

Members' Library Service Request Form

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Document Title	Empty Homes Shared Services Pilot Project

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Date	10/07/12

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REPORT TO: Members' Library Service

MEETING DATE:

BY: Executive Director (Services for Communities)

SUBJECT: Empty Homes Shared Services Pilot Project

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the Council's participation in a one-year Empty Homes Shared Services Pilot Project.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the contents of this Report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership aims to help Local Authorities and their partners pursue work to bring private sector empty homes back into use. The project is funded by the Scottish Government and housed by Shelter Scotland. The Scottish Government Review of the Private Rented Sector (2009) identified the need for a national post to support Councils who wish to pursue empty homes work, this post was established in 2010.
- 3.2 The Scottish Empty Homes Partnership secured funding from the Scottish Government to support a one-year regional shared services pilot to further develop Local Authority empty homes work.
- 3.3 East Lothian Council currently offers a below tolerable standard (BTS) / empty homes grant through the Scheme of Assistance. This grant is used to assist owners of empty BTS properties bring them back into use in the private rented sector. In 2011/12, £80,000 was allocated to the BTS / empty homes grant, however, uptake has been low.
- 3.4 East Lothian Council was invited to participate in a South and East Scotland Pilot Project, called Homes Again. The Pilot will operate across East Lothian, West Lothian, Fife, Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway. The Pilot will fund two Regional Empty Homes Officers to work directly with empty home owners and support Councils to develop policies and procedures.

The Scottish Government will fund 50% of the staff cost with the remaining cost split between the five Councils. The two officers will be hosted by Shelter Scotland who will provide line management with hot desking facilities provided by each Council.

- 3.5 An Advisory Board, comprising lead officers from each member Council, will be established. The Board will prepare a joint Strategy Action Plan and will receive regular updates from the officer(s). The Board will also agree the preparatory work required by each authority to ensure a consistent starting point for the project.
- 3.6 The Homes Again Project aims to bring 20 empty homes back into use in each authority area. The dedicated empty homes post will also enable the Council to further promote the existing BTS/empty homes grant and ensure best use of this fund.
- 3.7 It is anticipated the Regional Empty Homes Officer for East Lothian, Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway will commence in post on 23 April 2012.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This Report has no policy implications for the Council.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This Report is not applicable to the wellbeing of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – The Council is required to provide funding of £16,172 for the one-year pilot, which has been funded within the private sector housing grants budget.
- 6.2 Personnel – None.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

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