

Committee: Community Committee
Date: 18 September 2008
Title: **LONG TERM EMPTY HOUSES; ANALYSIS OF
POSTAL SURVEY**
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Agenda Item

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Item for noting

Summary

1. This report advises Members of the progress made on the issue of empty properties within the district.

Recommendations

2. That progress is noted by the Committee

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Minutes of report to: Community Committee -13/03/2008

Impact

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Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	None
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Sustainability	Each empty house brought back to use will reduce the pressure for new housing
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

5. A discussion took place at Community Committee in March 2008 regarding the Empty Homes Strategy. The action plan stated that the Housing Enabling and Development Officer would contact owners of long term empty properties to establish the real extent of the problem.
6. A list was obtained from the Council Tax section and it was established that several empty properties were owned by UDC or private companies such as BAA and Railtrack. The remaining 244 owners were contacted in May 2008 with a questionnaire and basic details of the PLACE project which enables the owners of a long term empty property to lease their properties to a nominated Registered Social Landlord (RSL) for a 3 year term, in return for renovation work to bring the premises up to the decent homes standard.
7. Of the 244 letters sent, there have been 108 responses to date which have been categorised in the table below:

Reason for property being empty	Number of properties
Occupied by owner/tenanted	43
On market or sold	18
Being renovated	21
Being demolished	1
Annexes to main residence	4
Probate/legal issues	3
Used for commercial purposes	2
Confirmed empty , of which:	-
Uninhabitable	3
Tied property	2
Other	3
Incorrect contact name/address	8
TOTAL	108

8. The comments received concerning the PLACE scheme were very minimal, with many of the properties currently being renovated by other financial means. However, three owners have requested advice on grants available to them and will be sent further information about the scheme. One applicant has shown an interest in PLACE, although the property currently has an agricultural tie.
9. The response shows that a substantial number of long term empty homes are eventually brought back in to use by their owners without the direct intervention of the Council, and identifying the other 15% and targeting advice, assistance and if

necessary enforcement on those properties will be the most effective use of our resources.

10. An updated list of long term empty properties is being obtained from the Council Tax section and this data will be compared to the current list. Further contact can then be made with those owners remaining on the list and new property owners can be written to.

Risk Analysis

11.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That long term empty properties are not brought back in to use	2	2	Advice, assistance and enforcement

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.