

Subject: Haslingden Home Renew Initiative (Pilot scheme) **Status:** For Publication

Report to: Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 21st September 2010

Report of: Head of Regeneration

Portfolio

Holder: Regeneration

Key Decision: No

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update the Policy Overview and Scrutiny committee on the success of the Haslingden Home Renew Pilot project, and to propose actions to be taken forward.

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
- Encouraging healthy and respectful communities
- Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe
- Promoting the Borough

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 The Haslingden Home Renew pilot project was approved by the decision of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 10th March 2009, with a view to bringing empty homes within the Haslingden area back into active use. Letters were sent out to owners of long term empty properties in the area, outlining the Council's commitment to bringing empty homes back into use and explaining that a pilot scheme was currently running in the area and as part of the scheme, Great Places – a Registered Social Landlord was looking to purchase

empty properties in the area. If owners were interested in selling their empty properties to Great Places, they could get in touch with them and if the property was suitable, they would purchase from the home owner.

- 4.2 109 letters were sent out to owners of empty properties in the Haslingden area. From these letters, 16 owners expressed an interest in selling their properties. Great Places had identified a need to find five suitable properties for them to purchase in order for the scheme to be viable for them. Great Places required properties to be run down in order for them to be able to secure funding through the temporary social housing grant, to renovate the properties and bring them back into use. Only four properties from the 16 which expressed an interest fell into the criteria set by Great Places. This therefore fell on short of the total required by Great Places.
- 4.3 However the letters which were sent out as part of the scheme, were worded in a way as to enough to encourage 31 owners (to date) to bring their properties back into use of their own accord. This enabled the Council to meet its target of 31 empty properties returned to use during 2009/2010. Therefore the scheme has been considered a success.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the pilot project be further developed and then rolled out across Rossendale as one of the tools to be used with the emerging Vacant Property Strategy.
- 4.5 The aim of the Vacant Property Strategy is to offer a range of options and advice to home owners. Properties will be scored according to factors including length of vacancy and condition, to enable appropriate action and advice to be targeted.
- 4.6 Proposals for advice and options assistance given under the Vacant Properties Strategy are currently being developed and will be subject to a full Cabinet report.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 There are no material budget implications arising from the report.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 The Council has various powers available to deal with vacant properties:

Empty Dwelling Management Order

The Council can apply for an EDMO. This gives the Council powers to put a tenant in place and restricted rights to manage the property for 12 months.

Final Management Order

The Council can apply for a FMO after an EDMO. This is for 7 years and gives the Council more legal powers to manage the property.

Enforced Sale

If there is a charge against the property (e.g. for works carried out in default) then the Council can recover the debt by forcing the sale of the property.

Compulsory Purchase Order

If the owner refuses to bring the property back into use, the Council can forcefully purchase the property off the owner. The owner will receive a fair market value.

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

7.1 There are no specific human resource implications arising from the report

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The Haslingden Home Renew initiative has been a success as 31 properties were returned to use, even though in this case none were purchased by the partner Registered Social Landlord.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

9.1 That the Policy Overview and Scrutiny committee notes the successful outcome of the Haslingden Home Renew scheme.

9.2 That the scheme be continued as part of a range of options in accordance with the Vacant Property Strategy.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

10.1 Portfolio Holder, homeowners, Officers.

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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