

48. Empty Homes Strategy

Hannah Cann, Private Housing Team Leader

- a. presented the new Empty Homes Strategy for Lincoln 2017-2022 to deliver the Vision 2020 and Housing Strategy objectives.
- b. advised that as of 1st January 2018 there were 419 long term empty privately owned homes in the City, 104 of these properties had been empty for two or more years.
- c. advised that bringing empty homes back to use offered income opportunities to the council, both through receipt of New Homes Bonus, and the potential to acquire and develop properties for resale or letting.
- d. referred to paragraph 4.2 of the report and highlighted the 4 main aims of the Empty Homes Strategy.
- e. referred to Appendix 5 of the strategy which set out the terms and conditions of the Empty Homes Working Group and advised that the group would identify long term empty homes, in particular those causing a problem, and bring them back to use.
- f. advised that there were resource needs including a capital budget for the acquisition and renovation of empty homes which would be identified on a case by case basis.
- g. referred to the action plan at Appendix 1 of the report and advised that the actions centred around exploring and improving the options available to the Council, on its own or in partnership to encourage and enforce owners to bring their homes back into use, and to acquire, develop and manage or dispose of long term empty homes.
- h. referred to paragraph 6.2 of the report and explained the enforcement powers that would be used to improve the condition of the empty homes and bring them back into use.
- i. invited members' questions and comments.

Question: Had the Council tried to bring empty properties above shops back into use?

Response: Yes where it was viable, there were often fire safety issues for properties above shops as it was shared access.

Question: In cases where a property had been left empty due to someone going to prison would the Council liaise with the Victim Liaison Service before taking enforcement action?

Response: Yes, the process initially would be to engage with the owner and the approach would be adapted depending on the reasons why the property had been left empty.

Question: With reference to The Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) where the Council would take control of the property for up to seven years, what would happen to the property after 7 years?

Response: The property would be let to someone on the housing waiting list with an immediate housing need, it would be made clear to them when they moved in that it would not be a house for life. Part of the action plan at Appendix 1 of the policy was to write operational procedures for EDMOs.

Comment: It was suggested that the membership of the Empty Property Working Group be referenced earlier in the Policy.

Response: Paragraph 4.3 of the policy could be amended to include a list of areas involved in the Empty Property Working Group.

RESOLVED that

1. The Empty Homes Strategy be noted and referred to Executive for approval.
2. The additional financial resources, including a capital fund, needed for CPO and EDMO to be bought back to Executive on a case by case basis to seek authority for the expenditure be noted.