty home are kept up to date regarding progress in line with the General data Protection Regulations.

The public can report homes that are suspected to be empty via the 'Report Empty Homes' page on the Council's website:

<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/housing/report-empty-property>

Action Plan for Empty Homes

Identification Activities

- Maintain a record of empty homes, including the owner's details, details of the property, images of the property and what action the Council has taken or is considering.
- Provide information to Braintree District Council residents via our website and other Braintree District Council media outlets on how they can report empty properties to the council via email and/or telephone.

- Hold an Empty Homes Working Group where team members from across the council can meet to discuss empty properties and the actions they are taking within their departments and provide coordination for future actions.
- Use information from Council Tax to assist in identifying long term empty homes.
- Plot properties on to a map of the District to provide a visual aid to identifying clusters or trends in empty properties within the district.
- Provide updates on the work being carried out in relation to empty properties to Council Members.

Support Activities

- Contact owners of all long term empty homes using the three letter approach. The letters include; an offer of a VAT reduction letter, a 'make your empty house a home' leaflet, an Empty Property Questionnaire, and a link to our 11 page Empty Homes Information Pack.
- Promote the empty property premium council tax rates to encourage owners to take steps to bring empty homes back into use.
- Maintain a list of interested parties who wish to buy empty homes in the area.
- Provide advice identifying the options available to the property owner on how to let a property; how to sell and information on how to renovate a property, including the VAT exemptions/
- Signpost owners to other Council services like planning and building control.

Enforcement Activities

- Take appropriate and proportionate enforcement action regarding the most problematic empty homes.
- Via the Empty Homes Working Group, support team members from other departments within the Council to identifying which empty properties require action, and agree what action should be taken.
- The Empty Homes Working Group to utilise appropriate powers to deal with anti-social behaviour issues caused by long term empty homes.

Awareness Activities

- Develop communication links in Parish Clerks within the Authority.
- Develop a communications plan with support from the comms team.

- Review and improve the online empty homes notification form with clear precise information so it is easier to report a suspected empty property.
- Review and improve the online information and advice available to empty property owners.

Appendix B – Research and Good Practice Other Local Authorities

Uttlesford District Council:

Uttlesford District Council have one Empty Homes Officer based within the Environmental Health Team. He has been in post since around 2011. Uttlesford District has, on average, 300 empty properties. On average 40 empty homes are added to their empty property list quarterly.

Once a property has been empty for more than six months the Empty Homes Officer sends the owner an initial letter. The initial letter outlines:

- The shortage of residential accommodation in Uttlesford.
- Explains that the District Council has adopted an Empty Homes Policy to reduce the number of long-term empty properties in the district and to help increase the useable housing stock.
- Advises that the principle aim of the Empty Homes Policy is to advise and assist owners of empty properties to bring them back into use.
- Mentions that Uttlesford District Council is able to offer interest-free loans for the renovation of empty properties to be sold or let.
- Advises that Uttlesford District Council are there is an offer of VAT reduction letters, which can be provided for properties empty for 2+ years that are being renovated by building contractors.

A request is made for the owner to let the Empty Homes Officer know their intentions regarding the property within the next 28 days via phone, email or using a pre-paid envelope.

The VAT reduction letter enables the empty property owner to pay 5% VAT instead of the usual 20% VAT.

If the Empty Homes Officer receives no response to the initial letter then a second letter is sent to the empty property owner after 28 days. The second letter includes the following:

- Mentions the PLACE loans again.
- Advises that Uttlesford District Council has a responsibility to investigate the empty properties within the district and to endeavour to bring them back into use.
- States that Uttlesford District Council are committed to working with owners to help bring empty properties back into use but outlines that where this is not successful Uttlesford District Council will consider enforcement action to achieve the reoccupation of the property.
- It reiterates that Uttlesford District Council would prefer to assist owners of empty properties to bring them back into use voluntarily but that failure to

respond to the letter could result in an assessment for enforcement action being initiated.

- A response within 14 days is requested along with the completion of an Empty Homes Questionnaire, for which a pre-paid envelope is provided.

If the property owner fails to respond to the second letter from the Empty Homes Officer sends a third letter. The letter contains that following:

- States that the PLACE loan is still an option.
- A request for information in accordance with Section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 is enclosed.
- Highlights that it is a legal requirement to respond to the notice within 14 days and it is a criminal offence if they fail to respond within that time.
- Reminds the owner that the Council is committed to working with owners to resolve the issues around empty properties.
- States that the Council are now considering options for enforcement but outlines that the Council has not reached a conclusion as to the best course of action.
- Asks the owner to advise of their intentions as a matter of urgency regarding what they intend to do to bring the property back into use.
- Requests completion of an Empty Homes Questionnaire and advises that the information from the questionnaire will be used to help assess the suitability of an Empty Dwelling Management Order for the property.

Since 2011 Uttlesford District Council have completed on three Compulsory Purchase Orders. The third, most recent, Compulsory Purchase Order was carried out by NP Law as opposed to Uttlesford District Council. Uttlesford District Council enlisted the services of NP Law rather than their own legal team after deciding that it was good value for money when compared to the 100s of staff hours that it would take their own legal team to complete the Compulsory Purchase Order.

When carrying out a Compulsory Purchase Order the Local Authority needs to pay compensation to the ex-owner, which includes the market value of the property as well as their costs (if they use a legal team). Uttlesford District Council use Compulsory Purchase Orders as a tool of last resort after the full voluntary process is exhausted. However, the Empty Homes Officer at Uttlesford District Council recognises that, in some cases, Compulsory Purchase Orders are an essential tool to stimulate owner action (if running concurrently with voluntary negotiations). For example, if an empty property owner is not engaging well with voluntary negotiations then initiating the Compulsory Purchase Order process is often successful with regards to inducing engagement from the empty property owner. The Compulsory Purchase Order process can run simultaneously alongside voluntary engage and if the voluntary pathway fails the Compulsory Purchase Order will be seen through to completion. If, however, voluntary negotiations are successful then the Compulsory Purchase Order would not be completed.

In the opinion of the Empty Homes Officer at Uttlesford District Council offering 'positive' and helpful voluntary engagement routes are more likely to stimulate positive action from empty property owners than trying to 'jump' straight to enforcement action. Enforcement action is often an option if voluntary discussions fail or the empty property owner will not engage. However, it is not necessary or as effective to use enforcement action as a first option instead of voluntary engagement.

Uttlesford District Council's Empty Homes Officer believes that loans (for renovation works to be carried out to an empty property in order to bring it back into use) are a really positive product to offer and publicise. The Empty Homes Officer at Uttlesford District Council believes that loans can be the difference between a property coming back into use and a property staying empty. Often a loan enables an empty property owner to be able to afford to renovate and let/sell the property where they otherwise would not have been able to afford to.

The funding that Uttlesford District Council uses in relation to loans comes from the PLACE scheme, which is a consortium of seven local authorities. The scheme started in the late 90s/early 2000s and Uttlesford District Council have around £600,000 left in terms of the funding that they received. As well as the funding being used for loans in relation to bringing empty properties back into use it can also be used for enforcement action.

The loans offered by Uttlesford District Council (to renovate properties to let or to sell) are up to £50,000 for a single unit and up to a maximum of £175,000 if multiple units require renovation (i.e. a building converted into three flats). The works covered by the loan should be to renovate the property to a minimum of the "decent home" standard.

The largest loan that Uttlesford District Council have administered to date is £75,000 for an old shop that was converted into three flats. The loan is secured against the property as a (first or second) Land Charge. If the owner fails to repay the loan, the land charge ensures that the Council is able to recoup the money should the property be sold/change hands.

As part of the loan conditions, Uttlesford District Council require that the property is renovated within 6 months of the loan being awarded. If the owner delays works then they have broken the terms and conditions of the loan and it can be followed up by the Council's Debt Control Team.

The loans offered by Uttlesford District Council can be paid back over whatever period the owner of the building desires, as long as they abide by the terms and conditions. A "loan to let" must be repaid within 5 years of the signing of the loan facility agreement. The owner can pay monthly, yearly or the full figure on the final day of the maximum loan period (5 years).

As part of the loan application process the Council's Audit Team have to perform a risk analysis on the person(s) taking out the loan (looking at the bank balances/debts/company reports). This should ensure that the person/business to whom the Council are administering the loan is financially stable enough to repay it.

The loans are "cyclical", meaning that once the Council have been repaid the loan figure they can reuse that capital in relation to a new loan. On average, Uttlesford District Council administer three to four loans per year.

Uttlesford District Council do not have a set target with regards to the number of empty properties that they bring back into use. They ensure that they accurately record all contacts and actions as well as monitoring the work and resources put into each empty property. Each property is graded as minor, medium and major with regards to work and resources used around bringing it back into use.

The Empty Homes Officer at Uttlesford District Council advised that he does not believe that Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) are an effect use of Council resource. The Empty Homes Officer stated that Empty Dwelling Management Orders require a great deal of commitment from the Council, both financially and with regards to time. When a Council implements an Empty Dwelling Management Order (which in itself is quite difficult to set up) they are responsible for the costs with regards to renovating the property to the "decent home" standard. The Council are also responsible for the management of the property (effectively becoming a Letting Agent), including repairs and associated costs, and ensuring that appropriate insurance is in place. Uttlesford District Council have not been involved in setting up any Empty Dwelling Management Orders.

North Kesteven District Council and City of Lincoln Council:

North Kesteven District Council and the City of Lincoln Council have one full-time Empty Homes Officer who divides his time equally between the two Councils. The Empty Homes Officer has been in post for five years.

The number of properties empty for six months plus in the North Kesteven District is 300 and the number of properties empty for six months plus in the City of Lincoln area is 400. Last year the Empty Homes Officer was involved in bringing 27 empty properties back into use for North Kesteven District Council and 30 empty properties back into use for the City of Lincoln Council. All 57 of the properties has been empty for two plus years.

North Kesteven District Council and the City of Lincoln Council do not offer any incentive payments or loans with regards to bring empty properties back into use. North Kesteven District Council previously offered loans, however, they experienced issues with regards to property owners not making payments towards the loan and/or deliberately delaying completing the renovation works. Also, the Empty Homes Officer stated that, due to the strict terms and conditions associated with the loans they found that not many property were interested in applying for a loan.

The Empty Homes Officer explained that due to the decent homes standard needing to be strictly adhered to in situations where a loan has been administered it actually results in higher renovation costs for the property owner. He reported that property owners did not want to spend more than they would have spent had they not taken out a loan.

The Empty Homes Officer for North Kesteven District Council and the City of Lincoln Council offers a VAT reduction letter to owners of properties that have been empty for 2+ years. The VAT reduction letter, when presented to building contractors carrying out renovations on an empty property, enables the empty property owner to pay 5% VAT instead of the usual 20% VAT.

As well as the VAT reduction letter the Empty Homes Officer provides the empty property owner with an Empty Homes Information Pack. A smaller leaflet (Your Guide to an Empty Property), detailing the risks of leaving a property empty (i.e. fraud, insurance, maintenance, vandalism and squatters) is provided along with an initial contact letter. This leaflet also mentions that after properties are empty for two years there is a 200% Council Tax liability.

When discussing Empty Dwelling Management Orders, the Empty Homes Officer stated that he does not think they are worth pursuing due to the amount of resource they take up in terms of managing the property. He added that if Braintree District Council did undertake an Empty Dwelling Management Order then we would need to take care in selecting a suitable property/properties. The Empty Homes Officer stated that any property built prior to 1970 should be avoided due to the potential costs with regards to renovations. He added that renovation costs should be kept below £26,000 to £30,000 otherwise the rental income would not cover the renovation costs.

With regards to Compulsory Purchase Orders, the Empty Homes Officer stated that he was involved in the process of starting a Compulsory Purchase Order but it was not completed due to the owner selling the property. He noted that the legal work in relation to the Compulsory Purchase Order was carried out in-house.

The Empty Homes Officer stated that he prioritises trying to engage with owners of properties that have been empty for two years or more. He noted that properties that have been empty for less than two years often come back into use naturally. The Empty Homes Officer advised that owners of properties that have been empty for around two years are more willing to engage with him. He believes that this is, in part, due to the Council Tax premium as well as the fact that properties that have been empty for this amount of time tend to need less renovation works and are, therefore, cheaper and easier for owners to bring back into use than the five years plus empty properties.

An Empty Homes Scoring Matrix is also used by the Empty Homes Officer in relation to North Kesteven District Council in order to identify any empty properties that need to be prioritised.

When discussing some of the reasons that properties remain empty, the Empty Homes Officer stated that sometimes people inherit properties and they cannot afford the probate costs. He stated that sometimes when an owner passes away an heir cannot be located. He advised that a company called Fraser and Fraser are able to assist with regards to the cost of probate and they recoup their fees from the sale of the property. Fraser and Fraser can also provide an heir finding service. Finders International provide an heir finding service as well and it is free for Councils.

The Empty Homes Officer attends an Empty Homes Working Group every month to six weeks. Planning Enforcement, Private Housing Enforcement, Environmental Health, Council Tax, Housing Options/Housing Solutions, Anti-Social Behaviour and Council Tax Enforcement also attend the Empty Homes Working Group. The meetings are via Teams and then quarterly face to face.

At the Empty Homes Working Group the Empty Homes Officer discusses the empty property figures and the work that he has done in relation to bringing empty properties back into use. They discuss anything concerning (i.e. increase in figures) and they discuss whether any of the departments have got any history with particular empty properties and whether anyone wants to bring any properties to any other department's attention. The Empty Homes Officer's Manager chairs the Empty Homes Working Group and Empty homes Officer presents.

Southend City Council:

Southend City Council have one full-time Empty Homes Officer who works under the Housing Supply Service. Strategic Housing, Adaptations and Private Sector Housing Teams also work under the Housing Supply Service. Southend City Council's Empty Homes Officer has been in post since the end of 2019.

Empty properties brought back into use by Southend City Council's Empty Homes Officer:

2021/2022 – 16

2022/2023 – 21

2023/2024 – 10 (as of May 2023)

The Empty Homes Officer stated that the number of properties brought back into use has been achieved through 'informal routes' and effectively managing communications with empty property owners.

Through partnership working with Southend City Council's Council Tax Team, the Empty Homes Officer advised that, she has brought in over £50,000 in revenue.

Southend City Council do not offer any financial incentives, loans or grants with regards to empty properties. The Empty Homes Officer offers the 5% VAT reduction letter to owners of properties that have been empty for 2+ years.

The Empty Homes Officer reported that Southend City Council are not very keen on using enforcement powers in relation to empty properties. She stated that, historically, she has found using enforcement powers do not help much in bringing an property back into use. The Empty Homes Officer advised that taking a 'how can I help you' and 'I can help you if you let me' approach with empty property owners has been extremely successful in bringing empty properties back into use. She noted that there is always a story behind why a property is empty. The Empty Homes Officer added, in situations where a property owner has faced emotional difficulties, perhaps in connection to their empty property, an empathetic and kind attitude is very effective with regards to stimulating positive voluntary engagement with the empty property owner.

Southend City Council's Empty Homes Officer sends out one initial contact letter. If the empty property owner does not respond to the letter then the Empty Homes Officer phones the owner and visits the empty property. She will continue to phone and try to engage with the owner to get to the route of the issue with regards to why the property is empty. Once a line of communication is established the Empty Homes Officer tries to facilitate voluntary engagement with the owner.

When discussing Empty Dwelling Management Orders, the Empty Homes officer advised that Southend City Council have been involved with two Empty Dwelling Management Orders. She stated that she is just about to close the last one and hand the property back to the owner. The Empty Homes Officer noted that the Empty Dwelling Management Orders were set up prior to her being involved with empty properties. She stated that Empty Dwelling Management Orders are not something she is keen to set up again in the future due to her believing they are not productive in the long-term.

The Empty Homes Officer added that the properties which were under Empty Dwelling Management Orders were managed by the same team that manage Southend City Council's council housing stock. In situations where a Council do not have/manage their own housing stock they would need to outsource the property management to a registered provider, for example. Consideration would need to be given with regards to the cost of the management fee, insurance, repairs and initial renovation works to bring the property up to the decent homes standard.

In relation to Compulsory Purchase Orders, the Empty Homes Officer advised that, legally, a Council would need to evidence that all other routes of engagement had been explored before trying to commence a Compulsory Purchase Order. Around two years worth of evidence in relation to engagement attempts as well as evidence of the property causing a nuisance would need to be gathered. Consideration would need to be given to how much resource the property has taken up from other departments, such as, planning, building control, community safety and Council Tax.

Works in default/monies already owed to the Council should be carefully considered as it may be the case that an Enforced Sale is more appropriate than a Compulsory Purchase Order. The Empty Homes Officer stated that in cases where voluntary engagement is failing, if a property owner owes Southend City Council around £25,000 or more then she will prompt Council Tax (if the owner has an outstanding debt with Council Tax) to begin debt recovery proceedings. She stated that this can lead to an Enforced Sale or a charge being placed on the property.

The Empty Homes Officer advised that in situations where a property is in probate but the executor is not making any attempt to conclude probate, notices can be served on the deceased. The executor should also be sent a copy of any notices that are sent to the deceased owner. The Empty Homes Officer advised that a charge can be placed on the property of a deceased person and a Compulsory Purchase Order can also be carried out on the property of a deceased person. Serving notices, placing charges and commencing Compulsory Purpose Orders, generally, encourage the executor to complete on probate.

When discussing a good starting point regarding the empty properties within the Braintree District, the Empty Homes Officer advised that we should start with properties that have been empty for two to five years. She stated that properties that have been empty for six months to two years will likely come back into use naturally. She added that properties that have been empty for five to ten years plus will be, generally, more difficult to bring back into use and they will take up a lot of resource. Building a secure caseload first with properties empty for two to five years was her recommendation.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils:

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have two full-time Empty Homes Officers in place; one covers the Babergh District and the other covers the Mid Suffolk District. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have approximately 500 long-term empty properties per Council (not including registered second homes). The Empty Homes Officer for Babergh has been in place for nearly two years. He was previously an Empty Homes Officer at Ipswich Borough Council. The Empty Homes Officer is based within the Houses for Homes Team. Houses for Homes is an Empty Homes initiative operated by the Environmental Health - Private Sector Housing Team of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils.

The Empty Homes Officer has been instrumental in setting up toolkits, policies and branding the service. This has taken a huge amount of time and investment and the Empty Homes Officer described the Empty Homes work at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils as being in its infancy. The Empty Homes Officer advised that it took 18 months to get to the stage where the Houses for Homes initiative was ready to go live.

Houses for Homes offers general advice and support, construction support and project planning, interest free loan assistance and, landlord lettings and income assistance.

With regards to the interest free loan assistance; the Empty Homes Officer determines the level of essential works required for a property to make it habitable and which works will be covered by the Empty Homes Loan. The maximum empty homes loan Babergh District Council and Mid Suffolk District Councils currently offer an owner is £20,000. Due to Houses for Homes being relatively new, the Empty Homes Officer was unable to provide any figures with regards to how many loans have been administered and he was unable to provide any feedback with regards to the success level of the scheme.

The Empty Homes Officer stated that the approach Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have towards empty properties is vastly different to that of Ipswich Borough Council. He noted that Ipswich Borough Council were/are very 'enforcement driven' whereas Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils take a much 'friendly' approach. The Empty Homes Officer advised that he has found the friendly, 'let us tell you how we can help you' approach is far more effective in terms of empty property owner engagement and compliance.

With regards to Compulsory Purchase Orders, the Empty Homes Officer stated that, in terms of the cost, consideration needs to be given to legal fees, locksmiths to secure the property, and any ancillary works needed such as asbestos removal before the Council sell the property. He added that, as a guide, the cost involved in a Compulsory Purchase Order would be the property's value (an independent valuation is needed to determine this) plus around £25,000 to cover the aforementioned ancillary costs. During his time at Ipswich Borough Council, the Empty Homes Officer was involved in several Compulsory Purchase Orders. He advised that as well as being costly, Compulsory Purchase Orders are extremely time consuming and require around eighteen months to two years of case history, evidencing engagement attempts, in order to justify them. He further advised that if the owner appeals and the Secretary of State becomes involved then the costs can significantly increase and there is no guarantee that the Council would win. He added that if a Compulsory Purchase Order is unsuccessful then that may encourage other empty property owners to reject voluntary engagement due to believing that there will be no consequences.

In terms of making contact with empty property owners and trying to facilitate voluntary, the Empty Homes Officer advised that we should start with properties that have been empty for two to five years. He advised that the empty property owners who pay a lower Council Tax Levy are easier to 'pivot' due to them not wanting to have to pay the higher Levy as a result of continuing to leave the property empty.

Report Title: Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	
Report to: Corporate Policy Development Committee	
Date: 30 th November 2023	For: Discussion
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: DP/2023/41
Report Presented by: Councillor Lynette Bowers-Flint, Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing	
Enquiries to: Caroline Elias-Stephenson, Head of Housing and Community caroline.elias-stephenson@braintree.gov.uk and Carly Jones, Strategy Business Support Manager carly.jones@braintree.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Corporate Policy Development Committee (the Committee) with an opportunity to consider the priorities contained within the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2028 (the Draft Strategy) prior to consultation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider the Draft Strategy as set out in Appendix A and provide initial feedback to lead officers as part of the consultation process being undertaken.

3. Summary of Issues

- 3.1 Braintree District Council (the Council) is required under the Homelessness Act 2002 to publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years. The current homelessness strategy covers the period 2018 – 2023. The Draft Strategy 2024 - 2028 retains a clear focus upon early intervention to prevent homelessness; or if prevention is not possible, to end homelessness at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.2 As part of the wider work that is being undertaken to adopt the Draft Strategy in March 2024, early consideration of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy priorities are being sought.
- 3.3 The Council has already undertaken some engagement work on the Draft Strategy. The Council have already held a stakeholder event on 9th November 2023, to gather feedback on the Draft Strategy, and this was attended by 35 partners. The feedback from this event included:
- There needs to be a strong emphasis in the strategy on preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity.

- Services working within the homelessness sector recognised that offering early intervention must be a priority, but there was a recognition that to be able to offer an early intervention service, teams needed to know more about mental health, housing advice and housing legislation / law.
 - Feedback has been provided to make changes to the wordings of the priorities, these will be reflected in the next version of the Draft Housing Strategy.
- 3.4 Nationally, 1 in 208 households are homeless. Throughout September 2023, the Council accommodated or already had living in temporary accommodation 65 households, which included 75 adults and 97 children. With more households 'at risk' of homelessness, the aim of this strategy is to provide advice and support both directly and through the community, so help is available when first needed. Therefore, leading to less households being homeless and reducing the cost of homelessness to the district.
- 3.5 Evidence collected so far has shown that households presenting as homeless have more complex needs than previous years. With more pressure on local housing, the Draft Strategy is designed to support households facing homelessness at an earlier stage to help reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the district with the following 4 priorities:
- 1) To prevent homelessness whenever possible
 - 2) Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation
 - 3) Increase access to suitable accommodation
 - 4) To prevent and break the cycle of rough sleeping
- 3.6 To assist the Council in the finalisation of the Strategy, the Council will undertake a public consultation on the Draft Strategy, in line with best practice, to seek input into the principles of the Strategy and the recommendations. This consultation is expected to run from mid-December for a period of 10 weeks. The responses will be collated, and lead officers will consider them, together with feedback received from the Committee, in the finalisation of the Strategy in readiness for its consideration by Cabinet in March 2024.
- 3.7 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Objectives:
- Residents live well in healthy and resilient communities where residents feel supported;
 - Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers.
- 4. Appendix**
- 4.1 Appendix A – Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2028.



2024
2028

Braintree District Council

Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy



Foreword

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Executive Summary

The aim of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is to prevent homelessness at an early stage and, where this is not possible, to support homeless households and those in housing need to secure suitable affordable housing.

The data and research gathered from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping evidence document provides valuable insights into the local homelessness situation in the district, enabling us to comprehend the extent of the issue and, crucially, the specific needs of each household. This knowledge empowers us to offer early intervention and preventative services within the housing sector. By identifying households at risk of homelessness, we can intervene proactively and address their needs in a timely manner.

The aim of this strategy is to work with our partners through shared aims and aspirations to deliver the following strategic priorities.

- 1** Work with partners to prevent homelessness by intervening at the earliest opportunity
- 2** Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation for households whom we have a duty to offer accommodation
- 3** Improve access to sustainable accommodation to enable independent living where possible
- 4** Continue to work with partners to prevent and break the cycle of rough sleeping

Introduction:

The government defines 'Homelessness prevention' as providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness.

'Homelessness relief' is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation.

The pressure on local authorities to find accommodation for homeless families has increased dramatically in recent years. The main underlying cause of homelessness is lack of access to stable, affordable and decent homes.

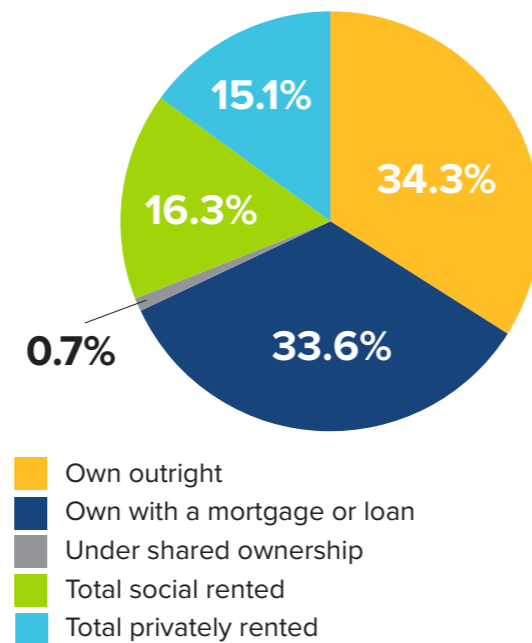
The Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 to 2028, along with the Local Plan, outlines the districts strategic aim of developing housing. As Braintree District Council does not possess any social housing stock, collaborating with registered providers in our district is crucial.

About Braintree District

Braintree District Council Housing Data shows:

- In June 2023 there are **69,186 properties in the district**
- **1/3 of all properties** in the district have a mortgage or loan
- Nearly **10,000 properties** are let within the private rented sector
- Over **10,000 properties** are social housing lets
- In 2022 – 2023 Braintree district let **380 social rents and 188 affordable rents**.
- As of June 2023, there are **2387** applicants on the council housing register.
- In 2022 - 2023, **1179** households presented as homeless.
- The age range of the main applicant approaching as homeless is between **25 – 34 years old**.
- The highest rate of household's composition presenting as homeless are single males.
- Between 2021 and 2022, the percentage of households owed a homeless duty, who have a record of mental health issues, **stood at 32%**. This figure is comparatively higher than the national average for England, which was **recorded at 25%**.
- **31%** of households who present as homeless in the Braintree District do so due to their accommodation in the private rented sector coming to an end.

Figure 1: Housing Tenure in Braintree District (Census 2021)



Successes

Over the last 5 years Braintree District Council has worked incredibly hard with our partners to achieve the following:

- **Received the 'Working in Partnership' award** alongside Rough Sleeping Initiative partners in the 2022 Essex Housing Awards for collaborative efforts during the pandemic. Additionally, achieved the second place for the 'Covid 19 Recovery' award.
- **Collaborated with partners** including Essex County Council, NACRO and Peabody to establish a pathway for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping. The pathway provides accommodation to help support and develop independent living skills to facilitate those individuals to sustain their own accommodation moving forward. The pathway consists of 6 units of accommodation with shared facilities and on site support.
- **The next stage on The Pathway is due to come on stream winter 2023.** This provides the opportunity for residents to move from higher support into 3 self-contained units with light touch support, before moving on to live independently.
- **Introduction of the Essex prisoner release protocol:** The purpose of the protocol is to reduce the risk of offenders becoming homeless upon release, consequently reducing the risk of re-offending.
- **Agreeing an Essex-wide Hospital discharge protocol:** The aim is to identify at an early stage any housing-related issues which may prove a barrier to discharge: reducing the risk of delayed discharge and improving outcomes for patients.
- **Duty to refer:** partners can alert the Housing Options Team easily about a customer at risk of homelessness by using the 'duty to refer' portal on the BDC website.
- **Housing team dealing with homelessness hold regular briefing sessions** to share knowledge with partners on the legislation and function of the housing allocations policy.
- **Rough Sleeper Initiative funding secured March 2019:** partnership between Essex County Council, Chelmsford CC, Braintree DC, Epping DC, Maldon DC and Churches Homeless Emergency Support Scheme (CHESS). The partnership has subsequently expanded to include a number of other local authorities across Essex.
- **Horizon Project** is delivered by Pheonix Future. The project secured funding to establish a facility offering on-site support and accommodation in the district for individuals experiencing homelessness or vulnerable to homelessness.
- **1325 affordable properties were complete between 2018 - 2023** The number of newly constructed affordable homes completed in recent years has made a significant contribution to addressing the housing demand in the district.

Challenges

- The affordable rental rates for new housing association homes can reach up to 80% of the market rents, making them higher than social rents. In light of the ongoing rise in rental costs, there is a concern that affordable lets may soon be unaffordable for households receiving full Housing Benefit (HB), Local Housing Allowance (LHA), or Universal Credit housing element (UC).
- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) was frozen across the country in 2020 at the rate of rent in 2018 - 2019. The rising market rents has resulted in affordable rents becoming increasingly inaccessible for households relying on housing benefits or the housing element of Universal Credit to cover their rent.
- The recent rise in mortgage rates may pose challenges for individuals looking to purchase a property. As a result, competition for properties in the private rented sector (PRS) will continue to rise. Landlords in the PRS may face additional pressure to either raise rental prices or exit the market altogether.
- Evidence shows that there is an increasing demand for larger homes (3 bedrooms plus) which are not readily available. The demand is from a variety of cohorts including those as a result of immigration and asylum, legislative changes, and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as examples. They have all resulted in a stretch of resources across housing services.
- There are some barriers for individuals with additional and complex needs accessing supported and temporary accommodation in the district.
- There is a limited financial incentive or guarantees to support households to secure housing in the private rented sector.
- There are limited options for move on support from supported accommodation into independent living.
- Delivery of new affordable homes may decline in the current market.

Covid and Everyone in

On Thursday 26 March 2020, during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government launched its 'Everyone In' campaign. This required local authorities to take urgent action to house rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping in order to protect public health and stop wider transmission of COVID-19.

Braintree District Council accommodated 33 individuals in response to this campaign.

Positive longer term accommodation options were secured for the vast majority of those who were accommodated

National and local influences:

Links to other Strategies and Frameworks

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have in place a homelessness strategy which is renewed at least every 5 years.

There are many strategies, policies, and frameworks both nationally and across Braintree District Council that the Housing Strategies operates alongside: these can be found at Strategy and policy documents – Braintree District Council.

- A **'Levelling Up'** agenda stimulating economic activity, investment in infrastructure and promoting community activity
- **The National Planning Policy Framework**, revised 20 July 2021 sets out the government's planning policy for England and how they will be applied
- **A new Fire Safety Act and an emergency Building Safety bill** which aims to make provisions about safety and standards of buildings
- **A fairer private rented sector** This white paper sets out plans to fundamentally reform the private rented sector and level up housing quality in this country.
- **A Housing White Paper 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market'** published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government in February 2017 setting out the government's plans to reform the housing market and boost the supply of new homes in England
- **The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017** ensures that all homeless people will be able to receive advice and assistance from their council, councils must try to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place.
- **Health and Social Care Act 2012** each local authority has a duty to take steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area. This includes people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
- **Homes England Strategic Plan 2018-2023** ensuring affordable and sustainable homes are built in areas of greatest need.
- **English Housing Survey Private Rented Sector 2020-21** is a national survey of property owners and letting agents who own and/or manage privately rented properties in England

- **The Climate Change Act 2008** is the basis for the UK's approach to tackling and responding to climate change
- **Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016** introduced Universal Credit and made amendments to jobseeker's allowance, employment and support allowance, income support, tax credits, industrial injuries benefit, housing benefit and the social fund
- **Everyone In: how to end homelessness in Great Britain 2018**
- **Social Housing White Paper 2020.** Charter for Social Housing Residents. The charter sets out seven commitments that residents should expect from their property owner
- **The Future Home Standards 2021** This consultation set out the government's plans for a new green Future Homes Standard and sought views on changes to building regulations in England to improve energy efficiency and cut carbon emissions in new build homes
- **Coronavirus Act 2020** Introduced to provide guidance on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the economy, housing, homelessness, and the welfare system
- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** designed to promote awareness of domestic abuse; protect and support victims and their families; transform the justice process to prioritise victim safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators; and to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.
- **The Renters (Reform) Bill**, which recently started its progress through Parliament, may also, when introduced, result in further pressures as it is anticipated this may be another cause of landlords exiting the market and will also make it easier for landlords to gain possession in some circumstances.
- **Localism Act 2011** came into force in November 2012 and supports the improvement of local housing options. The Act contained some key provisions relevant to homelessness including the power to discharge the full homelessness duty with an offer of private rented accommodation.

Local strategies and policies

- Corporate Strategy 2020 – 2024
- Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028
- Climate Change Strategy 2021 – 2023
- Economic Growth Strategy 2023 – 2028
- Economic Development Prospectus 2013 – 2026
- Digital Strategy 2022 – 2026
- Local Plan 2013 – 2033
- Marketing & Communications Strategy 2021 – 2024
- Annual Plan 2023 – 2024
- Live Well Strategy 2024 – 2028
- Gateway to Homeschoice Allocations Policy July 2022
- Essex County Council 2021 - 2025
- Essex Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2026

Partnerships

Braintree District Council has established several significant partnership meetings. These meetings provide a platform for discussing cases through a collaborative forum involving multiple agencies. The aim is to share information and tackle concerns effectively. This approach enables a range of services to intervene and provide support to individuals who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness. The aim is to prevent homelessness by taking appropriate measures at an early stage.

- **Community Safety Hub**
- **Joint Referral Panel**
- **Domestic Abuse Sub Group**
- **Tenancy Sustainment Sub Group**
- **Disability Working Group**

Additionally, there are other multi agency meetings which provide an opportunity for the council and partners to discuss national, regional and local influences and trends that may impact the work that is being delivered.

- **Homelessness Prevention Partnership**
- **Costing of Living Partnership**

There has also been the development of specialist roles across the service.

- **Domestic Abuse Specialist**
- **Mental Health Navigator**
- **Private Rented Sector & Empty Homes Officer**
- **Tenancy Sustainment Officer**
- **Cost of Living Officer**
- **Ukraine Resettlement Officer**
- **Health and Wellbeing Manager**



The importance of preventing homelessness

The conversations around early intervention is well developed and documented, but current prevention efforts often rely on individuals approaching local authorities to seek support.

This has resulted in a weighting towards homeless support, rather than early intervention. In partnership with others, we recognise the need to re-balance with a stronger focus on early intervention around homelessness.

Our research has informed us that cohorts most affected by the cost-of-living crisis include single person households, lone parents with dependents, and people in later life.

Benefits of early intervention and taking a whole systems approach

- Protects vulnerable residents from becoming homeless, this can include the elderly, the young, those experiencing mental health, substance misuse, physical disabilities and those leaving institutions.
- Promote health and wellbeing as those experiencing homelessness have a higher rate of poor short and long term physical and mental health conditions.
- Preventing homelessness has a positive impact on children's wellbeing and life chances as it supports families to live in stable secure accommodation. This is supported by evidence from the Braintree District Councils Health and Wellbeing which highlights the importance of giving every child the best start in life.
- Promotes stability and helps people be able to continue to work and studying.
- Provides the opportunity to address causes of homelessness and help make sustainable changes.
- Prevention services are cost effective as they cost less than providing emergency services and temporary accommodation.
- Creates healthier connected communities and maintains social support and networks.
- Helps end rough sleeping and homelessness.

Our Priorities

Priority 1

Work with partners to prevent homelessness by intervening at the earliest opportunity.

- 1** Support those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes or to find a new home without an intervening period of homelessness.
- 2** Work with local organisations and our partners to expand, better resource and publicise existing early intervention.
- 3** Build knowledge within the community to offer support and advice at the earliest opportunity.

Our ambition is to work with partners to offer advice and support to individuals and families at risk of homelessness at an early stage. In order to accomplish this, it is crucial for us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors leading to homelessness in our district.

By using a range of national and local data sources and collaborating with partners, we aim to establish a shared vision for preventing homelessness.

Many households are ‘at risk’ of homelessness, they may be threatened with eviction or living in insecure tenancies, this is where households live with the worry that their tenancy may come to an end, many live in poor housing conditions or must leave their accommodation due to range of reasons. There are also households who experience ‘hidden homelessness’, they are not rough sleeping, but they don’t have a long term settled place to stay. The reason people present as homeless varies, no two situations are the same.

National and local data shows us that cohorts most affected by the cost-of-living crisis include single person households, lone parents with dependents, and people in later life. Working with people at the earliest possible opportunity is key to preventing homelessness. Understanding our residents is key.

In 2022 – 2023, 64% of households who present at the foodbank in Braintree Districts is due to low income, 11% is due to benefit changes or delays.

Between 2022 and 2023, the primary factor for households experiencing homelessness while residing in privately rented sector was due to the landlord intending to sell the property.

From 2018 to 2022, the primary cause for households experiencing homelessness as a result of social rented tenancy was rent arrears due to tenants facing challenges managing their finances or making payments due to the shortfall between their benefits and rent costs.

With the widening disparity between the rental market, local housing allowance, and wages, an increasing number of households face the risk of homelessness. This is especially concerning as it includes individuals who already have low incomes and minimal savings, coupled with higher rates of debt, substance misuse, poor physical and mental health, and relationship breakdowns. Consequently, the ability to secure alternative housing promptly becomes progressively more challenging.

Working in partnership to promote and deliver initiatives around finances is crucial. Whether this is employment and skills training to enhance job stability, providing guidance on income maximisation, offering financial assistance and guarantees to help secure housing in the private rental market; or practical support to help form be completed for grants and benefits. The key is knowing what is available in the community and ensuring it is offered at the first sign its required.

Priority 2

Facilitate the delivery of suitable temporary accommodation for households whom we have a duty to offer accommodation.

- 1 Review temporary accommodation in the district.
- 2 Understand the needs of those presenting as homeless.
- 3 Establish suitable accommodation for people with support needs.

In Braintree District, temporary accommodation could comprises of Bed and Breakfast, hostel, hotel, refuge, private or a housing association property. This could be in or outside of the district.

Local authorities are facing mounting pressures on temporary accommodation as a result of various factors. This has led to a growing number of households being placed in Bed and Breakfasts and nightly let accommodations. There is a growing demand to secure such accommodation outside of the local authorities' own boundaries. While this is occasionally necessary for safety concerns, it can unfortunately lead to households becoming separated from their support networks and experiencing isolation.

Priority 3

Improve access to sustainable accommodation to enable independent living where possible.

- 1 Review move-on arrangements with all supported housing providers.
- 2 Monitor and report on changes in patterns of demand as overall growth increases.
- 3 Undertake service review through co-production (lived experience).

Developing and maintaining robust partnerships with providers who manage supported accommodation is crucial. The Joint Referral Panel (JRP) has successfully placed a significant number of single households in the district.

The JRP provides a gateway for referrals for people with a local connection, to supported (lower-level needs) accommodation schemes within the Braintree District.

The aim of the JRP is to ensure that every application made to a supported housing scheme is assessed for eligibility and suitability and provide a forum for all agencies to share appropriate information in the consideration of an application.

The JRP ensures that successful applicants are offered the most appropriate service according to their support need and reduces the number of people moving from one service to another following placement breakdown.

As part of the Healthy Housing Strategy 2023 – 2028, one objective is to improve engagement and work in collaboration with landlords, letting agencies, and other private owners. Further work needs to be undertaken to make the private rented sector a viable and sustainable housing options. We need to strengthen

and encourage take-up of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

Currently, we are reviewing our financial initiatives to assist households in obtaining housing in the private rented sector. This includes support for individuals and families who may be at risk of losing their private sector tenancy.

Using data and intelligence to make recommendations and evidence led decision on homelessness and rough sleeping is key. But co-production and actively engaging and listening to those working on the front line and those who have experienced homelessness is crucial. This is to learn what can be done better and it provides insight to what is happening right now. When designing and reviewing services that meet people's needs, there needs to be input from who have experience.

Priority 4

Continue to work with partners to prevent and break the cycle of rough sleeping.

We will continue to review our policies and work with partners to meet the ambition set out in DLUHC's Ending Rough Sleeping for Good.

- 1 No-one should leave prison homeless or to sleep rough.
- 2 Young people leaving care will receive the support they need to secure and maintain suitable accommodation.
- 3 No-one should be discharged from hospital to the streets.
- 4 No-one who has served in the UK Armed Forces should face the need to sleep rough.
- 5 Review the impact of the new asylum dispersal system on homelessness and rough sleeping.

Housing is critical to the prevention of mental health problems and the promotion of recovery. DLUHC's Ending Rough Sleeping for Good sets the ambition that no one is released from a public institution as homeless. Braintree District with our partners have a series of agreements and policies in place which include The Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3), this provides temporary accommodation for up to 84 nights for homeless prison leavers and those moving on from Approved Premises (CAS1) or the Bail Accommodation and Support Service (CAS2), and assistance to help them move into settled accommodation.

Vulnerable veterans across the country will have access to Op FORTITUDE, a new dedicated referral pathway for homeless veterans, including those sleeping on the streets.

Through the 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good' Policy published in September 2022, DLUHC have for the first-time defined a vision for ending rough sleeping, which is that it is **prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent.**

It is understood that there is a strong connection between homelessness and poor health. Many individuals experiencing homelessness also have various additional needs that make them more susceptible to rough sleeping. Our objective is to establish a solid partnership in order to effectively tackle the root causes of homelessness and rough sleeping.

Monitoring the Strategy

The partnership strategy will be delivered through the Homeless Prevention Partnership (HPP). This meeting takes place quarterly with our partners in the district who are working with those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The HPP will lead on the delivery plan which will meet the priorities set out within this strategy.

The strategy will be reviewed regularly to take into account national and local legislative changes as well as ensuring the strategies effectiveness.

