

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3

EMPTY PROPERTIES OFFICER

- 1 Members recommended that BCBC recruit a dedicated Empty Properties Officer to address the problems with Empty Homes in Bridgend County Borough. The Committee believed it was essential that BCBC have their own dedicated officer to address these issues, and this service should not be delivered as part of a shared service.
- 2 Members further recommended that once the Empty Properties Officer is appointed they become the co-ordinator of the Empty Properties Working Group.

The following response has been received in relation to this Committee report to Cabinet with the above recommendations

The capital programme approved as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2018-19 to 2021-22 included an allocation of funding previously used for the Caerau ward housing renewal area which finished at the end of 2016-17. It was agreed to use this allocation of £100,000 to widen the scope to fund housing renewal/ deal with empty property issues across the County Borough.

An Empty Property Coordinator has been appointed and the post commenced on 1 October 2018. The Coordinator is a qualified Environmental Health Officer employed by the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) and the full annual budget of £37,000 per annum is being used to fund the post for 3 days per week on a permanent basis. The post holder will continue to be employed by SRS but will be dedicated to Bridgend for 3 days per week and will be embedded within BCBC's housing team. The post will coordinate the Empty Property Working Group as recommended by the Committee.

After consideration of the needs of this role it was concluded that the level of experience and knowledge required for this post would not be achievable for 5 days at the budget level that has been identified. A lower grade post for 5 days per week would not bring with it the relevant experience or abilities and would not necessarily be easy to recruit. Therefore the benefits outlined below, and the joint working already in place with SRS outweigh the fact that it is a 3 day post and offers momentum and synergy to this work.

As a qualified Environmental Health Officer the post-holder may not only explore, but also be able to instigate, the potential use of enforcement action that is available to the Council. Whilst working side by side with Officers in the Housing team, the post will also be able to draw upon the considerable experience and local knowledge of the wider SRS team situated in Bridgend which can provide resilience and support in delivery of the service. In addition, the post-holder will be able to utilise the considerable knowledge and experience in relation to Empty Properties which exists in other teams within the SRS.