

- **Extract from the Shropshire Star dated August 28 2010**

*More than 4,000 homes are currently lying empty across Shropshire, with almost half of those not being lived in for more than six months, new figures showed today.*

*Residents, property owners and other interested groups are now being invited to comment on a new housing strategy which looks at tackling the issues associated with long-term empty homes in the county.*

*There are currently 4,362 empty homes across the county, with 1,933 of those properties having been empty for more than six months.*

*Shropshire Council's Empty Homes Strategy proposes setting up Empty Homes Action Zones to focus on areas where there are significant numbers of empty homes, and the council wants to give communities the opportunity to comment on the proposals being made.*

*The council will work in partnership with agencies, communities and property owners to take up a range of options for bringing homes into use.*

*Councillor Malcolm Price, cabinet member for housing, said: "One of Shropshire Council's priorities for improvement is to provide a range of affordable housing options for Shropshire residents.*

*"A contribution towards this priority will be to increase the number of properties in the housing market and in particular reduce the number of long-term empty homes.*

*"We hope the community and key stakeholders will actively be involved in the delivery of the strategy through contacting the empty homes officers with any comments or concerns about empty homes in their local areas."*

*Following a review of council tax discounts for empty homes owners of properties which are vacant for more than six months must pay the full rate of council tax.*

*This is intended to encourage owners to ensure homes are occupied.*

*The council will also continue to offer Empty Homes Grants to help owners where a property may need work carried out before it can be lived in, and has allocated additional resources to achieve this*