

Matter H Issues 1&2 – Further information regarding empty homes

This paper sets out details of performance with regard to reducing the number of empty dwellings in the city.

The City Council launched its Empty Property Strategy in 2007 (covering the period 2007-12) in response to the high level of homes lying empty. This saw a dedicated team tasked with reducing the number of vacant dwellings by 1,250. This success of the strategy combined with the government stating their commitment to bringing empty homes back into use (in their housing strategy), the introduction of the New Homes Bonus which is awarded for long term empty homes brought back into use and the acknowledgement (in SHLAA practice guidance) that net reductions in empty properties could count towards meeting the housing requirement led the City Council renew the Empty Homes Strategy. The new strategy covers the period 2013-18 with a target of reducing the number of empty properties by 200 per year.

The number of vacant dwellings can be determined from the Council Tax record. The following table shows the number of vacant dwellings each September since the strategy was introduced in 2007. It should be noted that these figures are not directly comparable for the figures for vacant dwellings in the 2011 census.

Year (September)	Vacant Dwellings	Year (September)	Vacant Dwellings
2007	14,890	2011	12,034
2008	15,367	2012	13,447
2009	14,521	2013	10,878
2010	13,039	2014	11,726

As can be seen the strategy has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of empty dwellings in the city since 2007. Although there have been year on year fluctuations over the eight years the trend is clearly downwards as shown on the graph below. The reduction between 2007 and 2014 has averaged 450 per year. This is higher than the annual allowance made in the SHLAA and on this basis the City Council concludes that it is reasonable to include an allowance for reducing long term vacancies on the basis set out in the SHLAA.

