



Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 061533
Date 5 June 2015

Vacant Properties

Request:

I would like to know the answer to my questions regarding properties that are in the Authority's portfolio and non-council owned assets as well.

So, if you can produce a list of commercial, resident & council owned assets that are vacant/empty & what the authority is spending to maintain them/paying rent on them or for security that would be appreciated.

1. How many vacant/empty/disused properties/buildings are there in Wolverhampton, according to your most recent figures?

In response to question 1, information relating to vacant Council owned residential and commercial properties which you have requested falls under exemption section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("The Act"), which relates to 'information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means'.

The exemption applies as the information is published and publicly-available to view by accessing the following links

<http://data.wolverhampton.gov.uk/View>"
https://public.wolverhampton.gov.uk/pls/houlive_selfsrv_ax/f?p=SSRVCBL:200:1632120232757:INITIALISE:NO:RP,200::

Please note that the second link is open from 6pm on Tuesdays until 9am on Mondays.

In relation to vacant residential property which you have requested, the Council is refusing to provide lists of empty residential properties where the property is owned by individuals. In making such refusals the Council refers to the following exemptions contained within the Act:

Section 31(1)(a) Law Enforcement - where disclosure would prejudice the prevention of crime. The exemption contained in Section 31 (Law Enforcement), requires the Council to consider the public interest when weighing up disclosure or withholding the requested information. Whilst the Council recognises that there is a public interest in enabling empty properties to be brought back into use, the Council also recognises that there is a public interest in reducing potential criminal activity in

empty properties, especially those owned by private individuals.

Section 40(2) Personal Data other than that of the requestor – where disclosure would breach the data protection principles contained in the Data Protection Act 1998– in relation to empty properties owned by individuals.

Wolverhampton City Council has wider responsibilities and concerns regarding community safety. There is a risk associated with such a list entering the public domain due to the known link between empty property and anti-social behavior. The Council's view is that any anti-social activity will be distressing for residents who live nearby, residents to whom the Council has a responsibility

2. How much is the Council spending on maintaining vacant/empty/disused properties/buildings in Wolverhampton?

3. How much is the Council spending on security for vacant/empty/disused properties/buildings in Wolverhampton?

In respect of questions 2 and 3 above, the money spent on vacant properties during the 2014/15 financial year is estimated to be in the region of £230,000. Please note that this figure also covers security. The Council do not hold a specific cost centre for security and therefore the money quoted above covers as a wide range of services which includes rates, water rates, electric/gas, alarms fire and intruder, alarm maintenance, security checks, security checks/out of hours response/caretaking/minor repairs, security measures to protect the site and buildings /Fencing etc, response maintenance, on-going maintenance such as boiler plant/or draining down services and grounds maintenance/needle disposal/fly tipping.

4. Do you have a list of the locations or names of properties/buildings in Wolverhampton that are vacant/empty/disused?

In response to question please see our response to question 1.