

Single Member Cabinet Decision

**Executive
Forward Plan
Reference**

E2197

Empty Property Policy

Decision maker	Cllr Vic Pritchard Cabinet member for Adult Social Services
The Issue	<p>The Housing and Wellbeing Strategy makes a commitment to bring empty residential properties back into use in accordance with an Empty Property Policy. An “empty property” for this purpose is a residential property that has been empty for longer than six months. Properties empty for less than six months and properties which have been empty for longer than six months and are substantially furnished are outside this policy.</p> <p>Bringing empty properties back into use makes best use of the existing housing stock, helping to address housing need. Bringing empty properties back into use helps to create stronger safer communities by reducing anti-social behaviour and nuisance associated with empty properties.</p> <p>The Empty Property Policy sets out how Housing Services will make best use of existing resources to bring empty properties back into use.</p>
Decision Date	21.12.2010
The decision	The Cabinet Member agrees that the proposed Empty Property Policy is approved as Council Policy.
Rationale for decision	A policy is required to detail how to make best use of existing resources and provide a framework for bringing empty properties back into use. This is stated within the Housing and Wellbeing Strategy.
Financial and budget implications	<p>The policy aims to make best use of existing resources and therefore Housing Services is not seeking additional funding as a result of this policy. A permanent part time Property Partnership Officer (Empty Property Officer) is already in post dedicated solely to bringing empty properties back into use.</p> <p>Enforcement action to bring the property back into use is likely to have financial implications ranging from legal costs to recoverable repair and management costs. However enforcement action would only be taken following a cost – benefit analysis of options available, including the option of doing nothing. The policy will prioritise empty properties for case action. Action will only be taken where the proposed action is financially viable. Where financially viable, the Policy allows for enforcement action to be taken following Single Member Decision approval.</p>

	The Homes Bonus scheme whereby the Government will match the Council Tax for 6 years from each additional new home includes homes created by bringing empty properties back into use. This Policy thereby contributes to increasing the Council's income providing the overall number of empty properties in the area reduces.
Issues considered	The empty property policy addresses customer concerns about safer communities by working to remove problems such as vandalism which empty properties may cause. Bringing empty properties back into use makes best use of existing stock which contributes to the sustainability of the area.
Consultation undertaken	Ward Councillors; Cabinet colleagues; Overview & Scrutiny Panel;; Local Residents; Stakeholders/Partners; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer
How consultation was carried out	Consultation with cabinet members and councillors was through Safer Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and all Councillors were invited to a consultation session. Local residents were consulted via Voicebox 16. Consultation with Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer was by email.
Other options considered	No other options have been considered

Signatures of Decision Makers	
Date of Signature	
Subject to Call-in until 5 Working days have elapsed following publication of the decision	