



Empty Homes Policy

Last Reviewed January 2021

Policy for empty homes

This policy is managed and adhered to by the housing service. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure alignment with government legislation.

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1.1 Introduction

New properties managed under the Housing Revenue Account will become vacant from time to time, for example when a tenancy is terminated or a tenant moves on. These vacant properties are referred to as 'empty homes'. This policy will clarify the way in which we manage our empty homes. For the purpose of this policy, a property becomes an empty home when keys are returned and the notice period has ended.

1.2 Aim(s) of the policy:

- To minimize empty home rent loss
- To facilitate repair works as quickly and efficiently as possible
- To prepare homes to a consistent minimum standard that is communicated and understood by residents

1.3 Equality and Diversity

The council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity in housing services and has procedures in place to ensure that all Applicants and Tenants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination.

1.4 Links to the council's corporate aims:

This policy supports the council's corporate priorities, which are set out in ['Delivering for Dacorum' – Corporate Plan 2020 - 2025](#). In particular:

- Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need.
- Delivering an efficient modern council.

1.5 Policy statement(s):

Tenants are expected to comply with the responsibilities listed in 2.1 when vacating a property. Failure to comply may result in tenants being charged in accordance with the Recharge Policy (see 2.1)

We will aim to minimize the amount of time each property is vacant as much as possible in order to maximize rental income (see 2.2).

We will ensure that all properties made available to let meet a minimum lettable standard and comply with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (see 2.3).

We will consider best use of stock when a property becomes vacant (see 2.4).

The Council is required to respond to any local or national restrictions imposed by central government. The administration of this and other Council policies could, therefore, be impacted by a pandemic or other emergency for the period that such restrictions are in operation.

2.0 Empty Homes Policy detail



2.1 Tenant Responsibility & Recharges

If the vacating tenant does not repair or make good any unauthorised alterations and clear items as described (identified by a council officer in a pre-void visit) then the housing service will carry out the necessary work and recover the costs from them via the Recharge Policy. The amount charged will be dependent on works needed.

It is the responsibility of the out-going tenant to:

- Give 28 days' notice when wishing to end their tenancy (unless transferring);
- Undertake any repairs that are your responsibility and reinstate any alterations you have made;
- Vacate the property by the agreed termination date;
- Remove all furniture, personal belongings and unwanted items from all areas (including storage and loft spaces) by the agreed termination date;
- Return all keys by termination date to council building (including shed and security door keys);
- Leave the property and any garden areas in a clean and tidy condition;
- Ensure that any outstanding rent and rechargeable repair charges are paid;
- Read any meters and advise utility companies that you are leaving and settle any outstanding debts on the utility meters.

There is more information about chargeable works in our [Recharges Price List](#)

2.2 Minimising Turn-Around Time of Vacant Properties

There are a number of ways in which an empty home can be categorised, determined by how much or what type of work is needed on the property. This can impact the length of time that properties remain vacant.

Any repairs which need to be carried out after the incoming tenant has moved in will be completed within a 20-day period or added to the relevant programme of works.

2.3 Lettable Standard

Our lettable standard is the standard of safety, comfort and cleanliness properties must meet for new tenants. More detail is available in the printable booklet on our website: [Standard for letting empty homes](#)

2.4 Best Use of Stock

In emergency cases or to better achieve value for money, an option to use the property for shorter-term use may be needed (i.e. in relation to a decant (move) or for temporary accommodation.) Where properties are identified for refurbishment, re-development, sale, demolition or adaptation (as outlined in our [Housing Allocations Policy](#)) the decision will be made within two weeks of the property becoming vacant.

3.0

Links to other corporate strategies and policies

This policy links to and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and strategies:

- Housing Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Housing Allocation Policy
- Recharge Policy
- Aids & Adaptations Policy
- Decant Policy
- Tenant Compensation Policy

4.0

Legislation

The legislation listed below will be taken into consideration when implementing this policy:

- Housing and Planning Act 1985
- Equality and Diversity Act 2010
- Homelessness Act 1996
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (defined within the Housing Act 2004)
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012