

City Housing Voids Overview and Scrutiny

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Content

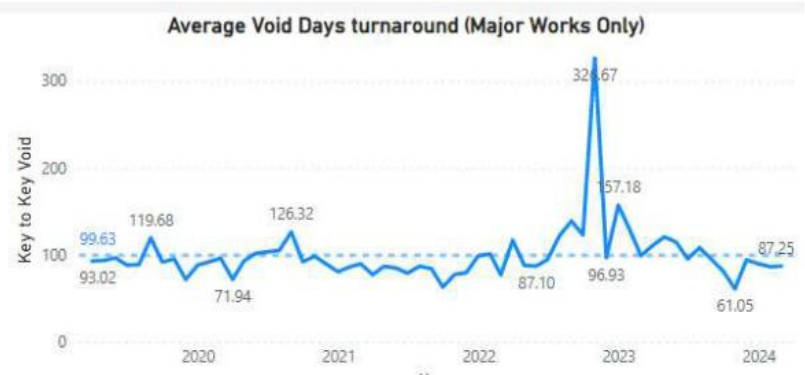
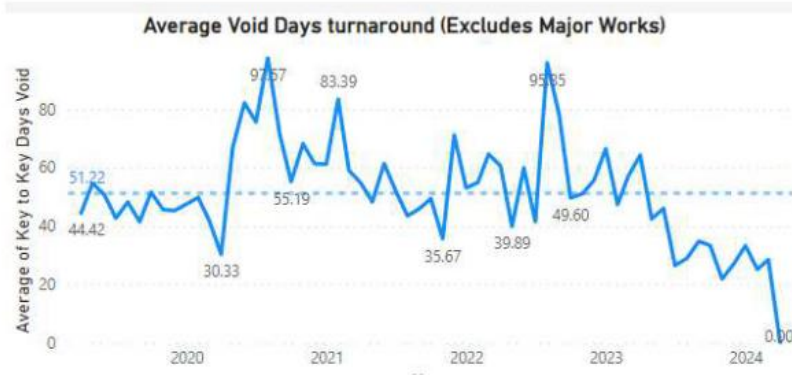
- Response to the Terms of Reference provided as part of the inquiry
- Overview of void standards and performance in Birmingham
- Outline of transformation proposals for voids and objectives including progress, impact, future activities and challenges faced



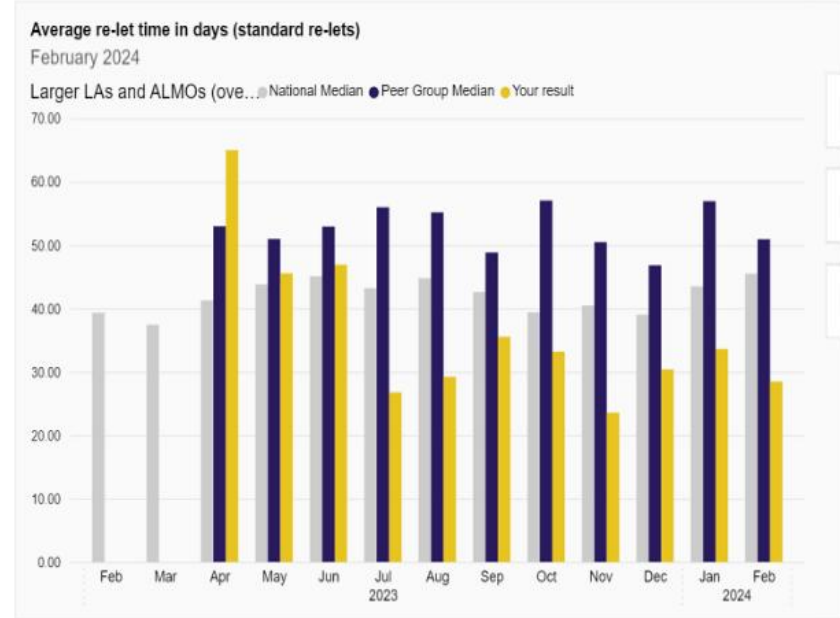
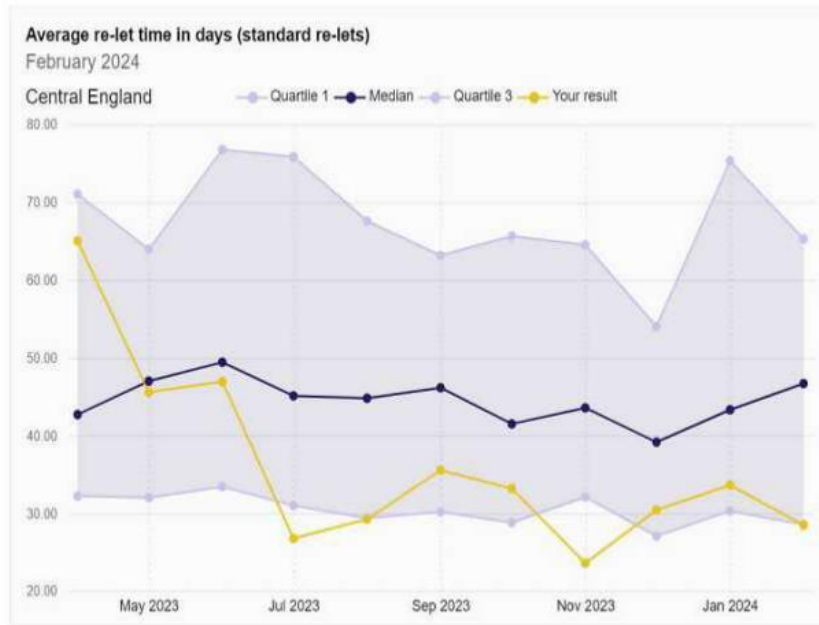
Void Performance

Average days 28 March 2024

Major works 87 March 2024

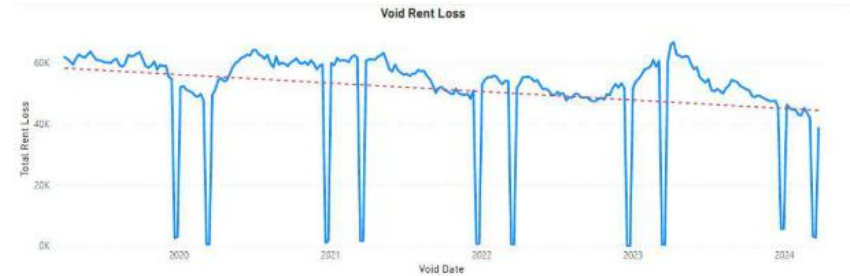


Benchmarking Performance



Void Rent Loss

- April 2023 £66,762
- March 2024 £38,625
- Total reduction £28,137 per week
- Yearly Total Voids – 2697



What do we know about the conditions of properties becoming void?

Address		Void Ref		Quadrant			
Search		Search		All			
Void Ref	Property Ref	Status Start	Address	Void Status	Decent Home Status	Quad	Void Status
339060	12244000704	11/03/2024	[REDACTED]	Fit For Let	Fail	North	Fit For Let
335715	12212000709	08/03/2024	[REDACTED]	Fit For Let	Pass	South	
338022	18505000988	01/13/2023	[REDACTED]	Fit For Let	Pass	South	
322202	16223000664	26/06/2022	[REDACTED]	Fit For Let	Fail	South	

Investment Plan					Works Orders							
Attributes	Attribute	Age Now	Installation Date	Replacement 1 Year	Cost	Repairs Reference	Raised Date	Pri Code	Work Programme	Status	SOR Code	SOR Descr
Wall Finish	WALL FINISH TILE HANGING	41	01/04/1982	2017	8783	8994281	14/04/2022	GW	Capital Works Programme	COM	ELECTEST	ELECTRIC
Boiler	BOILER GAS CONDENSING COMBI	16	01/04/2005	2020	8783	91335171	07/07/2022	GW	Capital Works Programme	COM	REMIPTC05	Minor Rem
Door	DOOR FRNT PVCU	23	01/04/2000	2022	2850	92717701	17/10/2022	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	AASCOPE	A and A SC DESCRPT
Wall Finish	WALL FINISH POINTED BRICKWORK	41	01/04/1982	2027	8783	94104451	09/01/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
Electrics	ELECTRIC WIRE SYSTEM	12	30/03/2011	2027	8783	94202091	10/01/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
Electrics	ELECTRIC WIRE TEST	1	06/05/2022	2027	8783	94203121	11/01/2023	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	AAPHYSICAL	A and A PH
Kitchen	KITCHEN FITS	13	22/03/2010	2028	8783	94203121	11/01/2023	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	CHOTHER	INSTALL CI
Roof	ROOF PITCHED CONCRETE	41	01/04/1982	2032	11850	94203121	11/01/2023	AAD	Aids And Adaptations	COM	KITLOWTOP	CARRY DL
Windows	WINDOW DOUBLE PVCU	16	01/04/2005	2033	7000	94280871	13/01/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
Bathroom	BATHROOM FITS	13	22/03/2010	2038	4850	94310761	17/01/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
						95238231	10/03/2023	45	Gas Servicing	COM	01800	Service all
						95238231	10/03/2023	45	Gas Servicing	COM	01802C	Supply and
						95701301	04/04/2023	55	Gas 24 Hours From Issue	COM	GASWTRLEAK	Water Leak
						95701471	04/04/2023	55	Gas 24 Hours From Issue	CAN	GASWTRLEAK	Water Leak
						96812341	02/09/2023	68	Sundry Servicing	COM	SSAR/LIFT	Sundry Ser
						97506211	11/07/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST
						97758901	25/07/2023	16	1 Day Rtr Fixed Price (Emergency)	COM	REPLIFT	REPAIR ST

Pre vacation Checks

- Pre vacation visits are completed once notice is received 70% provide notice
- We contact all Customers giving Notice to End their Tenancies. Contacts will be by phone then visit and key collection
- During any visits there is an extensive series of questions / information which we obtain which is used to inform AM and Repairs Partners
- Following Para 49 report an automatic report is produced to provide all investment information and repairs history for new voids. This enables contractor to have full repairs history of property.
- Accelerated Stock condition programme



What are our current standard for re letting?

- Our current standard is the empty property standard that it is safe warm, secure and free from hazards / damp and mould.
- There has been changes made to the capital items and current items provided within Bathrooms and Kitchens have been amended.
- Bathrooms will now be fitted with wall panelling rather than tiles, and will have a combined toilet system, new bathspec and shower fitted over bath, upgrade on taps and sink pedestal, a heated towel rail has also been added.
- Kitchens will now include upstands rather than tiles, with matching coloured carcasses and doors being fitted and work tops (several colour choices available). All will receive décor on new capital items.
- A property is being prepared to demonstrate the new products and will be available for o and s to view
- It should be noted that the approach is to repair if possible, to ensure that a wider asset management approach can be taken across the scheme or block



Example of Items



What are our tenants telling us about the service and standard at reletting ?

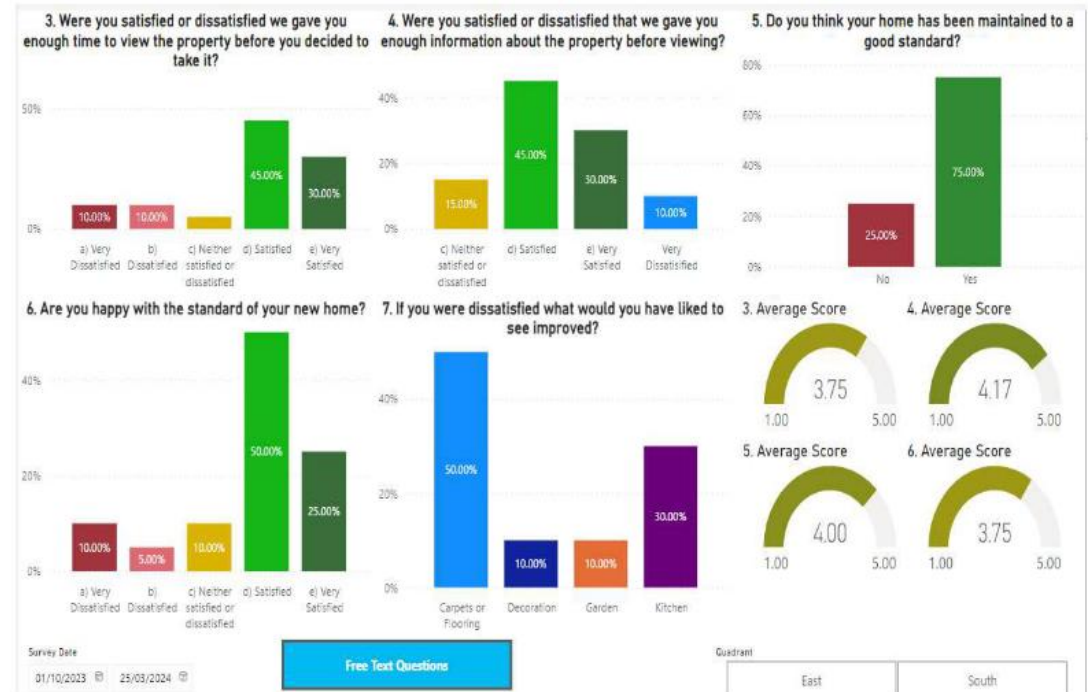
Surveys are completed at all lettings

This was introduced in October 2023 to capture feedback and understand concerns

Feedback on standard of property overall is good at 90% satisfied with their new home

Overall satisfaction with new home achieves the highest average score

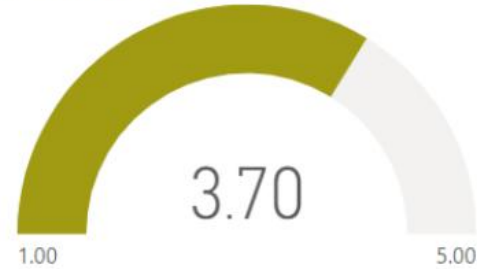
Request for Flooring and Kitchen has come up as a main area they would like to see an improvement on



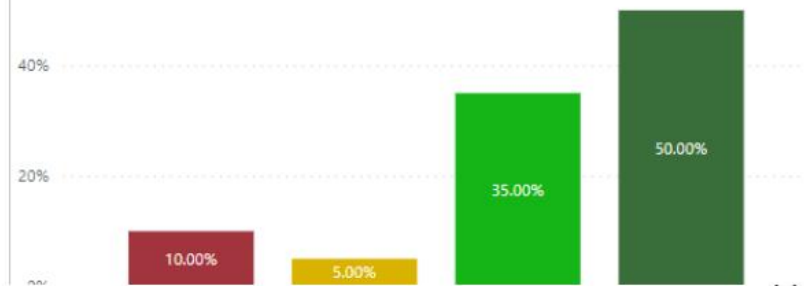
What are our tenants telling us about the service and standard at reletting ?



8. Average Score



9. What did you think of the advice and guidance we gave you before you moved in?



9. Average Score



What are our tenants telling us about the service and standard at reletting ?



Customer Feedback

- Focus Group Session Held 8 August 2023
- Pre-Tenancy Workshops
- Staff Helpful
- Challenges Turn on and Test
- Information at Viewing

- Customer Survey sent to all new tenants July 2023 10% return rate

- High Percentage Satisfied with Property
- Difficulties Gas Turn on and Test
- Gas Debts
- Utility Bills

26. How satisfied are you with standard of your new home?

[More Details](#)

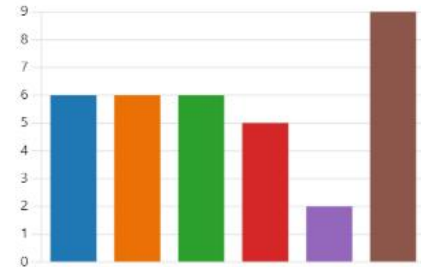
Very satisfied	13
Somewhat satisfied	8
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1
Somewhat dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	1



27. Were there any difficulties you encountered when moving into your new home? Select those that apply.

[More Details](#)

Sorting out debts on gas and el...	6
Gas turn on test	6
Setting up utility bills	6
Agreed repairs not completed	5
Unable to contact someone to r...	2
None	9

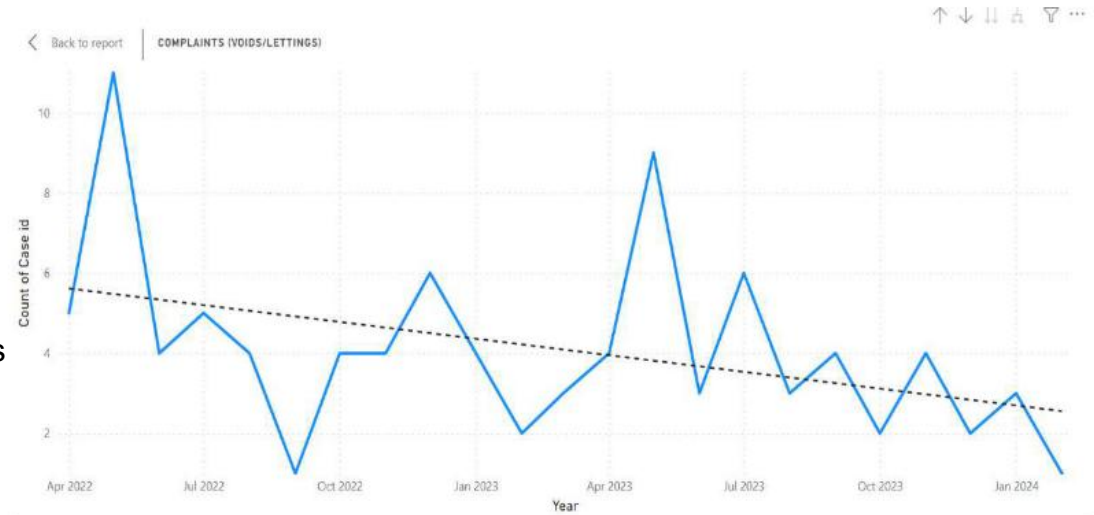


How are we responding to complaints and what have been the outcomes?

Levels of complaints have significantly reduced

Receiving on average 2 per month vs 190 new lettings less than 2%

Root cause analysis is completed, and issues addressed, built into transformation work if longer term



What are the concerns raised by the Housing Ombudsmen and regulator for social housing? How are the city responding to these concerns ? What progress has been made?

2 Ombudsmen since July 2023

Case	Issues
Case 1	<p>Heating failed at TOAT; 1 week to repair heating (in December/Jan) – evidence that heating was working when property was void so HO did not find against in that regard (other than time to repair).</p> <p>Two void repair jobs were outstanding at time of letting – kitchen window and garden cut-back. Cut-back took over 40 days to resolve and kitchen window took 9 months.</p>

Case 2	<p>Rubbish/rubble/cut-back not completed until after tenant had moved in; mice infestation as a result (in opinion of Housing Ombudsman).</p> <p>Delays due to waiting for contractor quote to clear rubbish and officer absence which the HO criticised.</p> <p>Contractors caused damage to carpets walking through property as unable to access rear due to refuse.</p> <p>No clarity on when refuse was removed however likely this took over a year from tenant moving in.</p> <p>Property was not compliant with void standard when tenancy started; tenant could not move in for 2 weeks whilst repairs were carried out.</p>
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Further Actions in place following Para 49 report

Recommendation by HO

Take a pro-active to repairs, making best use of void periods and intelligence to tackle problems before they arise.

Short Term	Long Term
Repairs History auto generated at point of void for analysis Review multiple repairs by property for possible inclusion in capital programme/improvements	Void standard review, comparison with other landlords
Using post void period to identify and improve repairs in occupation post tenancy	Revise and improve current void standard and incorporate feedback from Housing Ombudsman
Repairs raised following capital improvements link to stock condition and asset data, to help inform intelligence led analysis	Regular update meetings between HM and Assets on stock analysis, condition, investment, tenancy issues
Feedback from customers on void standard and lettings experience	Voids Improvement Project across HM and Assets, including data, agile working, standards, streamlining processes
Value based approach to void works through SOR which will enable analysis of works required	
Capture pre vac data, property condition , contractor intelligence	



Residents Feedback

You said

- Repairs not completed in occupation
- Gardens not cleared to appropriate standard and ownership unclear
- Viewing rushed and large amount of information received
- Debt issues , meters complex
- Standard of void
- Positive Pre tenancy workshops

We did

- 100 percent audits being completed
- Scheduling upfront will support with repairs not being completed
- Information after viewing refreshed for tenant so clear log on repairs completed in occupation, and garden ownership and standard- Power Bi- Targeted
- Information pack updated
- Developing pictures for web update
- Interim contract Resident Centric relaunch
- Toat completed in void period
- Ovo smart meter installation
- Flexibility in décor but into contract
- Review all negative feedback, recorded and responded to, built into future plans
- Recharge process reviewed
- Expanded Pre Vacs
- Tenancy conditions review
- Expanded Pre tenancy workshops



Housemark

- Independent review being completed
- “ To review current business processes, data and offer for customers, to identify any gaps in recommendations and service improvement, new structure”
- Recommendations to be shared once received



Voids Contract Changes & Wider

Known costs

Agreed schedules of work to sensibly meet the re-let standard

Reduced disagreements regarding works required as agreed 'up front'

Timescales based on value of works required



What should our standards for re let properties be?

- Homes are currently warm, safe and secure
- Homes currently meet Asset Management Strategy objectives
- Increase in specification could include full decorations and all modern updated facilities
- Cost is a consideration when increasing specification
- Timescale significantly increases (tripled in some cases) with increased specification
- Customer feedback and choice should be key factor
- Benchmarking visit was completed to Dudley main gaps schedule voids up front – new change noted and implemented
- Includes decoration in void spec- flexibility built into contract
- Bathroom and Kitchen similar standard on capital items with new changes
- No flooring

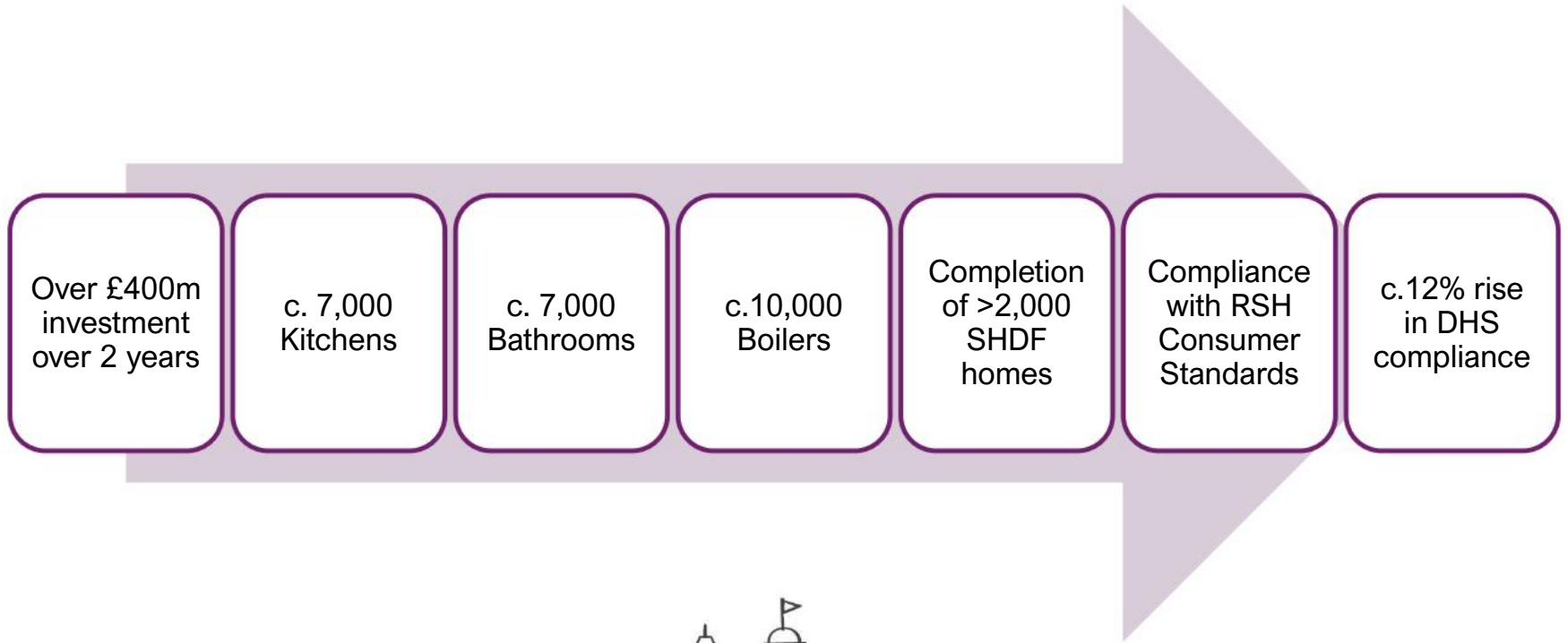


How could we meet these standards given the current financial context of the council?

- Not possible to meet all the needs
- We need £1.4 bn to improve stock to required standard
- Decent Homes will take up to 8 years
- Need to model a long term financial plan based on improved standard from current budget levels
- Review and analyse by archetype
- Option to consider policy change on customer responsibilities



Investing in the future- Regulator Focus Decency



Capital Works

Kitchen & Bathroom
refurbs by default
(modification or
extensions by
exception)

Kitchen and Bathroom
specifications
improved

Improved materials
quality at a 'BCC Price'

Nominated suppliers

Reduced target
timescales for
Kitchens (10 working
days)

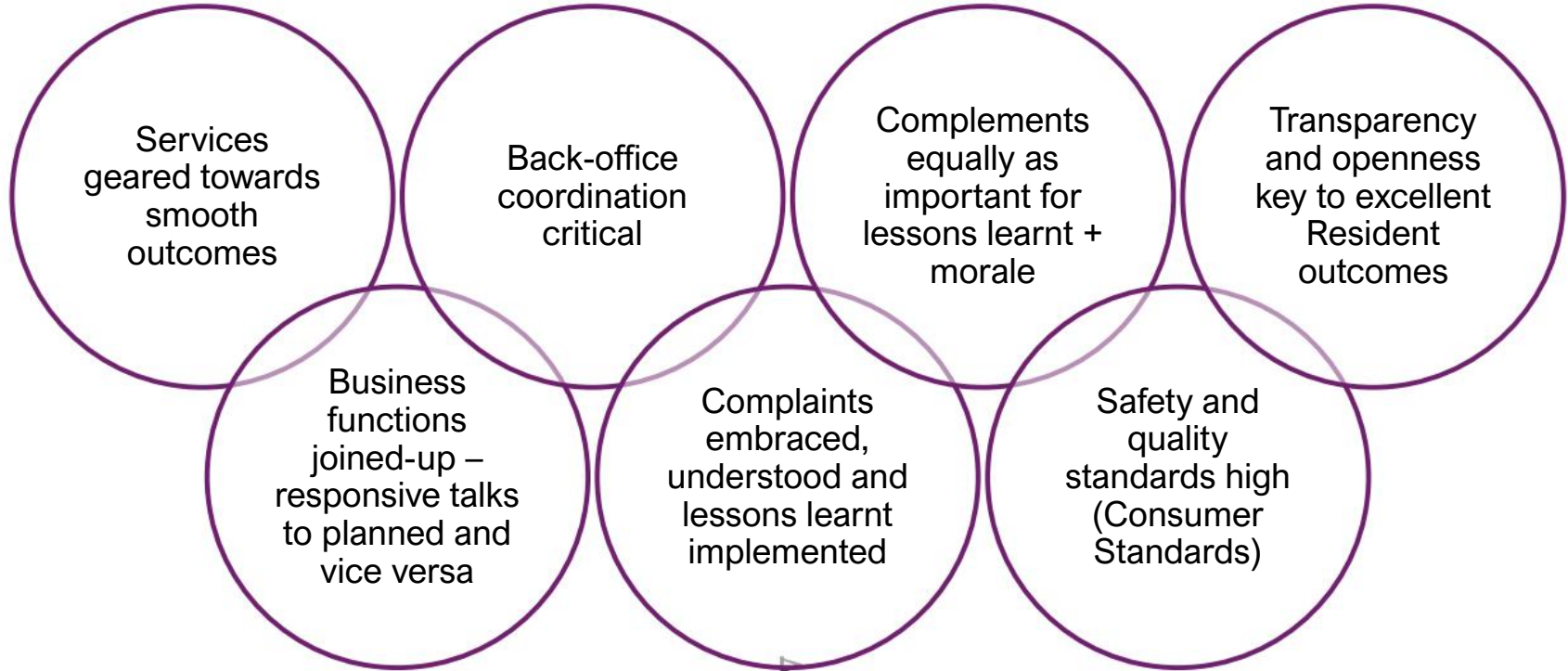
Reduced target
timescales for
Bathrooms (5 working
days)

Resident colour and
handle choice on
Kitchens

Resident colour choice
on flooring and
wallboards in
Bathrooms



Resident Centricity



Project aim, purpose and anticipated benefits

Aim

The overall aim of the project is to improve quality and standards and to identify areas of efficiencies and enhanced ways of working for customers, Voids Management staff and other related stakeholders.

Purpose

- To review processes which have not been reviewed for a number of years.
- Identify the opportunity to reduce void loss and ensure an integrated offer.
- Analysing trends to identify gaps.
- Developing the agile offer
- Increase HRA revenue by improving turnaround times.
- Include recommendations from the Root and Branch Service Review and Customer Service Programme to improve the customer journey.
- To ensure alignment with Corporate strategy and priorities.



Project aim, purpose and anticipated benefits (2 of 2)

Anticipated benefits

- Improve the customer journey / experience, delivering the right information at the right time.
- Reduce void turnaround time.
- Set and manage realistic customer expectations.
- Capture data to analyse trends and contribute to service change.
- Create efficiencies within the process, optimising effective communication across all services.
- Improve void standard
- Ensure Value for money



High-level project roadmap

Jan – April '23

- Project Team set up
- Enhanced Voids Standard approved
- As Is and To Be processes and procedures validated
- Options Paper re 'any tenancy start date' presented to DMT

*Feb – August 2024

- Commence implementation of new ways of working, including IT changes

*Jan – Mar '25

- Continue to embed and monitor new ways of working

Apr – October '23

- BRD developed and requirements prioritised
- Commence review of structures
- Commence IT and Field Worker App development
- First drafts of Lettings Policy and Tenancy Standard developed

*Sept – Dec '24

- Go-live with new ways of working

March 25

- Project End

* These are **indicative dates only** as they will be influenced primarily by resource availability and IT development timeframes.



Progress to date

Customers

- Letting Policy updated and live
- Customer feedback captured
- Pre tenancy Pre let work expanded
- Ovo Smart Meters
- Information updated to support Journey
- Interim Contract
- Furniture Project

Performance

- New Performance reports to monitor gaps
- Complaints reduction improved turnaround
- Contractor Performance improvement
- Aligned to Housemark benchmarking standard

Process

- Online Information updated
- IT requirements gather commencing build
- Mobilised New contract changes
- Data cleanse
- End to end review completed
- Independent Housemark Review
- Mapped support needs and customer data

Staff

- Re design consultation underway
- Co designed updated processes
- Pro active visits
- Training new contract



What is our proactive approach towards housing management and residents looking after their properties?

- Targeting new tenants in Temporary accommodation
- New format and increased attendance
- 2022 200
- 2023- 2024 1200 confirm
- Bespoke to BMHT, Careleavers

- 2200 Lettings so far this year (2023/2024) with 100% receiving a full benefit assessment during the Letting process. £8 million benefit enhancement to date .



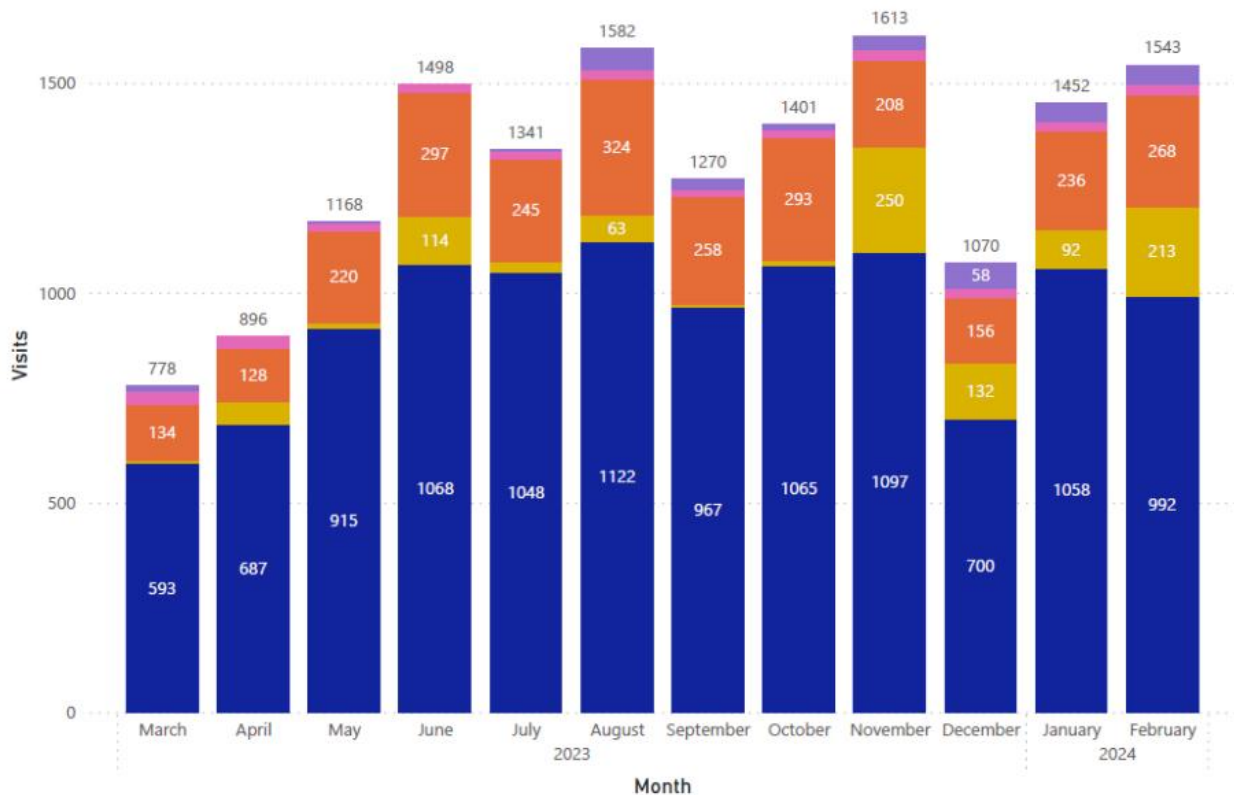
Housing Management

- Targeting Intro tenants 6 months visits 85%
- 12 week visits completed at move in
- Pro active visits taking place tenants not seen 3 to 5 years
- Vulnerability Policy updated
- Tailored support for Domestic abuse, Care leavers, and Families
- Wisemove to support Downsizing
- New Anti Social Behaviour Policy
- Implementing new Housing Management Structure minimum requirement to visit tenants every 2 years
- Tenancy conditions review underway





● BAs ● Surveys ● ASB ● DA ● Lettings



Team

All ▼

Year	Month	BAs	Surveys	ASB	DA	Lettings	Total
2023	March	593	8	134	31	12	778
2023	April	687	52	128	29	0	896
2023	May	915	13	220	19	1	1168
2023	June	1068	114	297	19	0	1498
2023	July	1048	27	245	18	3	1341
2023	August	1122	63	324	23	50	1582
2023	September	967	6	258	14	25	1270
2023	October	1065	11	293	21	11	1401
2023	November	1097	250	208	26	32	1613
2023	December	700	132	156	24	58	1070
2024	January	1058	92	236	22	44	1452
2024	February	992	213	268	25	45	1543
Total		11312	981	2767	271	281	15612

Future Challenges

- Cost of living
- Complex needs of customers
- Ensuring consumer standards compliance
- Financial Impacts across council
- Demand for stock

Partners Required

- Social Care and Health
- Rent Service Dwp
- Regeneration
- Housing Management Service
- Grounds Maintenance
- Childrens Trust
- Commissioned Services



- **QUESTIONS**

