

Bolsover District Council

Executive

22 March 2021

Empty Property Strategy 2021 - 2024

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- To agree and adopt the empty property strategy.

1 Report Details

- 1.1 The Empty Property Strategy sets out the Council's objectives in relation to bringing empty properties back into use.
- 1.2 The previous Empty property strategy was written as a joint document, this expired in 2020. It has been agreed that this strategy be written solely for Bolsover District Council in line with the Council's visions and aims.
- 1.3 As at August 2020 there were approximately 750 properties that have been empty for more than 6 months in the District. These properties represent a wasted resource and are the main focus of the empty property strategy.
- 1.4 As a result of Covid19 the District has seen an increase in the number of empty properties, partly due to the restrictions on sales and letting transactions in the first part of 2020.
- 1.5 There are a number of reasons why properties become and remain empty, some of the most common reasons are:
 - Inheritance issues/delays with probate
 - Lack of finance to carry out essential repairs
 - Problems with achieving a sale
 - Problems with letting
 - The owner may be in residential care
 - The owner may lack the skills to deal with the property
 - The ownership of the property may be unclear
 - The owner may live abroad
 - Unwillingness to bring the property back into use
- 1.6 The most common problems associated with empty properties are:
 - Deterioration of the fabric of the building
 - Fly tipping

- Overgrown gardens
- Verminous creatures
- Squatting
- Arson
- Graffiti
- Negative impact on property prices

- 1.7 The strategy ties together the three main strands of Empty Property work:
- i) Advice,
 - ii) Assistance, and;
 - iii) Enforcement
- 1.8 The Action Plan presents a framework to meet the Strategic objectives identified, which are:
- To address the issues of empty properties proactively, to bring them back into use to address the District's Housing need, particularly affordable and specialist housing.
 - To promote the work we do to bring empty properties into use and to raise awareness
 - To tackle problematic empty properties and bring them back into use, to improve our communities
 - To provide quality housing and improve the private rented sector
 - To work with partners and be innovative in our approach to tackling empty properties
- 1.9 The strategy will also have a key role in helping to secure potential external funding for housing related projects across the district.
- 1.10 The strategy will be for three years with a commitment to review in light of any central government changes impacting on the local community.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The previous Empty Property Strategy expired in 2020, therefore this needs replacing.
- 2.2 This will enable the Council to implement a raft of measures to reduce the number of long term empty properties resulting in additional housing units, additional New Homes Bonus and greater community sustainability which contribute to the delivery of the Council's aims and priorities.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 Consultation was carried out at various stages throughout the development process with internal and external organisations, including public, private and voluntary sectors.
- 3.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Not implementing the Empty Property Strategy will impact the Councils ability to reduce the number of long term empty properties within the district and the ability to deal effectively with the problems associated with them.
- 4.2 A key element of the Empty Property Officer's work is the development and implementation of an Empty Property Strategy to co-ordinate all streams of empty property work.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

- 5.1.1 Consultation with the finance 151 Officer indicates no financial risk with the Strategy.
- 5.1.2 The Strategy itself does not have any risk implications, any projects will be assessed on their own merit.
- 5.1.3 Reducing the number of empty properties will help to increase the Council's New Homes Bonus allocation (whilst this is still in place) and will also increase Council Tax income, particularly on properties that were previously derelict.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

- 5.2.1 The Strategy will have due regard to local and national policy and be compliant with legislation, including data protection laws.

5.3 Human Resources Implications

- 5.3.1 Existing employees will implement the Strategy, therefore there are no Human Resources implications.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That Executive agree and adopt the Empty Property Strategy.

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: <i>BDC: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/></i> <i>Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/></i> <i>NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000 <input type="checkbox"/></i> <i>Capital - £250,000 <input type="checkbox"/></i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Please indicate which threshold applies	No
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Has the relevant Portfolio Holder been informed	Yes
District Wards Affected	All indirectly
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	All

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Empty Property Strategy 2021 -24
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number
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