

**Wiltshire Council**

**Council**

**26 February 2019**

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**From Councillor Jon Hubbard, Melksham South Division**

**To Councillor Richard Clewer, Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Arts, Heritage and Tourism**

**Question (19-29)**

I refer the cabinet member to the letter regarding the long empty properties owned by the NHS at The Lodge on Spa Road in Melksham by the hospital, sent to him on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019 and his subsequent reply of 18<sup>th</sup> January in which he promised to investigate further. Could I please ask:

- a) What were the outcomes of his investigation and what actions is he taking as a result of them?
- b) Have these investigations including the council considering the options of compulsory purchase, enforced sale or an Empty Dwelling Management Order?
- c) What, if any, contact has there been with the NHS regarding their plans for the future of these homes?
- d) Are the NHS currently paying any council tax for these properties, and if so at what rate (i.e. are they paying an Empty Homes Surcharge)?

**Response**

I am grateful for Cllr Hubbard raising this issue again.

Following Cllr Hubbard's previous contact officers investigated the history of the Council's work to try and bring these properties back into use. The Council's last concerted involvement with these properties was in 2013 when external funding was secured and the NHS Trust was offered a five year lease from the Council. The external funding was required as the condition of the properties meant that it was not economic to undertake necessary works and recoup expenditure within the lease period. Unfortunately, the offer was not taken up by the NHS Trust.

It can only be assumed that the condition of the properties has deteriorated over the last five plus years. The absence of external funding will challenge the economics of bringing the properties back into use. The option of compulsory purchase or empty property management orders can be considered if all other options of working with NHS property services have been exhausted.

Contact has been made with colleagues in NHS property services. It was the intention to progress discussions via the One Public Estate partnership but that has not been possible since Cllr Hubbard's initial enquiry.

I can confirm NHS property services are being charged 150% Council tax.