

## **TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

**Report to:** Executive  
**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019  
**Report for:** Decision  
**Report of:** Executive Member for Housing and Regeneration

### **Report Title**

**Trafford Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2024**

### **Summary**

The 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 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)**

It is recommended that the Executive approves the Trafford Empty Homes Strategy and Draft Action Plan 2019-2024 for publication.

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

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

**Extension:** 4708/5776

**Background Papers:** None

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

**Appendix Two:** Trafford Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 Consultation Report

**Appendix Three:** Trafford Empty Homes Strategy Action Plan 2019-2024

*Implications:*

<p>Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>The priorities detailed within the Empty Homes 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 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>
<p>Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework</p>	<p>The Trafford Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 is aligned with the priorities contained within the GM Strategy and the GM Housing Strategy (2019-24).</p>
<p>Financial</p>	<p>The 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 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.</p>
<p>Legal Implications:</p>	<p>The Strategy identifies actions the Council and partners need to undertake to address long term empty properties in Trafford. Some of the interventions/action will require Legal input including CPO, EPMO and Enforced Sales.</p>
<p>Equality/Diversity Implications</p>	<p>None as a consequence of this report.</p>
<p>Sustainability Implications</p>	<p>None as a consequence of this report.</p>
<p>Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets</p>	<p>None as a consequence of this report.</p>
<p>Risk Management Implications</p>	<p>None as a consequence of this report.</p>
<p>Health &amp; Wellbeing Implications</p>	<p>None as a consequence of this report.</p>
<p>Health and Safety Implications</p>	<p>None as a consequence of this report.</p>

## **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 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 Strategy will form a key part in delivering Trafford's Housing Strategy (2018-2023) and will complement the priorities set in the GM Housing Strategy.
- 2.2 Production 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

## **5.0 Consultation**

- 5.1 Following completion of the Draft Strategy, the Council held a four week public consultation during September 2019. An on-line survey was created which posed questions relating to the proposed priorities and actions required to deliver them. A copy of the survey, draft Strategy and appendices were available on the Council’s website following a press release and publicity via social media.
- 5.2 In total, 102 responses were received to the on-line survey (see Appendix 2) with 94% being a personal view from residents and elected members. Overall respondents were very positive about the creation of the Strategy, the proposed priorities and actions identified. Respondents felt the following priorities were the most important:
1. Improve our neighbourhoods by addressing long term empty homes that have become the focus of anti-social behaviour and neglect.
  2. Work with owners of long term empty properties to bring them back into use.
  3. Develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders to address long term empty properties.
- 5.3 After assessing all consultation responses and suggested additions, the Strategy has been amended to include the following actions within the relevant priority:

### Priority 1: Work with owners of long term empty properties to bring them back into use.

- *Identify properties that are long term empty and draw up action plans to return them to use.*

### Priority 2: Improve our neighbourhoods by addressing long term empty homes that have become the focus of anti-social behaviour and neglect.

- *Using the matrix to identify those empty properties that can be brought back into use quickly and with limited investment.*

Priority 3: Provide advice and information to help raise awareness around long term empty properties.

- *Explore the opportunity to increase the £10k empty property loan on a case by case basis if required to bring back the most challenging of properties.*

Priority 4: Develop effective partnerships with key stakeholders to address long term empty properties.

- *Explore opportunities to use the renovation of empty homes to train and educate individuals regarding the construction trade.*

**6.0 Action Plan**

- 6.1 Following the public consultation, an Action Plan (see Appendix 3) has been produced to identify all proposed actions to meet the strategic priorities of the Strategy. The Action Plan provides an indication of timeframes and identifies key delivery partners for each action.
- 6.2 Once approved, the Strategic Housing Partnership will adopt the Action Plan as its delivery plan and will provide a co-ordination role in terms of delivery, monitoring progress and performance management.

**7.0 Wider Corporate Linkages**

- 7.1 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.

**8.0 Other Options**

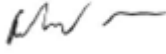
- 8.1 An option is not to adopt the Trafford Empty Homes Strategy 2019-24. However, the absence of an Empty Homes Strategy across Trafford will leave the Council without a mechanism to tackle empty homes in the borough.

**9.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 9.1 The Executive is asked to approve the Trafford Empty Homes Strategy and Draft Action Plan 2019-2024 which sets the key priorities for the borough and the actions required to deliver them by the Council and other key partners. The overarching Empty Homes Strategy will provide the mechanism to tackle long term empty properties in the borough and meet the Council’s Corporate Priorities, actions contained within the Trafford Housing Strategy 2018-2023; and wider GM priorities.

**Key Decision:** Yes  
**If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given?** Yes

Finance Officer Clearance.....FF.....  
Legal Officer Clearance.....TR.....

**CORPORATE DIRECTOR’S SIGNATURE**  To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.