

4th December 2017

Community, Health and Housing Committee

Empty Homes Update

Report of: *David Carter - Environmental Health Manager*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

1.1 At the meeting of the Community, Health and Housing Committee on 18th September 2017 the draft Empty Homes Strategy was adopted by Members.

1.2 Officers were instructed to report back to subsequent meetings to provide information on progress and performance indicators regarding empty homes.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Members note the contents of the report and actions taken to deal with empty homes.

2.2 Members instruct officers to prioritise properties for action to concentrate efforts on identified locations.

2.3 Officers are instructed to verify data provided to inform Government Empty Home statistics and to liaise with Basildon DC Billing & Benefits Team.

3. Introduction and Background

3.1 The original dataset used was that provided showing properties where the additional Council Tax premium was being applied – a total of 75 properties which had been empty for over two years.

- 3.2** At present a property which is habitable but unoccupied and unfurnished has a 100% discount from Council Tax for a maximum of 3 months, after which normal Council Tax is payable.
- 3.3** Since April 2015 the Council has applied a Council Tax rate of 150% on a property which has been empty for at least two years to attempt to encourage them to be brought back into use.
- 3.4** The Government has just announced in the Budget that this Empty Homes premium will be increased to an additional 100% over standard Council Tax.
- 3.5** Data from the work undertaken to date is presented in the report in Appendix A.
- 3.6** Additional data has now been provided by Basildon DC which is also presented in the Appendix and gives information on more recently empty homes.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1** Following discussions with the Chair and Vice Chair it has been decided that we will identify a few priority locations where empty homes are causing problems and focus attention on resolving these issues.
- 4.2** The initial priority sites are properties in Hatch Road, Goodwood Avenue and Plovers Mead.
- 4.3** The draft strategy has been published on the Council website and contact information made available for residents to advise us of empty homes.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1** To ensure that effective action is taken to reduce the number of empty homes in the Borough within existing resources where possible.

6. Consultation

- 6.1** The draft strategy is open for public consultation on the Council website at <http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/index.php?cid=2835> with replies requested by 1st January 2018.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 Environment and Housing Management

Manage our housing stock to recognise the limited resources available and the importance of supporting those in greatest need
Develop effective partnership arrangements with key agencies to deliver services
Community and Health
Provide advice, support, guidance and enforcement
Encourage thriving and engaged communities
Support community engagement with residents and businesses

8. Implications

Financial Implications

Name & Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Financial Services Manager & Deputy Section 151 Officer
Tel & Email: 01277 312829/jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Daniel Toohey, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
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8.2 Government guidance encourages local authorities to identify empty homes and section 85 of the Local Government Act 2003 enables Councils to utilise council tax information to identify empty homes. Government guidance also encourages Councils to formulate empty homes strategies with a view to bringing empty homes back into use.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

8.3 None

9. Appendices to the report.

Appendix A - Empty Homes Presentation

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