

Subject: Rossendale Vacant Property Strategy

Status: For Publication

Report to: Overview & Scrutiny Policy Committee

Date: 23rd February 2010

Report of: Head of Regeneration

Portfolio

Holder: Regeneration

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan General Exception Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consult members on the initial draft of the revised Vacant Property Strategy.

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 Without appropriate action, vacant properties can cause a blight on neighbourhoods and increase the risk of anti social behavior. They also represent a wasted asset both in terms of addressing housing need and the generation of income through Council Tax.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 Despite much progress in addressing the number of long term vacant properties within the Borough, the level of empty homes remains above the average for the North West.
- 4.2 Officers have been working on the development of a more pro-active approach to reducing the number of empty properties which would also include actions to address the growing number of empty commercial premises.
- 4.3 This draft strategy outlines this new approach which is based upon providing a more co-ordinated approach to instigating direct action, working in partnership with external agencies to find appropriate solutions and raising awareness particularly amongst those services who are active within the wider community.
- 4.4 The strategy seeks to provide the owners of vacant properties with tailored solutions, providing advice and assistance where possible and building upon the successful introduction of the Home Renew scheme by extending this pilot across the borough.
- 4.5 The strategy also outlines the options for direct action, either through the use of s215 powers or compulsory purchase, where owners of vacant property are not responsive.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 Section 6.5 of the strategy makes reference to the potentially high funding demands on the Council. This is at a time when both revenue and capital resources are reducing; with those resources that are available coming under increasing pressure from competing corporate priorities.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 No additional 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 Strategy seeks to underpin the Council's pro-active approach to reducing the numbers of long term vacant properties across the borough.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 Members are invited to comment on this first draft of the Vacant Property Strategy in advance of its wider circulation.

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