

Regeneration and Transport Select Committee

Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 23 October 2012

Review of Long Term Empty/Abandoned Properties

ANALYSIS OF LONG-TERM EMPTY DOMESTIC PROPERTIES

In Stockton there are currently over 1,300 long term empty properties. A long term empty property is a property that has been empty for longer than 6 months.

At its meeting on 10 September the Committee received evidence about empty homes and how the Planning Service is involved, in particular:

- The Local Planning Authority powers under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act
- Approach in Stockton Borough Council
- No funds for work in default for non-compliance
- What needs to be done to continue further work, recommended that funding is provided by the Council to enable the carrying out of works in default

Discussion and views were also provided regarding the Local Government Finance Bill providing councils with more flexibility over the Council Tax charges that can be levied on certain empty properties. The changes will support Council strategies to bring empty dwellings back into use and offer the potential to raise additional Council Tax revenue. The draft scheme represents a starting point for discussion and a period of consultation designed to gather feedback and gauge the potential impact, to inform the final scheme design that will be presented to Cabinet in February 2013. The proposals were presented to enable the Committee to provide input prior to a Cabinet decision scheduled for 4th October, which will consider a draft Council Tax charging scheme and consultation arrangements. The Committee's comments will be included as an appendix to the October Cabinet report.

The Committee met on 22 October to examine the Enforced Sales Procedure using case studies to determine costs to Council and attempt to identify invest to save opportunities.

It is anticipated that the Committee will present its findings and recommendations to Cabinet on 10 January 2013.