

Briefing Note

To	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Subject title	Void Performance Summary: Housing Management and Capital Investment
Date	30/09/2021
From	Natalie Smith – Acting Head of Housing Management Sarah Ager – Acting Head of Capital Investment and Repairs

Purpose

Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested an update in relation to the void performance.

Background

This report provides a summary of all aspects of the voids process(es) which impact on performance / turnaround times.

Current key performance indicators September 2021

- Total voids re-let - 208
- Average turnaround time excluding sheltered voids – 41 days
- Tenancy end date to Keys to Contractor – Minus 1.6 days
- Fit for let to tenancy start date (excluding Sheltered Voids) – 17 days

Moving Out (Prevacation)

The moving out process adds significant value to the voids process prior to receipt of keys and the key benefits of this process include:

- providing support to customers during the period of leaving their home, improving the customer journey which is extremely well received (particularly with the next of kin)
- reinforces customers' responsibilities to ensure properties are clear of rubbish / furniture and that gardens are maintained
- assists in reducing rechargeable items to customers and reduces financial debts

- provides very useful information to validate property information around adaptations and provides information to the contractors prior to receipt of keys to enable them to maximise the notice period
- a key collection service is provided to customers who are unable / struggling to return keys

The Moving Out Service is fully operational on the South of the City and recruitment interviews for 2 x Grade 3 Officers have been completed which will enable the expansion of the moving out service to the East, Central West and North.

The Voids Teams are working closely with a Government initiative to address furniture poverty and a report was recently submitted seeking approval to commence a furniture pilot for the South to further enhance recycling of furniture to support vulnerable customers and promote tenancy sustainability.

Moving Out does impact positively to enhance the quality of a void at handover. This not only assists in reducing repair times, but it also provides significant benefits to customers.

Keys to Contractor

The target to hand keys over to the contractors is 1 day. Performance is consistently ahead on this target currently minus 1.6 days (April to Sept minus 2.4 days). The introduction of key collections has positively impacted upon the flow of keys to the contractors. The challenge is to broaden and implement this service for the North / West / East to model best practice currently for the South (the appointment of 2 additional Grade 3s to work on the North/ West / East will facilitate in extending the moving out service and key collections).

Advertising a void

The present advert cycle runs from Thursday to Monday and all void keys received on a Thursday / Friday / Monday / Tuesday / Wednesday are advertised in the next cycle. There are no limits on void numbers to be advertised (the period by which we can return to the advert for further shortlists was recently extended from 28 days to 56 days) – voids are shortlisted on expiry of the advert from Tuesday through to Fridays.

Consideration may be given to reduce the advert cycle from Thursday – Monday to Thursday to Sunday taking 1 day off the advert cycle (this work and a report outlining benefits and positive impacts on shortlisting and void turnaround time is underway).

Readily available properties (RAPs) may be advertised on any day and adverts may be closed based on demand. (RAPs in the main are sheltered properties and mostly high rise sheltered schemes).

The potential of de-designation (including wider impacts) to some sheltered schemes is underway to general needs accommodation.

Shortlisting / Take to view

Two customers are presently shortlisted for each void and take to views are arranged at fit for letting (FFL) with one household invited to viewing. Customers are much happier to view at property at FFL when they can assess the finished product rather than during the repair period. This provides a much-improved customer journey and where new kitchens / bathrooms are being fitted during the repairs period this does improve the marketability of the property and improves customer satisfaction.

In the event that a property is refused, the local voids team are able to contact bid position 2 to arrange a further viewing within 24/48 hours (in reviewing the risk assessment on this it was determined that to invite two households to a viewing would significantly affect the ability to maintain / control safe working practices – this remains under review) . 86% of properties are re-let at the 1st viewing and whilst the risk assessment remains under review, the significant benefits to customers viewing the property after repairs are completed, remains a driving force.

Should the void be refused by both bid position 1 and 2 then there is an agreement with the Allocations Team to re-shortlist within 24 hours.

Fit for Let (FFL) to Tenancy Start Date (TSD)

During September 208 voids have been re-let (176 none sheltered voids)

Average FFL to TSD is 17 days

- 179 voids were let with 1 viewing (86%)
- 19 voids were let with 2 viewings (9%)
- 8 voids were let with 3 viewings (4%)
- 1 void was let with 4 viewings
- 1 void with 8 viewings

Target is to achieve 10 working days between FFL to TSD

For September FFL to TSD on voids re-let at 1st viewing was 14 days

Factors impacting on FFL to TSD include;

- Ability to re-let within 1 viewing
- Target is to arrange a take to view (TTV) is within 48 hours of FFL (the recruitment of 2 x additional grade 3 Visiting Officers will increase capacity to complete TTV for the North / West and East areas)
- Allocations to re-shortlist at FFL within 24 hours

Lettings

Following a positive outcome from viewing then a letting is arranged within 24 working hours – a recent review around increasing capacity for lettings was completed and there are currently no delays to report on next day lettings.

A review is underway to consider next day tenancy start dates, currently a tenancy start date is effective from a Monday. Letting to TSD is affected by a Monday TSD (next day TSD could potentially reduce FFL to TSD by up to 3 days).

Void Standard

There is an agreed void standard (Birmingham Empty Property Repairs Standard – BEPRS) that the contractors work to. A planned review of the standard is arranged for later this year with input from all Stakeholders.

Repairs Performance

Void repair performance has been behind target for a significant period time. The contractual targets were not being met and this was having an impact on the overall void turnaround time. Workshops were carried out with all contractors to identify blockages and seek solutions.

In July 2021 a void pilot was introduced, with new contractual targets and increased financial penalties reflecting the actual costs incurred by BCC each days the property is void. This was under the premise of an Early Warning Notice, advising that if performance does not improve a month after the end of the pilot, rectification notices will be issued where work can be taken off the contractor at cost plus.

This pilot gave the contractors the following targets to completing the void works:

Normal voids: 13 calendar days

Major works 1 (1 capital item): 13 calendar days

Major works 2 (2 capital items): 13 calendar days

Major works 3 (3 capital items): 20 calendar days

September achievements in contractual calendar days are as follows:

Contractor	Normal	MWV 1	MWV 2	MWV 3
Engie: Days	9.8	11.5	N/A	20
Wates East: Days	25.2	42.43	81	115
Wates West: Days	20.12	51.93	N/A	62
Fortem Days	9.8	17.05	22.35	31.67

City Average	16.23	30.72	51.67	57.16
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There have been demonstrable improvements in performance in two contract areas since issuing the Early Warning Notice as well as BCC working collaboratively with the contractors and scrutinising performance, however one of the contractors is yet to demonstrate any improvement.

The pilot came to an end on 1st October 2021 and as per the contractual early warning process we have entered a one-month period of transition, whilst the new targets and penalties are embedded with the contractors. After this time, where performance has not improved, the contract will be utilised to issue rectification notices, with the potential to take work off the failing contractors.

Key Actions

- Continue to monitor contractor performance and follow the contractual process
- Housing Transformation review to look at end to end process and customer journey
- Extend moving out service to the North / East / West to model moving out service provided on the South (waiting for the appt / start date of the grade 3)
- Monitor action plan on improving FFL to TSD (main focus on 1st time lets), develop a report on any day TSDs
- Wider work to review RAP to bring low demand accommodation into general needs and reduce pressures on TA / B&B
- Review the void standard

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