

# Housing Scrutiny Commission

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Void Performance report: June 2019 - December 2019

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr Elly Cutkelvin

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020

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**City Mayor**

## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: all
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- Report version number: v.1

### 1. Summary

Void performance in the second and third quarters of 2019/20 has stayed pretty steady and has not been as good as we had hoped considering the encouraging start we had in quarter 1. However, we are now seeing signs of an improvement with void times reducing and we are confident that this will be maintained and reflected in the yearend figures.

It should be noted that the number of vacant properties we have had to deal with so far this year is 12% higher than this time last year, encouragingly the void rent loss figure for this financial year will be better than last year even though we have had an increase of the number of vacant properties.

### 2. Purpose of report

To update members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on Void performance for the second and third quarters of 2019/20.

### 3. Supporting information including options considered:

The table below shows 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 19/20 performance against 19/20 1<sup>st</sup>.quarter performance.

Measure	Target	Quarter 1 19/20	Quarter 3 19/20	Current
Routine Voids*	45 days average	50.6 days	65	61.1
Long term voids	90 days average	138.4 days	123.1	129.4
All voids	Maximum 90 days average	86.92	92.6	69.5
No. Voids Held	Less than 2% (421)	248	285	261
Total annual rent loss	No greater than £825k	£265k	£673(year end estimate£823k	
Ready to let to Occupation**	10 days	5.4 days	4.8	4.5

\*This figure is the number of days void from the end of one tenancy to the start of the

next including weekends.

\*\*This figure is the number of working days between when the property is ready to when the new tenancy starts.

### **Routine voids**

Are those properties that require a comparatively lower level of work prior to being re let.

### **Long term voids**

Are those properties which require a higher level of repair before it can be re let, the reasons maybe:

- Damp proof work, wood worm treatment.
- Asbestos removal (licenced)
- Structural repairs
- Major adaptations
- Fire damaged properties
- The property is being used as an office, by a resident's group or the police
- Projects (such as the tower blocks)
- New meters and supplies.
- Pest control.
- Rewires, new capital kitchens and bathrooms

### **All voids**

This is the term used when talking and reporting on all voids regardless of if they are routine or long term.

### **Number of voids held**

This is the number of vacant properties we hold at any one time; this should be less than 2% of the total stock and excludes decants

### **Total annual rent loss**

This is the amount of rental income we have lost as a result of a property being empty and is based on a daily rate, the longer the property is empty the greater the amount.

There are two weeks over the Christmas period that are defined as rent free, this means that December is traditional a low month for void income loss. The average weekly rental figure is: £69.97 (range £53.64 - £116.48)

### **Total annual council tax loss**

We become liable for paying council tax on void properties at a daily rate as soon as the property has been empty for 1 calendar month. There are exceptions around this but this is the case in the majority of cases. We work closely with Council Tax to ensure this information is correct and it is audited quarterly.

## The void journey

In 2016 we set up a Housing Scrutiny Void Task Group. Members of the group visited void properties and tracked their progress through the various process we follow to get them to 'The Letting Standard', at the time members found this a useful way of understanding the numerous process a void property goes through. I have taken an extract from the 'ultimate void' process to highlight to current members the number of stages a typical void property goes through from receiving the termination form from the existing tenant to the new tenant moving in. I hope you find it useful:

**182 Thurcaston Road 58300018200**

<b>KEY DATES AND INFORMATION FOR 182 THURCASTON ROAD</b>					
Day	Date	Days	Service	Key Information	Notes
	29/04/2016		Housing Management	Notice received	Short notice period. Death?
	09/05/2016	1	Housing Management	<b>Void Start Date (Key received)</b>	
Mon	09/05/2016	1	Voids Technician	Carry out void inspection, EPC survey completed	
Mon	09/05/2016	1	Asbestos	Asbestos survey carried out	Asbestos were only given the front door key but needed access to all areas.
Mon	09/05/2016	1	Voids Technician	A total recharge of £679.50	
Tues	10/05/2016	2	Asbestos	Asbestos survey completed and updated on to Northgate	
Tues	10/05/2016	2	GBW	Ticket raised for new UPVC door	
Wed	11/05/2016	3	PLT	To CBL Advert	
Wed	11/05/2016	3	GBW	Shed door surveyed	work can be done after occupancy.
Fri	13/05/2016	5	Supervisor	Stores called to advise door has gone through	
Mon	16/05/2016	8	GBW	Door Delivered	
Wed	18/05/2016	10	PLT	Property allocated and offered	
Thurs	26/05/2016	18	PLT	Property refused	Didn't like area
Thurs	26/05/2016	18	Design	Rewire whilst void	
Fri	27/05/2016	19	PLT	Property allocated and offered	
Tues	31/05/2016	23	GBW	UPVC Door completed	
Fri	03/06/2016	26	Design	Rewire completed	Should have been RTL on this date.

Tues	07/06/2016	30	Voids Supervisor	Outstanding removal of Asbestos floors	Could have been completed earlier if those face fitted were available.
Wed	08/06/2016	31	Voids Supervisor	Extra spec work finished	
Thurs	09/06/2016	32	PLT	Property refused	Didn't like area
Thurs	09/06/2016	32	Housing Management	Keys returned to Housing office	
Fri	13/06/2016	33	PLT	Property allocated, offered and accepted.	
Sun	12/06/2016	35	Housing Management & Allocation	<b>Void End Date</b>	
Mon	13/06/2016		Housing Management & Allocation	New Tenant Arrived in property	

### Current issues affecting void times:

#### Key management:

This has always been a time stealer, tenants hand deliver their keys to certain locations across the city and they have to be collected, this is repeated for almost all of the functions that need to happen, some functions happen concurrently, like the actual inspection and the EPC but most others are carried out by different specialist teams. The actual movement of keys can add several days to the void time, the example in the table above shows the number of time keys are moved.

#### Recruitment:

There are always vacancies in the Void Team due to the number of people, the turnover and the time and difficulty we have recruiting appropriately trained staff. We have just recruited 3 new operatives which meant that we were fully resourced for a short time, however, the situation is constantly changing, and this is not the case now. To bridge the gap we do employ agency workers and we have also issues void repairs to contractors

#### Volume of void properties

The number of void properties is on the increase this year, for the same period last, the number of lets is 12% higher, however in spite of this we have forecast an improved rent loss figure.

#### Condition they are returned in

This is something that Scrutiny members were keen to explore when the Q1 report was presented, as before we continue to see properties returned back to us in a poor condition both internally and externally which has an impact on the time it takes for the property to be bought back into use. A project has started to look at the Tenancy Management function with a view to addressing this issue moving forward, I hope to be

able to bring you more news on this in subsequent reports.

#### Completing capital works

We continue to suffer delays due the completion of capital works in void properties. We carry out a lot of electrical rewires and kitchen refurbishment, this could be because we made the decision to defer the refurbishment to the void period to lessen the impact on the current tenant or the current tenants declined to have the work carried out at the time. When a property is void it is a good time to do these types of works as they can be very disruptive, but it does add to the time the property is empty. Our own craft staff do carry out some of these works but rewires and some kitchen refurbishments are issued out to contractors.

We are also experiencing contractor delays, the volume of work we are issuing

## 4. Details of Scrutiny

### Report for HSC

## 5. Financial, legal and other implications

### 5.1 Financial implications

None sought – for information only

### 5.2 Legal implications

None sought – for information only

### 5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

None sought – for information only

### 5.4 Equalities Implications

None sought – for information

5.5 Other Implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

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