

## **EXECUTIVE MEMBER QUESTIONS**

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Monday February 26<sup>th</sup> 2007**

**Councillor Isidoros Diakides  
Executive Member for Housing**

**From Councillor John Bevan:**

**1. What progress has been made with ensuring joint working with the Empty Property Officer in partnership with Benefits and Local Taxation Service to design an up-to-date database showing the breakdown of all empty properties in the private sector?**

**Answer:**

Meetings have been held between the EPO and Benefits/Taxation staff to improve joint working around empty property. The EPO has access to the Benefits/Taxation database which lists empty properties. This is used as a

basis for intervention work around private sector empty properties.

**2. What is the current number of empty homes in Haringey.**

**Answer:**

As at 1/4/2006, 2765 properties were empty.

**3. Please can it be confirmed that the Empty Property Officer has direct access to the Council Tax database, to identify empty properties.**

**Answer:**

The Empty Property Officer has had access to the Council Tax database for the past year, this has been a great help.

**4. Please can it be confirmed that**

***The Directors of Housing & Environmental Services have designed clear standards and criteria for when enforced sales; compulsory purchases or empty homes management orders procedures should commence***

**Answer:**

Enforcement action is considered at cross Dept. Enforcement Group meetings attended by Housing, Environment, Benefits/Taxation and Legal staff. The Empty Property Officer draws up an initial list for enforcement action, properties would be empty for over 1 year with the owner not co-operating. We are not aware of adopted criteria for enforced sales, CPO

and empty properties which have been signed off by members. However there is guidance and good practice.

Enforced Sales. Target properties are checked for debt first. Where debt to the Council of above £1,000 exists properties will be targeted for enforced sale. 2 enforced sales have succeeded (although one was not technically empty), with the owner paying the debt on a third. A further enforced sale was completed by Enforcement Service at the end of 2006.

Compulsory Purchase. An officer is currently being provided 1 day a week funded by the sub-region, who is working on potential CPO's and advising on the development of processes. He will prepare reports on suitable properties, however progress will depend on the identification of funds as the Authority has to specify that purchase funds are available for a CPO to succeed, even if it is planned to auction or sell on to a Housing Association. Reports on the first properties for consideration are in preparation following process work. The format and procedure for CPO which operates across the sub-region is being adopted by Haringey.

EDMO's. There are risks to the implantation of EDMOs due to a range of financial and practical difficulties. However it is pleasing to announce that the first interim EDMO has recently been served in the Country (South Oxfordshire DC). We are working in partnership with other sub-region authorities on a Management Order Contract which although initially focused on HMO licensing, now includes for empty properties. The contract is at the tender stage. In addition, we are working with letting agent partners in the accredited letting scheme in the development of an alternative voluntary scheme which would enable properties to be let as assured shorthold tenancies in the private sector.

**5. Please advise as to how many enforced sales have been completed over the last 3 years.**

**Answer:**

Two enforced sales have taken place, another failed as the owner paid the outstanding debt at the last moment. This property is still remaining vacant and we are targeting it for a CPO. A further enforced sale application is in process.

**6. Please advise how many compulsory purchase orders have been completed over the last 3 years.**

**Answer:**

There have been no CPO actions completed so far. However CPO action on 341-379 Seven Sisters Road is in progress. We are working on CPO proposals to Members concerning other certain long terms problem properties.

**7. How many empty homes management orders have been implemented since the regulations came into force.**

**Answer:**

None. There has only been one EDMO served in the whole country since the legislation was introduced in April 2006.

**From Councillor Catherine Harris:**

**8. Why did he try to suppress all or some of the Homelessness and Allocations Scrutiny Review Report due at Overview & Scrutiny on 12/9/06?**

**Answer:**

I did not at any time try to suppress or otherwise interfere with the content of the report referred to.

**9. Why he met with the Leader of the Council, the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny and the Chair of the Review Panel the week before this to decide what would be in the report and whether the report in any version would be available at all? Why was this not left to the members of the full cross party Review Panel.**

**Answer:**

The purpose of the meeting was to brief the Leader and myself on the recommendations in Overview and Scrutiny report, so that we could decide whether any urgent action was necessary.