

Subject: Achievements of LI 64 – number of private sector dwellings which are returned into occupation
Status: For Publication

Report to: Overview & Scrutiny Performance Committee
Date: 11th November 2009

Report of: Head of Regeneration

Portfolio

Holder: Regeneration

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide members with details of activities towards the achievement of the LI64 target.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:-

- Delivering quality Services to our customers
- Delivering regeneration across the Borough
- Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe
- Promoting the Borough
- Providing value for money services

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 LI 64 measures the progress made in reducing the number of vacant domestic properties across the Borough.
- 4.2 Outputs are measured by the number of properties returned into use which can be attributed to direct action by the local authority. Therefore, the Council needs maintain records and evidence which will demonstrate that individual properties would have remained empty without the intervention of the local authority.
- 4.3 To underpin this, an Empty Homes Task Group has been established to develop a robust empty property strategy that links up the activities of the Regeneration Team, Communities Team, Planning and Legal services and will cover both the domestic and commercial property sectors.
- 4.4 Once drafted, this strategy will be reported to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Policy Committee before being presented to Cabinet for approval.
- 4.5 In the past the target for LI64 has risen by 5 units each year culminating in a total of 40 in 2007/2008. This was achieved mainly through personal visits or calls to the owners persuading them of the benefits of re-occupying or selling their properties. In the following year (2008/2009), due to a number of circumstances only 26 properties were returned into use.
- 4.6 The current economic climate has had a significant effect upon our ability to achieve the targets for LI64 and it became obvious that this target could not be sustained using these more traditional methods and that a more pro-active approach was necessary to make progress.
- 4.7 In view of this, a new approach was devised working in partnership with a Housing Association to provide an option to purchase. A revised target of 30 was set for 2009/2010 to reflect the need to develop this new approach during the year.
- 4.8 A pilot scheme was established in Haslingden, called Haslingden Home Renew, it targets the owners of long term vacant properties and provides them with both advice and the opportunity to sell their properties onto a partner housing association.
- 4.9 The project is led by the Housing Regeneration Projects Officer who also works closely with members of the Communities team to agree actions on vacant properties.
- 4.10 Since its establishment in April 2009 it has returned 15 properties back into occupation with a further seven owners being potentially interested in selling to the housing association.
- 4.11 Based on this success, it is intended to extend this project to other areas across Rossendale which exhibit similar levels of long term vacant properties.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

5.1 Any financial implications will be met from existing budget resources.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 No comments.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

7.1 No HR implications.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Council is taking a pro-active approach to reducing the numbers of long term vacant properties across the borough and is developing more innovative methods to address the problem.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 That the contents of this report be noted.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 None.

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Community Impact Assessment required No

Is a Community Impact Assessment attached No

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

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No background papers