FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
PRESS RELEASE

September 20, 2019

Council backs national Empty Homes Week

Fenland District Council is reminding owners of empty properties of the help it can offer to bring unoccupied homes back into use.

To mark national Empty Homes Week, taking place from September 23 to 29, the council is raising awareness of the support available to owners of empty properties across the district.

Empty Homes Week, organised by Action on Empty Homes, aims to highlight the work being done across the country to bring 216,000 long-term empty homes back into use to help address the nationwide shortage of affordable housing.

Fenland District Council provides free advice to owners on their options, including bringing properties up to a decent standard so they can be rented out, applying for grants to fund repairs, finding tenants and selling properties.

The authority can also offer incentives to help create sustainable tenancies, such as providing owners/landlords with a deposit or fee in place of a rental deposit.

The council also provides a specialist Landlord Rents and Solutions Service to help resolve tenancy issues, such as rent, repairs and maintenance, which could lead to a tenancy ending and a property becoming empty.

Cllr Samantha Hoy, Fenland District Council’s Portfolio Holder for Housing, said: “The majority of vacant properties are generally empty for a relatively short period of time – usually associated with buying and selling, repair or improvement – and do not lead to any problems. However, properties that stand empty for a long time can quickly become a deteriorating asset that cost you money, and run the risk of being vandalised. Council tax can also be doubled if the property is left vacant for more than two years.

“Empty homes which are brought back into use will not only give the owner an income, but will provide a home for a local family and make a difference to the district’s housing needs.

“If you are an owner of a property which has been empty for more than six months, I’d encourage you to get in touch with our private sector housing team to see how they can help you get it ready to let. They can also help you to understand the regulations you need to have in place to protect both yourself and your tenants.”

The Council will always work with owners to try and bring long-term empty properties back into use, but if problems continue, it can take legal action. Powers include enforcement measures to improve a building’s condition, compulsory purchase, enforced sale, and the use of Empty Dwellings Management Orders. The authority is also developing a new Empty Homes policy to give an even greater focus on the issue.

For more information about the help and support available visit the Council’s website at: www.fenland.gov.uk/emptyhomes or email the private sector housing team on: privatesectorhousing@fenland.gov.uk
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For more information contact Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226