

**Decision under Delegated Powers
The Creation of a New Empty Homes Officer Post**

Officer Requesting Decision:

Private Sector Housing Manager – Rebecca Short

Officer Making the Decision:

Chief Executive – Geoff Parker

Recommendation:

That approval is given to create a new full time (37 hrs per week), permanent Empty Homes Officer post at salary grade SO1, reporting to the Private Sector Housing Manager (cost centre F300) with effect from the start date of the successful applicant.

Reason:

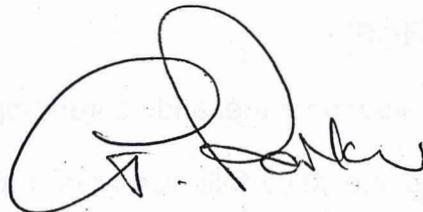
To undertake the full range of duties in relation to Empty Homes including, but not limited to, the identification of owners of empty properties, the monitoring of known empty properties, the identification of previously unknown empty properties and returning those empty properties to occupation - either through negotiation or enforcement.

Authority for Decision:

Section 8 of the Council Constitution contains authority for the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) to agree changes to the establishment, within budget and without major service or policy implications, affecting no more than five posts (irrespective of their post number) in any single case (item 6 on page 8-4 of the Constitution).

Decision and Date:

APPROVED



07.04.16

Background:

At present, work in relation to empty homes is limited to reactive complaint investigations of cases where an empty home is causing a nuisance to a neighbouring property. This could be, for example; by providing harbourage for vermin, or through the presence of structural defects resulting in damage to an adjoining occupied home. In such cases, action will be taken to remove the issue, but the home will remain empty.

In contrast, the Empty Homes Officer will take a proactive approach, seeking out empty homes, identifying the owners and working with them to identify the blockages to the home being returned to use. This could be through the provision of advice and assistance on getting the property on the market, support with taking steps to finding a tenant for the property (which includes homeless households or those at risk of becoming homeless) and identifying the works required to bring the home to a lettable standard, liaising with RSL's, overseeing a Partnership Grant or, in some cases the use of enforcement tools, for example; Compulsory Purchase or Enforced Sale, to secure the return of the home back into residential use.

A service pressure for the creation of the post was approved by the Budget Scrutiny Panel and £36,900 has been included in the revenue budget for cost centre F300 for 2016/17. This includes the salary (S01, SCP 29), on costs and essential car user allowance.

Cabinet Minute 105:2016 resolved that "the Budget Scrutiny Panels support for the proposal to appoint an Empty Homes Officer, which is affordable and included in the revenue budget, be noted".

Council (29th Feb 2016) approved item 8.2, Cabinet's Report of 2016/17 General Fund and HRA Revenue Budget, which contained in Appendix 6 details of the Service Pressures and Savings inc. on page C31 the new Empty Homes Officer post and associated legal costs linked to the extra post.

A job description and person specification (appendix 1) has been drawn up and was evaluated by the Job Evaluation Panel on 22nd March 2016; the outcome of the evaluation was that the post be graded as S01.

Summary of Advice Provided by HR:

Anna Cairns – HR Manager (1/4/16)

This post has been to a Job Evaluation panel and scored appropriately.

The normal recruitment process should be followed when recruiting to this post.

Financial Implications:

The post has been job evaluated at S01 and £36,900 has been included in the revenue budget for cost centre F300, this includes the salary (S01, SCP 29), on costs and essential car user allowance.

Risk Management:

Risk Identified:	Likelihood:	Impact:	Risk Management Actions Planned:
Failure to increase the establishment in this way will result in no, or very little, proactive action being taken to return empty homes back into use. Leading to no increase in the availability of residential accommodation within the Borough.	Possible	Moderate	Careful prioritisation of workload through an assessment of risk is likely to result in the status quo remaining - i.e. that only those empty properties that are impacting on surrounding occupied dwellings are investigated.
Failure to recruit to the post	Unlikely	Moderate	Post will be widely advertised and distributed to relevant area networks

Key Decision: No

Background Papers: Empty Homes Officer Job Description and Person Specification



NO-HYPOTHESIS-RECOMMENDATION

Division:	Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Job Title:	Empty Homes Officer
Grade:	S01
Post Number:	New Position
Base/Location:	Southfields Offices
Responsible To:	Private Sector Housing Manger
Responsible For:	N/A
Key Relationships/ Liaison with:	Property Owners, Landlords, Registered Social Landlords, other Local Authorities and Departments within CBC

Job Purpose	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To undertake the role and full range of duties within the Private Sector Housing Team in relation to Empty Homes including but not limited to the identification of owners of empty properties, the monitoring of known empty properties, the identification of previously unknown empty properties and returning those empty properties to occupation either through negotiation or enforcement. To identify and maximise all sources of available funding through the active submission of bids to facilitate this work. To lead on collaborative working with partners and Registered Social Landlords to bring empty homes back into use.

Main Duties and Responsibilities	
1	To further develop, update, monitor and review the progress of the Empty Homes Strategy.
2	To identify and obtain information on empty properties within the District and to devise a robust Empty Property Database accordingly.
3	To provide advice, assistance and information to owners of empty properties for bringing them back into use and offer advice and information on housing related issues to tenants, landlords, owner occupiers and members of the public.
4	To seek and implement innovative and creative solutions to bring empty properties back into use.
5	To develop procedures for tackling empty properties using the various options and solutions available, including enforcement action such as CPO and enforced sale

6	To process Partnership Grant applications. Carry out interim and final inspections to establish values and standards of works carried out to authorise release of interim and final payments. Attend site meetings and negotiate variations of agreed schemes and costing due to unforeseen circumstances and agree amended schemes/costing for re-approvals as necessary. All in accordance with the Councils adopted policies
7	To liaise with other departments of the Council to establish a co-ordinated approach towards the implementation of the Strategy. Develop appropriate referral and feedback systems between sections dealing with empty properties.
8	To deal with complaints/enquiries concerning empty properties in the district and where necessary, refer them to the appropriate department or external organisation.
9	To prepare reports and recommendations relating to the enforced sale, demolition, closure or compulsory purchase of unfit accommodation or empty properties.
10	To contribute to the setting of the Councils targets for the number of empty properties brought back into use each year and ensure that the targets are achieved.
11	To actively identify and submit funding applications to regional and national sources to facilitate the reuse of empty properties
12	Delivery of an effective and appropriate service to service users, fairly and without discrimination.
13	As a term of your employment you can be required to undertake such other duties commensurate with your grade, and/or hours of work, as may reasonably be required of you at your initial place of work or at any other of the Authority's establishments.
Special Factors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nature of the work may involve the jobholder carrying out work outside of normal working hours. 	

This job description sets out the duties and responsibilities of the job at the time when it was drawn up. Such duties and responsibilities may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the duties or the level of responsibility entailed. Such variations are a common occurrence and cannot in themselves justify a reconsideration of the grading of the job.

Charnwood Borough Council is seeking to promote the employment of disabled people and will make any adjustments considered reasonable to the above duties under the terms of the Equality Act 2010 to accommodate a suitable disabled candidate.

Date Prepared/Revised: 18th March 2016



Division:	Strategic and Private Sector Housing
Job Title:	Empty Homes Officer
Grade:	S01
Post Number:	New Post

	Essential	Desirable	How assessed
Qualifications			
NVQ Level 3 or equivalent in surveying, building inspection or other closely related field.	✓		App/Doc
Member of Chartered Institute of Housing, Environmental Health or Surveyors at practitioner level.		✓	App/Doc
Certificate of competency under HHSRS		✓	
Or Demonstrable experience identified within the section below.	✓		App/Int
Experience			
Extensive experience of carrying out detailed inspections/surveys of domestic property.	✓		App/Int
Experience of drawing up schedules of work.	✓		App/Int
Experience of local authority enforcement regarding enforced sales, compulsory purchase and/or empty dwelling management orders.	✓		App/Int
Previous experience of Civica APP (previously 'Flare')		✓	
An understanding of and the ability to provide, best practice in customer care		✓	App/Int

NO-TOUCH-SCREEN-ONLY

<p>Skills/Knowledge</p> <p>Computer literacy including experience in the use of Microsoft Office.</p> <p>Attention to detail.</p> <p>Detailed Knowledge of the Housing Act 2004 parts 1- 4 and other housing, health and welfare legislation.</p> <p>Demonstrate effective analytical problem solving and negotiation skills.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>		<p>App/Int/ Test</p> <p>App/Int/ Test</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p>
<p>Interpersonal Skills</p> <p>Ability to communicate effectively (orally and in writing).</p> <p>Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to deal with people with tact and diplomacy, including the ability to negotiate and mediate between various parties.</p> <p>Ability to work and contribute as a team member.</p> <p>Highly motivated, committed and able to work on own initiative.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>		<p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>Int</p> <p>Int</p>
<p>Other requirements</p> <p>Must be able to carry out site visits/inspections and use ladders and scaffolding.</p> <p>Must hold a current full UK driving licence and have access to a suitably insured vehicle available for work purposes</p> <p>An understanding of, and commitment to equal opportunities, and the ability to apply this to all situations.</p> <p>Flexibility to work varied hours on occasions</p> <p>Must be able to perform all the duties and tasks of the job with reasonable adjustments, where appropriate, in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p> <p>App/Int</p>

<p>Key: App = Application form</p>	<p>Pre = Presentation</p>
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Test = Test
Int = Interview

Med = Medical questionnaire
Doc = Documentary evidence (e.g. certificates)

Prepared by: Rebecca Short

Date: 18th March 2016