

# Action on Empty homes

A task force to bring privately-owned empty homes back into use in the capital is being set up by The City of Edinburgh Council.

The membership of the group will include representatives from the Scottish Empty Homes Partnership, private landlords and housing associations.

Some of the key actions for the task force will be to:

put together a bid for funding from the Scottish Government's new Empty Homes Loan Fund

consider the need for advice to owners of empty homes and look at implementing new legislation which allows local authorities to charge higher council tax for empty homes.

Latest figures from the Council show that at December 2011 there were 1,486 private sector properties empty for more than six months which is 0.8% of all private sector homes. Of these 967 had been vacant for more than a year.

The Empty Homes Task Force is one the commitments made by the Capital Coalition which was formed back in May.



Vice-Convener of  
Health, Social  
Care & Housing –  
Cammy Day

Councillor Cammy Day, Housing Leader, said: “Even though Edinburgh has a relatively low level of empty homes in both the social and private sectors this Council has a duty to look at all the avenues open to us to deliver more homes.

“The Capital Coalition made a commitment in May to set up this

task force and I'm delighted that we have taken what is undoubtedly a major step forward in tackling this pressing issue.

"Everyone knows there is a desperate need for more housing in the capital and we hope the task force will be able to find ways of bringing more empty homes back into use."

Kristen Hubert of Shelter Scotland, who run the Scottish Government funded Scottish Empty Homes Partnership, said:

"The Council should be praised for setting up this task force and their commitment to bringing empty homes back into use.

"There are many reasons why a home might be left empty. Owners can have sentimental attachment to it or they don't have the finances, the time or the skills to complete their plans for the property.

"Whatever the reason, bringing empty homes back into use has many benefits – it adds to the housing supply, contributes to local regeneration and supports community safety."

"We look forward to working with the taskforce in tackling the problem of empty homes across Edinburgh."

A report on the Empty Homes Task Force is set to be discussed at a meeting of the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee on Tuesday 11 September 2012. The papers for this meeting [can be read online here.](#)

The percentage of empty homes in Edinburgh has been steadily decreasing since 2008 from 2.4% to 2% in 2011 – less than the Scottish average of 2.8%.

The Council has already taken steps to reduce the potential for a greater number of empty homes during the recession by working with builders and housing associations to buy unsold new properties and convert them to affordable homes. This has resulted in a total of 76 newly built unsold properties being

purchased since 2010/11.

Earlier this year the Council used Council Tax data to contact over 1,000 owners of homes that had been empty for more than six months. They were sent a leaflet outlining the benefits of bringing their homes back into use.