



Derby City Council

**Housing, Finance and Welfare  
Cabinet Member Meeting  
8 September 2014**

# ITEM 4

Report of the Strategic Director of Adults, Health & Housing

## **Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy and Draft Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy 2015-2020: Consultation**

### **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report introduces both the proposed Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy and the proposed Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy for 2015-2020 and recommends Cabinet Member approval to proceed with the formal consultation process.
- 1.2 Both current documents were written in 2012 and will be due for renewal in 2015. As part of the review process, we need to consult widely to ensure that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account.
- 1.3 The objectives of the consultation are to consult on the development of our strategic priorities for the period 2015-2020 and how these can be achieved.
- 1.4 The consultation process will be planned and delivered in conjunction with Policy, Research and Engagement colleagues.
- 1.5 It is proposed that the Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy incorporate a Foreword by the Cabinet Member.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 To approve commencement of the formal consultation process for the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy
- 2.2 To approve commencement of the formal consultation process for the Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy
- 2.3 To approve the proposed Cabinet Member Foreword as drafted at Appendix 2.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 To enable the consultation process to proceed, thereby ensuring that the policy and strategy take into account the views of key stakeholders.





Derby City Council

## **CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING**

**Date September 8<sup>th</sup> 2014**

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### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 4.1 In March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government's 'National Planning Policy' set out its expectation that Local Authorities '...set policies to improve or make more effective use of the existing housing stock...bring back into residential use empty housing and buildings...and, where appropriate, acquire properties under compulsory purchase powers.'
- 4.2 The House of Lords Select Committee 'Ready for Ageing' Report 2013 identified that: "A better health and social care system to support people to stay living independently needs adequate housing and support in the home. If preserving independence is to be a central goal, appropriate and safe housing will become increasingly important. For example, by providing a warm environment or making adaptations to prevent falls, investment in housing can reduce hospital admissions. Services that help older people adapt their homes to allow them to live there for longer will become more important in the coming decades as the population ages."
- 4.3 The majority of housing both nationally and locally is private sector, in the form of either owner occupied or private rented accommodation.
- 4.4 Stock condition surveys show that private sector housing is in a worse condition than public sector housing and that private rented housing is in a worse condition than owner-occupied.
- 4.5 In Derby there are:
  - areas of our city with high concentrations of very poor housing occupied by economically deprived, socially excluded and highly vulnerable communities;
  - vulnerable residents and groups of residents either accommodated within, or who could benefit from accommodation within, the private sector;
  - long term empty private sector properties that blight neighbourhoods, blight the lives of neighbours and waste a valuable housing resource to the detriment of those in housing need.
- 4.6 With vulnerable and older people being the main users of both health and care services, their homes are a particularly important factor in maintaining physical and mental health and addressing health inequalities.

- 4.7 Marmot's Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post-2010 – 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives' found that: 'Bad housing conditions – including homelessness, temporary accommodation, overcrowding, insecurity, and housing in poor physical condition – constitute a risk to health...children in bad housing conditions are more likely to have mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, to contract meningitis, have respiratory problems, experience long-term ill health and disability, experience slow physical growth and have delayed cognitive development. These adverse outcomes reflect both the direct impact of the housing and the associated material deprivation'.
- 4.8 The Review concluded that: 'Investment in new and existing housing is needed across the social gradient...[and, since] Fuel poverty is a significant problem and likely to grow as the cost of fuel increases...Investments to improve housing need to be sustained.'
- 4.9 The Derby Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2011 dedicates a chapter to the health impacts of poor quality housing, declaring:
- 'Housing is a key determinant of health, poor quality housing being intrinsically linked with poor health. Poor housing conditions continue to cause preventable deaths, illness and accidents; they contribute to health inequalities, impact on peoples life expectancy and on their overall quality of life.'
- 4.10 We clearly need to do more now to help mitigate for the effects of otherwise preventable risks to health; such as poor quality housing. Housing is therefore high on the agenda for public health practitioners, commissioners and policy makers and, recognised as a key determinant of health, housing will continue to be included within the JSNA through on-going updates.
- 4.11 It is no surprise therefore that the Council Plan commits to improving housing supply and choice within the city; specific housing-related commitments include:
- "More private sector dwellings brought back into use or demolished.
  - Continue to protect residents by tackling statutory nuisance and environmental crime.
  - Continued delivery of the Healthy Housing Hub.
  - Reduction in the number of older and disabled people having to move to residential and nursing home.
  - Provide good-quality housing across the city
  - Increase the housing supply
  - Improve the health and wellbeing of tenants in the private rented sector by improving housing standards and in particular by tackling rogue landlords"
- 4.12 Unfortunately, current financial restraints affecting both local government and the private sector have significantly limited the range of options and interventions available and the extent of activity deliverable in support of those that remain. But, despite these pressures, decent, suitable housing remains critical to the health and well-being of Derby, the city, and to each of its residents.

- 4.13 Through the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy and the Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy we strive to help achieve the required improvements and tackle these concerns, by targeting help toward the more vulnerable, and by taking action to promote, encourage and, where necessary enforce, the improvement and better use of private sector housing.
- 4.14 Consultation is necessary to ensure that both the Policy and Strategy reflect the views of stakeholders involved.

## OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Current financial restraints affecting both local government and the private sector have significantly limited the range of options available. The Policy and Strategy as proposed make best use of the available resources.
- 5.2 Cabinet Member approval is required in order to proceed with the formal consultation process.

**This report has been approved by the following officers:**

<b>Legal officer</b>	N/A
<b>Financial officer</b>	N/A
<b>Human Resources officer</b>	N/A
<b>Estates/Property officer</b>	N/A
<b>Service Director(s)</b>	N/A
<b>Other(s)</b>	N/A

  

<b>For more information contact:</b>	Martin Brown. martin.brown@derby.gov.uk
<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 - Proposed Cabinet Member Foreword to the Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy Appendix 3 – Draft Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2015-2020 Appendix 4 – Draft Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy 2015-2020  <i>Appendices 3 and 4 available to view on CMIS</i>

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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### **Financial and Value for Money**

- 1.1 None as this is a proposal for consultation only. Should any future actions arising out of the finalised Policy and/or Strategy result in a recommendation to incur additional costs in the future, a separate report will be presented which will detail the costs and funding arrangements.

### **Legal**

- 2.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this proposal.

### **Personnel**

- 3.1 There are no specific Personnel implications arising from this proposal to consult. The consultation exercise will be delivered by Strategic Housing with support from colleagues in Policy, Research and Engagement.

### **IT**

- 4.1 There are no specific IT implications arising from this proposal.

### **Equalities Impact**

- 5.1 The Policy and Strategy do seek to target resources at the more vulnerable private sector residents and serve to improve housing condition, increase housing choice and tackle environmental and anti-social impacts affecting neighbours and neighbourhoods.  
An equality impact assessment of the Policy and Strategy will be carried out involving our Diversity Forums. The main consultation results will help inform the equality impact assessment.

### **Health and Safety**

- 6.1 None directly arising, but the Policy and Strategy do seek to target resources at tackling the health and safety impacts of private sector housing conditions.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

- 7.1 None directly arising, but the energy efficiency, fuel poverty and carbon reduction elements of the Policy contribute to environmental sustainability and to our carbon commitment, as does the re-use of existing empty homes.

### **Property and Asset Management**

- 8.1 There are no specific property and asset management implications arising from this proposal, but the commitment to empty homes services will restore presently wasted

houses to the useful housing stock in the city

## **Risk Management**

9.1 None directly arising from this proposal to consult

## **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 10.1 None directly arising from the proposal to consult, but the proposed policy and Strategy do support the following commitments within the Council Plan:
- More private sector dwellings brought back into use or demolished.
  - Continue to protect residents by tackling statutory nuisance and environmental crime.
  - Continued delivery of the Healthy Housing Hub.
  - Reduction in the number of older and disabled people having to move to residential and nursing home.
  - Provide good-quality housing across the city
  - Increase the housing supply
  - Improve the health and wellbeing of tenants in the private rented sector by improving housing standards and in particular by tackling rogue landlords.

<b>Proposed Cabinet Member Foreword to the Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy</b>
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## **Foreword**

The demand for housing currently far outstrips supply. As a result, there are around 4000 families on the waiting list for housing in Derby. There are also many others living in cramped, overcrowded or otherwise unsuitable conditions. At the same time, there are around 3500 empty homes in the City, 1600 of which have been empty for six months or more.

In order to meet the demand for housing, we must make the best possible use of our existing stock. Returning long term empty homes to use does not solve the housing crisis, but it certainly has a considerable impact.

In addition, empty properties can be detrimental to the lives of local residents as they are a magnet for crime and antisocial behaviour, drive down property values locally and contribute to urban decline and blight. They also represent a risk for the emergency services and put added pressure on various council departments such as Environmental Health and ASB teams.

The case for empty homes work is therefore compelling from a community and housing perspective, but in these times of unprecedented cuts to local government funding, there are also strong financial incentives to not only return existing empty homes to use, but to try to ensure that the number of vacant homes does not then increase.

Since the introduction of the government's New Homes Bonus (NHB) initiative, a reduction in the number of empty properties attracts additional income to the council, while an increase attracts an equivalent penalty. Since 2011, the reduction in the number of empty homes in the City has earned some £4.8m in NHB, placing Derby within the top 10% of local authorities in England. The work of the City council's Empty Homes Service has also recovered considerable debt associated with empty properties, taking the total earned and recovered through empty homes related activity to well in excess of £5million.

Over the period of the previous strategy, Derby City Council's Empty Homes Service and associated compulsory purchase programme enjoyed unprecedented success and national recognition. This comprehensively updated document will ensure that Derby remains at the forefront of empty homes work, and is able to maximise the economic, community and financial benefits that empty homes work brings to the City and its residents.

Councillor Sarah Russell  
Cabinet Member for Housing, Finance and Welfare