

Southend on Sea Borough Council - Equality Analysis

1. Background Information

1.1 Name of policy, service function or restructure requiring an Equality Analysis:

Empty Homes Strategy 2021 – 2026

1.2 Department:

N/A

1.3 Service Area:

Housing and Social Inclusion

1.4 Date Equality Analysis undertaken:

July 2020

1.5 Names and roles of staff carrying out the Equality Analysis:

Name	Role	Service Area
Jodi Thompson	Project and Policy Support Officer	Housing and Social Inclusion Strategy

1.6 What are the aims or purpose of the policy, service function or restructure that is subject to the EA?

The draft strategy follows on from the Empty Homes Strategy 2015-2020, outlining the Council's continued commitment to reduce the number of empty homes in the borough, maximise the re-use of empty homes and tackle issues surrounding empty homes.

The key aims of the draft Empty Homes Strategy 2021 – 2026 are to:

1. Reduce the amount of long term empty homes in the borough (those empty for six months or more).
2. Work with owners early on to prevent properties becoming empty for a prolonged period.
3. Utilise legislative tools to bring long term empty properties back into use in a timely and effective manner.

1.7 What are the main activities relating to the policy, service function or restructure?

The Empty Homes Strategy 2021 – 2026 sets out the Council’s continued commitment to reducing the number of empty homes in the borough, facilitating and assisting the creation of good quality and affordable homes and to make the best use of existing stock.

2. Evidence Base

2.1 Please list sources of information, data, results of consultation exercises that could or will inform the EA.

Source of information	Reason for using (e.g. likely impact on a particular group).
Council tax database	<p>Council tax database information as of 3 August 2020 as below. Demographic data linked to council tax is not available however, analysis of council tax classifications and numbers will support strategy aims, including efficient utilisation of resources, both in the medium and long term.</p> <p><u>Empty Properties</u> Class G – Occupation prohibited: 2 Class I – Receiving care elsewhere: 7 (e.g. moves in with family to receive care) Class T – Difficult to let: 6 Premium100 (2 Yrs empty): 130 Premium200 (5 Yrs empty): 65 2nd homes (PCLB): 652 Class E – 1 adult gone into care: 95</p> <p><u>Deceased Properties</u> F2 – Prior to probate: 363 F1 – Probate granted: 91</p> <p><u>Disregarded vulnerable Adults</u> Carer’s disregard: 97 (not applicable for those caring for spouse/partner or child under 18 years) Gone into care: 192 (two adults in a property and one party goes into care e.g. husband and wife) SMI disregard: 396 (two adults in the property and one party disregarded) Class U – Severely mentally impaired: 563</p> <p>PCLC – Discounts have been exhausted: 1,753 Nb. this figure is constantly changing as and when accounts are open and close accounts daily.</p>
Empty homes data	<p>630 properties in Southend were long-term empty as of 2019 as per the latest government figures. This compares with 596 empty homes in 2018 and 615 in 2017. These figures are based upon government ‘live tables on dwelling stock (including vacants). This</p>

	<p>data will support achievement of strategy aims and ensure resources are targeted effectively. This includes any increase or decrease in empty homes in Southend and take up of proposed incentives to owners of empty homes.</p>
<p>Council complaints / compliments</p>	<p>To determine if any equality implications are present from current empty home process. As of 29 July 2020 no complaints received relating to empty homes owners or matters associated with equality implications.</p>
<p>Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2021 – 2026 survey findings</p>	<p>To determine the views (including potential impact) of borough residents and those may own or be looking to purchase and empty homes. A survey report has been drafted and will be available on the Your Say Southend website at https://yoursay.southend.gov.uk/</p>
<p>Sheltered Housing Review 2016 demographic data</p>	<p>The Sheltered Housing Review, undertaken in 2016, offered real-time and projected demographic data relating to Southend residents. While some data requires updating, it offers useful background information on the volume of older people in the borough.</p> <p>While empty homes data does not currently link age profiles, it is hoped that collating and analysing such information going forward will help determine who empty home owners are in Southend, as well as the reasons for properties becoming empty. In this manner, it is intended that resources (including advice and guidance) to help bring empty homes back into use can be more successfully targeted towards those who may require assistance, including older people who require additional support to remain in their own homes or, for example, those in the process of a transition to supported living.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers of people aged 50+ are projected to rise from 66,300 in 2015 to 87,100 by 2035, an increase of 31.4%. • Numbers of 85+ population are set to increase by 103.8% between 2015 and 2035, rising from 5,300 to 10,800. • 4,761 people aged 65+ providing unpaid care in 2015, rising to 6,322 by 2030 – increase of 32.8%. • 2,520 people aged 65+ estimated to have dementia in 2015, rising to 3,867 by 2030 – increase of 53.5%. • 12,600 people aged 65+ living alone in 2015, rising to 17,455 by 2030 – an increase of 38.5%. • Higher levels of long-term limiting illness than the regional and national averages.
<p>Southend Borough Council Covid-19 equality</p>	<p>Linked to the above data. It is important to monitor and take account of the volume of residents, including older residents, in Southend to ensure they are receiving the right level of support</p>

impact assessment	<p>and/or advice and guidance to live independently in a home that meets their needs.</p> <p>As such, residents aged 70+ make up 15% (26,867 people) of Southend's 184,882 residents (ONS Population projections, 2020).</p> <p>In addition, 6.58% of Southend's 80,758 households are 76-80, live alone in small houses/flats, income <£15k, need support, and are not technology users.</p>
DWP	<p>820 working-age individuals in Southend receive Disability DWP payments, and 7490 receive ESA and incapacity benefits – however the true number of those with disabilities is higher as non-working age individuals are un-counted (DWP, 2016).</p> <p>This is a factor of consideration for advice or support in relation to empty homes.</p>

Please Note: reports/data/evidence can be added as appendices to the EA.

- 2.2 Identify any gaps in the information and understanding of the impact of your policy, service function or restructure. Indicate in your action plan (section 5) whether you have identified ways of filling these gaps.

Demographic data on owners of empty homes is not widely available to determine age, disability or other socio-economic factors which may have an equality impact. Other sources of information as highlighted above will be used to gather or counteract this where possible, with the action plan noting further approaches to fill this gap and ensure the draft strategy does not negatively impact those with protected characteristics.

3. Analysis

- 3.1 An analysis and interpretation of the impact of the policy, service function or restructure should be undertaken, with the impact for each of the groups with '*protected characteristics*' and the source of that evidence also set out against those findings.

In addition, the Council has identified the need to assess the impact of a policy, service function or restructure on carers, looked after children (as part of the age characteristic) as well as the socioeconomic impact of different groups, such as employment classifications.

Initial assessment of a perceived impact of the policy, service function or restructure. The impact can be positive or negative (or in some circumstances both), none or unclear:

	Impact - Please tick				
	Yes			No	Unclear
	Positive	Negative	Neutral		

Age (including looked after children)	X	X			
Disability	X	X			
Gender reassignment				X	
Marriage and civil partnership				X	
Pregnancy and maternity				X	
Race				X	
Religion or belief				X	
Sex				X	
Sexual orientation				X	
Carers					X
Socio-economic	X	X			

Descriptions of the protected characteristics are available in the guidance or from: [EHRC - protected characteristics](#)

- 3.2 Where an impact has been identified above, outline what the impact of the policy, service function or restructure on members of the groups with protected characteristics below:

	Potential Impact
Age	<p>Positive – the strategy aims to engage owners early on to prevent properties getting into a state of disrepair, potentially saving both older and younger owners time and money to bring empty properties back into use in a timely manner. Also, by engaging owners early on, it is anticipated that the council will be aware of any mitigating circumstances or long-term illness of owners, being able to offer advice and guidance as necessary.</p> <p>Negative – older or younger people in hospital or in supported living accommodation may not be aware or have the ability to address empty property matters that arise, potentially resulting in enforcement action being taken against them, including possible incurring of costs.</p> <p>It is important to ensure all empty homes information is fully accessible to support those with specialist requirements, including those who don't use technology and providing information in alternative formats where necessary. Tracking how people access empty homes information over time will</p>

	support the range of possible options and ensure accessibility needs of all residents are met.
Disability	<p>Positive – having an enhanced suite of services available to support owners of empty homes is anticipated to help identify properties in need of repair or structural works. This may include advice and guidance to bring properties to the Decent Homes Standard or signposting to approved tradespersons. This could have a positive potential impact for disabled owners or those with a long-term illness where the property poses a significant health risk in its current condition.</p> <p>Negative – should a property pose a significant risk or not comply with the relevant legislation, necessitating enforcement action, this may mean that disabled owners or those with a long-term illness undertaking works as a matter of priority. The council will take mitigating factors into consideration, provide information in alternative formats where required and help owners to make informed decisions. However, it is acknowledged that those with health conditions may be negatively impacted by the strategy, in particular engaging owners early on. Although, as noted, the council will make every possible effort to ensure all information and steps are clearly explained and understood throughout any processes undertaken.</p> <p>It is important to ensure all empty homes information is fully accessible to support those with specialist requirements, including those who don't use technology and providing information in alternative formats where necessary. Tracking how people access empty homes information over time will support the range of possible options and ensure accessibility needs of all residents are met.</p>
Gender reassignment	N/A – the proposed strategy does not take account of or impact factors relating to gender reassignment.
Marriage and civil partnership	N/A – the proposed strategy does not take account of or impact factors relating to marriage and civil partnership.
Pregnancy and maternity	N/A – the proposed strategy does not take account of or impact factors relating to pregnancy and maternity.
Race	N/A – the proposed strategy does not take account of or impact factors relating to race.
Religion or belief	N/A – the proposed strategy does not take account of or impact factors relating to religion or belief.

Sex	N/A – the proposed strategy does not take account of or impact factors relating to sex.
Sexual orientation	N/A – the proposed strategy does not take account of or impact factors relating to sexual orientation.
Carers	<p>Unclear – as noted above, demographic data on owners of empty homes is not currently available so it is difficult to determine the potential impact on the draft strategy on those who are disabled or have a long-standing illness, including those who may care for them, either paid or unpaid.</p> <p>Gathering and analysing data over time as the new strategy is implemented and taking account of customer feedback and utilisations of proposed incentives will help ensure no negative impacts for carers of those with protected characteristics are experienced.</p>
Socio-economic	<p>Positive – the proposed range of advice, guidance and incentives, including interest free loans, can benefit empty home owners who do not currently have the finances or knowledge to undertake costly repair work to bring the property back into use. Supporting empty homes owners to bring their empty property back into use can also benefit the local housing market and support other residents to access suitable housing.</p> <p>Negative – if enforcement action is taken, including subsequent recharge of works, this may have a negative impact of empty homes owners who are already struggling financially. However, by supporting owners to address repair works and access interest free loans to rent or sell, for example, this is intended to financially support such works to allow owners the opportunity to overcome financial obstacles.</p>

4. Community Impact

4.1 You may also need to undertake an analysis of the potential direct or indirect impact on the wider community when introducing a new/revised policy, service function or restructure.

N/A

4.2 You can use the [Community Cohesion Impact Assessment](#) as a guide, outlining a summary of your findings below:

5. Equality Analysis Action Plan

5.1 Use the below table to set out what action will be taken to:

- Ensure a full analysis of the impact of the policy, service function or restructure is undertaken.
- Mitigate/address identified negative impacts or unlawful prohibited conduct.
- To promoted improved equality of opportunity and to foster good relations.
- How the action plan will be monitored and at what intervals.

Planned action	Objective	Who	When	How will this be monitored (e.g. via team/service plans)
Review of council tax and complaints data	Establish if the strategy is having any negative impact on groups with protected characteristics.	Empty Homes Officer / Interim Head of Housing Supply	Bi-annual	Bi-annual review of council tax data in line with strategy stats/progress update. Complaints on ad-hob basis as and when received.
Analysis of empty homes data	To determine the causes and impact of empty homes to target resources more effectively and support achieving strategy aims.	Empty Homes Officer	Quarterly	Empty homes data
Analysis of empty homes advice and guidance	To determine how individuals are accessing the range of advice and guidance to ensure these are fully accessible or need to be updated or provided in alternative formats.	Empty Homes Officer / Interim Head of Housing Supply	Quarterly	Empty homes data; website data; advice and guidance issued
Housing and Southend 2050 work streams	Link the strategy and interconnected aims with wider housing and Southend 2050 projects to monitor resident feedback and ensure no equality implications.	Interim Head of Housing Supply	Ad-hoc	Via formal and informal Southend 2050 engagement communications and events and/or DMT meetings.

Signed (lead officer):

J. Thompson

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Signed (Director):

G. Halksworth

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Once signed, please send a copy of the completed EA (and, if applicable, CCIA) to Tim MacGregor TimMacGregor@southend.gov.uk.