

INFORMATION NOTE

Empty Residential Property Position Statement

This is the background information to accompany the information item presented to members of the Environment, Health and housing committee at its meeting of 8th September 2015.

Members have received previous reports to the former policy development scrutiny committee to update the position on the numbers of long term (greater than 6 months) empty residential properties in the borough. The term 'long term empty' has referred to properties that have been empty for 6 months or more. It now includes, for council tax purposes, a second type of empty property that has been empty for 2 years or more. The information has taken account of policy changes that have been introduced relating to the council tax discounts and premiums that have been introduced for long term empty properties.

The most recent change to council tax for long term empty property was introduced in April 2014. This change introduced a council tax premium to be levied on properties that had remained empty for 2 years or more. The premium is an additional 50% of the council tax charge such that 150% of the council tax for the property becomes payable. The additional premium complements other council tax measures that require 100% of the council tax to be paid for months 6 to 24 of being empty.

The effects of the various council tax changes on the numbers of long term empty properties can be seen in the following table.

Date	Long term empty	2yrs + empty
April 13	701	n/a
April 14	563	181
April 15	531	137
July 15	544	132

The table shows that a significant reduction took place in the numbers between April 2013 and April 2014. This coincided with the introduction of a 100% council tax charge in respect of properties that have been empty for more than 6 months. Since April 2014 the reduction in the overall number of long term empty property has been more modest. There has though been a welcome reduction of 49 properties that have been empty for more than 2 years.

At the meeting of the former policy development scrutiny committee of November 2013 members resolved that additional actions to deal with empty properties could only be taken within existing resources. This means that the current actions of, principally, the housing service are limited and in the main are only responsive to complaints received from members of the public. In the financial year 2014 -2015 there were no such complaints received by the housing service. In the current financial year, to date, one complaint has been received by the housing service.

FURTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE FROM

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