

- The house was originally occupied by a Mr and Mrs Parkin. Mr Parkin died in 1997 and his wife died in 2001. The property has remained empty since 2001.
- The only surviving relative is a Ms Brown - niece of Mrs Parkin. Ms Brown arranged the funeral for Mrs Parkin but has not been seen or heard of again. Ms Brown gave her contact details to a neighbour (who is also the local neighbourhood watch person) for forwarding post etc. The neighbour sent on the post for a couple of years but never heard anything again from Ms Brown, despite leaving messages for her etc.
- The neighbour reported the property to me in July 2008 after there had been an attempted break in and a rear window smashed. The neighbour tends to the front of the house to prevent it appearing empty, but it is gradually falling into more and more disrepair (kitchen ceiling has collapsed and porch canopy in major disrepair).
- I've tried numerous times to contact Ms Brown by letter/phone but she has never responded (she lives in New Barnet). Barnet Council Tax have confirmed that she does live at the address I have for her. The Empty Homes Officer at Barnet has also hand delivered a letter for me but still nothing. She has apparently told EDF that she wants nothing to do with the property.
- I've carried out probate searches on Mr&Mrs Parkin but no application has ever been made and they both died intestate. The Treasury has advised me that they will not take on the estate because there is a surviving relative. So the house is just sitting there rotting away!
- I asked a search company to check if there are any other relatives. They believe the niece may have a brother but have been unable to track him down or confirm if he is still alive.
- Earlier this year there was another break in and the Police are concerned that the house is becoming a known target for crime.
- Andrew Lavender (KCC) has been helping on this - he's dealt with similar cases in Kent. The proposed action is to serve an Improvement Notice for the disrepair, charge for doing this (as allowed under the HA 2004) and then start the Enforced Sale procedure to recover our costs. The house will then be sold at auction (by us), we deduct our costs and the balance remains held until such time as a claim is made (so if an application for probate is granted).
- I've consulted with Legal (Graham Grove) several times on this case and Legal are happy with the proposed action and satisfied that we have done all we can to engage with the niece. We will keep the niece informed every step of the way (even if she doesn't respond). The whole process will take around 6 months to get to the auction stage.
- The house is in a lovely cul de sac and would be an ideal family home. The local residents would love to see it back to use, the house is a constant worry to them - especially with the break-ins.

Thanks

Lisa

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