

Northumberland County Council

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post Title: Empty Homes Officer	Director/Service/Sector:		Office Use
Band: 6	Workplace: Blyth, Civic Centre		JE ref: 4346
Responsible to: Private Sector Housing Manager	Date: October 2023	Manager Level:	HRMS ref:
Job Purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To carry out investigations into empty privately owned properties, and negotiate with their owners to bring them back into use • To use appropriate enforcement action including enforced sales, CPO's and EDMO's to bring empty properties back into use. • To actively seek funding opportunities to support bringing empty properties back into use • To be responsible for liaising with private landlords and property owners to improve stock in the private rented sector through property improvement, management practices and bringing empty properties back into use. • Respond to requests for assistance regarding a range of private sector issues, liaise with community groups, other council departments, external organisations and stakeholders to source solutions • The post holder must be knowledgeable of legislation, policy, guidance, codes of practice, standards etc. relating to a range of legislative areas, keeping appraised of technical/scientific knowledge and developments necessary for fulfilling the duties of the post and providing specialist advice as required • To provide assistance and support area-based regeneration initiatives in identified areas and linked to the wider economic regeneration of the targeted area. • To be actively involved with the planning, consultation and implementation of projects, including assistance with selective licensing schemes and empty homes schemes. 			
Resources	Staff	Mentoring junior staff & trainees as appropriate. Supervision of project staff and external contractors when required.	
	Finance	Day to day responsibility for budget to fund work related to empty homes to improve housing conditions in the private rented sector Make decisions which have a financial implication in relation to empty homes schemes EDMO'S, Selective licensing and other private sector projects. Responsibility for costings in relation to property improvements and budgeting for renovations of empty properties. Manage external funding appropriate to bringing empty homes back into use. Prepare reports to request additional funding to supplement empty homes work required. Manage empty homes loans schemes and other funding opportunities for owners.	
	Physical	Design, maintain and operate corporate information systems. Visit long term empty properties and owners to assist with bringing the property back to use. Attend court where necessary to attain legal orders for access to properties. Work with colleagues within the Housing Service, in other divisions of the Council and external agencies, actively taking part in cross cutting projects as and when required,	

	seeking to positively contribute to or lead on community safety and area-based initiatives.
Clients	<p>Elected Members, external and internal partners and providers, owners of empty properties, homeowners, residents and Senior Managers and staff throughout the Council.</p> <p>Deal with a range of clients with complex needs in order to bring empty properties back into use.</p> <p>Working with community groups, members of the public and other stakeholders.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duties and key result areas: • Utilise investigatory skills and use a range of approaches to bring empty homes back into use including one to one meetings with homeowners; production of comprehensive advisory material; delivery of events/training sessions; inspection of empty properties to determine condition. • Take decisions as to what is the most appropriate support and/or enforcement action and proceed with that action including the use of informal letters, statutory notices, and prosecution • To use data analysis, communications, problem solving and case management to support bringing long term empty homes back into use. • Use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders; Enforced sale procedures, Compulsory purchase orders and other enforcement measures deemed necessary. • To undertake inspections, surveys and other investigations of residential properties which have been empty for more than six months under the Housing Act 2004 and other related legislation, as directed • To monitor and update the empty homes web pages to ensure that changes to legislation and professional practice are implemented within the service in a timely and efficient manner. • To work effectively with colleagues within the Housing Service, in other divisions of the Council and external agencies, taking the lead, actively taking part in cross cutting projects as and when required, seeking to positively contribute to or lead on community safety and area-based initiatives. • Where enforcement action is deemed necessary, prepare and serve statutory notices and orders in connection with empty properties and to gather and prepare evidence and attend Court and local public enquires (this list is not exhaustive and it is expected that the post holder will continually see to develop new, innovative approaches). • Prepare a variety of correspondence including, technical reports, statements of evidence, prosecution files, Fixed Penalty Notices, Cautions and records of negotiations, PACE interviews and discussions to achieve the requirements of the role. • To develop and maintain a comprehensive empty property register producing reports and statistical information as required. • To provide advice to owners on housing issues and work in partnership with internal departments, other partners and the community to determine the most appropriate course of action to minimise the length of time a property stands empty. • The post holder is to exercise judgement and make decisions within the framework of legislation and Council Policy. Matters not covered by existing policy are referred to the Environmental Health Team for guidance. • To inspect empty properties in the targeted area where there is requirement/need for the property to be inspected, to include Accreditations, RDGS or other comparable schemes in use by the local authority when assisting landlords, HHSRS inspection where enforcement action is being considered and inspection for Ready to Rent properties. 	

- To support and assist officers managing any selective licensing designation implemented across Northumberland as and when required. Providing, support, assistance and information to the licensing officer/team in relation to property inspections, working with licensing officer during targeted work around empty properties.
- Using appropriate legislation and measures to encourage owners and landlords to bring properties back into use.
- Continuously review and update all management information systems with intelligence gathered case by case.
- To support and play a key role within a multi-disciplinary team coordinating and enabling private and public sector partners to achieve solutions to regeneration issues.
- To assist with delivery of the key priorities, objectives and actions outlined in the Council's Housing Strategy ensuring delivery of outcomes in specific locations including through targeted delivery plans.
- To actively seek to source funding opportunities to assist with bringing empty properties back into use.
- Represent the service at internal and external housing forums, meetings and events, engaging with residents, tenants, landlords, property owners and other stakeholders.
- Promote partnership working with other Council officers from Legal, Planning, Public Protection and Council Tax, etc to identify problematic long-term empty properties and take the necessary action, including Empty Dwelling Management Orders and enforced sale where appropriate, to bring these properties back into use.
- To remain impartial while attempting to reconcile the expectations of several parties, whilst operating within current operational, legal, financial, and staffing constraints
- To assist with the preparation of project submissions in relation to private sector initiatives.
- To contribute to corporate working to achieve best value across all services through improvement in departmental and Council wide initiatives as appropriate.

The duties and responsibilities highlighted in this Job Description are indicative and may vary over time. Post holders are expected to undertake other duties and responsibilities relevant to the nature, level and extent of the post and the grade has been established on this basis.

Work Arrangements

Physical requirements:	Ability to drive. Some programmable outdoor site work. Deal with complex clients and their needs whilst working to bring empty properties back into use.
Transport requirements:	The work involves the need to travel to locations across the County for site visits, property inspections, meetings with owners and community events, attend meetings, both on site and at Council offices.
Working patterns:	Will be required to occasionally work outside of normal working hours and to attend evening meetings, consultations and community events.
Working conditions:	Working from an office/home, working outdoors across Northumberland County inspecting private rented properties, problematic empty homes, meeting with residents, community groups, councillors where they are based.
	Working at community events/consultations and landlord forums.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

Post Title: Private Sector Housing Officer	Director/Service/Sector: Adult Services & Housing	Ref:
Essential	Desirable	Assess by
Knowledge and Qualifications		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good standard of education to NVQ Level 3 or equivalent • Specific knowledge regarding Housing Act 2004 • Knowledge of empty homes and private sector housing and other specific legislation • Understands the diverse functions of a large complex public organisation • An active appreciation of the procedural and practical issues facing the service • Understands the relationship between costs, quality, customer care and performance and actively monitors progress within the department • Actively undertaking ongoing continuous professional and personal development • A sound knowledge of the private rented sector, legislation and topical issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively studying for an NVQ Level 4 or equivalent in a relevant discipline • Housing related qualification • Qualified Environmental health Officer with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Registration Board or a qualified housing surveyor with a recognized relevant qualification in that field. • Certified as competent to conduct HHSRS (housing, health and safety rating system surveys) assessments. 	
Experience		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence in using Microsoft Office, Oracle applications, word processing, spreadsheets and database systems. • Experience of delivering private sector housing interventions • A track record of dealing with cases, taking appropriate enforcement action and have the skills to be able to advise and support less experienced officers. • Experience of implementing empty home policies • Experience undertaking inspections, surveys and other investigations of properties under the Housing Act 2004 and other related legislation, as directed • Ability to effectively plan & manage a high-volume workload, working effectively under pressure to tight deadlines • Thorough knowledge and experience in a relevant context and service • An active desire to provide effective customer centred services • Thorough knowledge and experience in a relevant context and service. • An active desire to provide effective customer centred services. • Relevant experience of working with the HHSRS and property inspections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing enforcement/environmental health experience • Knowledge of completing schedules of work. • Knowledge of building costs, estimating and invoicing (repairs and improvements) 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience dealing with projects/schemes • Experience working with complex cases, partnership working and problem solving. • Recent experience in working with empty properties 		
Skills and competencies		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective IT skills and ability to understand and develop the use of ITC to achieve work objectives • Confident and competent in expressing own views and an active participant in internal and external meetings • Effective negotiation skills • Carry out investigations • High level of both written and verbal communication skills. • Ability to train others • Ability to organise own workload and that of others • Ability to work creatively and independently to achieve better outcomes. • Ability to work as part of a multi-agency team and promote partnership working. • Confident and competent in expressing own views and an active participant in internal and external meetings. • Customer focused and able to deliver within tight timescales. • Dependable, reliable and keeps good time. • Models and encourages high standards of honesty, integrity, openness and respect for others. • Understanding of solution focussed practice • Helps managers create a positive work culture in which diverse, individual contributions and perspectives are valued. • Proactive and achievement oriented. • Works with little direct supervision. • Represents the council in a positive view when meeting members of the public. • Able to act as a intermediary in order to resolve landlord. Tenant disputes • Numerate and skilled at analysing/reasoning with complex business-related statistics • Applies a methodical approach to problem solving • Adopts a collaborative approach to work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a sound understanding of equal opportunities and diversity issues in relation to employment and service delivery • 	
Physical, mental and emotional demands		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deal with complex clients and their needs whilst working to bring empty properties back into use. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Will be required to occasionally work outside of normal working hours and to attend evening meetings, consultations and community events. ● Working from an office/home ● Working outdoors across Northumberland County inspecting private rented properties, problematic empty homes ● Meeting with residents, community groups, councillors where they are based. ● Working at community events/consultations and landlord forums. ● Normally works from a seated position with some need to walk, bend or carry items ● Able to deal with complex cases and clients, often with complex issues ● An awareness of issues faced by people who are vulnerable and who have complex needs ● Deal with conflict and stressful situations ● Act as an intermediary resolving disputes and making difficult decisions ● Need to maintain awareness with lengthy periods of enhanced concentration ● Regular contact with public/clients in dispute with the County Council ● Be able to work under pressure 		
Motivation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customer focused and able to deliver within tight timescales ● Dependable, reliable and keeps good time ● Models and encourages high standards of honesty, integrity, openness and respect for others ● Helps managers create a positive work culture in which diverse, individual contributions and perspectives are valued ● Proactive and achievement orientated ● Works with little direct supervision 		
Other		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A positive, flexible approach to work 		

Key to assessment methods; (a) application form, (i) interview, (r) references, (t) ability tests (q) personality questionnaire (g) assessed group work, (p) presentation, (o) others e.g. case studies/visits