

### **Stage 1: Equality Impact Assessment**

<p><b>1. What are the main aims purpose and outcomes of the Policy and how do these fit with the wider aims of the organisation?</b></p>
<p>The Empty Homes Plan sets out how the council intends to take actions to reduce the number of long-term empty homes within the borough.</p> <p>The plan supports the council's priority for Maidstone to be a decent place to live.</p>
<p><b>2. How do these aims affect our duty to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the act.</b></li> <li>• <b>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.</b></li> <li>• <b>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.</b></li> </ul>
<p>The proposed policy will ensure fair and transparent treatment of all owners of empty homes through the adoption of a proportionate enforcement approach in each case.</p> <p>The plan also proposes a range of incentives for owners who wish to return their empty homes back into use.</p>
<p><b>3. What aspects of the policy including how it is delivered or accessed could contribute to inequality?</b></p>
<p>The proposed plan will not in itself contribute to inequality.</p>
<p><b>4. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including particular communities and groups who have protected characteristics ? What evidence do you have for this?</b></p>
<p>The plan seeks to provide a fair and transparent approach for returning empty homes back into use, including enforcement and incentives, and this will apply to all owners of empty homes.</p> <p>The plan provides for the council utilising its powers to compulsory purchase empty homes, however this will only take place as a last resort, after the owner has refused to take action to bring the property back into use through other means.</p> <p>There is anecdotal information that suggests that older persons may be over-represented in the cohort of empty home owners, where they have left their home to move into a residential care environment.</p>

If the answer to the second question has identified potential impacts and you have answered yes to any of the remaining questions then you should carry out a full EQIA set out as stage 2 below.

### **Stage 2: Equality Impact Assessment**

<b>Name of Policy/Service/Function</b>
Empty Homes Plan
<b>Purpose</b>
<b>What are you trying to achieve with the policy / service / function?</b>
<p>The Empty Homes Plan details the council's priorities relating to empty homes, and sets out how the priorities will be accomplished.</p> <p>The plan sets out an action plan for bringing empty homes back into use across the borough.</p>
<b>Who defines and manages it?</b>
<p>There is no statutory obligation on the council to adopt an Empty Homes Plan, however the absence of the plan would weaken the council's position, and prevent the council from demonstrating transparency in the actions it takes to bring empty homes back into use.</p>
<b>Who do you intend to benefit from it and how?</b>
<p>All residents who are impacted negatively by the effects of empty homes in their neighbourhood will benefit from empty homes being brought back into use.</p> <p>Similarly all residents who are seeking accommodation within the borough will benefit from the increased capacity within the housing market resulting from empty homes being brought back into use.</p> <p>Owners of empty homes will also benefit where they access incentives set out in the plan.</p>
<b>What could prevent people from getting the most out of the policy / service / function?</b>
<p>A minority of empty home owners will choose not to return their empty home back into use making use of the available incentives, and these cases will be more likely to be the subject of enforcement action to bring the home back into use.</p>
<b>How will you get your customers involved in the analysis and how will</b>

<b>you tell people about it?</b>
The Empty Homes Plan includes performance targets for a number of actions and these will be measured and reported in future iterations of the plan.
<b>Evidence</b>
<b>How will you know if the policy delivers its intended outcome / benefits?</b>
The number of empty homes returned to use is measured and reported, and the action plan will be monitored on a regular basis.
<b>How satisfied are your customers and how do you know?</b>
Customers are currently able to express dissatisfaction through the council's complaints system.
<b>What existing data do you have on the people that use the service and the wider population?</b>
The council's statistics relating to empty homes across the borough are contained within the Empty Homes Plan.
<b>What other information would it be useful to have? How could you get this?</b>
N/A
<b>Are you breaking down data by equality groups where relevant (such as by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity)?</b>
Data relating to empty home ownership is not currently reviewed in respect of equality groups. We will explore the opportunities to implement reporting against equality groups with our database software supplier.
<b>Are you using partners, stakeholders, and councillors to get information and feedback?</b>
Not at present. however the proposed plan, introduces actions relating to the provision of online and telephone reporting mechanisms for all customers.
<b>Impact</b>
<b>Are some people benefiting more – or less - than others? If so, why might this be?</b>
The plan sets out a transparent approach to returning empty homes back into use, however there is anecdotal information that suggests that older persons

<p>may be over-represented in the cohort of empty home owners, where they have left their home to move into a residential care environment.</p>
<p><b>Actions</b></p>
<p><b>If the evidence suggests that the policy / service / function benefits a particular group – or disadvantages another - is there a justifiable reason for this and if so, what is it?</b></p>
<p>This plan aims to reduce the negative impacts caused by empty homes in a fair and transparent manner for all empty home owners regardless of their diversity.</p> <p>If older persons are found to be over-represented in this area they will be able to take advantage of the incentives as would any other empty home owner, and where enforcement action is taken it will be proportionate to the impact caused by their empty home.</p>
<p><b>Is it discriminatory in any way?</b></p>
<p>The plan is not discriminatory as it focuses on dealing with empty homes rather than individuals.</p>
<p><b>Is there a possible impact in relationships or perceptions between different parts of the community?</b></p>
<p>No.</p>
<p><b>What measures can you put in place to reduce disadvantages?</b></p>
<p>The Housing Service will explore the potential to introduce equalities monitoring in respect of empty homes interventions.</p>
<p><b>Do you need to consult further?</b></p>
<p>No.</p>
<p><b>Have you identified any potential improvements to customer service?</b></p>
<p>The proposed plan will be transparent and understandable by customers and this should maintain high standards of customer service.</p>
<p><b>Who should you tell about the outcomes of this analysis?</b></p>
<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Have you built the actions into your Service Plan or Policy Implementation Plan with a clear timescale?</b></p>
<p>Yes.</p>

<b>When will this assessment need to be repeated?</b>
N/A