

JOB DESCRIPTION

COMMUNITY & HOUSING DEPARTMENT

POST TITLE:	Empty Property Officer		
Grade:	ME13		
DIVISION/SECTION:	Residential & Pollution		
Location:	Merton Civic Centre		
Responsible for:	N/A		
Responsible to:	Lead Officer (Private Sector Housing)		
Post number:	TBC	Date:	April 2023

Main Purpose

To lead and implement the Council's Empty Homes Strategy, bringing empty properties into use thereby contributing to increasing the supply of housing in Merton.

To provide advice and information, including the promotion of grant funding and other assistance available, to enable owners to exercise options to return properties to use.

To oversee the grant funding process from end to end, ensuring a customer care focused service is delivered to the public.

To achieve the Empty Homes Scheme performance standards and targets to enable the Council's strategic objectives and action plan targets to be met.

Specific Duties and Responsibilities

1	To develop and implement the Empty Homes Strategy in conjunction with internal Council and external partners.
2	To achieve targets for long-term empty properties brought back into use through engagement with owners and carrying out enforcement action where required.
3	To act as first point of contact for empty property enquiries, and provide appropriate advice and information, and signposting to other services, to maximise the options for owners to bring properties back into use for sale or rent.
4	To promote incentives such as Council and other grants, loans or financial assistance schemes to assist owners to access options to bring properties back into use.
5	To investigate reports of empty properties impacting on the area, such as public health, nuisance dereliction, antisocial behaviour or vermin infestations, and to arrange and carry out reactive and proactive inspections under the Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to assess property conditions and carry out risk assessments. To arrange works in default where prevention measures have been unsuccessful
6	In conjunction with the Team Manager, to implement enforcement activities relating to long term empty properties, and lead on casework management and Court case preparation where statutory interventions are required under enforcement powers, such as Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) under the Housing Act 2004, Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) under the provisions of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965 (CPA 1965), and other relevant powers including the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949.

7	To recommend remedial courses of action to landlords in order to improve standards of properties, communicating the necessary works and suitable timescales for improvement. Where standards have not been met, take the necessary action to improve the property through the issuing of formal notices, statutory letters and other appropriate means and methods.
8	To oversee the empty property grant process from initial enquiry to completion, including conducting inspections, assessing contractor estimates, and preparing assessments for eligible works.
9	To liaise with Council Tax and other services within the Council, and external agencies, to identify owners and undertake negotiation to encourage them to access options for returning properties to use.
10	To liaise with Conservation Teams within Planning to identify listed buildings or other high profile empty properties that are potentially suitable for residential use and engage with the owners.
11	Present evidence and give professional advice on behalf of the Council in Court, Public and/or Ombudsman enquiries and tribunals.
12	To actively engage with relevant external agencies such as the Empty Homes Agency and registered social landlords on matters relating to long term empty properties.
13	To use initiative and problem-solving skills to manage own workload, ensuring all queries & complaints from members of the public, Councillors, MP's and Senior Council Officials are investigated, resolved and brought to a satisfactory conclusion.
14	To prepare and arrange distribution of publicity through a range of media including web-based to promote the scheme and options available for bringing empty homes into use.
15	To provide heads of service with reports, information, advice or guidance, deputising for team manager as and when required.
16	To represent the Department at meetings with other local authorities, professional bodies and liaise with other Council officers, external organisations as appropriate.
17	To participate in the council's service improvement regime through the attendance and participation of working groups and benchmark activities.
18	To maintain a working knowledge of legislation, regulatory guidance, codes of practice, and sector technical developments relevant to the Empty Homes Scheme.
19	To undertake such other duties commensurate with the grade as may be required from time to time.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS APPLICABLE TO THIS ROLE

The post holder is expected to be committed to the Council's core values of public service, quality, equality, and empowerment and to demonstrate this commitment in the way they carry out their duties. In addition, they should be available to carry out such other duties, as may be required, which are consistent with the grade and scope of the post

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Health & Safety

To ensure that corporate and departmental health and safety policies and procedures are always implemented and to raise any concerns regarding their operation or any other health and safety matters with the appropriate line manager.

Equal Opportunities

To be aware of the council's Equal Opportunities Policy: to understand it and to adhere to it.

Customer Care

To assist in ensuring that the Council's aims and objectives relating to customer awareness are achieved

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON	
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Skills and Abilities

1. Demonstrable skills in relation to the planning, monitoring and delivery of projects and programmes of work in accordance with required performance indicators.
2. An ability to work collaboratively with staff in the department, staff across the Council and build effective relationships with Members and external organisations.
3. A demonstrable ability to provide a customer care centred service providing information advice and support to members of the public.
4. The ability to build productive and effective partnerships with key stakeholders as well as representatives of other public, private, voluntary sector and community organisations.
5. Ability to carry out inspections of properties and apply the Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessments, recommending schemes of works to be carried out.
6. Ability to manage a caseload from start to finish, ensuring compliance with policy, procedures, and relevant statutory and regulatory guidance.
7. Excellent verbal, written and presentation skills with the ability to communicate clearly, effectively and be highly credible and influential with elected Members and other public and private partners and stakeholders.

Knowledge and Experience

8. Evidence of a clear understanding of the HHSRS system, and relevant Housing Act 2004 and associated legislation relating to management of empty homes.
9. Experience of negotiating with landlords or organisation representatives to promote and deliver Council strategies or programmes.
10. Experience of promotion of schemes or programmes to the public, internal staff and external organisations, including producing publicity material and delivering presentations.
11. Experience of formulating solutions to address complex pollution services issues.
12. Experience of working within a regulated service and delivering strategic plan objectives.
13. Knowledge and experience of external grant funding regimes or ability to acquire required level within the induction training period.
14. Experience of managing a caseload involving application of legal enforcement measures and working with Legal representative to prepare cases for legal action.
15. Ability to represent the Council in legal proceedings, attending Court and giving evidence as necessary.
16. Experiencing of managing changing priorities and demands in a political or regulated environment.
17. Experience of managing financial (including complex programme and project budgets) and human resources.

Qualifications

18. Educated to a degree level or equivalent in a relevant discipline or extensive relevant practical experience.
19. Membership of relevant professional body and evidence of continued professional development.