

SOUTH NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIVE FORUM AGENDA



Friday 18th December 2009

at 10.00 am

**in Seaton Carew Community Centre, Elizabeth Way,
Seaton Carew**

SOUTH NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIVE FORUM:

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, S Cook, Flintoff, Gibbon, Hill, James, A E Lilley, G Lilley, A Marshall, Preece, Turner, Wistow and Young

Resident Representatives: Mary Green, Ray Harriman, Rosemarie Kennedy, Iris Ryder, Sally Vokes and Mike Ward

- 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 3. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 4. MINUTES**
 - 4.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum held on 16th October 2009
 - 4.2 Matters arising
 - 4.3 To receive the minutes of the meeting of South Area Police and Community Safety Forum held on 13th November 2009.
- 5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

6. ITEMS FOR CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Draft Public Convenience Strategy – *Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)*
- 6.2 Draft Empty Homes Strategy – *Principal Environmental Health Officer*

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION and/or INFORMATION

- 7.1 Building Schools for the Future Update - Presentation – *Project Technical Manager, Schools Transformation Team*

8. ITEMS FOR DECISION

No items

9. WARD ISSUES

10. DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the South Area Police and Community Safety Consultative Forum will take place on Friday 29th January 2009 at 10.00am at Jutland Road Community Centre, Jutland Road

The next meeting of the South Neighbourhood Consultative Forum will take place on Friday 19th February 2009 at 10.00am at Seaton Carew Community Centre, Elizabeth Way, Seaton Carew

WARDS

Fens
Greatham
Owton
Rossmere
Seaton

SOUTH NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIVE FORUM

16 October 2009

MINUTES OF THE MEETING



The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m.
in the Jutland Road Community Centre, Jutland Road, Hartlepool

PRESENT:

Chair:	Councillor Ann Marshall	-	Rossmere Ward
Vice Chair:	Iris Ryder (Resident Representative)		
	Councillor Christopher Akers-Belcher	-	Rossmere Ward
	Councillor Bob Flintoff	-	Owton Ward
	Councillor Steve Gibbon	-	Fens Ward
	Councillor Cath Hill	-	Seaton Ward
	Councillor Marjorie James	-	Owton Ward
	Councillor Alison Lilley	-	Fens Ward
	Councillor Geoff Lilley	-	Greatham Ward
	Councillor Michael Turner	-	Seaton Ward

Resident Representatives:

Sally Vokes, Michael Ward

Public: Christine Blakey, Dorothy Clark, Donna Hotham, Sybil Hotham, S Kell, J Smith, J Unwin,

Officers: Denise Ogden, Head of Neighbourhood Management
Colin Ogden, Neighbourhood Management Manager
Paul Mitchinson, Highway Services Manager
David Frame, Neighbourhood Manager (South)
David Mitchell, Neighbourhood Co-ordinator
Sue McBride, Neighbourhood Development Co-ordinator
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

Police Representatives:

Sgt Alan Perry

Stagecoach Representatives

Sandy Gallacher, Doug Elphick, Bill Woodward

Housing Hartlepool Representative

Lynn McPartlin

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Cook, Preece, Young and Resident Representative Rosemarie Kennedy.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

22. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2009

These were accepted as an accurate record.

23. MATTERS ARISING

Stagecoach – representatives of Stagecoach attended the meeting in order to address issues raised at the previous meeting.

- Seaton Library – Although changes to the routes in Seaton had been made to incorporate Elizabeth Way and Warrior Park, all should have access within 400 metres.
- Park Road/Arncliffe Gardens – Services 3 and 4 now ran every 10 minutes toward Rift House. Arncliffe Gardens removed because of parked cars. The service 516 had been increased although it did not run throughout the working day.
- Elwick Road/Baden Street junction – This route had been risk assessed and there is 8.00 am – 6.00 pm no parking, Monday to Saturday.

- Balmoral Road – Safety had been taken into consideration when planning the routes.
- St Patrick Shops, Owton Manor Lane – This was a local issue.
- Seaton Carew Nursery – Removal of the grassed area was being considered by the local authority.
- Owton Manor Lane – This would be addressed by local management.
- South Fens – There is a ten minute service serving this area.
- Seaton Lane/Torquay Avenue – The suggestion put forward at the last meeting was not considered a realistic alternative.
- Staff changeovers in York Road and Victoria Road – This would continue as it was where the offices were based.

Councillors G Lilley and James voiced their dismay that the representatives from Stagecoach who had attended the previous meeting had been unable to respond to concerns put to them as they were not the decision makers. The Forum felt that it was unfair to put the two workers in that position.

Sale of Community Buildings – The Neighbourhood Manager (South) confirmed that due to holidays no response had as yet been received from the Portfolio Holder but it was hoped to bring a response to the next meeting.

Factory on Seaton Lane – Resident Representative Iris Ryder said that the smell from this had gone briefly, but had now returned. The Neighbourhood Co-ordinator said that Public Protection had

visited the site but he would ensure that this was followed up.

Replacement of Lamp Posts – Resident Representative Mike Ward asked for clarification on the funding of replacement columns. He was informed that if it was a repair or maintenance it would be part of the normal lighting budget, but if a replacement with a higher specification was necessary, then this would come out of the Minor Works Budget. Mike Ward suggested that there were a number of concrete columns in Kesteven Road which were in need of replacement.

24. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Greatham Road Safety Campaign – Resident Dorothy Clark said that residents had been asked for their views via a leaflet and thought that a public meeting would have been arranged. The Neighbourhood Manager (South) said that initial consultation was via leaflet drop and a public meeting would take place as well. Councillor G Lilley said that most concern was in relation to pinch points and the Traffic Team Leader had said that plans could be fine tuned to accommodate views.

Maxwell Court – Resident Sybil Hotham expressed concern that trees which were on this site would be used by young people to climb into nearby gardens and asked whether anything could be done to alleviate this. The Neighbourhood Manager (South) agreed to look into this.

Traffic in Brenda Road – Resident Representative Iris Ryder said that traffic was cutting across the dual carriageway turning into the waste tip behind Tesco. The Neighbourhood Manager (South) said that he would point this out to the Traffic and Transportation Department.

25. HIGHWAY SERVICES STRATEGY FOR HARTLEPOOL

The Highway Services Manager gave a presentation in relation to the need to provide a long term Highway Services Strategy by the Local Authority. He stated that the current strategy seemed to be working in relation to main roads but there appeared to be a shortfall in relation to local roads. According to a 2008 survey, Local Authorities only received 51% of the budget necessary to maintain their highways and it is scheduled maintenance on local roads that has been suffering from underfunding. The Strategy was to be based upon levels of service, life cycle planning and whole life costing. There was a need to develop a business case for additional funding for scheduled maintenance. The public could submit their view of the strategy to Paul Mitchinson on 01429 523706 or paul.mitchinson@hartlepool.gov.uk

Procurement - Councillor G Lilley asked whether Multi Area Agreements would fit into the strategy and was informed that it was realistic to make local decisions, but some procurement would be done across the Tees Valley Local Authorities.

Wainwright Walk - Resident Representative Iris Ryder asked that the sub-contractors who had worked in Wainwright Walk recently be thanked.

Funding - Councillor Gibbon asked whether the recent scrutiny investigation into potholes across the town had managed to secure any extra funding. The Highway Services Manager said that funding was general funded by a combination of Capital and Revenue budgets. Capital was from Central Government through the Local Transport Plan. Revenue allocations were generally funded from a combination of local council tax, business rate and other government grants.

Quality of Materials - Councillor A Lilley asked whether the materials used for road surfacing did not seem to be as good quality in the past and the Highway Services Manager said that a balance had to be struck between using cheaper materials which did not last as long as costlier materials.

Drain Cover - Councillor A Lilley thanked the Highway Services Manager for prompt attention to a missing drain cover.

Wooler Road - Councillor Flintoff asked how long the recent resurfacing in Wooler Road was expected to last and was informed that it should last for 20 years.

26. HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING

The Head of Neighbourhood Management informed the Forum of the new developments with regard to the kerbside recycling provision in Hartlepool necessary in order to increase recycling performance. The Authority needed to achieve Government targets of 40% recycling. She stated that had all household recyclable materials been sorted for collection, then £120,000 could have been saved by the Authority the previous year.

She outlined current performance across the town and participation rates in the South area as detailed below:-

Participation Rates – South area breakdown for all materials					
Area	Glass	Cans	Paper	Plastic	Cardboard
Warrior Drive	81.44%	82.50%	83.07%	87.30%	87.24%
Seaton	85.70%	88.35%	89.26%	90.64%	90.27%
Jutland Road / A Block / Brierton Lane	70.91%	76.27%	81.99%	88.21%	88.57%
Oxford Road / Kingsley	83.89%	87.63%	88.58%	97.81%	97.81%
Belle Vue	50.00%	38.07%	52.72%	91.84%	91.84%

Fens Greatham	73.12%	77.08%	77.73%	95.33%	90.32%
Fens	82.86%	83.85%	86.67%	95.33%	95.26%
M Block – I Block	94.12%	96.32%	74.39%	83.70%	89.83%

It was noted that the Local Authority intended to take enforcement action against those households who did not recycle.

Staffing Levels - Councillor G Lilley asked whether staff who were employed in collecting of brown bins during the summer months were allocated other duties during the winter months and was informed that 3 staff were employed during the winter and 4 in the summer months.

Bonfires – Councillor G Lilley asked whether enforcement would be taken against a neighbouring family who burnt waste in their garden as opposed to recycling it. The Head of Neighbourhood Management agreed to discuss this with partners.

Recycling Incentive – Resident Donna Hotham said that Darlington Borough Council offered a £5 voucher as an incentive to recycle. The Head of Neighbourhood Management said that this possibility had been looked into but it did not seem fair to those who had always recycled.

Timing of collections - Councillor Hill queried how long bins could be left outside and was informed that residents were encouraged to put their waste and recycling out the night before collection and empty bins should be taken in on the day of collection.

Ibrox Grove – Resident Sybil Hotham stated that when bins had been collected the operatives did not return them to where they had been left. The Waste

Management Manager agreed to speak with the supervisors.

Clothing – Resident Joan Unwin asked whether old clothing could be put out for recycling and was informed that it was accepted and if it could not be re-used it would be shredded.

27. MINOR WORKS

The available budget for the financial year until 31 March 2010 was £25,510. Proposed schemes were :-

Saltaire Terrace, Greatham surfacing of tarmac - £6,200

Thetford Road, Fens, replacement of a tree - £153

Lincoln Road, Fens, replacement of a tree - £153

Newark Road, Fens, creation of mound - £350

Pickering Grove, Rossmere, installation of new lighting columns - £1,600

The total cost of the proposed schemes was £8,546.

Councillor Hill asked whether consideration could be given in future to having secondary fencing instead of creating mounds so that young people could still enjoy playing football.

The schemes as outlined above were all agreed.

28. WARD ISSUES

Provision of toilet facilities at Fens Shops – Councillor Gibbon raised the issue of the toilet facility being provided to Waverley Terrace allotment site at a cost

of £10,000. He stated that if money was available to provide toilets then consideration should be given for a block to the rear of Fens shops. The Neighbourhood Manager agreed to contact the relevant officer regarding this issue and to report back to him with further detail and an update.

Drain flooding – Councillor G Lilley said that the drain opposite the Hope and Anchor was flooding. The Neighbourhood Manager (South) agreed to look into this.

Lamp Post Maintenance – Resident Representative Mike Ward asked how often lamp posts were checked for safety and was informed that these were checked annually.

The meeting concluded at 12.00 noon.

CHAIR

WARDS

Fens
Greatham
Owton
Rossmere
Seaton

SOUTH POLICE & COMMUNITY SAFETY CONSULTATIVE FORUM

13 November 2009

MINUTES OF THE MEETING



The meeting commenced at 10.00 am at Jutland Road Community Centre, Jutland Road, Hartlepool

PRESENT:

Chair: Councillor Ann Marshall - Rossmere Ward

Vice Chair: Resident Representative Iris Ryder

Councillor Steve Gibbon	- Fens Ward
Councillor Cath Hill	- Seaton Ward
Councillor Alison Lilley	- Fens Ward
Councillor Geoff Lilley	- Greatham Ward

Resident Representatives: Rosemarie Kennedy,

Residents: Donna Hotham, H Oxley

Council Officers:

Dave Frame, Neighbourhood Manager (South)
Sue McBride, Neighbourhood Development Officer (South)
Julie Hetherington, Community Safety Assistant
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

Police Officers: Temporary Chief Inspector Mick Brown, Temporary Inspector Peter Howarth, PC Chris Bryan

Cleveland Criminal Justice Board: Kate Campbell

Cleveland Fire Brigade: Peter Bradley

Housing Hartlepool: Libby Griffiths and Linda Smith

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from
Councillor Christopher Akers Belcher,

Councillor Marjorie James and Resident Representative Ray Harriman.

12. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 AUGUST 2009

The minutes were agreed as an accurate account.

13. MATTERS ARISING

Brierton Lane Coping Stones – The Neighbourhood Manager advised the meeting that this was being dealt with.

Lighting on Seaton Carew Sea Front – The Neighbourhood Manager stated that this had been rectified.

14. UPDATE FROM THE POLICE

Temporary Chief Inspector Brown updated the Forum on Force-wide performance in October 2009 which was all showing a downward trend apart from drugs activity which was up. This however was a positive step. The trends in Hartlepool showed similar trends apart from Violent Crime which was up and to which he attributed to the effects of alcohol and the night time economy in the town centre. Various recent Operations were highlighted including Operation Pledge and Staysafe. Outcomes on issues raised at the last forum were outlined. Councillor G Lilley commented on recent information that trends in the Hartlepool night time economy showed that incidents continued well into the early hours of the morning. Chief Inspector Brown said that policing activity was planned to cover these trends but was holding licensees and door staff to account.

He informed the Forum of recent staffing changes in the District and also commented that because of concerns

about drug activity, increased resources had been targeted into this.

Performance in the South area was outlined comparative to the previous 3 months.

Councillor Alison Lilley commented favourably on the provision of a disabled bay in the shops area. It was clarified that enforcement for non disabled vehicles was the responsibility of the Local Authority enforcement officers but if it was an obstruction issue, then it was the responsibility of the police. However, warnings would be given initially, leading to enforcement action on persistent offenders.

Resident Donna Hotham expressed appreciation of the local Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). The Neighbourhood Manager (South) confirmed that there was much Partnership work between Police, the Local Authority and Housing Hartlepool. Chief Inspector Brown confirmed that Sergeant Sah who was based at Jutland Road was to arrange a meeting to introduce Police Officers to Members.

Chief Inspector Brown reminded the Forum that the Joint Action Group met monthly. There were also visual audits for each wards with three issues identified as priorities at each meeting.. Councillor Gibbon thanked the Community Safety Assistant for circulating the dates of the visual audits.

Councillor Alison Lilley commented that she thought that PCSOs should be given more powers in Cleveland, as in other Police Authorities and was informed that this had been considered in the past by the Chief Constable.

The Chair thanked Chief Inspector Brown for his presentation.

15. UPDATE FROM THE FIRE BRIGADE

The Community Liaison Officer, Peter Bradley provided figures relating to the numbers of Fires dealt with by the Fire Brigade. It was noted that figures were reducing year by year and this was attributed to the Hartlepool Arson Reduction Team who carried out audits and identified any fly tipping or waste which had the potential to be set alight. Community Teams visited to schools to educate young people on the danger of fires. Work was done with PCSOs and intervention teams to work with young people regarding fire safety.

A large number of home safety visits had also been carried out and there were good working partnerships with the Police, Housing Hartlepool and the Local Authority.

Councillor Ann Marshall asked whether there was a log of false calls made to the fire service and was informed that these would be detailed on the brigade's IT system.

Councillor Ann Marshall asked whether there were any areas of the town which had not taken up the free home safety visits and was informed that there was a good take up right across the town, although some people were reluctant to let Officers into their home.

Councillor Ann Marshall mentioned the high frequency of visits to the Newhome Court sheltered housing complex and was informed that if there were a lot of unwarranted calls to premises then the alarm system would be investigated by a fire engineer.

Councillor Geoff Lilley queried what interim arrangements had been made whilst the new Fire Station at Stranton

was being built and was informed that services would continue as normal with temporary accommodation being provided at the site. The new footprint of the building would be slightly bigger than the original.

Councillor Geoff Lilley raised the loss of a Hartlepool appliance to Billingham and asked that any future consultations on similar issues be brought to the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums. The Community Liaison Officer said that no actual decision had been made as yet because there was still ongoing consultation between management and unions. He agreed to provide an update at a future forum after consulting with Brigade management.

16. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UNIT UPDATE

Housing Hartlepool's Tenancy Enforcement Manager gave details of Partnership working between the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU) and Housing Hartlepool's Tenancy Relations and Enforcement Team (TRET) especially in relation to the Good Tenant Scheme. She highlighted categories of the Pride in Hartlepool Awards and asked those present to nominate individuals or groups for these.

Details of AS13 forms which had been issued were broken down by Ward relating to areas such as the Fens shops, Seaton Carew front, Rossmere Park and St Patrick's shops.

There had been an increase in the take up of parenting courses and all secondary schools now had Team Around the Secondary Schools (TASS) in place. The TRET worked with parents of children who had been involved in alcohol related incidents.

Councillor Alison Lilley queried the number of alcohol related incidents as she thought that they would have been fewer because of poor weather in the summer. Chief Inspector Brown informed the meeting of Operation Sunshine which was an initiative to challenge Anti-Social Behaviour and street drinking.

Actions taken by the Team were highlighted and the Tenancy Enforcement Manager said that if anyone wanted details of enforcement action on a ward by ward basis, she was happy to supply them.

Councillor Geoff Lilley asked how Housing Hartlepool had coped with problem tenants who had moved to other areas of the town. The Tenancy Enforcement Manager said that tenants were offered advice and support although enforcement measures would be taken if tenants breached rules. However, there was no support currently available to tenants of private landlords.

17. CRIME AND DISORDER CO-ORDINATION UPDATE

Project Co-ordinator of the Cleveland Criminal Justice Board, Kate Campbell, provided a brief overview of the Board's work. This is an executive decision-making body comprising representatives from the Police, Probation Service, Crown Prosecution Service, Courts and Youth Offending, which meets on a monthly basis and has the authority to commit resources to achieve targets. One recent achievement was the implementation of the Community Cashback Scheme whereby received criminal assets were redistributed to community projects. Further information was available via the website

<http://lcjb.cjsonline.gov.uk/Cleveland/home.html>

Councillor Geoff Lilley expressed concern that many cases were not progressed by Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The Project Co-ordinator said that if there was a particular issue relating to Cleveland, it would be discussed by the members of the Board. Chief Inspector Brown said that to try to overcome the problem of cases not being progressed by the CPS, the Police were ensuring that evidence was presented correctly by taking advice from the CPS representative at the Police Office prior to submission. He added that each file should contain a community justice impact statement which was a profile of a particular ward outlining demographics and problems associated with that ward so that magistrates would be aware of how the offence affected people in that area. There was also an opportunity for witnesses and victims to include a personal statement on how the crime had affected them personally.

Resident Representative Iris Ryder referred to the booklet Code of Practice for Victims of Crime – A Guide for Victims and Chief Inspector Brown confirmed that this was offered to all victims

Councillor Alison Lilley asked whether the Criminal Justice Board would be involved if suspects committed further crime whilst on bail and was informed that initially a court representative would be involved before it was brought to the CJB.

Councillor Cath Hill commented that it was important to remember that the Police were not judge and jury.

8. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None.

9. ANY ISSUES TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS AND RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Nuclear Power Station – Councillor Geoff Lilley commented that there had only been 1 day notice given of the consultation on the proposed Nuclear Power Station and he felt that more notice should have been given.

Rossmere Way – Resident Representative Rosemarie Kennedy said that there were ongoing problems with speeding traffic in Rossmere Way. She asked that bollards which were near to the shop could be extended towards Ardrossan Road to prevent drivers parking their vehicles and obstructing the view of other motorists. The Neighbourhood Manager suggested that traffic problems were currently short term due to building work in the area. The Chief Inspector said that a recent traffic survey had found that traffic generally kept to the speed limit. Councillor Ann Marshall suggested that there should be more disabled parking in the area.

Rossmere/Brierton Lane – Councillor Ann Marshall referred to speeding traffic in this area and was informed that a survey had shown that it was not a widespread problem. However, the Chief Inspector said that the Police Road Traffic Department would continue to watch the area.

Brierton Lane – Councillor Ann Marshall referred to incidents of a motorcyclist travelling at speed in the early hours of the morning. The Neighbourhood Manager said that this issue would be difficult to address unless specific dates times could be provided or registration numbers given.

Traffic Surveys – Councillor Alison Lilley asked that care be taken that when speed surveys were carried out, it should be at

an appropriate time of day. The Neighbourhood Manager said that this was always taken into consideration.

Contact Details – Resident Representative Iris Ryder reported an incident where a member of the public had been directed from the police station to various Council Departments before reaching the correct place. Chief Inspector Brown agreed to ensure that Officer contact details were available on the Police website and any leaflets that were produced. The Community Safety Assistant confirmed that she had details of relevant Local Authority Officers and would exchange details with Neighbourhood Manager.

Elmtree Park – The Neighbourhood Manager informed the meeting that the Elmtree Park Residents' Association had raised £2,000 towards upgrading the CCTV system and had also received funding from the Joint Action Group (JAG).

Venues – Councillor Geoff Lilley asked that other community buildings be considered for future meetings. The Chair and Neighbourhood Manager said that this was being looked into presently.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 am.

Report of: Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Subject: DRAFT PUBLIC CONVENIENCE STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the proposed and newly developed policy for the future provision of public conveniences in Hartlepool (**Appendix A**).

2. BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The first public toilet in Britain was opened over 150 years ago, and for a long time, the provision of municipal public convenience facilities was a matter of considerable civic pride. Over recent years however, many local authorities were unable to maintain or improve the facilities to the required and expected standards, and were forced to close many public conveniences due to financial pressures and high operating and maintenance costs.
- 2.2 Another reason for their decline was the high level of persistent and increased levels of vandalism and antisocial behaviour, which apart from its financial implications, created issues of public anxiety and concern, health and safety and put staff and users of the facilities at risk. As such, many facilities became an eyesore and a focus for activities such as vandalism, drug taking and other anti-social activities which accelerated and necessitated the closure of some of the facilities.
- 2.3 In 2007 the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Forum carried out a comprehensive investigation into the provision of public conveniences in Hartlepool. The investigation recognised the vital contribution a well-managed public convenience service can make, both to the quality of life for our residents, and our visitors and the negative effect which the lack of adequate provision and the poor maintenance of public conveniences can have on tourism and on the town's image in general. Cabinet accepted the findings of the Scrutiny investigation and an all-embracing action plan was implemented covering the demolition of old redundant and closed facilities, the refurbishment of the remainder and new build in tourist areas such as the Headland and Seaton Carew.
- 2.4 The Scrutiny investigation also recommended the Council had a policy for the provision of Public Conveniences, as there are no corporately agreed criteria for deciding on the provision and the location of public conveniences. The proposed policy is based upon the outcomes of the Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny review and re-examination of the relevant evidence and information available relating to the

provision of Public Convenience in Hartlepool. In attempting to develop and formulate the most appropriate policy, it is necessary to set-out the parameters of the current and the proposed service requirements.

- 2.5 The provision and maintenance of toilets in public places is at the discretion of local authorities who have a power, under section 87 of the Public Health Act 1936 ("PHA 1936"), to provide public conveniences, but no duty to do so. It is therefore up to the local Authority to decide whether it should provide public toilets and, if so, how many.

3. CURRENT SERVICE PROVISION

- 3.1 Currently, Hartlepool Borough Council provides public toilet facilities, at the following sites;

Item	LOCATION	NUMBER OF CUBICLES		URINALS	DISABLED FACILITIES	BABY CHANGING
		FEMALE	MALE	MALE		
1	Clock Tower - Seaton Carew	10	4	8	Yes	Yes
2	Seaton Old Baths Site	6	2	9	Yes	Yes
3	Middlegate - Headland	3	2	3	Yes	Yes
4	Lighthouse - Headland	2	1	3	Yes	Yes
5	Stranton Crematorium	1	1	2	Yes	No
6	West View Cemetery	1	1	2	No	No
7	Ward Jackson Park	3	2	3	Yes	Yes
8	Rossmere Park	3	2	3	Yes	Yes

OPENING HOURS

- 3.2 Summer Period - 1 March to 31 September

Item	LOCATION	OPERATING HOURS					
		OPENING			CLOSING		
		MONDAY - FRIDAY	SATURDAY - SUNDAY	BANK HOLIDAY	MONDAY - FRIDAY	SATURDAY - SUNDAY	BANK HOLIDAY
1	Clock Tower - Seaton Carew	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	9:30 pm	10:00 pm	10:00 pm
2	Seaton Old Baths Site	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 pm	9:30 pm	9:30 pm
3	Middlegate - Headland	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 pm	9:30 pm	9:30 pm
4	Lighthouse - Headland	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 pm	9:30 pm	9:30 pm
5	Stranton Crematorium	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	4:30 pm	8:00 pm	8:00 pm
6	West View Cemetery	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 pm	8:00 pm	8:00 pm
7	Ward Jackson Park	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	* Please refer to table below		
8	Rossmere Park	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	* Please refer to table below		

3.3 Winter Period – 1 October to 28 February

Item	LOCATION	OPERATING HOURS					
		OPENING			CLOSING		
		MONDAY-FRIDAY	SATURDAY-SUNDAY	BANK HOLIDAY	MONDAY-FRIDAY	SATURDAY-SUNDAY	BANK HOLIDAY
1	Clock Tower - Seaton Carew	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
2	Seaton Old Baths Site	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
3	Middlegate - Headland	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
4	Lighthouse - Headland	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
5	Stranbn Crematorium	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	4:30pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
6	West View Cemetery	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	5:00pm	5:00pm	5:00pm
7	Ward Jackson Park	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	* Please refer to table below		
8	Rossmere Park	8:00 am	8:00am	8:00 am	* Please refer to table below		

NOTES:

- All public conveniences shall be opened on **Bank Holidays**, unless otherwise specified.
- Closing times as above or at **DUSK** if earlier (Health & Safety implications)
- Entry to 'Disabled' toilets will require 'Radar' key.

Clock Tower, Seaton Carew

- The Clock Tower public conveniences facilities are in the process of being completely refurbished, providing a higher standard of equipment and better level of service.
- Apart from the structural and the general building fabric improvements, the refurbishment includes the complete replacement of the current equipment with new modern equipment incorporating anti-vandal properties.

Seaton Old Baths Site and Coronation Drive

- New modern facilities are currently being built near the car park in Coronation Drive, adjacent to the Newburn Bridge which is approximately 500m to the North of the Old Seaton Baths site, which will be demolished and the area grassed over once the new facilities have been fully commissioned and opened.

Headland (Middlegate and Lighthouse)

- The newly purpose built public conveniences at Middlegate, close to the Northgate Shopping Parade and the Croft Gardens, and the recently refurbished and upgraded facilities at the Lighthouse public conveniences near the Heugh Battery, include

disabled and baby changing facilities providing high quality public toilet facilities for the visitors to the Headland's foreshore and tourist areas.

Stranton Cemetery

- 3.8 Heating, together with routine and planned maintenance to the main facility has been introduced.

West View Cemetery

- 3.9 No major investment required, maintenance of existing facilities is ongoing.

Ward Jackson and Rossmere Parks

- 3.10 Following the recent refurbishment and modernisation of these facilities, Ward Jackson and Rossmere parks now offer high quality public conveniences. Both sites have been upgraded to include facilities for the disabled people, as well as baby changing facilities.
- 3.11 The Council will ensure that all conveniences are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness at all times and shall ensure there is an adequate supply of toiletries.

4. SECURITY

- 4.1 The Council has and continues to invest substantial resources in combating anti social behaviour and vandalism. The public's perceived fear of crime is such that CCTV etc is now almost a necessity.
- 4.2 As a further measure to reduce and deter vandalism and anti-social behaviour, and also to discourage large groups from gathering near or inside these facilities, CCTV cameras have been installed at the lobby of the new toilets at the Middlegate – Headland. Reports indicate that this measure has been successful, particularly in terms of reassuring the elderly and other vulnerable people.
- 4.3 In line with above findings and experiences, and in an attempt to alleviate public concerns, to improve the security aspect even further, and to reduce the criminal and anti-social behaviour, consideration will be given to installing low light stand-alone CCTV cameras to all public conveniences as funding opportunities become available.

5. PUBLIC EVENTS

- 5.1 The Council gives great importance to the positive value of those high prominence events such as the Maritime Festival, Dock Fest and Tall ships 2010.

- 5.2 As far as the provision of public conveniences for large events is concerned, the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) 'Event Safety Manual' in relation to the provision of sanitary facilities, requirements is recommended.

6. COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME

- 6.1 As an addition and supplement to the Council's provision of public conveniences, it is proposed the Council approaches the private sector to work in partnership and provide additional public toilet facilities.
- 6.2 The Community toilet scheme would use existing toilets within the business community for the public benefit rather than building a new toilet. The scheme is recognised by the Department of CLG and the British Toilet Association as one of best practice. The scheme would enable local businesses such as pubs, restaurants and shops, to work in partnership with the Council to make more clean, safe and accessible toilets available to the public.
- 6.3 Businesses are invited to enter into an agreement with the Authority, which involves the Authority paying an annual amount to the business for making their toilet facilities accessible to the public. Their commitment is to ensure they keep their toilets up to a certain standard of cleanliness. Members of the public can use toilet facilities during the premises opening hours and without the need to make a purchase. A survey would be carried out and if the premises are considered suitable, then an agreement between Hartlepool Borough Council and the private business will be signed, setting out the terms of the agreement. Participating businesses would have to display purposely designed stickers in their window, advertising they are members of the scheme and that they provide public toilet facilities. The sign shows the type of service i.e. male, female, and whether it also provides wheelchair or baby changing facilities.
- 6.4 Richmond upon Thames Council has in excess of 60 facilities taking part in its 'Community Toilet Scheme', and Perth and Kinross Council has over 20 businesses taking part in its 'Comfort Scheme'. Both Councils reported that the business number participating continues to grow.
- 6.5 It is proposed to develop the scheme in tourist areas, retail parks, and shopping precincts inviting interested businesses with the appropriate facilities to apply and be considered to take part in the scheme.
- 6.6 Preference will be given to premises offering high quality facilities, including facilities for the disabled and baby changing, first in the tourist areas, and in areas where the Council does not provide public convenience facilities or the facilities may not be adequate.

- 6.7 The level of payment would depend on the level of service to be provided, namely, the type and number of facilities and whether they provide disabled or baby changing facilities, and the hours the facilities would be made available to the public.
- 6.8 Initially it is proposed to run a pilot scheme involving the participation of no more than ten facilities spread throughout the town. The scheme would then be evaluated and if successful as it is anticipated, the scheme can be further expanded as considered appropriate.
- 6.9 The disadvantages are that not all toilets are kept up to the said standard. Businesses can close without notice and the Authority is beholden to their opening and closing times.

7. FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 7.1 New public and private developments, new large leisure and retail business premises should be encouraged to make provision for public toilet facilities, highlighting the many benefits such facilities can bring to their business, as well as to the local economy and community. Effective use of the planning legislation such as 'Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as well as the Licensing provision process should also be considered secure reasonable levels of public toilets in new buildings.

8. PUBLICITY / ADVERTISEMENT

- 8.1 All relevant information about the Public Conveniences in Hartlepool will be made available and displayed on the Council's webpage including the location and the facilities provided on each site.
- 8.2 Business participation in the Community Toilet Scheme would be expected to display appropriate and specific signage on their premises. In addition, where appropriate, highway signs / directoryfinger posts would be installed.

9. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS / IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The current budget provision provides for the day to day planned maintenance and operational costs. The revenue budget does not include for any major future refurbishment or major capital schemes or any future structural works. The facilities will be considered and included within the Council's Asset and Property Management Plan.

- 9.2 Annual, condition surveys will be undertaken by building surveyors to identify and to schedule planned maintenance works, and any other extensive capital works, so these could be timely included in the Council's capital works programme.
- 9.3 The initial costs for the setting-up, the signage and the operational costs for the proposed 'Community Toilet Scheme', is yet to be determined, however, it is expected the costs can be considered within existing budgets.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Having considered all the relevant information, Hartlepool Borough Council has recognised there is a clear need and public expectation for the provision of clean, safe, well planned, well designed, well maintained and clearly signposted high quality public toilets.
- 10.2 The Council has invested significantly in a refurbishment programme over the last 2 years based on the finding of the Neighbourhood Scrutiny Forum.
- 10.3 It is recommended that additional public convenience facilities in Hartlepool be provided partnership, between Hartlepool Borough Council and the private sector in through the development of a Community Toilet Scheme.
- 10.4 As part of the Council's measures to minimise vandalism and anti-social behaviour, we will investigate all funding opportunities to install low light CCTV cameras to its facilities, where this is technically possible and where appropriate, the Council's security contractor will be used to monitor areas of risk.
- 10.5 New facilities will be considered in line with this policy's aims and must fulfill the relevant criteria. Appropriate consultation with interested parties and stakeholders would also take place, prior to the final decision.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The views of the Neighbourhood Consultative Forums are sought to shape the policy prior to reporting to Portfolio for Transport and Neighbourhood

THE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE POLICY

Our aim is *“to provide clean, safe, high quality, and well signposted public convenience facilities catering for the needs of our residents and tourists”*.

The expected outcome of this policy is to provide public toilet facilities:

- a) at appropriate locations
- b) which are well sign posted, providing information, including opening and closing times, and an emergency contact telephone number
- c) that are accessible to all
- d) that are clean and safe to use

The policy will be implemented by working to the following service standards.

The Council shall ensure that all conveniences are maintained to a high standard of cleanliness at all times and shall ensure that there is always an adequate supply of toiletries.

The Council will display a notice in each convenience recording the last date and time the toilets were cleansed and checked, and by whom. The Council will display a notice in each convenience to be specified by the Authorised Officer providing sufficient guidance and contact details to enable any member of the public to make a complaint.

The Council shall check the facilities on a daily basis and report all faults and damage of any kind whatsoever as soon as they occur direct to the Council's designated Maintenance Section.

The Council shall ensure that employees are trained to take safe and reasonable steps to discourage improper, anti-social, and criminal behaviour in and around the conveniences, and shall report appropriate incidents to the Police whenever such behaviour occurs.

Being able to access a toilet is a fundamental need for anyone particularly to a visitor in Hartlepool. Tourists need more information and more clear signposts.

Public conveniences including the proposed participating facilities of the 'Community Toilet Scheme' will be well signposted. Appropriate and sufficient number of signs should be installed directing users to the location of the public conveniences. They should be of good quality and comply fully with the corporate signage scheme of Hartlepool Borough Council and comply with any planning, road-traffic and other regulations.

Clear signs indicating the opening and closing times of the facilities will be displayed near the entrance.

Suitable signs showing the date and times of inspection and cleaning of the facilities should be display in appropriate locations inside the toilets. Also signs advising and showing the contact telephone number(s), where anyone wishing to make a complaint about the public conveniences or to report a defect should also be display.

In addition to the day to day maintenance, a yearly condition survey will be carried out to every public convenience facility provided by the Council to establish the condition and to identify the maintenance and any other requirements including costings. Based on the surveys' findings and the planned maintenance requirements, appropriate maintenance regimes and capital schemes should be drawn-up and implemented in order to maintain high standards of service.

The Council recognises that its public conveniences are at risk of abuse by anti-social persons or criminals, including drug users and vandals. As such the Council's security contractor patrol, monitor and open and close some of the facilities.

Report of: Principal Environmental Health Officer

Subject: DRAFT EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To bring the attention of the Forum to the draft Empty Homes Strategy and to seek consultation on the main proposals and its further development

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The need for this Strategy acknowledges the concerns of the community and members about the numbers of empty private houses and the associated issues that relate to the image of the town.
- 2.2 The main aims of the Strategy are to bring empty private houses back into use, maximise the use of existing housing, and contribute towards neighbourhood sustainability and community well-being.
- 2.3 In April 2009 631 private dwellings were recorded as being empty for over 6 months which is 1.9% of the total number.
- 2.4 A proactive approach has been taken to deal with the condition of these individual properties, securing works by agreement with owners or in default after the service of notice. The focus of this work has been on the physical condition of the property and its effect on neighbouring residents.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

The purpose of the Strategy is to:

- Bring long-term empty homes back into use using flexible solutions / appropriate enforcement action
- Prevent homes from becoming long-term empty
- Increase decent and affordable housing for those in housing need / maximise housing options in the town
- Continue to identify the *real* situation with regard to the distribution and ownership of empty homes and establish trends and reasons
- Support investment in Housing Market Renewal and its surrounding areas through the reduction of long-term empty homes
- Devise and implement an Action Plan with targets and milestones to deliver this Strategy up to 2014 in partnership with departments, organisations and agencies involved in its implementation.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1. The draft Strategy is attached as **Appendix A**. The focus will be on prioritising houses, streets and areas for action using an assessment form and to introduce new actions open to the Council.
- 4.2. The consultation questions are attached as **Appendix B**

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. That the report be noted and that any interested parties be encouraged to submit any representations during the consultation period up to 1st February 2010.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

7. CONTACT OFFICER

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APPENDIX A

Hartlepool Borough Council Empty Homes Strategy 2010 – 2015



Foreword by the Mayor

(Links with EHS and work with derelict buildings and empty commercial units etc)

To be produced by the Mayor after consultation on the strategy.



Contents

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Section 1: Introduction / Background – Why is it important to tackle empty homes?

1.1 Introduction

Hartlepool Borough Council has prioritised the adoption of real measures to bring privately owned empty properties back into use as part of its strategic housing approach.

This Strategy will therefore provide an effective framework for bringing private sector empty homes back into use in Hartlepool. This includes failed private rented properties, abandoned properties, buy to leave empty properties and surplus new build houses and flats.

The key aim of this Strategy is to bring empty homes back into use and acknowledges the concerns of the community about empty homes and the associated issues that relate to the image of the town.

Areas of low demand and abandonment are primarily being dealt with through Housing Market Renewal and regeneration activity.

This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Housing Strategy 2006-2011. It will support and complement the current priorities of maintaining housing regeneration; homelessness prevention; provision of affordable housing and improving the quality of existing housing. It is also linked to the wider objectives in Appendix 5.

1.2 Why do we need this strategy?

The aim of this Strategy is to bring appropriate empty homes back into use, using a range of flexible solutions.

1.2.1 Empty homes are a wasted asset if there is unmet demand.

This Strategy needs to be clear about demand for the type and location of empty homes to be targeted for action.

The Government continues to promote the use of private rented sector homes for people in housing need. The Rugg Review of the Private Rented Sector¹ considers how this sector can meet local demand.

1.2.2. To maximise the use of the existing housing stock

The Government has stated the importance of maximising the use of the existing housing stock in order to minimise the number of new homes that need to be built each year. Hartlepool has a significant level of outstanding planning permissions; of these 61% are flats. Given the current number of new build flat developments which are yet to be sold, at the time of writing this strategy, this could potentially result in a significant number of empty homes in the future.

This Strategy also needs to take into consideration the particular problem within Hartlepool of the mismatch between the existing stock and the increasingly diverse and sophisticated aspirations of the local population to own or rent properties.

¹ The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential. October 2008. Centre for Housing Policy, University of York.

This Strategy will also align with contribution towards the provision of affordable housing in Hartlepool. The affordable housing need in Hartlepool has been evidenced through the Hartlepool Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Tees Valley SHMA and is supported by the large social housing waiting list. These reports acknowledge the important role of the private rented sector in meeting this affordable housing need.

1.2.3 To contribute towards neighbourhood sustainability and community well being through:

- An increased stock of good quality housing meeting the Decent Homes Standard
- Promoting regeneration and investment in affected areas
- Discouraging local property price devaluation
- Reducing nuisance and negative environmental impact caused by empty homes i.e. crime, fly tipping, vandalism, vermin, arson
- Reducing damp and other problems for neighbouring properties
- Helping to meet local housing need, therefore reducing the need for new build homes and the potential reduction of greenfield land development
- Cutting carbon emissions by renovating and undertaking home improvements rather than building new homes
- Increasing health outcomes for people
- Encourage economic vitality through increased trade for local businesses and increasing employment opportunities

1.2.4 To reduce the direct and indirect financial costs borne by empty property owners, neighbours, and public services such as the local authority, police and fire service.

1.3 Current Position

1.3.1 As in all towns, there will always be a percentage of empty homes in Hartlepool to allow the housing system to function effectively and facilitate residential mobility and the improvement of the housing stock. This is normal and allows the market to operate effectively. 3% has been generally used as a guideline.

Homes are empty for different reasons and we need to understand the causes in order to provide effective solutions. The main reason identified for the high number of empty private sector homes is the high number of small terraced homes in low demand locations. Other reasons include:

- Neglect by owners / abandonment due to lack of value
- Disputes over ownership
- Inability to sell
- Repossession / bankruptcy
- Deceased estate
- Ownership of the property unknown
- Speculative purchase (buy to keep empty)

An effective strategy will ensure owners of these properties are informed of all the options available, the benefits of filling an empty home and the enforcement options available to the Council.

The total number of properties in Hartlepool is 41,594 and of those **XXX** are vacant

In Hartlepool the number of empty private homes empty at April 2009 was 631, 1.9% of the total number of private homes. The number of households on the waiting list at April 2009 was 3794. These numbers are counted in accordance with the Government's annual housing return².

To be inserted: No. households approaching the Council for assistance to find accommodation

² Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix 2009

Dwellings in the following categories are counted as being potentially available to the market:

- Empty between changing occupants
- Undergoing modernisation, repair or conversion
- Awaiting demolition
- Repossessions
- Awaiting probate
- Newly completed but not occupied
- Owned by a charity
- Unoccupied annexes
- Trustee in bankruptcy.

Dwellings in the following categories are excluded because they are not considered as being available to the market:

- Second homes
- Holiday lets
- Flats and houses normally occupied by students
- Owner in prison
- Owner receiving or giving care
- Owner in the armed or visiting forces
- Flood damaged
- Awaiting occupation by clergy

The calculation also excludes long-term vacant private sector dwellings earmarked for redevelopment or demolition.

Using Council Tax Records, the properties that have been empty for over 6 months (as at April 2009) have been mapped out on a Geographical Information System. The map indicates clusters of empty homes in XXX areas. **GIS map to be inserted.**

1.4 Current available resources –

- 1.4.1 Council Tax data is used to provide a snapshot of the numbers of houses empty at any one time. Problematic properties affected by vandalism or nuisance come to the attention of the council by complaints from residents, residents groups and elected members. A proactive approach has been taken to deal with the condition of these individual properties, securing works by agreement with owners or in default after the service of notice. The focus of this work has been on the physical condition of the property and its effect on neighbouring residents.
- 1.4.2 An emergency property securing service in partnership with the Fire Brigade has contributed successfully towards reducing the incidence of deliberate fire setting in targeted areas.
- 1.4.3 Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) have been used to bring two houses back into use and a further Order is pending.

Owners of empty houses which have been the subject of complaint are asked to provide details of their plans to bring dwellings back into occupation.

1.4.4 Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Funding for the period 2008/2012

Single Housing Investment Pot (SHIP) & HMRF £11.5m and Homes and Communities Agency (English Partnerships legacy funding £4.85m)

This funding is to purchase private sector property in three key sites in central Hartlepool. The programme covers the following sites:

- Raby Road Corridor – This includes Hurworth, Perth, Gray, Grainger Streets and parts of Raby Road and Turnbull Street. All properties can be purchased by agreement.

- Belle Vue – This includes properties in parts of Borrowdale, Patterdale, Kathleen Streets together with parts of Windermere Road. Only owner occupied properties can be purchased.
- The third area is Carr, Hopps, Jobson, Richardson, Rodney Streets and parts of Blake Street and Hart Lane. Only owner occupied properties can be purchased.

Other strategic purchases can be made on the three HMR sites.

In order to deliver the programme on the ground a front line delivery Regeneration team is managed on a day to day basis in partnership with Housing Hartlepool. This Team effectively provide a 'mini' Neighbourhood Management Service in the three HMR areas. Each area has named Officers who deal with residents on a 'one to one' basis and hold street surgeries where needed. The Officers liaise with other bodies, sections of the Council and statutory agencies to improve the day to day living environment of residents. They hold and gather up to date evidence and information of how the areas are progressing, what issues/problems are occurring in any particular street.

1.5 Purpose of the Strategy

This Strategy for Hartlepool sets out the strategic direction for empty homes work and supports Hartlepool's Local Area Agreement outcomes. Its objectives are to:

- Bring long-term³ empty homes back into use using flexible solutions / appropriate enforcement action
- Prevent homes from becoming long-term empty
- Increase decent and affordable housing for those in housing need / maximise housing options in the town
- Continue to identify the *real* situation with regard to the distribution and ownership of empty homes and establish trends and reasons
- Support investment in Housing Market Renewal and its surrounding areas through the reduction of long-term empty homes
- Devise and implement an Action Plan with targets and milestones to deliver this Strategy up to 2014 in partnership with departments, organisations and agencies involved in its implementation.

³ Empty for over 6 months



Section 2: What can we do to tackle empty homes?

2.1 Identify the scale of action needed

Research relevant to this Strategy includes

The **2007 Strategic Housing Market Assessment** identified a shortfall of affordable housing (393 dwellings (244 net)) and a high number of empty homes at 4.7%.

The **2008 Tees Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment** reported an overall vacancy rate of 5.7% for Hartlepool in 2007 (7.1% in the private sector and 1.3% in the social sector) – the highest rate in the Tees Valley. This assessment identified a revised shortfall figure for affordable housing at 291 dwellings (193 net).

The 2009 draft Private Sector House Condition Survey estimates that there are 1,480 vacant dwellings, 4.6% of the private housing stock within Hartlepool. The national average is approximately 4.1%. Based on the results taken from the stock condition survey it is estimated that 1.9% of the private sector dwellings within Hartlepool are long-term vacant.

2.2 Provide Advice

The Council will need to engage owners, and where possible, to work in partnership with them to find the right solutions through the provision of advice on:

- Redevelopment / planning consents
- Finding a contractor / managing repairs
- How to join the Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme
- Finding a tenant through the Compass Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- How to sell the property
- Renting/leasing the property or finding a letting agent

2.3 Provide Financial Assistance

The council has the flexibility within its allocation of central government SHIP funding to provide financial assistance for owners to bring empty properties back into use. A repayable loan could be provided where the property is in need of works to make it habitable or lettable. The recent Government policy shift targeted towards supporting new build affordable homes means that the scope to introduce financial assistance for bringing empty homes back into use has been severely restricted, particularly in the short term.

Potentially any of the voluntary and enforcement options could involve the council in having to find funding to instigate action.

2.4 Voluntary acquisition

The council could purchase by agreement for onward sale/lease to a partner Registered Provider (formerly Registered Social Landlord) or for owner-occupation. Alternatively the council could broker a purchase by a partner Registered Provider.

2.5 Direct owners towards voluntary Leasing Schemes

The Council could work in partnership with suitable Registered Providers or private managing agents to provide a leasing scheme to which owners can be directed. Through such a leasing scheme the owner would agree a lease for a period of years and be guaranteed a rental income. The Registered Provider could sub-lease to the council and take nominated tenants.

2.6 Enforcement Options

- **Tackling security / nuisance issues - Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982**
Used to prevent unauthorised entry or for the purpose of preventing the property from becoming a danger to public health, and to remove rubbish. Works are carried out in default where an owner does not give a verbal agreement to carry out the works and costs are recharged back to the owner.
- **Tackling nuisance issues - Environmental Protection Act 1990**
Used to remove rubbish from empty properties and to carry out works to remedy the cause of the nuisance.
- **Tackling visual impact – Section 215, Town and Country Planning Act 1990**
Poor visual impact is one of the most common complaints about an empty home. The council can serve notice on owners who fail to maintain their properties. It deals with the external appearance (the visual amenity) but does not deal with the internal aspects. It will not necessarily result in the property being returned to use.
- **Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) – Section 132 Housing Act 2004**
The Council can apply to a Residential Property Tribunal to take over a property and to repair, let and manage it on behalf of the landlord for up to 7 years. Costs can be recouped from the rental income. However, it does mean that only properties with relatively low repair costs will be financially viable. This tool is a solution to the empty home whilst balancing the rights of the owner. The Council would seek to work with a partner Registered Provider, and/or an accredited private landlord who have the resources to manage properties to pilot an EDMO.
- **Enforced Sale – Section 103, Law of Property Act 1925** is a last resort option which allows the Council to force the sale of a property subject to a local land charge following works in default Action by the Council. The sale allows the Council to recover debt owed by the owner and also costs incurred as a result of the enforced sale. This tool may indirectly prompt the new owner to return the property to use.
- **Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) –Section 17, Housing Act 1985**, is generally regarded as a last resort solution as it removes ownership from the current owner to the Council. It may only be used if the Council can demonstrate that it has taken other measures to bring the property back into use and has a robust plan for the re-occupation / use / management of the property. This option shifts responsibility from the owner to the Council for bringing the property back into use and requires public resources.

2.6 Joint working across the Council

Although the Council has a range of legislative tools at its disposal the success of the Empty Homes Strategy will depend on co-operation across its various divisions including Planning, Regeneration, Strategic Housing, Community Safety, Council Tax and Legal. Joint working is already well established and can be developed to assist in the delivery of this Strategy.

2.7 End Use of Properties

The location and type of property brought back into use will be important in deciding what residential use is appropriate.

Options for end use include:

- Leasing with Registered Providers through council nominations
- Properties advertised for rent on Compass Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- EDMO
- Disposal of CPO'd properties to Registered Providers

Empty homes brought back into use through this Strategy will be delivered and monitored according to demand for that property type and location.



Section 3: Strategic Action

3.1 Setting Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this Strategy has been outlined in 1.5 and is detailed in the strategic objectives, which form the basis for the Action Plan in Section 4.

Action on empty homes can also be linked to wider objectives such as:

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing and temporary accommodation
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and crime
- Neighbourhood regeneration
- Increasing revenue from Council Tax
- Reducing complaints and demands on environmental health, police and fire service
- Increasing local economic activity
- Delivering sustainable development which considers effective protection of the environment.

3.2 Prioritising Action

The aim of this Strategy is to reduce the overall number of empty homes. A targeted approach will be used to bring properties back into use in areas that have been identified for proactive action. Analysis has shown particularly high concentrations of empty homes in particular areas (Appendix 4).

Within these 'priority areas' empty properties will be assessed for future action using the revised Empty Property Assessment Form which is a point based system. The Form will be used to gauge the most appropriate enforcement action for a particular case. The intention will be to return properties to meaningful use based on consistent and transparent criteria and policy. This takes into account factors such as:

- Condition / environmental impact / no. complaints received
- Time empty
- Number of empty properties in the same street

Although most of the proactive work will be within the identified areas it must be recognised that on occasion there will be the need to deal with homes outside of these areas, and a reporting

mechanism is being put in place to do this through the Derelict Buildings, Untidy Land, and Open Spaces Group.

3.3 Balancing enforcement and incentives

The appropriate course of action for any individual property will depend on whether the owner can be located and if they are willing to bring it back into use. In conjunction with this the financial vitality of the property should be considered balanced against the likely rental or sale price.

Action within this Strategy will be prioritised according to how long the property has been empty, the negative visual impact the property is having on the immediate neighbourhood, the level of complaints and the area it is situated in.

A range of solutions will be employed to ensure empty homes are brought back into use in appropriate areas. The Strategy will ensure a consistent and transparent approach to bringing empty homes back into use through the implementation of the revised Empty Property Assessment Form (Appendix 1).

3.4 Impact of the recession and other risks

The current recession and failing housing market offers threats and opportunities for tackling empty homes.

Mortgage repossessions are increasing across the country and there are concerns about the potential impact on buy-to-let tenants. This will be closely monitored within Hartlepool.

The market downturn in 2008/09 may result in an increase in empty homes as owners choose not to sell or can not find a buyer or tenant. The limited access to credit may also make it more difficult for owners and developers to raise finance for renovations and may result in churning of the private rented market. This will also be closely monitored and its impact assessed.

However, the market downturn may also bring opportunities for owners with an empty home falling in value to enter into long-term agreements with Registered Providers while they wait for the market to recover.

The Housing Sub-Group of the Hartlepool Partnership has recently examined the effect of the recession on a range of housing issues, including Private Sector Empty Homes, and identified some immediate actions⁴. (Appendix 5)

Changes in buy to let lending and less availability of owner occupier mortgages will impact on the number of homes left empty for over 6 months.

In addition there are a significant number of new build units currently empty in Hartlepool (mainly on the Marina). In the longer-term there will be a need to work more closely with planning colleagues to better align future housing demand with planning approvals.

3.5 Resources Needed

Most proactive authorities have at least one officer dedicated to carrying out the actions required to be carried out by an Empty Homes Strategy. The scale of action desired by the Council will require consideration of ways to provide this essential staffing resource

⁴ A Review of the impact of the recession on the implementation of Hartlepool's Housing Strategy. Housing Sub-Group, September 2009.

Financial aid towards the cost of empty homes work will be significant in assisting their return into use. Funding sources are restricted, and the Council will have to investigate the possibility of using SHIP capital, Section 106 agreement funding, and borrowing to pump-prime the enforcement actions proposed.

A business case will need to be developed to ensure the financial implications of using EDMO and CPO are understood.

3.6 How we will deal with empty homes / priority areas

In order to address the challenges to delivering this Strategy the following strategic objectives have been identified:



Objective One: Bring long-term empty homes back into use using flexible solutions / appropriate enforcement action



Objective Two: Prevent homes from becoming long-term empty



Objective Three: Increase decent and affordable housing for those in housing need / maximise housing options in the town



Objective Four: Continue to identify the *real* situation with regard to the distribution and ownership of empty homes and establish trends and reasons



Objective Five: Support investment in Housing Market Renewal and its surrounding areas through the reduction of long-term empty homes



Objective Six: Devise and implement an Action Plan with targets and milestones to deliver this Strategy up to 2014 in partnership with departments, organisations and agencies involved in its implementation

A SMART action plan for delivery of this Strategy up to 2014 has been developed using the 5 strategic objectives identified above and is contained in Section 4.

Section 4: Action Plan




Objective One: Bring long-term empty homes back into use using flexible solutions / appropriate enforcement action

Desired Outcome: To improve neighbourhoods and the environment by targeting and helping to bring long-term empty homes back into use.

Key Action	Key Task / Actions	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
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	Involved			
Develop an Empty Homes Toolkit	Develop an Empty Homes Management Protocol for private owners and registered providers to use when they own empty properties			
	Develop EDMO policy and procedures			
	Develop CPO policy and procedures			
	Develop Enforced Sale policy and procedures			
Using enforcement proactively tackle long-term empty properties in areas of housing need.	Bring XXX long-term empty properties back into use over the next 5 years			
	Identify first phase empty properties suitable for enforcement action			
	Pilot and evaluate the use of EDMO in line with policy and procedures			
	Explore possibility of employing a dedicated empty homes officer			
Explore opportunities for financial assistance to private owners	Evaluate the costs of bringing homes back into use			
	Investigate sources of funding			

 Objective Two: Prevent homes from becoming long-term empty				
Desired Outcome: Minimise the number of properties becoming empty for longer than 6 months				
Key Action	Key Task / Actions Involved	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
Develop a marketing and publicity approach to promote the Empty Homes Strategy	Develop empty homes publicity material			
	Improve empty homes information on the internet			
Provide a contact point within the Council for empty homes work	Develop and provide a range of methods of communication to enable people to make contact easily			
Improve liaison with private landlords	Offer advice to landlords on becoming a landlord			

	and assist in letting empty homes			
	Continue to promote and reward good landlords through the Landlords Accreditation Scheme			
Improve partnership working within the Council	Take a proactive approach and work closely with the anti-social behaviour team to educate landlords			
	Work with colleagues in Council Tax to ensure that the options available to bring empty homes back into use are made available to owners			



Objective Three: Increase decent and affordable housing for those in housing need / maximise housing options in the town

Desired Outcome: Improved access to decent and affordable housing for people in housing need

Key Action	Key Task / Actions Involved	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
Investigate and develop a range of re-use options for owners	Investigate and evaluate the feasibility of developing a leasing scheme with providers through council nominations			
	Promote the use of Compass CBL to advertise properties for rent			
Increase the use of empty homes in meeting housing need	Use the marketing strategy to create demand			
Work with registered providers to maximise housing options in the town	Monitor and evaluate the outcome from the pilot HH Managing Agent scheme			



Objective Four: Continue to identify the *real* situation with regard to the distribution and ownership of empty homes and establish trends and reasons

Desired Outcome: To have accurate information and mapped trends in order to effectively progress strategy development and enable informed decision making

Key Action	Key Task / Actions Involved	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
Develop an Empty Homes Database				
Establish an accurate baseline of empty homes information	Undertake a survey of empty home owners and establish why they are leaving their properties empty			
	Consult owners on their			

	views as to what the Council should be doing to help them return their property to use			
	Consult local residents and other groups for their views on empty homes in Hartlepool			
Map areas of housing need	Use the information from the Compass CBL scheme to identify areas of housing need			
Review and monitor empty homes performance	Join National Association of Empty Property Practitioners			
Work in partnership with Council Tax	Work with colleagues in Council Tax section to identify the data held on all empty properties			



Objective Five: Support investment in Housing Market Renewal and its surrounding areas through the reduction of long-term empty homes

Desired Outcome: Achieve long-term sustainability of these areas

Key Action	Key Task / Actions Involved	Responsibility	Resources	Timescale
Ensure empty homes work complements the regeneration activity for the town				



Section 5: Development of the Empty Homes Strategy

An Empty Homes Strategy Steering Group was established at the start of the Strategy development process. The aim of this was to engage internal and external partners, raise awareness and seek the views of relevant departments and organisations for the issues and priorities that the Strategy should address.

The Steering Group is made up of:

- Strategic Housing Officers
- Private Sector Housing Officers
- Housing Advice Team Manager
- Neighbourhood Managers
- Regeneration Officers
- Planning Officers
- Anti Social Behaviour Team Manager
- Local Taxation Assistant
- Housing Hartlepool
- NDC Trust

The Empty Homes Strategy Steering Group is attended by officers who have a corporate interest to ensure the success of the Strategy. The group reports to the Derelict Buildings Group, chaired by the Mayor.



Appendix 1 Empty Property Assessment Form

Address	_____
Date of Inspection	_____
Number homes in street	_____
Number empty in street	_____

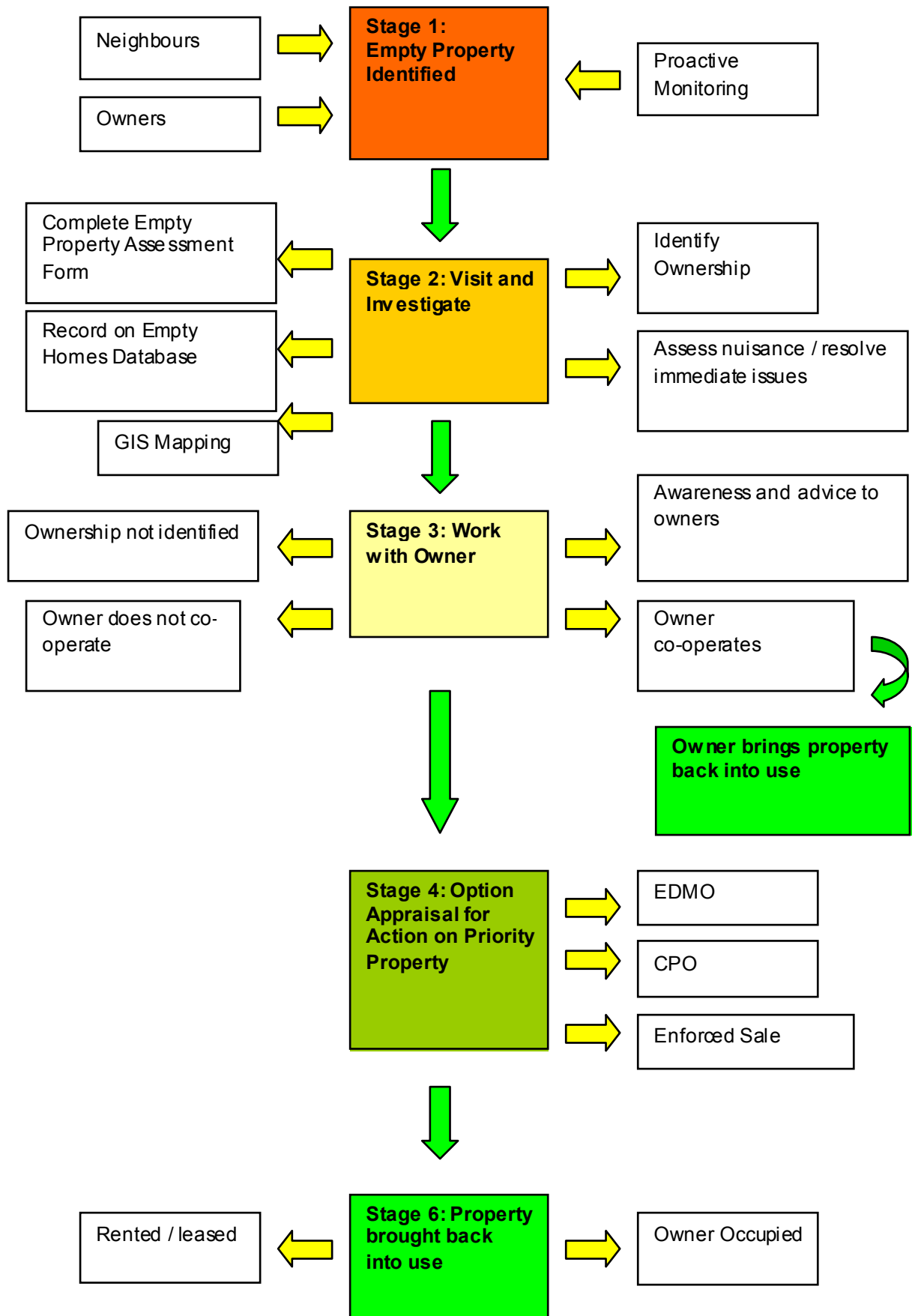
TIME VACANT	
Less than 6 months	5
6 months – 1 year	10
1 year – 5 years	15
Over 5 years	25
VISUAL IMPACT	
Visible neglect	
Broken window (s)	5
Damaged door	5
Partial boarding / shuttering	10
Full boarding / shuttering	20
Poor paintwork (fascias / windows)	5
Overgrown garden	5
History of fly-tipping	10
Insecure / attracting vandalism	10
Location	
Thoroughfare	10

CRIME / COMMUNITY SAFETY	
Risk of Arson	15
ASB Complaints	5 (per complaint)
Repeat Calls to Police / community tension	10
AREA	
Zone A (areas identified for possible HMR work but not yet confirmed – info on streets involved from AW/NJ)	10
Zone B (Regeneration Area)	5
Zone C (list from AW on neighbouring streets to Regen areas + all Selective Licensing streets)	15
COMPLAINTS / STATUTORY ACTION	
Justified Complaints about property condition	5 (per complaint)
Notices Served	5 (per notice)
Works in Default	5 (per order raised)
DEMAND	
Interest from purchasers	10
Interest from renters	10
SCORE	
A. SUB TOTAL	
B. MULTIPLIED BY % EMPTY IN STREET	
C. TOTAL (A+B)	

Works in Default debts – details (notice served and amount of debt:

Other debt (e.g. Council Tax) – details:

Comments





Non-enforcement incentives	Risks / Disadvantages	Advantages
Advice on: *redevelopment / planning consents *finding a contractor / managing repairs *how to join the Landlord Accreditation Scheme *finding a tenant through the Compass CBL Scheme *how to sell the property *the leasing scheme *tax issues		
Financial Assistance The Council could provide a loan to the owner to make the property lettable or suitable for owner-occupation, to be repaid monthly at an agreed rate, in a lump sum, or for a share of the value of the property on future sale	1. Reduced central government funding for private sector housing improvement due to the policy shift targeted towards new build affordable homes means that financial assistance for bringing empty homes back into use is restricted	1. Only relevant for regeneration of targeted areas 2. Council can apply conditions 3. Funding can be recycled 4. Placing a financial charge on a property for repayment on future sale could assist an owner of a single empty with very limited access to finance, to bring the property back into use
Rent Deposit Scheme Providing a link to existing schemes or financing a new scheme to offer landlords a bond in lieu of a deposit for accepting applicants nominated by the Council		
Voluntary Leasing Directing the owner to a Registered Provider management / leasing scheme for a period of years. The Registered Provider could sub-lease to the Council and take nominated tenants		1. The owner will sign a long-term lease and be guaranteed a rental income for the length of the lease.
Voluntary Acquisition The Council can purchase by agreement for onward sale / lease to a Registered Provider for owner-occupation. Alternatively to broker a purchase between the owner and a Registered Provider	1. Restrictions on the Council purchasing and retaining houses for rent. 2. Transfers financial risk to the Council / Registered Provider	1. Gains control of the property 2. Useful as a pre-CPO procedure to show that the Council has tried to deal with the owner by discussion rather than enforcement

Good Tenant Scheme This aims to reduce ASB in the private rented sector by providing landlords with information to enable them to make informed choices about the history of potential tenants		1. Landlord provided with detailed history of potential tenants
--	--	---

Enforcement Tools to deal with property condition	Risks / Disadvantages	Advantages
Preventing Unauthorised Access Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Section 29 Service of notice on properties open to unauthorised access or likely to become a danger to public health. Requires the owner to take steps to secure the property. The Council can secure the property if the work is not carried out, and has powers to secure without notice in emergency		
Removing rubbish Environmental Protection Act 1990 – Section 79/80 Service of notice on the owner to remove rubbish from empty houses		1. Can be used to target premises and to proceed with Works in Default, EDMO, CPO 2. Works lead to a registered charge and is fully recoverable with costs.
Tackling Visual Impact Town and Country Planning Act 1990 - Section 215 Service of notice to improve the external appearance of unsightly property or land considered detrimental to the amenity of the neighbourhood	1. Does not directly bring property back into use 2. Does not deal with the internal parts of the property	1. Non payment of any debt can be used as the basis for Enforced Sale action
Work in Default The Council can proceed to carry out any of the above works when an owner defaults on any of the above notices by not carrying out the works	1. Involves an initial outlay of capital.	1. Accumulation of specific outstanding debts can instigate Enforced Sale

Enforcement tools to bring properties back into use	Risks / Disadvantages	Advantages
Empty Dwelling Management Orders Housing Act 2004 – Section 132		

<p>Council can make an application for an Interim Management Order to a Residential Property Tribunal to take over management for up to a year. If the owner has not reached an agreement with the Council for the owner to resume management during the year, the Council can make a Final Management Order to retain management for up to a further 7 years</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open to appeal, particularly in hard to let areas 2. Procurement process needed to secure managing agent, e.g. RSL 3. Owner entitled to receive rent less acceptable costs of management 4. The Council may not recoup the total cost of repair/refurbishment necessary to make the property lettable 5. May need to identify funding for costs of appearing at Residential Property Tribunal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brings property back into use. 2. Powerful persuasive tool. 3. Costs can be recouped from rental income 4. Funding for acquisition is not required, though some initial expenditure may be needed to bring the property up to a reasonable standard 5. May take as little as 6 months to obtain
<p>Enforced Sale Law of Property Act 1925</p> <p>A debt recovery power which allows the Council to force the sale of a property when charges are registered as a result of works carried out in default and the debt isn't paid.</p> <p>Suggested level of accumulated debt to trigger action is £300.</p> <p>Transfer of ownership is monitored by the Council to ensure that the property is brought back into use</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can't enforce a sale if the debt is paid – but is a catalyst for dialogue. 2. Doesn't apply to all debts, e.g. Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act notices are not registerable 3. May not be appropriate for heavily blighted areas. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can't enforce a sale if the debt is paid – but may result in the owner reconsidering the options. 1. Brings property back into use. 2. Recovers debts. 3. Has been successful in larger authorities with dedicated teams 4. Council is never liable for the property 5. Costs incurred in taking action can be taken out of proceeds of onward sale 6. Relatively short time period of 6-9 months to force the sale 7. Owner is required to identify future use and not just pay the debt.
<p>Compulsory Purchase Order Housing Act 1985 – Sec.17</p> <p>The Council can acquire an empty house where it can be demonstrated that there is housing need. Used when an owner has no realistic plans to bring property back into use or won't agree a voluntary solution. The owner is entitled to the market value of the property. The property would be sold, either on the open market or by inviting offers from interested parties.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council financial resources needed up front 2. Council must have proposals for subsequent occupation and management 3. Open to public enquiry 4. Have to hold the purchase funds indefinitely in cases where the owner is not known 5. May not recoup the total cost of purchase 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Threat of CPO can persuade owner to take action without the need to enforce the CPO. 2. Can apply conditions to the sale, e.g. buy back if the property is not renovated within a specified timescale, e.g. restricting the sale for owner-occupation

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 6. May be difficulties in selling on | |
| 7. Process can be lengthy | |



Appendix 4 Priority Areas for 2010 - 2015

In producing this Strategy for 2010 – 2015 the Empty Homes Strategy Steering Group identified the following areas as having particularly high concentration of empty homes:

- 6 Selective Licensing Areas
- Belle Vue
- Oxford Road
- Stephen Street
- Maina
- West View Road
- Individual Streets i.e.
 - Helmsley Street
 - Dent / Derwent Street
 - Baden Street
 - Sheriff Street
 - Mapleton Road / St Oswalds Street⁵

In addition the Strategy will also prioritise individual properties in streets that do not have high numbers of empties i.e.

- Tankerville Street
- St Pauls Road

These priority areas were identified in December 2009 and it is expected that during the lifetime of this Strategy that this list may change and it will therefore be monitored and analysed on a regular basis. Strict criteria will be introduced to remove any streets from the priority list and replace them.

⁵ Please note that this list is not exhaustive



Appendix 5 Links to Wider Objectives

• National Policy

Empty homes have become an important issue nationally over the last few years and the Government, working with the Empty Homes Agency, is encouraging local authorities to adopt measures to bring privately owned empty properties back into use as part of their strategic housing approach.

The government estimates that empty homes account for 3% of the housing stock. Of the 697,055 vacant properties in 2008, 293,728 were identified as private sector vacancies of over 6 months.

The government has produced a range of guidance and legislation designed to help Councils set and achieve challenging targets on this issue.

- All local authorities have been encouraged to publish an empty homes strategy
 - VAT has been reduced to 5% on properties empty for 2 years and 0% on properties empty over 10 years.
 - Full council tax charging has been introduced on empty homes and access to the name and address details of owners
 - CPO streamlining procedures have been introduced
- **Communities Plan – Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future (2003).** This sets a long-term programme of action for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. The Plan includes housing and planning reforms and offers a new approach to how we build and what we build. It specifically refers to bringing empty homes back into use.
 - **Housing Act 2004.** This introduced Empty Dwelling Management Orders, the first power specifically targeting privately owned empty homes. This involves local authorities taking over most of the rights and responsibilities of the owner of an empty dwelling, to refurbish and rent out the property, without becoming the legal owner.
 - **Barker Review of Housing Supply 2006.** One of the key themes within the report and recommendations was to ensure more efficient use of urban land – this included more efficient use of existing housing stock and returning empty homes back into use.
 - **Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.** The Act established the Homes and Communities Agency, which focuses on delivering more new and affordable homes across all tenures and will drive and invest in regeneration. It will help to deliver the commitments set out in the Housing Green Paper 2007, which make specific reference to the need to tackle long term empty properties.

• Regional Policy

Government Office for the North East contributes to the implementation and promotion of the Government's Housing Policy to ensure people have a good quality of life in sustainable communities. They work with local delivery partners and stakeholders around the key policy themes of affordable homes; tackling low demand and market restructuring; the provision of decent homes and addressing the housing needs of vulnerable groups. The North East Housing Strategy 2007 sets the strategic housing priorities for the region with two of the four strategic objectives relating to existing housing stock, therefore impacting on returning empty homes back into use.

• Sub Regional Policy

Across the Tees Valley there are 3918 private sector homes that have been empty for over 6 months⁶. Hartlepool works closely with its Tees Valley partners to develop specific initiatives to address the problem of empty homes and the Tees Valley has a good track record of sub-regional working.

- **Tees Valley Empty Homes Scheme.** Between 2007 and March 2009 the Tees Valley Local Authorities were involved in this initiative to target long term empty homes through purchase and renovation. 7 properties were purchased within Hartlepool.
- **Sub Regional Empty Homes Strategy.** At the time of writing this Strategy work has commenced on the development of a Sub Regional Empty Homes Strategy to introduce wider ranging and varied enforcement approaches, and where possible, to follow a common approach.

- **Local Strategies**

Empty homes impact upon and have links with many local strategies.

- **Community Strategy & Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy 2008-2020.** The Community Strategy, called Hartlepool's Ambition, looks ahead to 2020 and sets out the long-term vision and aspirations for the future:

"Hartlepool will be an ambitious, healthy, respectful, inclusive, thriving and outward-looking community, in an attractive and safe environment, where everyone is able to realise their potential".

The Vision is described in more detail in eight themes:

1. [Jobs and the Economy](#)
2. [Lifelong Learning & Skills](#)
3. [Health & Wellbeing](#)
4. [Community Safety](#)
5. [Environment](#)
6. [Housing](#)
7. [Culture & Leisure](#)
8. [Strengthening Communities](#)

The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy provides the context for neighbourhood level regeneration within Hartlepool. It forms part of the Community Strategy and its aim is to reduce inequalities in the most disadvantaged communities and to help tackle social and economic exclusion by lowering worklessness and crime and improving health, skills, housing and the physical environment.

- **Housing Strategy 2006-2011.** The current Strategy was developed by the Hartlepool Partnership through the Housing Partnership. It details our housing objectives, priorities and the actions that will be undertaken to meet local housing need and aspiration. The aim of the housing partnership is to:

"Ensure that there is access to good quality and affordable housing in sustainable neighbourhoods and communities where people want to live."

In 2008 a supplement was produced to be read alongside the Housing Strategy 2006-11. It acknowledges that there is a need to be more proactive in bringing empty homes back into use and to consider the use of all of the options open to the council.

Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy. This Strategy identifies the following priorities:

- Achieving Decent Homes targets for private housing occupied by vulnerable groups
- Delivering empty homes initiatives

⁶ Empty Homes Agency 2008

- Providing targeted support to renovate and repair housing in areas adjacent to redevelopment areas
- **Homelessness Strategy.** At the time of writing this Strategy work has commenced on the development of an updated Homelessness Strategy for Hartlepool. The Strategy will set out the strategic framework for the continued improvement to the housing and support services delivered by the Council and its partners in the prevention of homelessness.
- **Housing Market Renewal / Regeneration.** HMR is a key priority for the Council. It is the leading thrust of the Council's Housing and Regeneration Strategies and a major element of the Local Strategic Partnership's Community Plan. Access to funding since 2006 has been through the Council's participation in the Tees Valley Living Partnership, where the Council is a major local authority partner in the 'Pathfinder'. Sub regional co-ordination is undertaken by Tees Valley Living with implementation and delivery by the individual local authority.

The Council's Housing Regeneration Team prepare neighbourhood, area based and town-wide regeneration strategies, co-ordinate the development of bids and submissions for regeneration resources and manage/support a range of regeneration programmes and projects.

The programme has been driven by community input and involvement which has been heavily influenced and guided by residents. Two key documents are the New Deal for Communities Community Housing Plan and the North Central Hartlepool Master Plan. All current and passed HMR sites have been the key priorities in these documents.

- **Crime, Disorder and Substance Misuse Strategy 2008.** The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on local authorities to form a Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and to work with partners to promote community safety. In Hartlepool this is the Safer Hartlepool Partnership and its Strategy 2008 – 2011 has the reduction of criminal damage and anti social behaviour among its priorities.

3.6.5 Links to training / employment

Within the Council's HMR and new build programme links have been made to employment and training. At the initial developer selection stage a development brief is produced which details the employment and training requirements of the scheme. The preferred developer is then appointed and the employment and training requirements secured within a development brief. On commencement of the development the employment and training requirements are monitored by the Council's Working Solutions Team to ensure that all requirements in the development brief are fulfilled. This approach is used for all Council HMR schemes and new build affordable housing schemes.



Appendix 6 Housing Sub-Group Findings

The Housing Sub-Group of the Hartlepool Partnership has identified a small number of issues worthy of more detailed investigation through the process of the updating of the Housing Strategy. For Private Sector Empty Homes these are:

- Through selective licensing, there is the opportunity to engage with landlords earlier, and more proactively when homes are known to be empty
- To date, the Council has not used Empty Dwelling Management Orders. This should be piloted and the approach evaluated
- There is an opportunity to explore more innovative ownership deals for homes which are vacant. This could include a partnership approach between HBC and a RSL in an owner and manager role

- The emerging Empty Homes Strategy and associated Action Plan should be completed. This should clearly identify geographic areas for priority intervention and present a review of resources available for this activity
- There is an opportunity to explore the availability of funding to support loans to fund repairs or rent guarantee / bond payments to make properties available for Council nominated applicants
- The Community Campus activity has been well received. Is there an opportunity to secure additional funding to support this activity?



Appendix 7 EDMO Survey Findings

In July 2009 a survey was sent out to all Local Authorities (LAs) who currently use or propose to use the EDMO tool.

From the responses received from 9 LAs using or threatening to use EDMO it was seen that the time taken to serve an EDMO ranged from 3 months to 18 months. The authorities that take the quickest time have employed dedicated empty homes officers. Where it is taking 18 months can be said to be due to staff undertaking this task as part of their overall duties. The costs of serving an EDMO also range considerably, from £1.5k to £25k. Looking at the funding sources it could be concluded that the authorities with larger budgets are spending more.

EDMOs have been served on a range of property types that have been empty for a range of reasons including mental health issues, debt, owner moved out. The time left empty before the EDMO was served also ranges widely from 12 months to 17 years. Most properties are now being let through private letting agents, the owner, partner ALMO and RSLs. Some have also been sold and a couple are still empty.

All LAs that responded to the survey believe that the EDMO proves value for money and would serve another.

APPENDIX B**EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2010-2015****CONSULTATION 3.12.09 – 1.2.10**

Question	Comment
Do you think our priorities and objectives are the right ones?	
Do you think that the Action Plan will address the objectives?	
Do you think there are any gaps in the Strategy that relate to empty homes?	
Do you think the priority areas (Appendix 4) are the right ones?	
How easy is the Strategy to read?	
Your Name	
Contact Details (please provide your preferred contact details so that we may respond to your feedback)	

This consultation is an opportunity to comment on the draft Empty Homes Strategy for 2010 – 2015. We want to ensure that the document reflects the priorities of the wider community. Please complete the questionnaire to ensure that your comments are included in this consultation process. If you would like further information on the development of the Empty Homes Strategy or have any questions / comments on the first draft please contact Karen Kelly on 01429 524896 or karen.kelly@hartlepool.gov.uk