

**TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

**DELEGATED EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REPORT**

**Report to:** Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration  
**Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> August 2019  
**Report for:** Decision  
**Report of:** Corporate Director Place

**Report Title**

**Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024**

**Summary**

The Draft Empty Homes Strategy has been developed to identify and address the issues related to the number of long-term empty homes in the borough.

The Draft Empty Homes Strategy identifies key proposals to bring empty homes back into use and measures to support private and public sector partners to achieve this. The proposals have been identified in the context of Corporate priorities, the Trafford Housing Strategy (2018-2023), GM Housing Strategy and discussions with key stakeholders.

**Recommendation(s)**

That the Executive Member approves the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 for the purposes of consultation as detailed in the report.

**Contact person for access to background papers and further information:**

**Name:** Vikki Jeffrey (Housing Project Officer)  
Caroline Siddall (Housing Strategy & Growth Manager)

**Extension:** ext 4708  
ext 4776

**Appendix One:** Draft Trafford Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024

**Background Papers:** None

*Implications:*

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	<p>The priorities detailed within the Draft Strategy meet the Council’s Corporate Objectives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Quality, Affordable and Social Housing</li> <li>• Health and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Successful and Thriving Places</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the Draft Strategy proposals meet the Departmental Improvement Plan priorities and are complimentary to, and will play a key part in delivering elements of the Trafford Housing Strategy 2018-2023.</p>
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	The Draft Trafford Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 is aligned with the priorities contained within the GM Strategy and the GM Housing Strategy (2019-24).
Financial	The Draft Strategy identifies an action for Regulatory Services to explore options to increase staff capacity within the Council’s Housing Standards Team to drive forward delivery of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy. It also identifies potential actions to be delivered in partnership with other key public and private stakeholders. Any proposals from these actions that have a financial impact will need to be considered on their own merit.
Legal Implications:	None.
Equality/Diversity Implications	None as a consequence of this report.
Sustainability Implications	None as a consequence of this report.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	Existing staff resources will need to be identified to support the delivery of the Strategy once it has been agreed. Information will be made available on line and documents will be available to access through the Council’s web pages.
Risk Management Implications	Risk to delivery of the proposed actions detailed within the Strategy will be monitored and updated as required.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	None as a consequence of this report.
Health and Safety Implications	None as a consequence of this report.

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Producing an Empty Homes Strategy is a key action of the Trafford Housing Strategy and replaces the previous Empty Homes Strategy that ran from 2011 to 2015. Tackling the issue of long-term empty homes (i.e. those that have been empty for 6 months or more) is a priority in light of the severe supply and demand issues faced in the borough, the resultant high cost of renting and buying a property, the lack of affordable housing and problems of blight and anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2 During the lifetime of the previous Empty Homes Strategy, the number of long term empty homes reduced from 1,110 to 637. However, the number has started to increase and in 2018 there were 774 long-term empty properties in Trafford.

## **2.0 Methodology**

- 2.1 The Draft Strategy identifies proposed measures to deliver the Council's corporate priorities of 'Building Quality, Affordable and Social Housing', 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'Successful and Thriving Places'. The agreed strategy will form a key part in delivering Trafford's Housing Strategy and will complement the priorities set in the GM Housing Strategy. The content of the Strategy has been discussed with the Strategic Housing Partnership and it has been produced through joint working between the Strategic Housing, Housing Standards and Revenue and Benefits teams.

## **3.0 Empty Homes in Trafford**

- 3.1 A review of available data relating to empty properties in Trafford shows:
  - There were 100,993 residential properties across Trafford in 2018. 774 of which (less than 1% of the total stock) have been empty for more than 6 months and therefore classed as long term empty properties.
  - Compared to many local authorities across the country Trafford has a low proportion of empty homes (1%) with the average for England being 2.5%.
  - Compared to other local authorities in GM, Trafford has the lowest number of long term empty properties (properties empty for 6 months or more). Long term empty homes in Trafford were at its lowest at 617 in 2014 and have risen since then to 774.
  - Sale has the highest number of empty properties with a total of 189 in July 2018 and Old Trafford has the second highest with a total of 162 at the same time.
  - Stretford has the highest number of properties which have been empty for two years or more with a total of 49 in July 2018.

#### **4.0 Vision and Priorities**

- 4.1 To meet the challenges identified above, a Vision for the Strategy has been developed along with four Strategic Priorities. The Vision and Priorities are as follows:

Vision:

*“Work together to bring Trafford’s long term empty properties back into use to increase the supply of quality, affordable homes for our residents”*

Strategic Priorities:

1. Work with owners of long term empty properties to bring them back into use.
  2. Improve our neighbourhoods by addressing long term empty homes that have become the focus of anti-social behaviour and neglect.
  3. Provide advice and information to help raise awareness around long term empty properties
  4. Develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders to address long term empty properties
- 4.2 To achieve the priorities identified above, the Strategy identifies a number of key proposed actions which are set out in Appendix 1 pages 12 to 21.

#### **5.0 Wider Corporate Linkages**

- 5.1 The proposals actions detailed within the Draft Empty Homes Strategy meet the corporate priorities of ‘Building Quality, Affordable and Social Housing’, ‘Health and Wellbeing’ and ‘Successful and Thriving Places’. The Empty Homes Strategy, coupled with the Trafford Housing Strategy and GM Housing Strategy, forms a comprehensive and fully joined up approach to bringing empty homes back into use in Trafford.

#### **6.0 Other Options**

- 6.1 An option is not to adopt the proposed Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-24. However, the absence of an Empty Homes Strategy across Trafford will leave the Council without a mechanism to tackle empty homes in the borough.

#### **7.0 Consultation**

- 7.1 Consultation has already taken place internally and with the Strategic Housing Partnership and it is now prudent to consult wider with members of the public and key stakeholders on the Draft Empty Homes Strategy. It is proposed to commence an online consultation for a six week period starting in September 2019. It will be posted on the Council’s website and will be open to stakeholders and residents to submit their comments. Following the consultation, the Strategy will be further developed based on the results of the consultation exercise and responses received throughout that process and an Action Plan will also be developed.

7.2 Approval on the final Empty Homes Strategy and associated Action Plan will be sought from the Executive.

## **8.0 Recommendations**

8.1 It is recommended that the Executive Member for Housing & Regeneration approves the Draft Empty Homes Strategy (2019-2024) for the purpose of consultation as detailed in the report.

**Key Decision:** No

**If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given?** N/A

**Finance Officer Clearance** FF

**Legal Officer Clearance** DS

### **[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE**

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Corporate Director has cleared the report prior to issuing to the Executive Member for decision.

### **Appendix 1- *Trafford Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024***



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