

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Function:</u>	Customer Service
<u>Date:</u>	9 th March 2023
<u>Title of Update:</u>	Void Property Management
<u>Report Author:</u>	Derek McGowan
<u>Chief Officer:</u>	Derek McGowan - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment
<u>Contact Details:</u>	demcgowan@aberdeencity.gov.uk

UPDATE:

Aberdeen City Council is the fifth largest Social Landlord in Scotland, with c22,000 Council houses available for allocation. This service update provides a progress report on the management of void council house properties, as of 6th March 2023. Since the last service update was issued in November 2021, the number of void properties has continued to rise, with consequent decreases in performance in key areas of void rent loss and void turnaround time.

Performance is scrutinised routinely within services, with a fortnightly review undertaken through outcome improvement meetings chaired by the Chief Officer – Early Intervention and Community Empowerment.

Outcomes from this meeting are in turn reported to the Housing Improvement group chaired by the Director of Customer Services. The introduction of the Member / Officer void property group has been beneficial in allowing more in depth discussion on the challenges faced and how void properties are managed. Void property management performance is provided for scrutiny at each Committee cycle, with drill down narrative provided.

At Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee on the 14th March 2023 a report seeking approval to update the Council House Allocation Policy will be considered, to reflect the introduction of Choice Based Letting which will contribute to a reduction in the void turnaround time. We have an ongoing programme of ‘cleansing’ the waiting list to ensure that all those on it are actively seeking a house with us, to increase the likelihood of an offer being accepted when made.

Councillors will be aware of the successful bid for Capital Funding made to the Scottish Government to bring 500 of our long term void properties into use for housing Ukrainians, this will be positive with regard to property condition, turnaround time and void rent loss. These properties would not otherwise have been prioritised for repair due to the work required on them.

Performance

There are currently 2132 properties classed as void. The attached data chart shows the number of properties that are in different parts of the void pathway.

Performance with regard to void Council housing is routinely reported to Committee – critical metrics for the overall system are the total number of void Council houses; the total lost rent due to void Council houses, and the average number of days to relet a property.

Void property status

The current waiting list for a Council house is 5238. This waiting list is made up of people with urgent priority, those on the transfer list, those with varying levels of points awarded depending on circumstances, and those with no priority.

Primary influences on the number of void properties are the rate of tenancy termination, the level of work required to bring the properties to the letting standard, and the rate that completed properties are relet. Examples of specific performance data are provided below:

- Tenancy termination rates are at an average of 40.9 per week since the 1st April 2022, with the average number of properties let at 33.3 per week since the same date. This means that on average each week the service has retained an additional 7.6 void properties. These figures do include substantial numbers of new build properties coming into the housing stock this financial year.
- On average 40.1 sets of keys are sent to repairs per week, with 31.6 sets of keys received back for let.
- The average relet time for a property this financial year is 171.5 days. This is an increase on last year's figure of 106.4. Factors causing this increase include the new build properties coming in to the stock, and some difficulties encountered in letting some of these; the higher number of average offers required to be made in order to secure a let (that Choice Based Letting is being introduced to improve) which is 2.8 offers per let; and the availability of trades people to undertake the work required to bring the properties to the new minimum letting standard. This has meant increased efforts to secure these staff through framework contracts.
- A further factor driving the increase in the relet time is the number of properties available for rent with no confirmed offer, which has reached an average of 175.5 properties per week this financial year due to a high number of sheltered, very sheltered, and multi-storey properties that are available but with no accepted offers for them.

Allocation and reletting of Council Housing

We have made 4,111 offers of accommodation up to the 28th February this year, with 1,452 offers accepted and properties let. The current refusal rate is 60.1%, which is above our target of 45%. The main reasons for refusal are:

	Number	%
No Contact/Wants Application Cancelled	478	30.0%
Personal/Deferred	419	26.3%
Area	302	18.9%
Property	268	16.8%
Other	69	4.3%
Incorrect Recording	35	2.2%
Financial	23	1.4%

If you require any further information, please contact Derek McGowan at demcgowan@aberdeencity.gov.uk.