

Minutes of draft Private Sector Empty Homes Strategy consultation event

Housing Renewal Policy and Empty Homes Strategy Consultation Event

Thursday 19th May 2011

Attendees

Martin Brown (MB)	Housing Initiatives Manager – Private Sector Housing
Maxine Mawson (MM)	Unit Administrator (Minutes)
Clive Mozley (CM)	Empty Homes
Craig Keen (CK)	Derby Community Safety Partnership
Janet Dean (JD)	First Contact & Age UK Derby and Derbyshire (AUKDD)
Jeremy Mason (JM)	Housing Strategy
Brian Salt (BS)	Empty Homes
Linda Selvey (LS)	DASH
Richard Murrell (RM)	Derby Home Energy Advice Service
Rachel Porter (RP)	Adult Services
John Massey (JM _{sy})	Customer Services
Don Smith (DS)	Regeneration Projects
Alex Ward (AW)	Estates
Simon Fogell (SF)	Policy & Strategy

EMPTY HOMES – Housing Renewal Policy and Empty Homes Strategy

Item	Issue	Action / Follow up by
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Empty Homes Strategy:

- Aim is to get properties back into use.
- Aim of today: To refresh the strategy in light of current council aims, introduction of New Home Bonus and the development of a new performance measure.

Empty Homes Assistance:

- In previous years there has been a large amount of money to refurbish properties and bring them back into use to be paid back over 5 years. This yr = £150,000, maximum of £10,000 per property payable over a 3 yr period. The figure was set at this in order to be able to help as many properties as possible.

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Home Relocation Assistance:

This has only been used once and helps with removal expenses.

Enforcement Options:

- This would be a last resort option, always try and use the voluntary approach, but compulsory purchase and enforced sale remain an integral part of the strategy.

New Homes Bonus (NHB):

- This is based on council tax data as submitted to CLG. Equation is: number of properties in the City minus the number of long term empty homes. This gives the number of properties paying full council tax and those that are exempt. If this number is higher than the previous year, NHB will be payable, if it is lower, NHB will not be payable.
- Example: 2010: 100,000 properties in Derby, 2000 of which are long term empty homes. *Baseline figure is therefore: 100,000 – 2,000 = 98,000.* 2011: 101,000 properties in Derby, 1500 of which are long term empty homes. Baseline figure is therefore 101,000 – 1,500 = 99,500. The number of properties either occupied or exempt from council tax has increased by 1500. NHB would therefore be payable on 1500 properties.
- NHB payment from Government is equivalent council tax income for the property paid each year for six years.
- Previously concentrated on problem properties – NHB equalises all interventions as reward is the same.
- Empty Homes Service now looking at every property on council tax empty homes list rather than just problem ones. A balance needs to be found between complex cases dealing with dilapidated properties and ‘quick hit’ advice and assistance or data cleansing.
- Performance measure changing to reflect new emphasis of empty homes work and to create a reporting framework that is Empty homes Service specific, rather than council-wide as was the case with BVPI64

Issues Raised:

- Age UK Derby & Derbyshire has run a successful project working with older people to look at options of moving from their home. Strategy document partnership working is excellent about funding partnerships, what about including partners who could help people with the skills of making decisions, provide ‘honest brokerage’ – free, confidential and independent advice enabling the Derby Citizen choice.
- Work with Derby College / Derby Uni for apprenticeship work. Prince’s Trust is very keen to do this work.

Item	Issue	Action / Follow up by
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The biggest problem that is faced is owner apathy. Currently working with the YMCA on property maintenance project. • Age UK has an on line directory of trustworthy traders and businesses www.aubd.co.uk or people can visit or be directed to the AUKDD advice centre at the Morledge (Tel: 343232) Age UK 50+ Centre in the Eagle Centre Market. • Council Tax exemption for empty – There is currently a 6 month exemption for empty properties, thereafter, 90% council tax is payable. There is discretion on hardship grounds, the owner would have to demonstrate financial hardship and provide evidence that they are taking active steps to sell the property. • Some owners of Empty Homes still pay full council tax for some reason. Currently on the register there is an owner who owns 5 properties and they are paying full council tax on all 5 properties – none of them are listed as empty. • Adding properties that are not registered as empty, but in fact are empty, to the council tax register has an adverse effect on New Homes Bonus. • £600,000 NHB income is forecast for 2011/12 and has been committed to the general budget, but this situation may change • Empty Homes team need to show what impact they can have on this bonus – positive impacts through returning empties to use and maximising payments (or minimising losses) of NHB 	ALL / JD
	<p>Q: Is New Homes Bonus payable if a new home is added to the Council Tax list?</p> <p>A: If the property is new and exempt from council tax – ie, empty for less than six months, it would count as a new unit of accommodation and be eligible for NHB payments. However, once the six month exemption has expired, if the property has not been occupied it would count as a long term empty home and therefore have a negative impact on NHB.</p>	