

COUNCIL – TUESDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 2024

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR R SUTTON TO COUNCILLOR M WYATT

“This Council refreshed its Empty Homes Policy in March 2022, including data showing 262 privately owned homes empty for a year or more at January 2022. Further, a consultation on Council Tax changes for Empty and Second Homes has just been launched that mentions 360 homes empty for a year or more, presumed to be based on Council Tax data and matching the 2023 figure published by 'Action Empty Homes.

I would like information on the number of empty homes for each year since 2021(including percentage increases) along with the number and community locations of those which have been brought back into use with NWLDC support, having remained empty for six months or more. I would like to understand what the Council is doing about empty properties, including the details of any policy changes, other than Council Tax increases, being considered to deal with the blight, waste and community cost of empty homes and details of the use of powers and enforcement actions tabulated in Appendix 2 of the policy.

Could the Portfolio Holder please provide me with the above information?”

REPOSENSE FROM COUNCILLOR M WYATT TO COUNCILLOR R SUTTON

“The number of empty homes across North West Leicestershire is a figure that continually changes not just from year to year but also day to day. To allow an easier comparison, figures have been provided on the number of empty properties as at 1 October each year.

01/10/2021 – 432 empty properties
01/10/2022 – 465 empty properties
01/10/2023 – 510 empty properties
01/10/2024 – 582 empty properties

Attached is a document breaking these figures down in more detail and setting out the use of enforcement tools.

The Environmental Protection Team is notified about empty properties by the Council Tax Team. An initial assessment is undertaken based on the type of property, location and condition. This assessment determines the actions that the Council takes based on the Council's adopted [Empty Homes Policy \(2022\)](#).

The Council has a graduated approach to dealing with the properties. Initial contact is made with the owner via letter signposting the owner to the Empty Homes Officer for advice. If steps are not taken to deal with the issues identified, officers follow up with suggestions on how properties are brought back into use, or request plans for the property, or just initially a contact letter giving them the Empty Homes Officers details where appropriate. This can be followed by letters regarding possible issues, and asking for rectification of these, e.g. untidy land.

The Environmental Protection and Council Tax teams are currently working together on an additional process/policy that allows the Council to complete an Order for Sale, based on Council Tax Debt alone. This is different to an enforced sale. An enforced sale is another legal process that can be used to bring an empty property back into use by forcing the sale of the property and recovering any Council debt such as Council Tax Debt and Debts

associated with any works undertaken by the Council on the empty property. An Order for Sale however, can only be used when there is only Council Tax debt on an empty property.”