

**TITLE: Draft Empty Homes Strategy**

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**Summary**

The Council has an articulated priority of returning empty homes back in to use and revised its Council Tax exemption policy for 2010/11 to reflect this.

A draft Empty Homes Strategy has been developed in order to provide the basis for the Council's activity around returning vacant domestic property to use.

Stakeholder consultation is planned prior to adoption of the strategy by the Council.

**Recommendations**

- a) To agree the draft Empty Homes Strategy for consultation
  - Appendix 1 and easy read version Appendix 2
- b) To agree the consultation arrangements as outlined in Appendix 3

**Background Information**

1. A review of the Council Tax database in late 2009 indicated that the number of homes which had been vacant for more than 6 months had marginally increased between October 2008 and October 2009 from 1907 to 1940.
2. One of Shropshire Council's priorities for improvement is "to provide a range of affordable housing options for Shropshire residents". One way of contributing towards this priority is by increasing the number of properties in the housing market and reducing or removing the discretionary 50% Council Tax discount in respect of long-term empty homes. This may encourage owners to sell or let homes that have been empty for more than six months.

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3. As a result of this, during January 2010 Shropshire Council reviewed its Council Tax discounts for empty homes. It was resolved that a revised discretionary Council Tax discount policy be adopted in respect of long term empty properties for the 2010-11 financial year be approved; i.e. the retention of the full 50% discount for six months and complete removal of the discount thereafter.
  4. Revision of the discretionary Council Tax discount has increased Council Tax income and a proportion of this has been ring fenced for a 3 year period to support the work of Private Sector Housing Team. Funding has been provided for the creation of two dedicated Empty Homes Officers to assist in the implementation of this an Empty Homes Strategy and to provide additional capital funding for the popular Empty Properties to Homes Grants.
  5. The Strategy details the basis on which work to return vacant domestic properties to use will be undertaken and in particular proposes work with local communities to create, where appropriate, Empty Home Action Zones, where resources will be concentrated.

### **Current Position**

1. The Council's draft Empty Homes Strategy has now been completed.
2. Recruitment of two Empty Homes Officers is in process.
3. The draft Empty Homes Strategy requires stakeholder consultation before adoption by the Council.
4. The proposed consultation arrangements are outlined in Appendix 3

<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b></p>
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<p><b>Human Rights Act Appraisal</b></p>
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<p>The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights act 1998.</p>
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<p><b>Environmental Appraisal</b></p>
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<p>There are no significant implications directly arising from this report.</p>
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<p><b>Risk Management Appraisal</b></p>
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<p>Although not a statutory requirement, an Empty Homes Strategy provides a clear basis on which all work in connection with empty homes is pursued.</p>
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<p><b>Community / Consultations Appraisal</b></p>
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<p>Stakeholder consultation is planned (Appendix 2)</p>
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**Cabinet Member:**

Cllr Malcolm Price - Portfolio Holder Housing

**Local Member**

All areas

**Appendices**

- 1: Draft Empty Homes Strategy
- 2 Easy Read Empty Homes Strategy
- 3: Draft Empty Homes Strategy Consultation timetable