

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PANEL – 9TH OCTOBER 2018

Report of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing Lead Member: Councillor Mercer

ITEM 7 EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2017- 2022 UPDATE

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the delivery of the Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022 and the continued actions to deliver the priorities.

2. Recommendation

To note the update of the Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022 and comment on the future actions to deliver the priorities.

3. Reason

To ensure that the Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022, which provides a clear framework to deliver the Council's value of 'Creating a Strong and Lasting Community', meets its obligations in respect of the strategic housing needs of the Borough.

4. Policy Context and Justification

The Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022 is designed to help deliver the Council's priorities identified in the Corporate Plan.

5. Background

5.1 The Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022 concentrates on the delivery of four key objectives:

1. Encourage empty home owners to bring empty homes back into use.
2. Bring problematic empty homes back into use through enforcement action.
3. Devise and explore new and innovative solutions to reduce the impact of empty homes on local communities and bring them back into use.
4. Develop a co-ordinated approach to help identify and tackle empty homes.

5.2 The current Empty Homes Strategy for Charnwood was adopted in July 2017. The Empty Homes Strategy report (see Appendix 1) provides an overview of our current priorities, our achievements including setting out our actions planned up unto April 2022.

Appendix 1: Empty Homes Strategy progress report 2017-2018

Background Papers: Cabinet, Report – 6th July 2017
Policy Scrutiny Group, 25th April 2017
Cabinet, 7th July 2016 – Item 6 and Minute 19.
Scrutiny Management Board, 15th June 2016 - Item 7 and Minute 6.
Empty Homes Scrutiny Panel agendas and notes of meetings held on:

Meeting 1 – 30th September 2015

Meeting 2 – 5th November 2015

Meeting 3 – 3rd December 2015

Meeting 4 – 13th January 2016

Meeting 5 – 2nd March 2016

Meeting 6 – 7th April 2016

Meeting 7 – 11th May 2016

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empty homes strategy progress report 2017-2018

	ACTION	PROGRESS UPDATE AND OUTCOMES	COMPLETED
1.	Review advice and assistance available to empty home owners including Partnership Grants and the Tenant Finder Scheme	The Council have been offering home owners a free valuation service and getting properties sold at Auction to avoid enforcement action in addition to offering Partnership Grants and the Tenant Finder Scheme. To date 5 owners have been supported to sell their properties at Auction.	Continuous
2.	Explore opportunities for Empty Homes Leasing and Social Lettings	Appointed a Social Lettings Coordinator who will work with the Private Rented Sector to improve access to the Sector. The new Social Lettings Coordinator has carried out research and reviewed the existing Tenant Finder Scheme. 3 potential service options are under consideration. Consultation with Private Sector Landlords will take place later in the year.	Continuous
3.	Arrange and host advisory events for empty home owners with relevant guest speakers	Empty Homes Event to be hosted for the Empty Homes week in October 2018.	Date of event to be confirmed
4.	Review current publicity arrangements and consider the production of a newsletter for stakeholders	Posters have been put up at Community Centres, Libraries and Supermarkets. The Empty Homes Service has been promoted through the Hospital Newsletter.	Continuous
5.	Develop an Enforcement Policy for dealing with problematic empty homes	The Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy was approved on the 19 th May 2018 and this incorporates the enforcement action the Council can take to bring Empty Homes back into use.	Completed
6.	Consider the establishment of an affordable loan scheme for those renovating empty properties for their own eventual occupation	The Empty Homes Officer has completed research but to date this has been unsuccessful as the organisations that would administer the loans are reluctant to take this forward because of the level of risk to their organisation.	Completed



7.	Explore the establishment of a Council Owned Development Company	Partnership working is being considered across the County to develop a Housing Company.	Completed
8.	Develop improved communication channels	<p>Work continues with Planning Enforcement, Council Tax and Environmental Services in tackling problematic empty homes.</p> <p>A partnership approach has been developed with local Auctioneers to visit owners of Empty Homes to provide a free no obligation property survey.</p>	Continuous
9.	Publicise incoming minimum energy efficiency standards for rented accommodation and assistance available for landlords to comply to minimise potential for increase in number of empty homes	<p>The regulations will come into force on the 1st April 2018 that it is unlawful to rent a property which breaches the requirement for a minimum E rating, unless there is an applicable exemption. This will be expanded to cover all existing tenancies on the 1st April 2020</p> <p>A Civil Penalty of up to £4,000 will be imposed for on Landlords who breach this requirement.</p> <p>Private Sector Housing Standards Officers are creating a list of rented properties across the Borough to ensure that these regulations are being adhered to.</p>	Continuous

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