



Housing Scrutiny Committee

17 January 2018

Item

REVIEW OF EMPTY HOMES POLICY

To:

Councillor Kevin Price, Executive Councillor for Housing

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey, Trumpington, West Chesterton

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Empty Homes Policy 2012 is in need of revision following operational changes and the introduction of the Empty Homes Loan (2017).
- 1.2 The review of the existing Empty Homes Policy has resulted in the policy remaining largely unchanged but with amendments to wording, context updated and operational changes added within the following sections:
 - Section 1 Introduction.
 - Section 8 National perspective.
 - Section 9 Local perspective.

- Section 11 Enforcement options open to the council that can be used.

1.3 Additional information has been included in:

- Section 10 what can the Council do to bring an empty home back into use.

1.4 The amendments have not affected the application or principals of the policy.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Executive Councilor is recommended to: consider the proposed changes and adopt the revised Empty Homes Policy 2017 attached as Appendix1

3. Background

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3.1 The Empty Homes policy was adopted by members in 2012; it forms the basis of how the City Council takes action in relation to empty homes in the City. Since the policy was introduced, a full time empty homes officer was recruited in 2015. Cambridge City Council has continually met its targets in bringing over 30 previously long-term empty properties back into use each year, (2015-2016 50 properties brought back into use, 2016-2017 39 properties brought back into use).

3.2 The empty homes officer has worked with owners of empty properties and the Town Hall Lettings service to facilitate once empty homes being re-occupied by tenants. Two previously empty properties have been let through Town Hall Lettings at an affordable rent level.

3.3 The policy is essential to provide clarity to residents in the way we act, as well as providing clarity around both formal and informal options I may pursue in order to bring the property back into occupation. It is important the policy is kept up to date to ensure that it both follows operational changes within the Council and legislative changes that may have come into force. The policy must remain robust and able to stand up to scrutiny in the case that a member of the public or business makes a complaint relating to the way we have handled their case.

Sections 1, 8 and 9 have been reviewed and updated to provide current data and operational changes.

- 3.4 Section 10.4 now includes information about the 2017 Empty Homes Loan Policy. This is an interest free loan of up to £25,000 is available to eligible owners of long-term empty homes to facilitate renovations of their properties and occupation via a not for profit social letting agency.
- 3.5 Section 11 has been updated to ensure that the enforcement options have continued to be inline with relevant legislation
- 3.6 Sections 10 and 11 have be revised to ensure that there is clear distinction between the assistance and enforcement options available to Cambridge City Council

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

This policy revision has no financial implications to the City Council.

(b) Staffing Implications

There are no staff implications other than communicating the change and ensuring any work with the owners of empty homes is taken in accordance with the policy.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality impacts assessment has been completed (Appendix2)

(d) Environmental Implications

Low

(e) Procurement Implications

There will be no procurement implications.

(f) Community Safety Implications

The Policy is used to guide the way we enforce appropriate legislation that regulates the environment

5. Consultation and communication considerations

We have consulted with Council Tax & Leasehold Services.
We will communicate using the Council website.

6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

Empty Homes Policy 2012 <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sites/default/files/.../empty-homes-policy-2012.pdf>

Empty Homes Briefing paper June 2017

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03012/SN03012.pdf>

The Housing (Empty Dwelling Management Orders) (Prescribed Period of Time and Additional Prescribed Requirements) (England) (Amendment) Order 2012 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2625/made>

The Empty Homes Loan Policy

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/s38062/Appendix%20A%20Empty%20Homes%20Loan%20Policy%202017.pdf>

7. Appendices

Appendix One - Empty Homes Policy 2017

Appendix Two - EQIA

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact

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