1. What in your view are the main causes of empty homes?

As part of an Empty Homes Shared Service Pilot project with North Lanarkshire Council in 2014/15, the Council carried out a survey of long term properties using Council Tax data as a baseline. The purpose of the pilot was to examine the extent and nature of long term empty properties within South Lanarkshire.

A questionnaire was sent out to a representative sample of 200 owners of long term empty properties (properties empty for longer than 6 months) to establish information on why properties were empty, request details of the property condition, and the type of advice & assistance which would help bring the property back in to use.

Responses were received from 58 owners (29%). Of these responses, 49% reported that the property was ready for occupation or being actively marketed, and 28% had been occupied within the period of the survey. A further 10% were being renovated with 8% in need of renovation. A very small number reported the property was subject to legal dispute.

In relation to advice and assistance, 39% of responses noted that advice on the availability of loans or grants to assist with the cost of renovation would be helpful, with 42% noting that advice and assistance of selling, or finding a tenant would be useful.

Currently, less than 0.5% of homes in South Lanarkshire are estimate to be long-term empty properties. The Council continues to deal effectively with long term empty home enquiries on a case by case basis.

Working closely with other council departments and the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership to sign post owners to appropriate sources for advice and information on how to bring their property back into use.

Where appropriate, the Council makes use of existing discretionary Housing, Planning, Environmental Health, and Building Regulation powers to support action to bring long term empty homes back into effective use in line with the Council’s strategic priorities.

In April 2019, the Council exercised its powers to implement the 200% Council tax levy on long term empty property to encourage owners to bring property back into use.
2. **Is this a problem which affects all tenures of housing?**

Yes. Within a South Lanarkshire context, long term empty properties are predominantly in the private sector. While numbers are small, the problems they cause affect all tenures. Analysis of the Council Tax database established that 28% of long term empty properties were previously owned by the Council and had been purchased by sitting tenants under Right to Buy legislation, even a single long term empty property can have a major impact on surrounding social rented housing, particularly where common repairs are required in multi tenure blocks.

3. **What is the impact on communities where there are large numbers of empty homes?**

South Lanarkshire Council does not have areas where there are large numbers of long term empty homes, where they exist even single long term empty properties can have a significant impact on neighbouring properties, being detrimental to the amenity of the area, attracting antisocial behaviour and generating repeated enquiries from elected members and the general public which has an impact on staff resources.

4. **Is the issue of empty homes a problem in particular areas and if so why?**

South Lanarkshire has identified significant long-term challenges facing certain rural settlements linked to population and economic changes, loss of industry and commerce resulting in mismatch in supply and demand. The Council continues to work closely with partner Housing Associations and is progressing a range of targeted actions to consolidate and improve housing sustainability in affected areas and ensure housing supply is fit for purpose to meet the needs of current and future residents.

5. **Are you aware of any areas which have made progress in addressing the issue of empty homes and if so, what other local authorities could learn.**

The Council has worked successfully in partnership with Housing Associations and private developer partners to address structural low demand through a number of major housing regeneration programmes across our area including Fernhill in Rutherglen. We are currently working with West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative to implement a major housing regeneration masterplan in Whitlawburn, Cambuslang.

6. **How effective are current tools open to local authorities/central government to deal with empty homes? Should they have more powers?**

South Lanarkshire Council considers that current legislation is sufficient to deal with long term empty private sector homes
7. Should there be more enforcement powers for local authorities/central government to deal with the issue. If so what could these be?

South Lanarkshire Council considers that current legislation is sufficient.

8. Is there enough information/data to provide an accurate picture of empty homes in Scotland? If not how could this be improved?

We consider that we have sufficient data to form an accurate picture of long term empty properties