

TAKING ACTION ON EMPTY HOMES

Dover District Council continues to work hard to address the number of empty homes across the area. As part of this work, a new empty homes strategy has been drawn up for the period 2010-2015.

An owner of an empty property in Dover District has been prosecuted by DDC at Folkestone Magistrates Court in February for failing to comply with Improvement Notices requiring him to renovate the property. The prosecution was successful and the owner was fined £9,000 plus £2,000 costs. The property came to the attention of the Council's Empty Property Officer who tried unsuccessfully to encourage the owner to renovate the property. The owner ignored all of the Council's attempts to contact him and help him, and the Council had to take formal legal action in an attempt to get the property improved. The property has been empty for many years and is proving to be a magnet for vandals and anti-social behaviour. It has become an eyesore and a danger to people entering it or the land it sits on.

Councils have powers to require owners of empty properties to renovate them, make them safe and bring them back into use. Interest-free loans may be available in some cases to help owners do the work needed. For more information on help available or action that can be taken, please contact the Empty Properties Team on (01304) 872397 or log onto www.dover.gov.uk

Maintain your drain

It's easy to forget about maintaining your drains - until something goes wrong. However, making sure drainage and sewerage systems, which serve both residential and commercial properties, are in good working order is essential. Drain jetting generally involves clearing any unwanted blockages, and can be done in a number of ways. If the drains need greater repair than clearing of a blockage, it can lead to more serious work being necessary. During the colder months drains can become blocked up with cooking fats and washing powders etc. Where residents are served by a shared drainage system it is often worth getting together with your neighbours to organise regular cleansing. Advice on drain maintenance is available by contacting the Council's Environmental Health section or see www.dover.gov.uk

IT'S ALL BEER AND SKITTLES ISN'T IT?

Licensing is woven through the fabric of our daily lives to ensure the health, safety and well-being of our residents, businesses and visitors to the district.

This does not just cover reviewing the licensing hours for pubs and clubs in the district. The enforcement of taxi licensing ensures that the drivers and operators are fit and proper to carry out the role and that the vehicles are safe and clean. How many people having their ears pierced or hair styled realise that the business and individual have to be registered with the Council or that the stall selling jewellery in the High Street needs a permit to be there? The safety of the public is the paramount concern for the Licensing Authority.

Recent law changes allow the public to have much more say in the issuing or review of licences. This has in turn had a positive effect on noise and anti-social behaviour connected to business premises. The government intends to increase the powers given to Councils to increase public safety and quality of life. Partnership working between Councils, other agencies and the public continues to expand so that answers to issues are dealt with together.

The Licensing Section at DDC is a ready source for advice and guidance whilst still ensuring compliance and enforcement. The team produces a licensing newsletter giving a wide range of clear and concise information. For more details, please call Licensing on 01304 872295.

