

REPORT FROM: Housing, Health and Economic Development
Manager
TO: West Craven 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 the West Craven Committee 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 West Craven 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 2017, within the whole Pendle District, there were **1158** properties empty up to two years and **369** properties empty over two years

In the West Craven Committee area, there were **47** residential properties empty over two years, of which **8** have since been re-occupied. A further **201** residential properties were recorded as empty up to two years, of which **86** have since been re-occupied.

District wide, out of a total of **1527** empty properties within these two categories, **498** have been re-occupied, representing a return back into live use of over 32% in the five months since 1 April 2017.

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. The current position regarding priority vacant properties in the West Craven 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 the West Craven Committee area

Glen Cottage, Rainhall Crescent, Barnoldswick

This property has been empty for a considerable time and is the subject of a loan enquiry. The property is in probate, although the executors have made a loan enquiry and been provided with a schedule of work. Once probate is granted, the executors will decide whether to proceed with a loan or dispose of it through sale.

449 Colne Road, Kelbrook

This property has not appeared on any empty property lists in the past but, following a Councillor enquiry, a visit revealed that the property has been empty for over two years. The Council's Planning Department are currently dealing with the Councillor enquiry and has been supplied with contact details for a relative who may be able to assist.

