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Welsh Local Government Association

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Further information following the meeting held on 3 July 2019

Dear Jim and Lisa,

Thank you for facilitating the Committee's evidence sessions with members of the All-Wales Private Sector Expert Panel and revenue officers on Wednesday 3 July 2019 on empty properties.

During the meeting, the representatives of the Expert Panel agreed to write to us on a number of areas where we would be grateful for further information and clarification. I list the issues and our questions below.

- The panellists agreed to provide data on the location of empty properties within local authority areas and whether there is a link with areas of social deprivation.
- The panellists agreed to write in response to a number of questions on the effectiveness of the enforcement powers available to local authorities in dealing with empty properties.

During the session with the Expert Panel, we discussed the issue that many empty properties are not listed on the council tax valuation list due to being in poor condition, but we were unable to pursue this during the session with revenue officers due to time constraints. We would therefore be grateful if you could provide details on the number of empty properties deleted from the council tax valuation list each year for the last five financial years. If possible, we would like to know the reason for the deletion.

Linked to the performance indicator, it would also be useful to know if possible, perhaps from the local authorities represented at the evidence session, how many empty properties are actually generating work at the moment, or in a given financial year. This would be useful in order to get an indication of the work being done on empty properties.



The panellists also agreed to write in response to a number of questions on the effectiveness of the enforcement powers available to local authorities in dealing with empty properties. The specific questions are listed below.

- Why have local authorities made so little use of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs)? How could EDMOs be improved or should an entirely new process be introduced?
- Written evidence from the South East Wales Empty Property Working Group suggested that enforced sale is more straightforward than EDMOs or Compulsory Purchase Orders. Why is this the case and how could the enforced sale process be made easier or more flexible?
- Several consultation responses mentioned Scottish Government plans to introduce a Compulsory Sales Order process where land that has been vacant or derelict for an undue period will be sold by public auction to the highest bidder. Would this type of process be useful in Wales and what advantages would it bring?

Additionally, due to time constraints, we were unable to ask a number of questions relating to affordable homes and would be grateful if you could address these questions in writing. The specific questions are listed below.

- To what extent have local authorities been able to enable or encourage owners of empty homes to provide affordable housing? Has partnership working with housing associations been successful?
- Where a local authority or housing association wants to buy or lease an empty property to refurbish and then manage or sell, what challenges do projects like this face? Are there examples of good practice in this area?
- The Committee's consultation received evidence that the impact of bringing an empty property back into use in a rural area can be more significant than elsewhere. Does turning empty properties in rural areas into affordable homes present any specific challenges? How can these challenges be overcome?

It would be helpful to the Committee if we could receive this additional information by 26 July so that it can be considered as part of our inquiry. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



John Griffiths AM, Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

