

**REPORT FROM:** HOUSING, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
SERVICES MANAGER

**TO:** NELSON COMMITTEE

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## VACANT HOUSES

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the committee on the position regarding the management of vacant houses in Nelson.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the committee note the action that is being taken to manage empty houses in their wards
- (2) That the committee note the position regarding each of the priority empty properties
- (3) That the committee receive an update report in six months time unless there is a particular issue regarding a property in the committees area

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To ensure that empty properties in the borough are managed
- (2) To ensure that the committee is kept up to date with the position regarding the priority properties in their area.

### ISSUE

1. There are a number of known vacant houses in the Nelson Committees wards. These houses are a wasted resource, attract anti social behaviour and detract from the amenity of the area.
2. The Council Executive approved the empty homes strategy at their meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2006. This strategy includes an action plan indicating how we intend to manage empty houses in the Borough. A new action Plan for 2016-17 was approved by the Councils Executive on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016

3. The Council's Empty Homes Loan scheme is still being offered to qualifying owners.
4. The Sustainable Communities Strategy set a target for the reduction in the proportion of vacant private sector dwellings to 3.7% by 2011 across the Borough. The Council's continued support for the Empty Homes Officer post ensures that this target is both met and exceeded.
5. As at 1 April 2016, within the whole Pendle District there were **1226** properties empty up to two years and **382** properties empty for over two years.

In the Nelson Committee area, there were **179** residential properties empty over two years, of which **61** have since been re-occupied. **22** of the empty properties within this category are currently owned by the Council and are being marketed for sale in the Albert Street, Mosley Street and Macleod Street area. A further **384** residential properties were recorded as empty up to two years of which **322** have since been re-occupied.

District-wide, out of a total of **1608** empty properties within these two categories, **976** have been re-occupied, representing a return back into live use of over 60%.

6. It is anticipated that the number of vacant properties in the Nelson Committee area can be further reduced by continuing to implement the action plan.
7. Where appropriate, the owners of empty properties are contacted to determine whether they have any current proposals to bring their properties back into live use and to inform them of the benefits of the Empty Homes Loan scheme.
8. Where owners inform us that they intend to renovate the properties, then the progress is monitored to ensure that the renovations proceed and do not stall.
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10. The current position regarding the priority vacant houses in the Nelson Committees area are listed in appendix 1.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

**Policy:** None

**Financial:** None

**Legal:** None

**Risk Management:** None

**Health and Safety:** As empty houses attract anti social behaviour there are potential risks for officers inspecting these houses. However there are departmental risk assessments in place to minimise these hazards

**Sustainability:** The reoccupation of empty properties will bring a valuable resource back into use.

**Community Safety:** Empty houses attract anti social behaviour and fly tipping bringing them back into use will reduce these activities and improve the neighbourhoods.

**Equality and Diversity:** None

## **APPENDICES**

### **1 Priority Vacant Properties in Nelson**

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

## **Appendix1**

### **Priority Vacant Properties in Nelson**

#### **24 Lancaster Gate Nelson Lancashire**

This property has undergone extensive renovation work over the past 18 months internally, including a kitchen extension, although works have stalled lately and attempts to contact the owner have been ignored.

#### **16 Elizabeth Street**

The owner of this property originally made a loan enquiry some years ago and failed to proceed. The property then went to auction, but the owner failed to sign the property over to the buyer. A second loan enquiry and application were made last year but the owner's application was turned down as he failed to provide required documentary evidence for the property.

#### **93 Fir Street**

This property has been empty for over two years. A loan enquiry has been made and the owner has been provided with a schedule of work.

#### **356 Leeds Road**

Complaints have been received regarding the condition of this property. It has recently changed hands, a loan enquiry has been made and the new owner has been provided with a schedule of work.

#### **65 Fir Street**

This property has been the subject of complaint over a number of years. The Council is currently working with the owner, who live across the road, to try and assist with its disposal.