



Appendix 2

Voids – Improving Standards Terms of Reference

Reporting to Housing and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Our key question:	What lessons can be learnt from other Social Housing providers to improve void standards for Birmingham City Council housing stock?
1. How is O&S adding value through this work?	<p>1. Corporate Priority – one of the Council's five Grand Challenges is Community Cohesion and Living Standards.</p> <p>2. On 10 January, City Council agreed a motion that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build on the ongoing work to refocus the Council's Housing Department on its core purpose, which should be to provide decent, safe homes for those who can't afford the market, and to deliver against this purpose • Carry out an in-depth condition survey to establish the true condition of all council housing stock. • Work with tenants, partners and scrutiny to develop and apply a clear standard of what an excellent repairs and maintenance service looks like. • Commit to re-establishing Birmingham's position as a national exemplar of the decent homes standard, and on a cross-party basis lobby the Government for further investment in Decent Homes so that the standard can be met as quickly as possible. • Commit to implementing all recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman and to report back to Council in line with the Ombudsman's recommendations. <p>3. On 17 January, the Housing Ombudsman Service published its Special Report on Birmingham City Council. This identified 5 key themes: repairs; record keeping; complaint handling; compensation, and governance and learning.</p> <p>4. In 2021-22, members of the Housing and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook visits to Birmingham City Council housing properties, specifically to understand the standard of properties which had recently become void and to understand the standard of properties which were ready to let. As a result of these visits, the Committee raised concerns about what these properties demonstrated about the quality of properties in the Housing stock.</p>
2. What needs to be done?	The Committee will hear evidence from Birmingham City Council and other Social Housing providers to consider the following issues:



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the current position of void standards within Birmingham City Council housing stock including a description of the current standard and how the service is performing. • To outline the Council's transformation plan for voids and its objectives. What will this transformation look like? • To understand what progress has been made to date and what impact has it made • To outline future challenges and how the Council is preparing to address them • To consider how other Social Housing providers deliver better standards for their tenants • To identify improvements in policy and practice
3. What timescale do we propose to do this in?	This will be considered between the February and April meetings. The Committee may choose to hold an additional informal session after the April committee to consider its next steps.
4. What outcomes are we looking to achieve?	To provide decent and safe homes for tenants, and to improve the overall quality of Council housing.
5. What is the best way to achieve these outcomes and what routes will we use?	<p>The Committee will consider this topic as part of its March and April meetings. The March meeting will focus on receiving evidence from Birmingham City Council; the April meeting will focus on receiving evidence from other Social Housing providers.</p> <p>These two sessions will be supplemented by visits to both Birmingham City Council properties and Social Housing properties in order to provide real time examples.</p> <p>Following its April session, the Committee will consider how to take its findings forward. This may involve an additional session; however, this will be determined by the Committee at this time.</p>

Member / Officer Leads

Lead Member:	Chair: Cllr. Mohammed Idrees
Lead Officer and support:	<p>Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager</p> <p>This will also be supported by Paul Langford, Interim Assistant Director for Housing Management and other officers from Birmingham City Council Housing service.</p> <p>Support will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with members to agree visits and any additional meeting dates • Liaising with social housing providers



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inviting people to give evidence• Accompanying site visits• Circulating agenda and papers in advance of the meeting• Producing a record of discussions• Producing a report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
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