**District Dispatch**

This week is National Empty Homes Week, which looks to put the spotlight on the important work that is being done to reduce the number of homes that have been left empty for six months or longer.

While the percentage of long-term empty properties in the Chichester District is relatively low — at 0.3% — in comparison to many other areas of the country, each one represents a potential new home for someone. With this in mind, we’re encouraging owners of empty homes to get in touch with us to find out about the range of support that is currently available to help bring these much-needed properties back into use.

There can be lots of reasons why a property is left empty. Although many homes routinely become unoccupied for a short time between tenants or owners, others can remain empty for longer. These are the properties that we’re keen to see put back into use as potential homes for private buyers or tenants; families threatened with homelessness or someone that needs support; or as a step onto the ladder for key workers.

Empty homes can easily fall into disrepair or attract acts of vandalism, and so as well as helping to enhance local neighbourhoods through maintaining property values and providing increased housing options for local residents, bringing empty homes back into use can also help avoid anti-social behaviour and improve the sense of pride in a local neighbourhood.

Making an empty house a home again has huge benefits to the owner too — from reducing costs associated with regular bills, such as council tax, and deterioration in property value; to opening up opportunities to gain a regular rental income from letting or a lump sum from selling the property. We do, however, understand the challenges people face in financing and renovating this type of project, and so we’re keen to promote the wide range of support that’s available.

One of the schemes that people can access is our Empty Homes Assistance scheme. Through this initiative, funding is available to help give properties that have been vacant for more than a year a new lease of life. Owners can access up to £10,000 of funding, which would only need to be repaid if the property was sold within 10 years. People can find more details about this support, including eligibility criteria, at: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/housingfinancialassistance**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/housingfinancialassistance)and apply here: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/article/34191/Apply-for-Landlord-financial-assistance**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/article/34191/Apply-for-Landlord-financial-assistance)

In addition, if someone is looking to refurbish a property that has been empty for two years or more, they can buy most renovation materials at a reduced VAT rate of 5%. To access this support, they can request a letter from the council’s Revenues and Benefits team by emailing: taxation@chichester.gov.uk.

I would also encourage empty homeowners to visit our website — [**www.chichester.gov.uk/emptyhomes**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/emptyhomes) — for more information about these schemes, along with additional advice on bringing empty properties back into use. You can also contact our Housing Standards team who will be happy to offer advice by emailing: housingstandards@chichester.gov.uk or calling: 01243 534734.

We’re also keen to hear from residents who believe that a home in our district has been empty for over six months. Empty homes can be reported on our website at: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/article/35746/Report-a-housing-condition-problem**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/article/35746/Report-a-housing-condition-problem) or by emailing our Housing Standards team: housingstandards@chichester.gov.uk. To find out more about the work of our Housing team or to access support, please visit: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/housing**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/housing)

Using our website is the quickest and most convenient way of accessing many of our services, including reporting issues such as a parking problem or a missed bin collection; paying for services such as bulky household waste or garden waste services; and applying for services such as car park season tickets, and help with council tax and housing costs. You can also access our services from your smartphone using our app: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/chichesterdcapp**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/chichesterdcapp)

Best Wishes,

Cllr David Betts

Cabinet Member for Housing and Revenues and Benefits at Chichester District Council

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A logo with text on it  Description automatically generated | **Terri Foster**Senior Communications OfficerCommunicationsChichester District Council |

|  |
| --- |
| Ext: 21226 | Tel: 01243521226 | tfoster@chichester.gov.uk | Fax: 01243776766 | <https://www.chichester.gov.uk> |
| East Pallant House opening hours: 9am-4pm Monday to Friday |
|  |  |

