

## Appendix 2

### **Purpose**

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**To advise staff of the criteria in respect of discretionary funding towards empty homes on which assistance eligibility will be based.**

### **Background**

In 2015 the Council will also receive further resources from the TGSE funding allocation which will also be used to bring empty properties back into use.

Whilst these resources are beneficial the Council recognises the need to ensure cost effectiveness and, as a result, has developed a voluntary Empty Dwelling Management Assistance programme, similar to an Empty Dwelling Management Order but with the consent of the parties involved and without the need for formal applications to the First Tier Tribunal Service

### **Funding Policy Review**

Policy is reviewed each year in preparation for the new financial year.

### **Proof of Ownership [Title]**

As Empty Dwelling Management Assistance (EDMA) is discretionary in nature, there is a need to ensure that adequate proof of title has been established. Proof of title will be required via Land registry.

### **Implementation of Empty Homes Grant Strategy**

Enquiries can arise in various ways. Often, they will be generated from initial contacts by the officer responsible for contacting owners following complaints or other notification. In such cases, the grant enquiry will be transferred to the Strategy and Planning Manager to coordinate with the relevant contractor.

### **Eligibility**

The property must be recognised as being empty by either Council Tax or the Private Sector Housing Team for more than six months, not have been subject to any other enforcement by the Council that resulted in the property becoming empty, by example, Housing Health and Safety Rating System Enforcement by Private Sector Housing, and the owner must not be subject to enforcement action by the Council in relation to any other property that he/she may own. The owner must have owned the property for more than 12 months.

## **Process**

This represents a voluntary agreement between the property owner and Southend on Sea Borough Council that will see the Council take over the management of the relevant properties for a period of time and carry out repairs to bring them up to the 'Decent Homes Standard'.

The repairs and management would be coordinated by the contractor appointed to operate the Empty Dwelling Management Order enforcement contract.

Any repairs would be agreed to by all parties prior to commencement as would the total cost of the works and the length of time that the management will be in place.

The amount of money spent by Southend on Sea Borough Council to conduct the repairs would then be recovered through the rental income. To protect that expenditure, a land charge will be placed on the relevant property. Once the cost of the works is recovered then the charge will be removed.

The Council will not charge interest on the amount spent.

The project would commence with an initial survey conducted by South Essex Homes to establish the scale of works and also to seek quotations from contractors. This would allow all the parties involved to obtain an understanding of the total cost and also to then calculate the timescale of the management period.

Once this is agreed, a formal agreement to that effect can be reached, the charge placed and the work can commence.

Should there be a 3<sup>rd</sup> party charge, then the consent of that organisation will be required before commencement.

### ***VAT on Empty Homes Renovation***

*Regard shall be had to the current VAT advice note.*

- Queries concerning this practice note to be referred to the Strategy and Planning Manager in the first instance.