

Agenda Item No:

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny (Services)

Date of Meeting: 16th February 2012

Report Title: Scrutiny Review of Security and Maintenance of Derelict Buildings
– Review of Actions

Report By: Tim Cookson
Borough Planning Officer and
Mike Hepworth
Head of Environmental Health and Parking

Purpose of Report

To report on actions agreed by Cabinet to the Scrutiny Review of Management and Security of Derelict Buildings

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That the progress in implementing the agreed actions from the Scrutiny Review of Management and Security of Derelict Buildings are noted.**

Reasons for Recommendations

To recognise the actions taken to implement the Scrutiny Review of Management and the Security of Derelict Buildings. .

Introduction

1. The report of the Scrutiny Review of Management and Security of Derelict Buildings was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services on 2nd June 2011 and it was then reported to the Cabinet on July 2011 for the management response. The recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny for Services Committee were accepted by the Cabinet. This report reviews progress made in responding to the resolved actions.

- 1.1. All concerned in the review, including Hastings Borough Council Officers and Councillors, colleagues from the Police and Fire and Rescue Services, and Officers from other local authorities who responded to requests for information, should be thanked for their contribution and provided with a copy of the report.

Progress with action: All concerned with the Review have been thanked for their assistance.

- 1.2. The Borough Planning Officer and the Council's Senior Enforcement and Litigation Lawyer should carry out further research into the potential use of the power to force the sale of a property in relation to recovering debts incurred by the Council through works in default carried out to specific derelict buildings (Section 103 of the Law of Property Act 1925).

Progress with action: A visit to Oxford City Council has taken place to better understand how they have successfully used this power. The Borough Planning Officer, the Senior Lawyer (Enforcement & Litigation), the Housing Renewal Manager and a member of the Planning Enforcement team met with Oxford City Council's Empty Property Officer and their Supervising Lawyer, Housing and Civil Litigation. As a result of the information gained this power will be actively considered when suitable situations arise.

- 1.3. The information outlined in Appendix Two, summarising the legal powers available to the Council and the specific Council services responsible for enforcing them, should be brought to the attention of all Ward Councillors to help them determine the most appropriate Council service to contact if they have concerns about a derelict building.

Progress with action: This information was circulated via the Member's Bulletin.

- 1.4. The information outlined in Appendix Two, summarising the legal powers available to the Council and the specific Council services responsible for enforcing them, should also be brought to the attention of all of the Council Officers working within the different enforcement services, to help them to understand the powers available to colleagues in other parts of the Council, and to promote a joined up and more effective approach to tackling the issues arising from derelict buildings

Progress with action: This information has been circulated.

- 1.5. A section on derelict buildings should be added to the Council's website, covering who to contact to complain about issues arising from such premises, and also who the owners or potential developers should contact for advice on how to redevelop such sites

Progress with action: A category has been created in the 'A-Z' section on the Council's website which links to the grotbusting section of the Council's website.

- 1.6. The Borough Planning Officer should introduce a system whereby a 'Council Aware' style Notice is erected at vacant derelict buildings notifying the general public of the most appropriate Council contact details for concerns associated with specific vacant derelict buildings

Progress with action: A suitable draft Notice has been prepared.

Conclusions

2. The recommendations of the Scrutiny Review, which were accepted and endorsed as actions by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Services and the Cabinet have now been implemented fully.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Area(s) Affected

Central Hastings, East Hastings, North St. Leonards, South St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	Yes
Risk Management	Yes
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No

Background Information

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