

Subject: Vacant Property Strategy

Status: For Publication

Report to: Performance Overview and
Scrutiny
Cabinet

Date: 9th November 2010

17th November 2010

Report of: Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration

Portfolio

Holder: Regeneration

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek approval for the revised Vacant Property Strategy and associated Action Plan which aims to reduce the number of long term vacant residential and commercial properties across Rossendale.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities and associated corporate objective.

- Delivering Quality Services to Customers
- Delivering Regeneration across the Borough
- Improving health and well being across the Borough
- Keeping our Borough clean, green and safe

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- The strategy provides a clear and concise way for dealing with empty properties across the Valley; including stated methodology for dealing with those owners who are unwilling to work with the Council. Failure as an authority to support the proposed principles and policy implications of this work could undermine the effectiveness of the Council's Vacant Property Task Group to bring properties back into use.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

4.1 Following the establishment of the Vacant Property Task Group in 2008, officers from across the Council have been working on a unified approach to deal with problematic vacant properties (both commercial and residential).

4.2 The task group felt that a co-ordinated strategy was required in order to provide a consistent and clear process for assessing and dealing with vacant properties as well as providing an efficient way of dealing with properties that are reported through to individual departments. The strategy also provides baseline evidence for monitoring and measuring the performance of the Vacant Property Task Group over the next five years.

4.3 The initial baseline work has identified that:-

- There are 605 long-term empty residential properties across Rossendale equating to approximately 20 long-term empty homes for every homeless households accepted by the Council in Rossendale 2009/10.
- There is over 59 hectares of vacant and derelict land and buildings as well as 123 empty commercial properties.

The five year target for the Vacant Property Task Group will be to reduce the number of long term empty residential properties by 50% and empty commercial properties / land by 30% from these initial baseline figures.

4.4 These targets will be achieved through:-

- Working with owners to support them in bring properties back into use.
- Delivery of the VPS Action Plan which will implement a number of new initiatives and approaches to dealing with these properties and owners.
- Targeted enforcement action where owners are unwilling to work with officers.

4.5 Resources to delivery this work will continue to be met through existing staffing structures and joint activity led by the Health, Housing and Regeneration Team.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

5.1 Any financial implications are commented upon in the body of the report.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 Any legal implications are commented upon in the body of the report.

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

7.1 There are no human resource implications.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The strategy provides a clear focus for addressing the number of long term vacant property.
- 8.2 Adoption of this strategy will provide defined, measurable targets for annual reductions in the number of empty properties and will provide officers with a clear remit for tackling vacant properties across the Council.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 That the Rossendale Vacant Property Strategy be approved.
- 9.2 That any further minor amendments to the Strategy be delegated to the Director of Business and the Head of Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 Direct consultation with:-
- Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
 - Peer Local Authorities
 - Regenerate Pennine Lancashire
 - Internal Council Departments
 - Corporate Policy
 - Overview and Scrutiny – Policy

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Community Impact Assessment required Yes
Is a Community Impact Assessment attached Yes

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No
Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No

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Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Vacant Property Strategy	Attached