

CABINET

Agenda Item: 8

Ward: All

Portfolio: Planning, growth and housing services

Report Authors: Sally Taylor

Meeting Date: 10 July 2017

SUBJECT: Empty Homes Strategy

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Report Sign off	Seen by:	Name	Date
	Chief Executive/ Deputy Chief Executive(s)	Tracy Aarons	June 2017
	Legal	Lesley Dolan	June 2017
	Finance	Paul Deal	June 2017
	Group Manager	Jai Vick	June 2017
	Portfolio Holder	Nigel Woollcombe-Adams	June 2017
	Ward Member(s)	N/A	
Summary:	The purpose of this strategy is to outline the Council's approach to assisting empty home owners and helping to bring their properties back into use, and when necessary intervene and make use of the powers in accordance with the Part 4 of the Housing Act 2004. It sets out what empty home owners can expect from the Council and its officers.		
Recommendation:	The Cabinet is asked to approve the Empty Homes Strategy.		
Direct and/or indirect impact on service delivery to our customers and communities:	This Empty Homes Strategy seeks to ensure as far as reasonably possible that good practice is maintained and engagement is sought with empty properties owners, support is offered to help bring the properties back into use		
Contribution to Corporate Priorities:	This directly supports Priority 3.3 of the Councils Corporate Delivery Plan 2016-17		
Legal Implications:	There are no direct legal implications as a direct result of the strategy		
Financial Implications:	There are no direct financial implications		

Impact on Service Plans:	This directly supports Priority 3.3 of the Council’s Corporate Delivery Plan 2016-17
Value for Money:	The strategy builds on the Councils proactive approach to securing compliance by informal processes. However, when cooperation and engagement is not forthcoming from empty home owners it is important that the Council adopt the most efficient method of compliance by following this strategy. Formal action is considered within this strategy as a tool to be used in the most difficult non engaging owners, or when other options have been exhausted.
Equalities Implications:	<p>All significant issues have been covered within the Empty Homes Strategy which indicates how the service will approach engagement with empty home owners any enforcement issues that arise and that there has to be a flexible and adaptable approach to each case.</p> <p>When communicating on empty homes issues there is the potential that because of disability or race the person has not understood what is expected of them therefore translations and support services are made available by MDC.</p>
Risk Assessment and Adverse Impact on Corporate Actions:	There are no risk management implications as a direct result of this report but having no Empty homes strategy there could be reputational risk.
Scrutiny Recommendation (if any)	Scrutiny has recommended the Empty Homes Strategy for approval.

INTRODUCTION

The intention is to introduce a revised Empty Homes Strategy as part of the Housing Renewal Policy.

The Private Sector Housing team is responsible for engaging with and offering support and advice to empty home owners and when absolutely necessary employ enforcement options.

The Empty Homes Strategy aims to engage with and bring empty properties back into use through the provision of advice, support and formal action where necessary. This policy is intended to provide general guidance for Council officers, potential landlords, landlords and owners.

BACKGROUND

Every year Private Sector Housing deals over 400 empty properties in the towns and surrounding villages of the Mendip District. And therefore needs to continue its flexible approach to the changing requirements of dealing with empty homes and working cohesively across Somerset, working in partnership and consultation with relevant organisations, to enforce a clear and flexible approach to dealing with empty homes.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The Council believes in a clear, fair, proportionate, consistent and transparent policy on enforcement when required.

The Council aims to achieve consistency through the advice that is offered, but consistency however does not mean simple uniformity. There are many variables involved in making a decision which includes the scale of the problem, the risk to health, the attitude and actions of owners. The ability to have flexibility within the policy is therefore important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to endorse and approve the Private Sector Housing Empty Homes Strategy attached.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that the Council continues to work with empty home owners to help them bring them back into use and to help provide affordable and safe homes.

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List of background Papers:

Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.