

A Guide to Using Your Empty Home

January 2018



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Bringing properties back into use can improve the whole community.

Empty properties are a wasted resource, especially when housing is in such short supply. The Council work with owners and other agencies to tackle problems caused by empty homes. Properties brought back into use can:

- provide a home for someone in need
- improve a neighbourhood
- give the owner a financial return

Empty homes can be targets for crime and vandals, squatters and general anti-social behaviour. Bringing empty homes back into use is a sustainable way to meet future housing demand and can improve the whole community.

Did you know you may be losing money by leaving your property empty?

It is estimated that the cost of leaving a home empty can be as high as £13,000 a year after taking into account lost rent, taxes, insurance and deterioration of the property value.

What options are available?

The Council can help you get an empty property back into use. There are a number of options open to you.:

- Repair/convert the property for occupation
- Let the property direct to a tenant
- Let the property through the Council's Rent Deposit Bond scheme
- Let the property through a private letting agent
- Sell the property to a private developer
- Sell the property on the open market
- Sell the property at auction

Rent Deposit Bond scheme

Mole Valley is now running a Rent Deposit Bond scheme, helping people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and in priority need under homelessness law, to access privately rented accommodation. See our RDBS leaflet for more information

What can the Rent Deposit Bond scheme offer you as a landlord?

- Help in finding a suitable tenant
- Guarantee a deposit (called a bond) to cover damage to the property and any rent arrears
- Ensure ongoing tenant and landlord support is provided
- A full inventory service

For further details please contact Keith Cook, at Mole Valley District Council, Pippbrook, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1SJ.

Tel: 01306 885001 or email keith.cook@molevalley.gov.uk

Mole Valley District Council can offer free advice and information on tenancies and housing issues to both landlords and tenants.

For more information contact the Housing Options Team at Mole Valley District Council, Pippbrook, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1SJ.

Tel: 01306 885001 or email: housing@molevalley.gov.uk

Letting in the Private Sector

You may wish to consider letting your property yourself or through a managing agent. If you use a managing agent, you may wish to use one that belongs to the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA)

Tel. 01926 496 800

Website: www.arla.co.uk

Selling your property at auction

This can be an effective way to dispose of property which is difficult to sell and often results in a good price being achieved for a dilapidated property. Check your local press and estate agents or the National Association of Valuers & Auctioneers at:

Tel. 01926 496 800

Website: www.nava.org.uk

Council Tax

If you own an empty property which has been lying empty and unfurnished for over two years, you could be charged 150% Council Tax and the Government is proposing to bring in legislation to allow Councils to increase this to 200%.

For further details please contact Council Tax on (01306) 879293 or email: council.tax@molevalley.gov.uk.

Empty Homes VAT discounts and exemptions

In the past, developers have been stopped from converting and refurbishing empty properties because they could not recover the VAT on their costs. A builder can now charge a reduced 5% rate on VAT, compared to the standard rate on a house which has been empty for two years.

For more information contact the VAT, Excise & Customs Helpline:.

Tel. 0300 200 3700

Website: www.hmrc.gov.uk

Legal remedies and enforcement

Where all other options have been exhausted, the Council can use its legal powers and enforcement options as a last resort. The Council seeks to work with owners of empty homes to discuss options, assist and support them to take necessary action before reaching this stage.

Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs)

The Council can serve an EDMO to carry any repair work to the property and recover the cost over a period of up to seven years through rental income. The Council is responsible for appointing a managing agent and identifying a tenant. At the end of the term the property is returned to the owner.

Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs)

A CPO enables the Council to acquire ownership of the empty property and to sell it on the open market for refurbishment and reoccupation.

Enforced Sales

The Council can register some debts incurred on an empty property as a local land charge, such as costs incurred where works in default have been carried out. This means that when a property is sold, the debt gets paid from the sale proceeds before monies are passed to the owner or beneficiary. The council can force a sale of the property via the courts in order to obtain payment of the debt.

This can also apply should the owner of a problem empty property have a large unpaid council tax bill - we can ask a court to give us permission to sell the property. We can recover all the council tax, and our own costs from the sale price

How to report an empty home

Whether you know of an empty home, or you own an empty home and want help in bringing it back into use, contact us and we will provide further advice.

You can e-mail us, telephone or write to us:

Sheena McKenzie

Mole Valley District Council

Pippbrook

Dorking

RH4 1SJ

Tel: 01306 885001

Email: sheena.mckenzie@molevalley.gov.uk / housing@molevalley.gov.uk

Website: www.molevalley.gov.uk

If you wish to report a property online and/or anonymously please e-mail Mole Valley District Council at :

<https://www.gov.uk/report-derelict-abandoned-building>