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MEETING	EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING & ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES ADVISORY PANEL
DATE	14 JULY 2008
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS SUNDERLAND (CHAIR), BOWGETT (VICE-CHAIR), HORTON, MORLEY, SIMPSON-LAING, TAYLOR, WISEMAN AND REID (EXECUTIVE MEMBER SUBSTITUTING FOR CLLR GALLOWAY)
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLOR SUE GALLOWAY (EXECUTIVE MEMBER)

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## **12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

## **13. MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2008 be approved and signed by the Chair and Executive Member as a correct record.

## **14. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

## **15. EMPTY HOMES POLICY**

Members considered a report that updated them on the number of long term empty homes in York and of the work undertaken to bring properties back into use and briefed Members on the use of Empty Property Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO's), including the resources implications in using these measures.

Officers gave a verbal update and informed Members that the key messages from the survey were that:

- 761 homes were identified as being empty for more than six months  
229 (30.1%) of the properties were occupied;  
181 (23.8%) were actively being marketed for sale or for rent;  
and

20 (2.6%) properties were closed /brick up or in a derelict state.

<b>Total number of properties</b>	<b>761</b>	
Total Occupied	229	30.1%
Unsure	79	10.4%
<b>Total empty</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>59.5%</b>

Of the 453 empty properties:

Empty for sale /rent	181	39.95%
Empty - other	146	32.22%
Empty - repairs	106	23.39%
Empty - derelict	15	3.31%
Empty - closed / brick up	5	1.10%

- Each dwelling was visited at least once and information about the property was recorded using a standard survey form to ensure a consistent approach to recording the findings.
- When the 453 empty properties were assessed against the current eligibility criteria for empty homes grants, 214 properties were identified as being eligible.

Members had a detailed discussion and raised a number of issues and in answer to some of Members' questions, Officers confirmed that:

- The recovery of the capital costs could not be extended beyond seven years as the law currently states but could be recovered at a later date through a charge on the property.
- The area's currently covered in the City could be expanded following government guidelines.
- 13 properties had not been located and the addresses would be circulated to the relevant Ward Councillors to locate them.
- They would not be revisiting the 17 flats they could not gain access to due to resource implications.
- They had liaised with Norwich and Lewisham Councils.

Some Members suggested Officers join the EDMO Homes Agency Group and it was agreed they would register on the online discussion group.

Members considered and had a detailed discussion on the three options available:

- **Option One** - To maintain the current level of empty homes work and the resources attached to it.

- **Option Two** - Increase the level of dedicated resources to empty homes through the employment of an Empty Property Officer with responsibility to lead on all of the initiatives and raise the profile of empty homes work in the city.
- **Option Three** - Increase the level of resources to empty homes work through the Employment of a temporary officer on a fixed term, (as and when required) to release other staff within the team to take on the more proactive role in pursuing an EDMO as and when the need arises.

Members considered the financial implications of each option and applying for a growth bid was suggested. Some Members commented that the current resources had brought 24 homes back into use with no additional capital needing to be spent.

Members voted on option one, which resulted in a split vote and the Chair took the casting vote and option one was carried.

Members thanked all Officers involved in this report and commended the team on the 300 hours they had already spent on empty homes work.

#### Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member be advised to approve Option One - to maintain the current level of empty homes work and the resources attached to it.

#### Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: With the low level of empty homes within the City, the current approach provides value for money.

## **16. SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS REPORT - APRIL 2007-MARCH 2008**

Members considered a report that informed them of the number of complaints, compliments, comments and requests made about social care services between April 2007 and March 2008 and provided information about the lessons learnt as a result of complaints received and the service improvements made.

Members noted that the complaints received last year had been reduced and that no stage three complaints took place. Members thanked officers and commended them on this result.

#### Advice of the Advisory Panel

That the Executive Member be advised to note and accept the information in this report and the annual social care complaints and representations report 2007/08.

Decision of the Executive Member

RESOLVED: That the advice of the Advisory Panel be accepted and endorsed.

REASON: To comply with the council's responsibilities to provide a publicly available report on complaints relating to its social care services.

CLLR REID  
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

CLLR SUNDERLAND,  
Chair of Advisory Panel  
[The meeting started at 5.03 pm and finished at 6.00 pm].