

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING TASK & FINISH GROUP

8 MAY 2024 AT 12.00 PM

PRESENT: Cllr MJ Crooks - Chair
Cllr C Harris, Cllr MJ Surtees and Cllr P Williams

Officers in attendance: Valerie Bunting, Steven Connor, Rebecca Owen, Madeline Shellard and Sharon Stacey

7. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Gibbens and Lambert.

8. **Declarations of interest**

No interests were declared.

9. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

10. **Empty homes**

An officer from the private sector housing team informed members of the work of the service in relation to empty homes including issues resulting from hoarding, techniques to encourage owners to bring properties back into use, and powers available.

Information from council tax was requested in relation to the number of empty properties, how long they had been empty, particularly those that had been empty for at least two years.

Targeting empty homes was discussed and it was acknowledged that due to the increase in damp and mould work, there was no capacity for additional work on empty homes. It was noted that the team couldn't proactively contact owners of empty homes, but if an empty home was reported, a questionnaire was sent. Officers reported that the Borough Bulletin was used to encourage those with empty homes to come forward, but the response rate was low. It was suggested that a full article be included in a future Borough Bulletin.

The difficulty of selling a home when a resident was in care or when they had deceased but there was a charge on the property for care costs was discussed.

11. **Changes in council tax premium on empty properties**

The Democratic Services Manager provided some information from Revenues & Benefits on the changes to charging council tax on empty properties. It was agreed that a senior officer from the Revenues & Benefits Service be invited to

the next meeting to give a full update on the new regulations and provide figures on numbers of empty homes, for how long they had been empty and numbers of council tax payers paying enhanced rates due to their property being empty for an extended period of time.

12. **Housing needs study - private rented housing**

The Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer provided an update on the housing needs study and the growth of the private rented sector. Discussion ensued in relation to private rented housing including some tenants' reluctance to complain about the condition of a property due to the worry of being evicted, and the affordability of properties for larger families.

The questions that might be put to a letting agent at a future meeting were discussed, including their opinion of standards of private rental properties. It was also suggested that a tenant who has had problems with a privately rented property could be invited.

Some of the problems of getting registered providers on board for S106 housing were highlighted. It was also noted that shared ownership seemed to have been overshadowed by the first homes schemes.

It was suggested that an outcome from this group may be to lobby government to give councils more freedom, powers and ability to buy new stock.

13. **Census information**

Some interesting points were noted from the census information. The following points were raised:

- The types of houses previously suitable for first time buyers were often purchased by landlords to rent out
- Some landlords were leaving the market due to new tax implications
- Properties were often extended, leaving fewer smaller properties.

14. **Agenda and information required for next meeting**

The following was suggested for the next meeting:

- Invite a letting agent, a tenant and a private landlord
- Draft a list of areas to lobby on
- Invite an officer from Revenues & Benefits to present council tax changes and figures.

15. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was agreed for 12pm on 13 June.