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Our Ref: 070317 - 01
Date: 13 April 2017

Dear Mr Dargue,

I refer to your Freedom of Information (FOI) request which we received on 21 March 2017.

You asked:

In Birmingham and the West Midlands region:

1. Number of properties empty
2. Current value of these properties
3. Cost of keeping them, despite them being empty
4. Any which are in the process of, or planning to be, sold to external bodies.

In compliance with the FOI Act 2000, NHS Property Services is able to respond to your request as follows:

The information is exempt from publication under section 43 – Commercial Interests.

The following information about NHS Property Services may however be helpful to you.

NHS Property Services is responsible for 10 per cent of the total NHS estate. Our portfolio consists of 3,700 freehold and leasehold primary care properties, such as health centres and surgeries. At any one time, approximately seven percent of our portfolio is vacant – below average for a portfolio of this size.

The reasons why a property may be vacant can vary. For example, our commissioners (NHS England and Clinical Commissioning Groups) may be conducting a service review, or the property may be pending for refurbishment or sale.

NHS Property Services will only dispose of a property once health commissioners have formally declared it surplus to NHS requirements.

The fact that an NHS PS property is vacant, therefore, does not mean that we are free to dispose of the property. That only happens when it is declared surplus. We are then obliged to offer both freehold and freehold properties to other government organisations for a ten-week period, and only then can we dispose of the properties on the open market.

A key objective of our freehold disposal programme is to ensure that we achieve best value for taxpayers, with sales receipts re-invested in the NHS.

Our property strategy team works with CCGs and occupiers to ensure that properties are efficiently utilised. The team also works with our property management team to ensure that vacant space is re-let to NHS organisations, where practically possible.

Since our formation in April 2013 and until the end of the financial year 2016/17, we had sold £152 million of vacant property and enabled the construction of 2,770 much-needed new homes in the process, in line with Government objectives.

It is important to recognise that NHS Property Services is not merely a property holding company, but a dynamic change agent delivering NHS estate improvements and employing 3,000 front-line service delivery staff in facilities management.

Unfortunately we cannot give specific detail on sites, due to commercial confidentiality and ongoing transactions.

I hope this is helpful, but if you are unhappy with the way we have handled your request for information, you can request a review or make a complaint in writing to the FOI Manager either by email to information@property.nhs.uk or by post to: NHS Property Services Ltd, 85 Gresham Street, London EC2V 7NQ.

Then, if you are still not satisfied with the handling of your request you have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at www.ico.org.uk/complaints/getting or by post to: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Welch
Freedom of Information Lead