# **Empty Dwellings**



**Coventry** City Council

Property Licensing and Housing Enforcement Manager

### Introduction to Empty Dwellings

- Empty dwelling may be a flat, house or multi occupied building
- Become empty through a number of ways
  - Bereavement/ probate/ inheritance
  - Second home
  - Change in occupancy
  - Registered charity use
  - Owner in prison/ care or other temporary absence
  - Prohibited by law
  - Bankruptcy/ trustee / repossession
- Long Term = more than six months







# Long Term Empty Dwellings in Coventry

Wasted resource and blights on neighbourhoods

• Magnets for fly tipping, anti-social behaviour, vandalism and arson

- 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 Cabinet approved Empty Dwellings Strategy 2021-26
- "Reduce the number of long term empty dwellings to a practical minimum"







# **Empty Dwellings Strategy 2021-26**

- Three main Objectives
  - Objective 1 Promote a range of advice, assistance and support and develop new solutions;
  - Objective 2 Use enforcement action to bring long term problematic empty dwellings back into use; and
  - Objective 3 Better understand why dwellings are being left empty and where possible prevent dwellings from becoming empty for long periods of time.







### Our approach

- Three phases leading up to formal action
  - Phase 1 work with the owner to identify options and find a solution
  - No satisfactory progress case will progress to Phase 2 (informal warning)
  - Subject to regular environmental crime and ASB skip stage 2 and move to phase 3 (formal action) /o wner of a property is untraceable or demonstrates an unwillingness to work with the Council
- The Council will seek to recover all costs where possible
- Extent of enforcement determined by the resources available to fund both the revenue and capital elements
- Prior to enforcement look at all options available legally and within available resources to ensure not being subjected to unnecessary risk







#### **Action Plan**

- Action 1 Secure approval of the revised Empty Dwellings Strategy 2021 2026
- Action 2 Appoint a suitably experienced Empty Dwellings Officer
- Action 3 Review and revise the advice and assistance available to owners
- Action 4 Explore opportunities for projects
- Action 5 Explore opportunities for partnership working
- Action 6 Develop links with internal and external agencies i.e. lettings agents
- Action 7 Development of service level agreement and policies and procedures

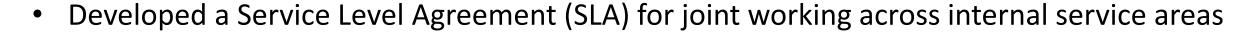






#### What have we done so far...

- Secured the approval of the revised Empty Dwellings Strategy
- Appointed Empty Dwellings Officer



- Revised the online reporting form to provide an effective and anonymous system
- Analysed 300+ cases to develop an empty dwellings property database
- Identified 32 priority cases targeting 4 for potential insolvency action or enforced sale;
  6 potential Compulsory Purchase Order action; 22 requiring proactive enforcement
- Targeted one long term problematic case with Demolition Order /CPO action
- During 2022 brought 33 properties back into use









#### **Enforcement Powers**

- General enforcement powers
- Untidy gardens
- Pests
- Nuisance
  - Targeted by using appropriate legislation
- Service level agreement
- Powers to carry out works in default
- Build evidence base for targeted intervention

- Enforced Sale
  - Incur costs to register a charge
  - Recovery debt (charge)
  - Value vs charge
  - Enforce sale at auction
  - Work with new owner
  - Can also be used for Ctax debt







### **Enforcement Powers**

- Compulsory Purchase Orders
  - Power of last resort and where there is a compelling case
  - Owners refuse to take action
  - Owner cannot be traced
  - Long term empty
  - Negotiations failed
  - Proven housing need
  - Time consuming
  - Redevelop site with partners

- Empty Dwelling Management Orders
  - Conditions
    - Failed negotiations
    - Wholly unoccupied for at least six months
    - No prospect of being reoccupied
  - Temporarily take over management
  - Works to bring property up to standard - cost effective to do so
  - Interim measure 12 months
    - Limited control as owner has final consent
  - Final EDMO no more than 7 years
    - Application to Tribunal







### Useful contacts

 Report a problematic Empty Dwellings housingenforcement@coventry.gov.uk

#### Recommendations

- Scrutiny to note current position and funding
- To support the co-ordinated response to managing Empty Dwellings in the city
- To include as a future agenda item to receive an update on progress and outcomes achieved in dealing with long term empty dwellings







Thank you for listening

