

REPORT FROM: Housing, Health and Economic Development
Manager
TO: Barrowford and Western Parishes Area Committee
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VACANT HOUSES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Committee on the position regarding the management of vacant houses in Barrowford and Western Parishes area.

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 Barrowford and Western Parishes Committee area. 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 25th 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 30th June 2016.

3. The Council's Empty Homes Loans 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 over two years

In the Barrowford and Western Parishes Committee area, there were **28** residential properties empty over two years, of which **4** have since been re-occupied. A further **107** residential properties were recorded as empty up to two years, of which **83** have since been re-occupied.

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

6. It is anticipated that the number of vacant homes in the Barrowford and Western Parishes Committee area can be reduced further by continuing to implement the action plan. However there are a number of vacant houses in the area that are considered to be a priority and may require formal action to bring them back into use.
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.
9. The current position regarding priority vacant properties in Barrowford and Western Parishes Committee area is 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

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Priority Vacant Properties in Barrowford and Western Parishes Committee area

7 Grange Avenue, Barrowford

This property has been vacant for a number of years and been the subject of complaints regarding the state of the rear garden and nuisance from vermin. Letters to the owner have been ignored and the Council's Planning Department have taken a proactive approach to force the issue.

