

## Empty Homes Strategy 2017-2022

Addendum – May 2020

The aim of the Empty Homes Strategy is to provide an up to date insight into the work carried out by the Council to proactively reduce the number of long term empty properties, and to minimise the negative impact of empty properties on their neighbouring properties.

At the time of the Empty Homes Strategy being written and adopted in 2017, a key element of this work included the partnership working between the Council and Methodist Action North West, who assisted in the delivery of the empty homes scheme, offering financial and technical support to long term empty home owners to assist in bringing their property back into use. Paragraphs 4.12 - 4.17 of this strategy outline the nature of this partnership, the method in which it was formed and the benefits that offered to enable long term empty properties to be brought back into use that would otherwise have sat empty.

Unfortunately, in the summer of 2019 Methodist Action went into liquidation, meaning that this partnership came to an end. All properties that had been brought back into use through the scheme were handed back to the owners and the offer of financial assistance to empty home owners was suspended.

The objective in paragraph 5.10 “To Explore and Pursue Funding Opportunities to Tackle Empty Homes” specifically focuses on the partnership with Methodist Action and building on this relationship to pursue additional funding and offer additional incentives to empty homes owners to bring their properties back into use. As this partnership has now ceased, the Council are actively exploring alternative options to continue the positive work to bring empty homes back into use and increasing the supply of good quality housing across Lancaster district. The Council will also continue to pursue any alternative funding that might be available to be used towards reducing the number of empty properties across the district.

The partnership between Lancaster City Council and Methodist Action was successful in bringing 22 properties back into use, which are properties that would otherwise have potentially remained empty for a substantial length of time. It is therefore considered that this was an effective partnership that delivered on its aims, and it is unfortunate that it was cut short. The Council can take what it has learned from this experience and hopefully move forward with a new partner, in the near future, to offer a new empty homes scheme.

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