

## SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD – 29TH MARCH 2017

### Report of the Head of Strategic Support

#### ITEM 9 EMPTY HOMES SCRUTINY PANEL – 6 MONTH UPDATE

##### Purpose of Report

To enable the Board to consider the implementation of the decisions taken by the Cabinet following its consideration of the report of the Empty Homes Scrutiny Panel and what, if any, further action may be required.

##### Recommendation

That the Board consider the information provided in respect of the implementation of the decisions taken by the Cabinet following its consideration of the report of the Empty Homes Scrutiny Panel and for each decision determine whether:

- the implementation is complete or sufficiently complete and no further monitoring is required;
- the implementation is not complete and a further update for the Board is required;
- the implementation is not complete or other issues with the implementation are identified and a recommendation or advice to the Cabinet is required.

##### Reason

To enable the Board to be satisfied that decisions taken following scrutiny recommendations are being implemented satisfactorily, take or recommend any further action that is necessary and ensure the effectiveness of the scrutiny function.

##### Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

As part of the process for ensuring the effectiveness of the scrutiny function the Board receives a report setting out the Cabinet's responses to scrutiny recommendations and a later report on the implementation of the decisions taken by the Cabinet. These later reports are usually considered by the Board 6 months after the Cabinet decisions are made.

On 7th July 2016, the Cabinet considered the findings and recommendations of the Empty Homes Scrutiny Panel. The decisions taken by the Cabinet are set out in the Appendix to this report, and also include the current status of the actions undertaken following those decisions, set out in the form of a table.

##### Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The Board normally only receives one report on the implementation of decisions taken following scrutiny recommendations. There would, therefore, not normally be a further report following this one. The Board may however decide that further

updates are necessary or may choose to make further recommendations to the Cabinet.

### Report Implications

Implications are as set out in the appended table where relevant.

### Background Papers

1. Cabinet, 7th July 2016 – Item 6 and Minute 19.
2. Scrutiny Management Board, 15th June 2016 - Item 7 and Minute 6.
3. Empty Homes Scrutiny Panel agendas and notes of meetings held on:

Meeting 1 – 30th September 2015

Meeting 2 – 5th November 2015

Meeting 3 – 3rd December 2015

Meeting 4 – 13th January 2016

Meeting 5 – 2nd March 2016

Meeting 6 – 7th April 2016

Meeting 7 – 11th May 2016.

Officer to Contact:            Laura Strong  
Democratic Services Officer  
01509 634734  
[laura.strong@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:laura.strong@charnwood.gov.uk)

Cabinet Decisions Following Consideration of Panel Report	Actions Taken to Implement Decisions (including estimated completion date if appropriate)	Status
<p><b>Minute 19-1</b> That Panel recommendation 1, '<i>That, given the generally positive response to the consultation, an Empty Homes Premium of 150% be introduced from the start of the 2017/18 financial year</i>', be noted and at a future meeting the Cabinet receive a draft policy paper, and, if appropriate, consider an amendment to introduce an Empty Homes Premium of 150%, alongside the possible Local Council Tax Support changes for April 2017, consultation for which is due to take place in August and September 2016;</p> <p><i>REASON</i> <i>To enable the Cabinet to decide whether it wishes to proceed with the introduction of an Empty Homes Premium.</i></p>	<p><b>Response of the Strategic Director of Corporate Services</b></p> <p>The Council has agreed to introduce an Empty Homes Premium from 1st April 2017, see Council Minute 60.4 23rd January 2017. Council report detailing the arrangements, <a href="#">here</a> (see pages E13-E14).</p>	Completed.
<p><b>Minute 19-2</b> that Panel recommendation 2, '<i>That from the start of 2017/18 financial year, the current Council Tax discount of 100% for one month when a property became empty be discontinued</i>', be noted and, in light of the responses received from the consultation, the Cabinet receive a report at a future meeting on how the current Council Tax discount of 100% for one month when a property became empty could be discontinued;</p> <p><i>REASON</i> <i>To enable the Cabinet to decide whether it</i></p>	<p><b>Response of the Strategic Director of Corporate Services</b></p> <p>The Council has agreed to discontinue the one month Council Tax discount for empty properties from 1st April 2017, see Council Minute 60.4 23rd January 2017.</p>	Completed.

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<i>wishes to discontinue the one month Council Tax discount for empty properties.</i>		
<p><b>Minute 19-3</b></p> <p>(i) that Panel recommendation 3 be agreed and that the work of the Empty Homes Officer include:</p> <p>(a) promotion of the facility on the Council's website to report empty homes and problems with empty homes;</p> <p>(b) working with councillors on issues relating to empty homes in their wards;</p> <p>(c) gathering evidence from across the Council and from partners on empty homes that are causing problems;</p> <p>(d) better communication and promotion of the support that is available to bring empty properties back into use;</p>	<p><b>Response of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing</b></p> <p>Leaflets and posters have been produced and ordered along with an advert in LRI/Glenfield patient magazine for 2017/2018 – all promoting the online reporting tool.</p> <p>Time allocated to work with Councillors as and when required.</p> <p>Communication channels established with Environmental Protection, Planning, Community Safety, Street Management, Police and Council Tax, via the fortnightly Enforcement Hub meetings, 8 weekly Council Tax reports and established links with Leicestershire Police.</p> <p>Leaflets and posters have been produced and an advert placed in the LRI and Glenfield Patient magazine for 2017/2018 promoting the support available.</p> <p>Empty Home owner survey responses have been used to identify and target potential interest in the various advice and assistance available.</p>	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Completed.</p>

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<p>(e) evaluation of the effectiveness of schemes and interventions in relation to empty homes;</p>	<p>The evaluation of the effectiveness of Schemes is ongoing and will feed into development of the Empty Homes Strategy.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>(f) actively bidding for external funding, including with partners;</p>	<p>Potential funding and partnership working opportunities are being actively identified for example the joint Crisis Bid submission with The Bridge in August 2016 and more recently a funding investigation with Land Aid, who work to reduce homelessness for young people. Although currently there is no grant funding available links have been made with the Head of Grants and Projects at Land Aid so that we can be notified of future opportunities.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>(g) contacting property owners well before properties have been empty for two years;</p>	<p>Contact has been made with owners of empty homes from 6 months, with specific emphasis on those properties reaching the 18 months mark to highlight the options available to bring homes back into use and the imminent Council Tax increase.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p><i>REASON</i>  <i>To be proactive in seeking to bring empty properties back into use.</i></p> <p>(ii) and it be noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in respect of (a) above, posters will be circulated around the Borough to promote the reporting facility;</li> <li>• in respect of (b) above, this action would continue as part of the day to</li> </ul>		

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<p>day service delivery;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in respect of (c) above, this action will be included in the newly appointed Empty Homes Officer's Action Plan;</li> <li>• in respect of (d) above, posters will be circulated around the Borough to promote the support that is available to bring empty homes back into use;</li> <li>• in respect of (e) above, quarterly performance statistics will be produced and reported in the Business Plan Performance report;</li> <li>• in respect of (f) above, bidding for appropriate funding would be actively undertaken;</li> <li>• in respect of (g) above, this action will be included in the newly appointed Empty Homes Officer's Action Plan;</li> </ul> <p><i>REASON</i>  <i>To acknowledge the comments of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing regarding how the Panel's recommendation will be implemented.</i></p>		
<p><b>Minute 19-4</b>  (i) that Panel recommendation 4 be approved and that the Council adopts an Empty Homes Strategy based on the contents page attached as Appendix 2 to the Scrutiny Panel's report and the format of the document used by the London Borough of Hounslow;</p>	<p><b>Response of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing</b></p> <p>The Empty Homes Strategy is being developed, which following a consultation process will be taken to Cabinet for approval.</p>	<p>In progress. Proposed to submit report to Cabinet in July 2017.</p>

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<p><i>REASON</i>  <i>To set out the Council's proactive approach to bringing empty properties back into use and raise standards in the private housing sector.</i></p> <p>(ii) and that it be noted that this action will be included in the newly appointed Empty Homes Officer's Action Plan;</p> <p><i>REASON</i>  <i>To acknowledge the comments of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing regarding how the strategy will be brought forward.</i></p>		
<p><b>Minute 19-5</b>  That Panel recommendation 5 (<i>that the Leader write to Leicestershire Police stressing the importance of recording all incidents of anti-social behaviour in a manner which means that the Council and the Police can share information and take appropriate action in response to them</i>) be noted and it also be noted that the issue of anti-social behaviour incident recording is being managed and addressed by the County Anti-social Behaviour Strategic Group;</p> <p><i>REASON</i>  <i>To set out how the Panel's concerns about inconsistencies in the recording of anti-social behaviour are being addressed.</i></p> <p><i>All district partners and Leicestershire Police are members of the Anti-social Behaviour</i></p>	<p>No action was required in respect of this Cabinet decision.</p>	

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<p><i>Strategic Group and it has agreed to purchase an IT interface between the Police's Command and Control system (STORM) and the partnership ASB recording system (SENTINEL). The aim of this initiative is to ensure all recorded incidents of ASB will be retrievable through SENTINEL.</i></p>		
<p><b>Minute 19-6</b>  That Panel recommendation 6 (<i>that the review of the Council's sheltered housing be progressed as quickly as possible</i>) be noted and it also be noted that the Project Team for the review of the Council's sheltered housing has met twice on 26th May and 1st June 2016 and that the Project Initiation Document was submitted to the Project Board for approval on 6th July 2016.</p> <p><i>REASON</i>  To set out how the Panel's concerns regarding the issue of sheltered housing with the Council's own housing stock will be addressed.</p>	<p><b>Response of the Head of Strategic and Private Sector Housing</b></p> <p>The Sheltered Housing Review Project Board approved the Project Initiation Document, Project Plan and Scheme Review template at the Board meeting on the 6th December 2016.</p> <p>The reviews of the Schemes are currently being undertaken and will determine the future of the Schemes, providing solutions based approach and determining where the Council wants to invest.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>