
REPORT TO:	Housing and Community Services Committee	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	24th November 2011	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Director of Operations	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Beverly Wagstaffe (01283 228759)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Empty Homes Strategy 2012 - 2017	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS01

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members approve the draft Empty Homes Strategy 2012 – 2017 as a basis for wider consultation.
- 1.2 That authority is given for the Head of Housing and Environmental Services in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to agree any minor amendments to the draft strategy arising from wider consultation prior to implementation on 1st April 2012 (any major amendments would be brought back before the Committee).

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To seek Members approval of the proposed Empty Homes Strategy 2012 – 2017 (see Annex 1).

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Empty Homes Strategy forms part of the Council's wider Private Sector Housing Policy and guides our actions and interventions in relation to private sector long-term empty homes, which have been vacant for more than six months.
- 3.2 In April 2011 there were 468 homes formally registered within the district, as per Council Tax records as being empty for more than 6 months.
- 3.3 A door to door survey was undertaken in July 2011 to verify the information. This identified that only 291 of these homes were empty or potentially empty. In October 2011 344 homes were recorded on the Council Tax records as vacant for more than 6-months. This means that (utilising the 291 figure as the starting point) over the period to 30th September there was a net increase of 53 empty homes (average of 9 per month).
- 3.4 Committee approved the existing Empty Homes Strategy on 24th April 2008. The Strategy has been revised in order to keep it relevant and up to date and to ensure that it reflects the Council's corporate priorities as well as ensuring that limited

resources are appropriately focused to maximise additional funding via the New Homes Bonus.

3.5 The proposed strategy identifies three priority areas to reduce the number of long-term empty homes in the district: -

Priority 1: To raise awareness of how to bring empty homes back into use and provide advice and support to owners.

Priority 2: Encourage owners to bring homes back into use to meet an affordable housing need.

Priority 3: Consider intervention for homes empty for more than 2-years or where they are a danger to public health or where the Council has carried out works in default of a formal notice.

3.6 There is currently no funding set aside to support and encourage owners to bring empty homes back into use. The delivery of the proposed strategy will rely upon enabling, regulating and partnership working. However, should capital funding be available in the future the proposal is to focus this on the following projects: -

To encourage the bringing of empty homes back into use: -

- Provide a grant to private landlords and registered providers to support the renovation of properties in exchange for nomination rights for those households in housing need.
- Provide a loan to first-time buyers to support the renovation of properties.

To encourage the letting of properties vacant for more than 3-months: -

- Extend the existing “Rent Deposit Guarantee” scheme to those households on the housing waiting list who find suitable accommodation to meet their housing needs in the private rented sector.

To encourage owners to rent their homes: -

- To identify a partner to deliver and operate a “Private Sector Leasing Scheme” in South Derbyshire for owners who wish to have a rental income from their empty homes for short periods but do not wish to have the burden of managing the tenancy agreement.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council of the strategy as currently written although some targets are dependent on finance, the source of which has yet to be identified.

5. Corporate Implications

5.1 The Empty Homes Strategy supports delivery of the Corporate Plan “Safe & Secure” theme by contributing to the key projects: -

- SP01 – Facilitate new affordable housing for people unable to access market housing.
- SP02 – Improve the current house conditions across the private/public stock.
- SP05 – Develop and implement an Empty Property Strategy.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 Action to make use of empty homes addresses a number of social, economic and public health issues. Empty homes can attract vandalism, fly tipping and anti-social behaviour and generally have a negative effect on the neighbouring areas and the residents that live there.
- 6.2 Returning empty homes back into use can make a positive contribution to the overall health and well being of local residents as well as contributing to the shortfall in affordable homes.