



**REGENERATION AND HOUSING SCRUTINY
REVIEW BOARD
25 January 2023**

ITEM 08

Report sponsor: Rachel North, Strategic Director

Report author: Sue Li, Empty Homes, Compulsory Purchase and Enforcement Manager

Empty Homes Update

Purpose

- 1.1 To receive the report on Empty Homes.

Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To consider the report.
- 2.2 To make comments or recommendations following discussions on the report received.

Reason(s)

- 3.1 To inform the Board of work undertaken in relation to Empty Homes.
- 3.2 To allow the Board an opportunity to make comments on the report received.

Supporting information

- 4.1 A presentation was delivered to the Regeneration and Housing Scrutiny Board on 18 October 2022 detailing the status of the Empty Homes Service.
- 4.2 Since that presentation, a further Empty Homes loan application has been received. The team still has the capacity and budget to approve another two applications.
- 4.3 A change in process has been identified to minimise the cost of the compulsory purchase programme. Knowledge and experience within the team means that straightforward compulsory purchase cases are managed internally, rather than appointing specialist legal services. Exact savings will depend upon the number of properties where a formal compulsory purchase order is commenced but is likely to be a minimum of £3,500 per year.

- 4.4 The Government's annual calculation of the council tax base has been released. Analysis by the Empty Homes Network indicates that nationally the number of long-term empty homes has increased by 4%. The number of empty homes in Derby has increased in line with the national average. Reduced staffing, increased costs within the construction industry and the wider housing market will have contributed to this increased. The Empty Homes Team is in the process of opening new cases for these known additions.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 None directly arising from this report.

Other options

- 6.1 None.

Financial and value for money issues

- 7.1 Potential annual savings of at least £3,500 on legal fees, due to increased internal expertise. External specialist solicitor need only be instructed for more complex cases.

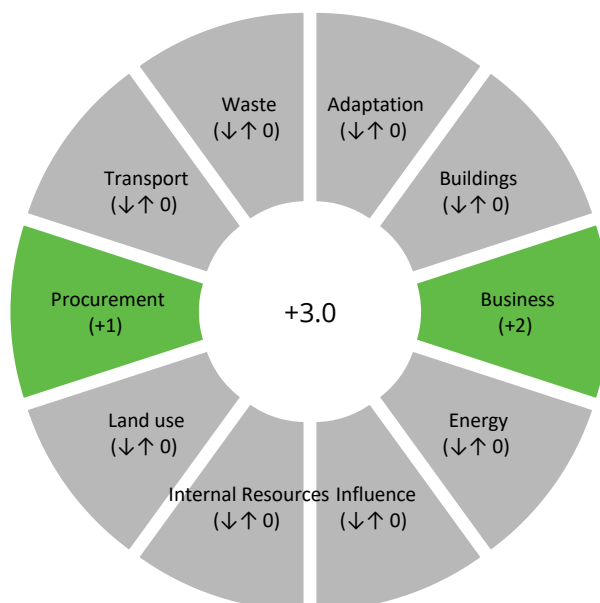
Legal implications

- 8.1 None arising from this report.

Climate implications

- 9.1 None directly arising from this report. However, where the Council retains a property that has been acquired through Compulsory Purchase, energy efficiency measures will be installed to address climate change and reduce fuel bills for tenants. The exact measures will be determined on a bespoke basis, but each property will be improved to achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of at least 'C' and higher if reasonably achievable. In most cases this will represent a significant improvement in the energy efficiency of the property.
- 9.2 The re-use of an empty home will, in most cases, require less resources than the construction of a new home and reduce pressure, albeit slightly, for development on greenfield sites.
- 9.3 The Empty Homes Team is actively seeking sources of funding to encourage empty homes owners to incorporate thermal efficiency measures into renovation of empty homes.

9.4



9.5 The chart above shows the positive climate change impact of only appointing external solicitors for the more complex compulsory purchase orders.

Socio-Economic implications

10.1 None arising directly from this report

Other significant implications

11.1 None arising directly from this report

This report has been approved by the following people:

| Role | Name | Date of sign-off |
|---------------------|---|------------------|
| Legal | Olu Idowu | 11/01/2023 |
| Finance | Amanda Fletcher | 06/01/2023 |
| Service Director(s) | David Fletcher, Director of City Development and Growth | 30/12/2023 |
| Report sponsor | Rachel North, Strategic Director of Communities and Place | 11/01/2023 |
| Other(s) | Ian Fullagar, Head of Strategic Housing | 11/01/2023 |

Background papers:
List of appendices: