



Subject:	Notice of Motion – Action to Address Empty Homes
Date:	20th February, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider the Notice of Motion received for the meeting of the Council on 3rd March, 2025 in relation to Action to Address Empty Homes.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>Members are asked to note that, in accordance with Standing Orders, Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure or falls within the remit of a particular Committee must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.</p> <p>At this time Members are only asked to note that the Notice of Motion has been received and that a subsequent report will be brought to Committee, if that Committee so agrees, outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications.</p> <p>The Committee is asked to note that this motion will be referred on the first instance to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Committee will be aware that Standing Orders 13 (m) to (r), as agreed by the Council at its meeting on 4th October, are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (m) <i>The Standards and Business Committee will have delegated authority to adopt or reject Notices of Motion. The Lord Mayor will indicate at the Council meeting those Notices of Motion that have been considered by the Standards and Business Committee and whether such Notices of Motion were rejected or adopted. In either case, the proposer only may speak on the issue at Council.</i> (n) <i>The Standards and Business Committee will refer all Notices of Motion directly to a standing committee when the matter to which the Notice of Motion refers falls within the remit of that committee. At Council, the Lord Mayor will indicate that the Notice of Motion was received and referred. There will be no speakers on such Notices of Motion at Council.</i> (o) <i>The Standards and Business Committee will refer Notices of Motion for consideration by full Council when the Notice of Motion relates to a strategic or constitutional matter.</i> (p) <i>The Standards and Business Committee will not have the power to amend the wording of any Notice of Motion that is being referred to the full Council for debate.</i> (q) <i>Any amendments to Notice of Motions to be proposed at the Council are to be furnished at least one day in advance of going to the full Council and will be circulated to Party Group Leaders in advance of the Council meeting.</i>

3.2	<p>(r) <i>In referring any matter to the full Council, the Standards and Business Committee may determine to restrict contributions to the debate in relation to any Notice of Motion to one per political party. At the Council meeting, the Lord Mayor will clearly indicate if the restriction applies.</i></p> <p>The following motion has been received:</p> <p><u>Action to Address Empty Houses</u></p> <p>“This Council notes with concern the growing number of households (48,000) on the housing waiting list.</p> <p>The Council also notes with concern that despite the huge demand for public housing: there remains a substantial number of homes in Belfast which are empty. According to Land and Property this figure sits at 3,694 for the Belfast area.</p> <p>As a local authority, the Council commits to working with the relevant departments to try to bring empty homes back into use as affordable and social housing. Council notes that the DFC Empty Homes strategy, which aimed to do this, ended in 2018.</p> <p>The Council therefore commits to developing a strategy alongside DFC, the Housing Executive and other statutory bodies to ensure there is a coordinated action plan to bring disused homes into public use. This action plan will be funded and appropriate measures such as an empty homes rates premium, strengthened compulsory purchase powers and financing support for converting empty homes into social housing are brought forward to ensure it is able to be delivered.</p> <p>The Council will seek to establish an Empty Homes Partnership, similar to the Scottish model, which will coordinate these efforts with the relevant bodies.</p> <p>The Council will also seek funding from DFC to appoint an Empty Homes Officer in order to liaise directly with the owners of empty homes, to understand why the home is empty, and to offer tailored solutions to turn it into a home again.”</p> <p>Proposer: Councillor Michael Collins</p> <p>Seconder: Councillor Áine Groogan</p>
3.3	<p>The motion calls upon the Council to undertake a number of actions in relation to empty homes, including developing a strategy, establishing a partnership and appointing an empty homes officer - the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for strategic policy, working with partners to lead on the Belfast Agenda and also agreeing the Local Development Plan. The motion will therefore be referred to that Committee.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> None.</p>
4.0	<p>Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>

