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|  | <b>Housing Committee</b><br><b>June 2017</b>  |
| <b>Title</b>  | <b>Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy 2017</b>  |
| <b>Report of</b>  | Commissioning Director, Growth and Development  |
| <b>Wards</b>  | All   |
| <b>Status</b>   | Public  |
| <b>Urgent</b>   | No  |
| <b>Key</b>  | No  |
| <b>Enclosures</b>   | Appendix 1 – proposed Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy 2017                           |
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## Summary

This paper includes proposed amendments to the Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy for borough residents. It supersedes and brings together all previous policies and amendments and details the assistance available to bring long term empty properties back into use. The conditions attached to any grant are detailed.

## Recommendations

1. That the Committee approve the amendments to the Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy
2. That the authority for future minor amendments to this policy be delegated to the Commissioning Director, Growth and Development in consultation with the Chairman of the Housing Committee

## **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 This report seeks to update the existing Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy. This was approved in 2010 by DPR, amended by the Cabinet Member for Housing 30 August 2012 (DPR1690) and the Cabinet Member for Housing on 30th May 2013 by delegated powers (DPR2051).
- 1.2 Since 2003 the council has used powers conferred by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 to exercise discretion in the award of funding to disabled and vulnerable residents residing in unsuitable homes.
- 1.3 For a number of years financial help has been available to help and incentivise owners of empty properties to bring them back into use. Empty properties are a valuable housing resource and bringing them back into use provides homes in the borough and where it is linked to grant funding eases homelessness pressures. Following poor take up of the existing funding this report amends the previous policy to make a more flexible and hopefully attractive offer to empty property owners. The amendments are detailed in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 Empty Property Grants are supported by Barnet Homes as a cost effective method of reducing the number of tenants in nightly purchase accommodation. The temporary accommodation subsidy regulation change from April 2017 means that the subsidy Councils receive for temporary accommodation will no longer be demand led and each Local Authority will receive a fixed amount. There is therefore great benefit in securing homes on long-term arrangements at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates (where most of this income can be recovered) as opposed to procuring in nightly markets where units will be subject to inflation and much of the cost is not recovered if temporary accommodation numbers increase.
- 1.5 The amendments include, but are not limited to:
  - Works covered by the grant to include works necessary to a suitable standard for letting
  - Applicants not having any outstanding debts to Barnet Council
  - Increase in grant amounts by 2% in line with inflation since the last grant increase
  - Offer of a three year or five year landlord option
  - New Empty Property (Accessible Homes) Landlord Grant – this is a top up for landlords agreeing to bring their property up to the Lifetime Homes Standard. This will provide Barnet Homes with additional units of adapted accommodation which is difficult source, leading to additional cost savings for Barnet Homes.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 This revised policy is being recommended, to make a more flexible and hopefully attractive offer to empty property owners.
- 2.2 The introduction of the Empty Property (Lifetime Homes) Grant will assist in avoiding the high costs of people remaining in care where adapted properties cannot be found.
- 2.3 Empty property grants are supported by Barnet Homes as a cost effective solution for securing temporary accommodation for priority homeless persons.
- 2.4 An increase in the number of empty properties offered to Barnet Homes will also reduce the risk of vulnerable family breakdown. The council has an overarching duty to promote the welfare of children under the Children Act which presents issues when households are housed outside of the borough. If children are in schools in Barnet or have support needs then there is a risk of challenge which result in families being placed in expensive nightly paid accommodation in Barnet. Having long term TA in borough via Empty Property Grants facilitates the council in being able to discharge it's homeless duty into suitable accommodation but also enables households that are vulnerable to maintain support networks which are key to managing their vulnerabilities. Increasing the number of long term TA units in borough reduces the impact of households being placed out of borough and enables continuity of support to be provided by support services to improve the families' welfare. Families in nightly paid TA are more transient and feel less secure. They are more likely to have attendance issues at school and work as well as having more difficulty in maintaining their support networks with the result of an increased chance of families needing crisis intervention such as a child being taken into care. The average weekly cost of external foster placement is £824.24 and the average weekly cost of residential placement is £2,676.56.
- 2.5 The Empty Property Team work with the Police and Community Safety in relation to empty properties that are squatted ensuring that they are vacated, public health issues dealt with and then secured against future illegal entry. Burglary has a significant financial impact on individual victims, as well as the wider community. An estimate of the average cost of a single burglary is £3,925 (economic and social costs).
- 2.6 Bringing empty properties back into residential use reduces the risk of arson. This will reduce the cost to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority by on average more than £3,000 per incident.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.1 **Maintain the existing policy-** The current Empty Property Grant Offer has a small take up and does not provide an attractive offer. People often do not like the 5 year tie in to the scheme and feel it is not cost effective to carry out

costly renovations and then let the property at Local Housing Allowance rates. As such properties either remain empty leading to costly enforcement action, or they are renovated and let to the private sector.

- 3.2 **Stop providing Empty Property Grants-** At a time of significant financial pressure all schemes must provide value for money and savings for the Council. It is accepted that Empty Property Grants are a cost effective method of securing nomination rights for Barnet Homes and as such reducing the temporary accommodation budget. As such doing less is not a cost effective option.

#### 4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Once the recommendation has been approved the necessary internal changes will be made and the revised offer will be promoted to empty property owners in the borough and relevant partners. The policy will be reviewed over the next 12 months to ascertain if the offer is more attractive in securing Empty Property Grant applicants and as such providing properties with nomination rights for Barnet Homes through Let2Barnet.

#### 5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

##### 5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The policy meets the council's key Corporate Priorities detailed in the Barnet Corporate Plan 2015-2020 which is based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity to make sure Barnet is a place:

- *Of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life-* The additional housing secured through the Landlord Empty Property Assistance will assist in reducing the number of persons in nightly purchased accommodation used by Barnet Homes. This will enable more homeless families to be provided with secure accommodation which will enable stability in schooling, health care and an improved quality of life for residents. In addition where properties have been empty for a number of years due to complex personal and financial issues Empty Property Grants can provide a life line for the owners who are assisted in bringing their properties back into use and provided with a source of rental income.
- *Where services are delivered efficiently to get value for money for the taxpayer-* Empty Property Grants provide value for money by reducing money paid by the Council on costly enforcement action whilst reducing the amount of money spent on nightly purchase accommodation.

- 5.1.2 The policy meets the vision of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020 as it will contribute toward "helping everyone to keep well and to promote independence". Specifically, Empty Property Grants contribute toward the

objectives of

- Improving outcomes for babies, young children and their families by reducing the number of persons in nightly purchased accommodation used by Barnet Homes and providing a good standard of accommodation for priority homeless persons.
- Creating circumstances that enable people to have greater life opportunities – a reduction in the use of nightly purchased accommodation and the provision of more stable accommodation will reduce the negative effect to people's mental health and wellbeing caused by living in poor quality or unsuitable housing.

5.1.3 This policy is in line with the aims of Barnet's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

5.1.4 Barnet's Housing Strategy 2010-2025 key objectives are:

- Increasing housing supply.
- Delivering homes that people can afford.
- Sustaining quality, particularly in the private rented sector.
- Preventing and tackling homelessness.
- Providing suitable housing for vulnerable people.
- Delivering efficient and effective services.

These amendments to the Financial Assistance Policy contribute to this by:-

- Improving the condition and sustainability of the existing housing stock
- Providing nomination rights to house people in housing need.

## **5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

5.2.1 This policy does not seek any further funds and will be funded from existing capital provision. The policy is subject to availability of funding and this will be kept under review.

5.2.2 These policy changes are not likely to lead to a flood of applications, but hopefully will lead to an increase. No grant is approved without prior approval from Barnet Homes and the necessary funding being available.

5.2.3 Since April 2014 19 empty property grants have been completed. There are currently 8 grant cases with work on going on site, and 14 applications in the pipeline.

5.2.4 The savings to LBB for using properties secured through Empty Property Grants over Emergency Temporary accommodation are as follows:

|  | 1 bed             | 2 bed             | 3 bed             | 4 bed             |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Annual Saving</b>                     | <b>-2,026.64</b>  | <b>-2,741.08</b>  | <b>-2,630.41</b>  | <b>-3,391.42</b>  |
| <b>5 year saving</b>                     | <b>-10,133.20</b> | <b>-13,705.41</b> | <b>-13,152.06</b> | <b>-16,957.08</b> |
| <b>5 year saving with inflation (3%)</b> | <b>-10,628.77</b> | <b>-14,375.68</b> | <b>-13,795.27</b> | <b>-17,786.37</b> |

From April, the subsidy councils receive for TA can no longer be demand led and each LA will receive a fixed amount. There is therefore great benefit in securing units on long-term arrangements at LHA (where most of this income can be recovered) as opposed to procuring in nightly markets where units will be subject to inflation and much of the cost not recovered if TA numbers increase.

Acquiring properties through the scheme also helps mitigate against future sharp increases in TA costs. Unquantifiable savings will also be made by a reduction in the on-going costs associated with the management of nightly purchase accommodation, reduction in legal challenge and on-going public sector enforcement costs.

- 5.2.4 Experience indicates that once landlords sign up with Barnet Homes, even once their lease is up they are likely to extend the use by Barnet Homes.

### 5.3 **Social Value**

- 5.3.1 Having consideration to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 there are no specific social value considerations arising out of this report. The revised Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy will deliver social, economic and environmental benefits for residents in relation to improvement in standards of the private sector housing stock and reducing the health impact of poor quality accommodation.

### 5.4 **Legal and Constitutional References**

- 5.4.1 Local authorities have discretionary powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 to provide assistance in any form for the purpose of improving living conditions provided the council has adopted a policy for the provision of assistance under article 3 of the Order
- 5.4.2 Constitution, Responsibility for Functions, Annex A, sets out the terms of reference of the Housing Committee including:
- Promote the better integration of privately rented properties into the Borough's framework
  - All matters relating to provision of disabled facilities and other housing related grants, including the operation of a Home Improvement Agency.
  - All matters related to regulation of private sector housing, including enforcement, licensing, empty properties and squatting.

- To consider for approval any non-statutory plan or strategy within the remit of the Committee that is not reserved to Full Council or Policy and Resources.

## **5.5 Risk Management**

- 5.5.1 There are no risks associated with the approval of the amendments to the Private Sector Housing Financial Assistance Policy.

## **5.6 Equalities and Diversity**

- 5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
  - advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
  - foster good relations between people from different groups

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services

- 5.6.2 This report details amendments to an existing policy. Section Two of the report includes a number of supporting reasons for the recommendation, including increase in housing availability, promoting the welfare and resilience of families and children, enhancing community cohesion and improving housing supply for some of Barnet's most vulnerable residents. The recommendations are therefore expected to have a minimal positive impact on residents and a neutral equalities impact on empty property owners because anyone meeting the criteria and owning an empty property will be eligible to apply for an Empty Property Grant.

## **5.7 Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.7.1 Over the past six months an Empty Property Survey has been undertaken of 1,485 long term empty properties recorded on the Council Tax data base. Information was left at all premises regarding options available for empty property owners including Empty Property Grants. In addition a mailshot has been completed of nearly 600 empty properties since April promoting the grant scheme with minimal responding take up. The feedback received in relation to the scheme has helped form the amendments proposed to the scheme.

## **5.8 Insight**

- 5.8.1 No insight data has been used to inform the decision required.

# **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### APPENDIX 1 – PROPOSED AMMENDMENTS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY APRIL 2017

| Existing Empty Property Assistance Criteria  | Proposed Empty Property Assistance Criteria  |
|--|--|
| <p>Budget permitting, assistance is available from the Council for bringing long-term empty residential properties in the Borough back into use under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002.</p> <p>Following the initial letter offering Empty Property Financial Assistance, the offer will remain open for a maximum of six months. After this time the offer of grant would normally be withdrawn.</p> <p>Four types of Empty Property Grants are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empty Property (Returning From Care) Grant</li> <li>• Empty Property Avoidance Grant</li> <li>• Empty Property (Key Workers) Grant</li> <li>• Empty Property Landlords Grant</li> <li>• Empty Property Landlords Grant (where work is undertaken by agreement with LBB or an alternative agreed provider)</li> </ul> | <p>Budget permitting, assistance is available from the Council for bringing long-term empty residential properties in the Borough back into use under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002.</p> <p>Following the initial letter offering Empty Property Financial Assistance, the offer will remain open for a maximum of six months. After this time the offer of grant would normally be withdrawn.</p> <p>Five types of Empty Property Grants are available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empty Property (Returning From Care) Grant</li> <li>• Empty Property Avoidance Grant</li> <li>• Empty Property (Key Workers) Grant</li> <li>• Empty Property Landlords Grant</li> <li>• Empty Property Landlords Grant (where work is undertaken by agreement with LBB or an alternative agreed provider)</li> <li>• Empty Property (Accessible Homes) Landlord Grant</li> </ul> |



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| <p><b>Empty Property (Returning From Care) Grant</b></p> <p>The Council may offer a grant to owner-occupiers who wish to return empty properties to housing use in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the applicant is in long term care and due to disrepair is unable to return to their property;</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Empty Property (Returning From Care) Grant</b></p> <p>The Council may offer a grant to owner-occupiers who wish to return empty properties to housing use in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the applicant is in long term care <b>or receiving care (Council Tax definition)</b> and due to disrepair is unable to return to their property;</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Empty Property (Key Workers) Grant</b></p> <p>The Council may offer a grant to key workers where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the purchase price of the property was £500,000 or less.</li> <li>the applicant owns no other properties.</li> </ul> <p><i>A Key Worker is defined as a Public Sector Employee who is considered to provide an essential service.</i></p> | <p><b>Empty Property (Key Workers) Grant</b></p> <p>The Council may offer a grant to key workers where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the purchase price of the property was £500,000 or less.</li> <li>the applicant owns no other properties.</li> </ul> <p><i>A Key Worker is defined as a Public Sector Employee who is considered to provide an essential service.</i></p>           |
| <p><b>Specific Conditions for Both Types of Owner Occupier Grant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the property has been empty for 6 months or more</li> <li>the applicant owns the freehold of the property and is responsible for all structural repairs, or the applicant has</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Specific Conditions for Both Types of Owner Occupier Grant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the property has been empty for 6 months or more.</li> <li>the applicant owns the freehold of the property and is responsible for all structural repairs, or the applicant has</li> </ul>  |

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| <p>a lease with at least 8 years to run and any required freeholder permission for the proposed works is obtained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the property does not meet the Decent Homes Standard.</li> <li>▪ the applicant has Planning Permission, for the proposed works or an Established Use Certificate and Building Regs approval</li> <li>▪ the applicant has no outstanding debts to the Council e.g. Council tax arrears</li> <li>▪ applicants who wish to convert a larger property into flats, and move into one of the units will be entitled to a Landlord's Empty Property Grant for the work (see below)</li> <li>▪ the property must remain occupied by the applicant or immediate family for 5 years</li> <li>▪ the maximum grant for owner-occupiers is £20,000, subject to a reasonable cost assessment. The applicant's eligibility will be determined by a means test using the formula or method dictated by the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 (as amended).</li> <li>▪ the property shall be occupied within 1 month of completion of the work</li> <li>▪ a charge is registered against the property so that if the property is sold, or the deeds are transferred within 5 years, the grant must be re-paid. In addition, if the property is allowed to fall vacant unreasonably, for a period of 6 months or more, the grant must be repaid. If any of the conditions are contravened following the completion of the works then the full sum will have to be repaid to the Council.</li> </ul> <p>The Council has the discretion to pay 50% of the money before completion of the works e.g. where works to properties have stalled due to a lack of funds. Where the applicant has a</p> | <p>a lease with at least 8 years to run and any required freeholder permission for the proposed works is obtained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the property does not meet the Decent Homes Standard.</li> <li>▪ the applicant has Planning Permission, for the proposed works or an Established Use Certificate and Building Regs approval</li> <li>▪ the applicant has no outstanding debts to the Council e.g. Council tax arrears</li> <li>▪ applicants who wish to convert a larger property into flats, and move into one of the units will be entitled to a Landlord's Empty Property Grant for the work (see below)</li> <li>▪ the property must remain occupied by the applicant or immediate family for 5 years</li> <li>▪ the maximum grant for owner-occupiers is £20,000, subject to a reasonable cost assessment. The applicant's eligibility will be determined by a means test using the formula or method dictated by the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 (as amended).</li> <li>▪ the property shall be occupied within 1 month of completion of the work</li> <li>▪ a charge is registered against the property so that if the property is sold, or the deeds are transferred within 5 years, the grant must be re-paid. In addition, if the property is allowed to fall vacant unreasonably, for a period of 6 months or more, the grant must be repaid. If any of the conditions are contravened following the completion of the works then the full sum will have to be repaid to the Council.</li> </ul> <p>The Council has the discretion to pay 50% of the money before completion of the works e.g. where works to properties have stalled due to a lack of funds. Where the applicant has a</p> |
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| <p>contribution this must be paid before any payments are made by the Council.</p>   | <p>contribution this must be paid before any payments are made by the Council.</p>  |
| <p><b>Empty Property Landlords Grant</b></p> <p>This grant may be used for work to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ bring a residential property up to the Decent Homes standard and/or,</li> <li>○ conversion of the property into self-contained flats and/or,</li> <li>○ demolition and rebuild (providing there is an increase in the units of available housing) or,</li> <li>○ assisting with the purchase of a long term empty property or,</li> <li>○ conversion of a commercial unit into residential accommodation.</li> </ul> <p>The council may offer a grant to landlords to return empty properties to housing use in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the property has been empty for 6 months or more</li> <li>• the applicant is/will be the owner or long leaseholder of the property and is responsible for all structural repairs</li> <li>• the property does not meet the Decent Homes Standard</li> <li>• the applicant intends to (and the property is acceptable) rent out the property for a minimum of five years to Barnet Homes or an alternative Social Housing provider approved by the Council, to house people in housing need nominated by the Council</li> <li>• the applicant has any required Planning Permission for the proposed works or an Established Use Certificate and</li> </ul> | <p><b>Empty Property Landlords Grant</b></p> <p>This grant may be used towards work to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ bring a residential property up to the Decent Homes standard and/or,</li> <li>○ conversion of the property into self-contained flats and/or,</li> <li>○ demolition and rebuild of an existing commercial or residential structure (providing there is an increase in the units of available housing) or,</li> <li>○ assisting with the purchase of a long term empty property or,</li> <li>○ conversion of a commercial unit for example storage space above shops into residential accommodation.</li> <li>○ Bringing the property up to a suitable standard for letting by Barnet Homes.</li> </ul> <p>The council may offer a grant to landlords to return empty properties to housing use in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the property has been empty for around 6 months or more</li> <li>• the applicant is/will be the owner or long leaseholder of the property and is responsible for all structural repairs</li> <li>• the property does not meet the Decent Homes Standard</li> <li>• the applicant intends to (and the property is acceptable) rent out the property for a minimum of three or five years depending on the scheme taken, to Barnet Homes or an alternative Social Housing provider approved by the</li> </ul> |

- , Building Regulation Approval)
- the applicant has any required freeholder permission for the proposed works
- the landlord is a “fit and proper person” as defined under section 66(2) of the Housing Act 2004 this includes not contravening any provision of the law relating to housing or landlord and tenant law.

The maximum sums for Landlord Grants are shown in the following table. This policy provides the discretion to reduce the “Maximum Grant” through an Officer Agreed Delegated Powers Report where demand outweighs the budget available.

| <b>Number of Bedrooms on Completion</b> | <b>Maximum Assistance</b> | <b>Incentive Scheme * See below</b> |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1                                       | £15,000                   | £1,500                              |
| 2                                       | £20,000                   | £2,000                              |
| 3+                                      | £25,000                   | £2,500                              |

\* This policy provides the discretion to add top ups to the grant to promote the scheme, or where landlords work closely with the Council. This can include but is not limited to:

- an Early Bird Incentive (full application before a certain date),
- a Certificate Service (for example where the Council will provide Energy Performance, Gas Safe Certificate and Electrical Condition Report)
- A Loyalty Scheme for landlords signing up for extended

- Council, to house people in housing need nominated by the Council
- the applicant has any required Planning Permission for the proposed works or an Established Use Certificate and , Building Regulation Approval)
- the applicant has any required freeholder permission for the proposed works
- the landlord is a “fit and proper person” as defined under section 66(2) of the Housing Act 2004 this includes not contravening any provision of the law relating to housing or landlord and tenant law.
- **There are no outstanding debts owed to Barnet Council**

The maximum sums for Landlord Grants are shown in the following table. This policy provides the discretion to reduce the “Maximum Grant” or the length of nomination rights for Barnet Homes through an Officer Agreed Delegated Powers Report where demand outweighs the budget available.

| <b>Number of Bedrooms on Completion</b> | <b>Maximum Assistance- 3 years nomination rights</b> | <b>Maximum Assistance- 5 years nomination rights</b> | <b>Incentive Scheme * See below</b> |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1                                       | £9,200   | £15,300  | £1,500                              |
| 2                                       | £12,300  | £20,400  | £2,000                              |
| 3+                                      | £15,300  | £25,500  | £2,500                              |

\* This policy provides the discretion to add top ups to the grant to promote the scheme, or where landlords work closely with the Council. This can include but is not limited to:

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| <p>nomination rights</p> <p>Applicants can apply for up to a maximum of 6 units per property. Additional units may be agreed at the discretion of the Private Sector Housing Manager.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ an Early Bird Incentive (full application before a certain date),</li> <li>○ a Certificate Service (for example where the Council will provide Energy Performance, Gas Safe Certificate and Electrical Condition Report)</li> <li>○ A Loyalty Scheme for landlords signing up for extended nomination rights over 5 years</li> </ul> <p>Applicants can apply for up to a maximum of 6 units per property. Additional units may be agreed at the discretion of the Private Sector Housing Manager.</p>   |
| <p><b>Empty Property Landlords Grant (where work is undertaken by agreement with LBB or an alternative agreed provider)</b></p> <p>This policy provides the discretion to provide this grant if it is found to be viable. The Council is currently investigating the practicalities of this option. The service would enable landlords without access to funds up front, willing to let the property through Barnet Homes, or an alternative agreed provider to agree to LBB or alternative agreed by LBB completing the necessary works. The owner would need to agree formally to any costs not covered by the grant plus an administrative fee being accrued back through the rental income.</p> <p>The property must be let to Barnet Homes or an alternative Social Housing provider approved by the Council to house people in housing need nominated by the Council for five years or until the assistance plus fee has been repaid, whichever is the longer.</p> | <p><b>Empty Property Landlords Grant (where work is undertaken by agreement with LBB or an alternative agreed provider)</b></p> <p>This policy provides the discretion to provide this grant if it is found to be viable. The service would enable landlords without access to funds up front, willing to let the property through Barnet Homes, or an alternative agreed provider to agree to LBB or alternative agreed by LBB completing the necessary works. The owner would need to agree formally to any costs not covered by the grant plus an administrative fee being accrued back through the rental income.</p> <p>The property must be let to Barnet Homes or an alternative Social Housing provider approved by the Council to house people in housing need nominated by the Council for five years or until the assistance plus fee has been repaid, whichever is the longer.</p> |
|  | <p><b>Empty Property Avoidance Grant</b></p>   |

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|  | <p>The Council may offer a grant to owner-occupiers who wish to return empty properties to housing use, or avoid a property becoming long term empty where the owner is in or is going into care. If the owner does not have access to funds to cover costs that exceed the grant, these costs plus an administrative fee can by formal agreement be accrued back through rental income.</p> <p>The property must be let to Barnet Homes or an alternative Social Housing provider approved by the Council to house people in housing need nominated by the Council for five years or until the assistance plus fee has been repaid, whichever is the longer. If the property is sold before the debt is repaid the debt must be repaid in full.</p> <p>This grant may be used for work to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ bring a residential property up to the Decent Homes standard and/or,</li> <li>○ bring a residential property up to a suitable standard for letting by Barnet Homes.and/or,</li> <li>○ conversion of the property into self-contained flats</li> </ul> <p>The council may offer a grant where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the property is expected to be empty for more than 6 months</li> <li>• the applicant is/will be the owner or long leaseholder of the property and is responsible for all structural repairs</li> <li>• the applicant has any required freeholder permission for the proposed works</li> <li>• There are no outstanding debts to the Council</li> </ul> |
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| Empty Property Landlord Grants Specific Conditions  | Empty Property Landlord Grants Specific Conditions  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the property must be let for a minimum of five years to Barnet Homes or an alternative Social Housing provider approved by the Council to house people in housing need nominated by the Council.</li> <li>Alternatively where accommodation is owned by a charity and tied to occupation by a specific client group, this may be agreed at the discretion of the Private Sector Housing Manager where the client group can be proved to be vulnerable.</li> <li>applicants are required to convert or improve the property to Barnet Homes Property Standards (or an alternative agreed by LBB) and the Decent Homes Standard</li> <li>the property (and its fixtures, fittings and furniture) must be fully insured. The Council will require a copy of the current insurance certificate to be provided before the assistance can be paid</li> <li>all works listed on the specification of works and all units within the property must be completed before the final payments can be made</li> <li>final payments are subject to confirmation from Barnet Homes (or an alternative agreed by LBB) that the works meet the standards agreed</li> <li>the owner (or agent, if any) must be accredited under the London Landlords Accreditation Scheme before final payment can be made</li> <li>works should be started within 3 months and completed within 9 months of approval</li> <li>to claim the payments a copy of the builder's final account with all relevant certificates e.g. building control, gas/electrical certificates, roof/damp guarantees etc must</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the property must be let for a minimum of three or five years (depending on the grant applied for – see table above) to Barnet Homes or an alternative Social Housing provider approved by the Council to house people in housing need nominated by the Council.</li> <li>Alternatively where accommodation is owned by a charity and tied to occupation by a specific client group, this may be agreed at the discretion of the Private Sector Housing Manager where the client group can be proved to be vulnerable. <b>The minimum letting period will still need to be met.</b></li> <li>applicants are required to convert or improve the property to Barnet Homes Property Standards (or an alternative agreed by LBB) and the Decent Homes Standard</li> <li>the property (and its fixtures, fittings and furniture) must be fully insured. The Council will require a copy of the current insurance certificate to be provided before the assistance can be paid</li> <li>all works listed on the specification of works and all units within the property must be completed before the final payments can be made</li> <li>final payments are subject to confirmation from Barnet Homes (or an alternative agreed by LBB) that the works meet the standards agreed</li> <li>the owner (or agent, if any) must be accredited under the London Landlords Accreditation Scheme before final payment can be made</li> <li>works should be started within 3 months and completed within 9 months of approval</li> <li>to claim the payments a copy of the builder's final account</li> </ul> |

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| <p>be provided on completion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the property shall be occupied within 1 month of completion of the work</li> <li>a charge is registered against the property so that if the property is sold, or the deeds are transferred within 5 years from completion of the grant, the grant must be repaid in full. In addition, if the property is allowed to fall vacant unreasonably, for a period of 6 months or more, the financial assistance must be repaid.</li> <li>If any of the conditions are contravened following the completion of the grant then the full sum will have to be repaid to the Council</li> </ul> <p>The Council has the discretion to pay 50% of the money before completion of the works e.g. where works to properties have stalled due to a lack of funds. Where the applicant has a contribution this must be paid before any payments are made by the Council.</p> | <p>with all relevant certificates e.g. building control, gas/electrical certificates, roof/damp guarantees etc must be provided on completion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the property shall be occupied within 1 month of completion of the work</li> <li>a charge is registered against the property so that if the property is sold, or the deeds are transferred within 3 or 5 years from completion of the grant (depending on the grant received), the grant must be re-paid in full. In addition, if the property is allowed to fall vacant unreasonably, for a period of 6 months or more, the financial assistance must be repaid.</li> <li>If any of the conditions are contravened following the completion of the grant then the full sum will have to be repaid to the Council</li> </ul> <p>The Council has the discretion to pay 50% of the money before completion of the works e.g. where works to properties have stalled due to a lack of funds. Where the applicant has a contribution this must be paid before any payments are made by the Council.</p> |
| <p><b>Empty Property HCA Funding</b></p> <p>Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding is an additional grant of up to £13,000 per empty property to support the main Empty Homes Programme. On completion they must be let at Local Housing Allowance rates.</p> <p><b>Empty Property HCA Funding Conditions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the property has been empty for 1 month or more</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Delete as the funding stream is no longer available</b></p>   |



- the applicant is/will be the owner or leaseholder of the property and is responsible for all structural repairs
- the property does not meet the Decent Homes Standard
- the applicant has any required Planning Permission for the proposed works or an Established Use Certificate (including Building Regulation Approval)
- the landlord is a “fit and proper person” as defined under section 66(2) of the Housing Act 2004 this includes not contravening any provision of the law relating to housing or landlord and tenant law.
- the property must be let through a lease for a minimum of five years to Barnet Homes.
- the property (and its fixtures, fittings and furniture) must be fully insured. The Council will require a copy of the current insurance certificate to be provided before the assistance can be paid
- all works listed on the specification of works and all units within the property must be completed before the final payments can be made
- final payments are subject to confirmation from Barnet Homes that the works meet the standards agreed
- Payments can only be made on completion of the work
- the owner (or agent, if any) must be accredited under the London Landlords Accreditation Scheme before final payment can be made
- works should be started within 3 months and completed within 9 months of approval
- to claim the payments a copy of the builder’s final account with all relevant certificates e.g. building control, gas/electrical certificates, roof/damp guarantees etc must be provided on completion.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the property shall be occupied within 1 month of completion of the work</li> <li>• This grant is not repayable although it will be reclaimed if the landlord terminates the lease within the initial five year period and/or the above conditions are not complied with. It is repayable on a pro-rata basis.</li> </ul> <p>This funding may be used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independently</li> <li>• in conjunction with the Council's Empty Property Landlords Grant for work to bring the property up to the decent homes standard</li> <li>• in conjunction with the Council's Empty Property Landlords Grant where the grant has been put towards the cost of purchasing a long term empty property.</li> </ul> <p>All works must be completed by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2015 for this funding stream.</p> <p>This policy provides the discretion to use any new funding secured from this or any alternative funding streams in line with the funding criteria and in addition to the financial assistance provided through this policy. It will not be used as an alternative to the proposals contained in this policy.</p> |   |
|   | <p><b>Empty Property (Accessible Homes) Landlord Grant</b><br/> Subject to finance and Barnet Homes approval, in addition to the Empty Property Landlord Grant a "Top Up" may be applied for to bring properties up to a standard that is accessible for persons with mobility issues. This will be a pre-set standard.</p> |

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|  | <p>The value of the <b>Empty Property (Accessible Homes) Landlord Grant</b> is not to exceed £12,500 and is to fund the following general works in a manner most likely to be suitable for the widest range of needs. It is not to fund adaptations particular to the needs of a specific person. Where there is an overlap between the work of the Empty Property Grant and the Empty Property (Lifetime Homes) Landlord Grant, a double award of funding will not be made e.g. new bathroom is required to meet the Decent Homes standard, which instead is provided with a level access shower. Only the payment for the shower room will be provided.</p> <p>This will only be available to landlords signing up to the 5 year nomination rights.</p> <p>The <b>Empty Property (Accessible Homes) Landlord Grant</b> will fund works to make the property as far as possible compliant with the Lifetime Home Standard, but generally to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the property accessible for the commonest needs Ensure that any disabled occupant would have reasonable ability to circulate into and around the dwelling and be able to access the kitchen, bathroom, WC, bedroom and family room.</li> <li>• Provide accessible washing facilities, such as a level access shower</li> <li>• Ensure that power, light and heating controls are so positioned as to be accessible for a disabled occupant</li> <li>• Such other works as may from time to time be found to be necessary to ensure a particular property is suitable for</li> </ul> |
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|  | <p>occupation by a disabled person.</p> <p>This grant will be subject to the Empty Property Landlord Grants Specific Conditions.</p> |
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