

## **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

1.1 The Proper Officer reports that, pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13, the following motion had been received:-

1.2 From Cllr Mrs D L Belton and seconded by Cllr R P Constable:-

“ As of December 2023, the following numbers were accurate in relation to empty properties in the Rochford District;

- 518 unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties.
- 69 furnished properties which are no ones main home (2<sup>nd</sup> homes)
- 475 unoccupied properties which are exempt by statute from Council Tax e.g. – properties where owner died and probate yet to be granted/within 6 months of probate.

Rochford do not currently have or use the services of an Empty Homes Officer, meaning little is being done to actively bring these homes back into use. Given the number of residents on the housing waiting list as well as a demand for new private homes resulting in constant development, I am asking this Council to commit to procuring the services of a neighbouring authority to start working towards bringing these properties into use at pace. Whilst the 518 homes generate the council an income, I believe the properties being occupied is more important that the enhanced Council tax amount. Of the 475 properties that are not currently generating any council tax, these could not only provide vital homes for local people but could also generate council tax in the region of £750k per annum, and although a large proportion of this goes to Essex County Council, PFCC and Town/Parish RDC keep a fair share and regardless all precepts help our residents one way or another. We can as part of the work reach out to ECC to contribute to the cost of the officer time.

Typically, 5 or 6 properties come back into use every year but I suspect others join the list. However, if we use Southend City Council as an example of an authority that employ a FT empty homes officer, they have brought over 50 back into use this year.

This is a motion therefore proposing that RDC commit to procuring the services of an Empty Homes Officer in 2024 and, subject to the results achieved, consider creating a specific post in the future to ensure we are doing what we can to minimise empty homes across the District.”

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.