



## Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Finance and Performance Scrutiny      2 September 2024

Wards affected:      All wards

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### **Void Property Management – Council Housing Service**

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Report of Director (Community Services)

#### **1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To update members on current void performance within the council's housing service.

#### **2. Recommendation**

2.1 That members note the report.

#### **3. Background to the report**

3.1 Voids are unoccupied properties which often require repairs before being ready for let to new occupants. Key objectives for the housing service are to make void properties available for letting as quickly as possible, minimising rent loss and maximising the housing available, whilst ensuring that the homes we provide are clean, safe, secure and comply with the Council's ready to let standard.

3.2 The council manages approximately 3211 homes of which approximately 190 become vacant per year. On average there are around 32.5 voids with repairs at any one time. Last year we received 3.56 voids per week. The main reasons for properties becoming void are following death of the tenant followed by tenants moving into residential care.

#### **3.3 Void Property Management**

Effective and efficient void management is necessary to:

- Maximise rental income
- Reduce waiting times so that tenants can access properties more quickly
- Meet housing demand
- Maintain and ensure the quality and safety of the council's homes

### 3.4 Key Performance Indicators

The housing service has the following KPIs:

- LHS212C Average Relet Time for Standard Voids (General Needs Housing)
- LHS212d Average Relet Time for Major Voids (General Needs Housing)
- LHS212e Average Relet Time all Voids (General Needs Housing)

When a property is void the housing repairs team carry out the following works, these will include

- Clear the property of any items left by the previous tenant & carry out an overall inspection of the property condition.
- Arrange for a pre-clean if the property is un-hygienic & not suitable for working in.
- Carry out an Electrical Installation check (EICR)
- Arrange for a legionella flush to be carried out by a specialist contractor if the property is known to have been empty for a significant time.
- Arrange for an external Asbestos Management / Targeted survey if required
- Clear any debts left on the gas & electric meters utilising the British Gas void care service
- Arrange for a kitchen survey, design & quote should the existing require an upgrade.
- Carry out void works utilising our In-House repairs team or the external void contractor
- Carry out a final clean & further legionella flush
- Whilst void, the opportunity is also taken to carry out any planned maintenance that may be due. This can include heating upgrades, electrical re-wires, kitchen & bathroom refurbishments.

Following completion of the remedial works during the void stage, properties are then passed over to the Allocations team for relet. Properties are advertised prior to the completion of the repair works, to minimise further delay. The Allocations team are also responsible for managing adverts from other Registered Providers.

3.5 The Housing Service is committed to ongoing service review and improvement. The following service improvements have been made over the last 12 months to reduce void times:

- Void performance is monitored by a monthly void performance meeting with representatives from both the housing repairs and housing allocations teams.
- Additional contractor procured to support the In-House void team, allocations officers now attend performance meetings with the external contractor.

- Tenancies can now start on any working day. Prior to this a tenancy could only start on a Monday which extended void performance times.
- Key safes at the property for outgoing tenants to leave their keys.

### 3.6 Hard to lets/ long term voids

The longest turnaround time for a hard to let property is 1609 calendar days. (Centurion Court). In the year 23/24 the following properties were considered hard to let as they took over 6 months despite continuous adverts. All properties are sheltered housing.

- Two properties at Armada Court
- Three properties at Mayflower Court
- Three properties at Centurion Court (one of which was void for 6 years, one for 3 years).
- In addition, 8 general need properties took over 6 months to let in the year 23/24. Reasons included major works and multiple tenant refusals.

Void properties at Centurion and Mayflower Court are bedsits which are less attractive to potential tenants.

### 3.7 Current performance

There are currently no long-term voids. Further information providing void performance over the previous two years is provided in the table below.

We are members of House mark and take part in annual and monthly benchmarking activities. Officers also attend Void and Allocation House mark sessions three times per year to discuss best practices and performance with peers. More information can be found in appendix A.

### 3.8 Table A- Key metrics for last two years

Indicator	Performance measure	2022-2023 Result	2023 – 2024 Result
<b>Number of voids per year</b>	Number of voids	198	180
<b>Monthly average void period performance</b>	Average Re-Let Time (Figure includes long term voids)	103.7 calendar days <b>for standard voids</b> 115.7 calendar days <b>for major voids</b>	110.8 calendar days <b>for standard voids</b> 135.2 calendar days <b>for major voids</b>
<b>Void rent loss</b>	Void Rent Loss	2.10%	2.36%
<b>Void turnover percentage</b>	Tenancy Turnover	5.69%	5.61%
<b>Void costs per property</b>	Average Void Job Cost	£3326.92 (excluding planned works)	£3036.70 (excluding planned works)

<b>Time with repairs and time with housing management</b>	Housing Allocations – Average re-let time	66.6 days	62 days
	Housing Repairs – Average turnaround time	59 days	61 days
<b>Any KPIs used</b>	% of Properties Vacant and Available	1.6%	0.72%
	% of Properties Vacant and Unavailable	0.69%	0.59%
<b>Hard to let properties</b>	Number of properties taking longer than 6 months to let	7	16

### 3.9 Void Satisfaction

We collect transactional surveys from tenants within 2 months of moving into their property, this table details the satisfaction levels over the last 7 years. There was an average response rate of 45% (max 59%, min 23%)

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
57%	64%	61%	72%	73%	66%	78%

In the last 2 years, the most common themes in the comments, are as follows:

- Very happy / Good / Love it: **55%**
- Poor standard of cleaning carried out: **14%**
- Flooring – cannot afford carpets, issues feeling cold, or concerns re: carpet gripper: **11%**
- Overgrown garden, unmanageable: **7%**

### 3.10 Tenant Satisfaction

Our most recent perception survey, demonstrated in a dataset with authorities across the East Midlands, shows that the service provided has a high level of satisfaction. We also saw higher levels of satisfaction than our peers across all 12 TSM questions (in the House mark mid-year outturn).

Our highest level of satisfaction is 89% - tenants satisfied that their home is safe. Further detail is outlined in Appendix A.

### 3.11 Tenant Engagement

Following a recruitment exercise, to provide a wide range of opportunities for tenant engagement, we have established a group of 6 tenants who have

committed to the role of Tenant Void Property Inspector. A tenant working group is now in place. The purpose of this role is to physically visit properties; to inspect them following the completion of void repair works and to ensure they meet the standards and provide feedback to inform service improvements. Inspections will be carried out monthly. Tenants will work in pairs and produce a report after each visit.

Following discussions with the Tenant Influence and Scrutiny Panel it was noted that the void standard requires further review to ascertain if any changes should be made. The panel discussed looking at a specific topic within the remit of void performance as one of their next project choices. The panel next meets in September.

**4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules**

4.1 To be taken in private session.

**5. Financial implications [initials of person writing the implications]**

5.1 Based on the information in “Table A- Key metrics for last two years” above and using the average social rent in our HRA strategy of £85.15 as at the end of 2023/24, the table below gives the estimated costs falling on the HRA of voids.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>2022-2023 Financial cost</b>	<b>2023 – 2024 Financial cost</b>
<b>Number of voids per year</b>	198	180
<b>Monthly average void period performance</b>	£33,622	£30,566
<b>Void costs total</b>	£658,730	£546,606

**6. Legal implications [ST]**

6.1 None

**7. Corporate Plan implications**

7.1 Effective void processes contribute to the following corporate objective.

People- Help people to stay healthy, happy and active and continue to provide initiatives that support children and young people, older people and our vulnerable residents

## 8. Consultation

8.1 None

## 9. Risk implications

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Poor standard of accommodation provided to tenants/failure to meet the decent homes standard	Robust void management processes and performance monitoring	Head of Housing/Repairs Manager
Delays to allocation of homes	Effective performance management	Head of Housing/Housing Options Manager

## 10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

10.1 Through the provision of social and affordable housing, the council is able to help support with local housing need.

## 11. Climate implications

11.1 The Housing Service is working towards achieving net zero for all of its homes. EPC works are completed during the Void process to improve the energy performance of each dwelling.

## 12. Corporate implications

12.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data protection implications
- Voluntary sector

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Background papers: None

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