



GETTING EMPTY HOMES BACK INTO USE - A PRACTICAL, SELF-FUNDED MODEL

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1. GETTING EMPTY HOMES BACK INTO USE



Strategic Challenge

Long-term empty homes affect housing supply, building condition, community wellbeing, and local finances.

Integrated Approach

A single role links empty homes work to revenue generation through business rates, ensuring financial resilience.

Sustainable Delivery

Empty homes work is delivered effectively without reliance on short-term funding or housing revenue budgets.

Transferable Principles

The model's principles apply to other councils facing funding, capacity, and priority challenges.

2.THE CHALLENGE



Non-Statutory Nature

Empty homes work is often deprioritized due to financial pressures and competing council demands.

Complex Case Challenges

Long-term empty homes involve probate, health, repairs, financial limits, and complex ownership issues.

Need for Coordination

Effective intervention requires time, persistence, and cross-service coordination among authorities.

Funding and Capacity Limits

Without sustainable funding, councils face difficulty preventing vacancy and building deterioration.

3. OUR APPROACH



Support First

- Engagement and problem-solving before formal action

Identifying empty homes

- Council Tax data, referrals and targeted checks
- Correcting records and confirming genuine empties

Owner Engagement

- Understanding why the home is empty
- Providing a clear, consistent point of contact

Removing Barriers

- Explaining processes and options
- Breaking complex situations into manageable steps

Enforcement Last

4. THE REALITY OF LONG-TERM EMPTY HOMES



Unintentional Vacancy Causes

Most long-term empty homes remain vacant due to owners facing barriers, not negligence.

Common Barriers Faced

Delays in probate, ill health, financial hardship, repairs costs, and disputes commonly prevent occupancy.

Support vs Enforcement

Shifting from enforcement to support enables tailored interventions that remove obstacles and build confidence.

Sustainable Outcomes

Understanding reasons for vacancy helps councils create sustainable solutions rather than escalating conflicts.

5. WHY THE APPROACH WORKS



Named Officer Clarity

Assigning a named officer provides clear communication and accountability for owners and colleagues.

Cross-Team Collaboration

Strong relationships among multiple council teams allow holistic issue resolution rather than isolated efforts.

Practical Guidance Provided

Offering practical, tailored guidance helps owners confidently navigate complex systems effectively.

Building Trust and Reassurance

Progress is achieved through reassurance and clear next steps, reducing friction and increasing trust.

6. OUTCOMES ACHIEVED



Revitalised Housing Supply

Long-term empty homes have been restored, boosting housing availability and enhancing neighborhood conditions.

Improved Data Accuracy

Council tax records updated for better data quality, aiding effective financial planning and management.

Clear Internal Case Ownership

Defined case ownership reduces duplication and confusion, streamlining internal processes.

Confident Stakeholder Engagement

Conversations with residents and officials are more evidence-based and confident, improving community relations.

7. THE FUNDING PROBLEM



Funding Challenges for Councils

Empty homes work faces major funding challenges as it competes with statutory duties for limited resources.

Pressure on Revenues Teams

Revenues teams focus mainly on billing and collection, limiting their ability to identify proactive changes.

Need for Sustainable Funding

Without steady funding, empty homes initiatives risk being short-lived and reactive rather than embedded.

8. THE SELF-FUNDED SOLUTION



Combined Role Strategy

North Norfolk links empty homes work with revenue generation through business rates for a self-funded approach.

Business Rate Challenges

Many property changes affecting rateable value are not proactively reported, impacting revenue accuracy.

Diverse Hereditaments

Business rates cover various hereditaments beyond traditional businesses like utility sites, car parks, and marinas.

Revenue Supporting Housing

Income generated funds the empty homes function, reducing dependence on housing budgets.

9. THE IMPACT AND KEY TAKEAWAYS



Financial and Community Benefits

The model delivers significant financial gains and strengthens community programs by supporting empty homes initiatives.

Proactive Change Identification

Proactive rating list updates uncovered a hidden business rates bill exceeding £1 million, improving revenue accuracy.

Sustainable Empty Homes Work

Revenue from improved billing directly supports and sustains long-term empty homes programs.

Aligned Council Objectives

Integrating empty homes work with revenue generation and council goals creates lasting impact for communities and finances.

THANK YOU

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