

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Housing and Environment	DATE 11 th January 2009
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard	
TITLE OF REPORT	Properties Off Charge	
REPORT NUMBER	H&E / 09 / 143	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to update the Housing and Environment Committee on all properties held as either "UTBR or NTBR Off Charge". The report identifies a number of elements in relation to the property such as, date of approval, target date for returning as void, lead officer, etc.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is requested to;

- Note the current position within both the UTBR and the NTBR off charge list and requests a further update to the next cycle of this Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council has made an allowance for rent loss due to unoccupied properties in its budget process. Properties removed from charge would be factored into those calculations during any period that they are off charge or unoccupied. This would be the same for properties returned to charge until the properties are actually let.

The repairs and improvement works proposed from these properties, under the classification of NTBR / UTBR, are funded from both the Housing Capital and Revenue budget headings respectively.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

Aberdeen's City Vision, to be "a city which is vibrant, dynamic, forward looking - an even better place to live and work, where people can expect high-quality services that meet their needs", and the City Council's Vision that "we will be recognised within the city and more widely, as being a leading Council in Northern Europe by 2010". The content of this report links with the following priorities identified within Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking 2007 to 2011.

- Housing
 1. Increase the provision of sheltered housing for communities across the City
 2. Speed up letting and repairs in Council homes
 3. Enhance the total environment in social housing area

The contents of the report contribute to the achievement of National Outcome 10 as outlined in the Single Outcome Agreement 2008 to 2011;

1. We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.

Policies and Procedures have been developed by the Voids Service Working group, The Void Management Team and The Estate Management Service Working Group. These are;

- Policy Objective - To reduce void rent loss by ensuring:

1. All necessary repairs on void properties are completed within target timescales.
2. All necessary repairs on void properties are completed in accordance with the Council's current Re-let Repairs Standard.
3. Prioritisation of repair of voids where an applicant has accepted an offer of the tenancy.
4. Negotiation of the scale and nature of repairs with new tenants at the void viewing stage.
5. To carry out Health and Safety repairs only prior to a tenant taking occupation in predetermined letting areas. All other non-essential repairs to be completed after occupation.
6. Voids subject to major works are identified as UTBR and removed from charge as early as possible.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The document detailing all properties held "off charge", is only an accurate representation at the time, of the specified update.

To reduce the exposure of each of empty property from factors such as malicious and willful damage or physical deterioration while unoccupied, emphasis must be placed on the "target dates" to be achieved.

The Council is required to manage its housing stock in the most efficient and effective manner and this may result in properties being under major repair or improvements. By maintaining safe and secure environments in which to live this can only increase and enhance peoples living experience within the city.

Due to the lack of factoring arrangements in place Aberdeen City Council (as landlord) has been frustrated where their flat / property is contained within a mixed tenure block when providing its tenants with management, maintenance and improvement services.

The Council's Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) Standard Delivery Plan was approved by the former Communities Scotland in August 2006. This outlines our strategy for meeting SHQS by 2015. If the Council cannot achieve the targets set within the Delivery Plan and within reasonable rent increases this could lead to direct intervention by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

6. REPORT

A report submitted to the Housing and Environment Committee on the 26th August 2009 updated “Elected Members” on properties held as NTBR / UTBR off charge. This reporting process on properties off charge is included in each cycle of the Housing and Environment Committee. The most recent update is appended to this report.

The list of UTBR / NTBR off charge properties makes available information and details on the reasons why a “void” property has been removed from charge. A void being identified as a property held on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) with no tenant and for a period of time.

To remove a property from charge the following criteria must be met in conjunction with the necessary level of approval.

- Empty properties subject to a Housing Committee decision that they are not to be let because they are surplus to long-term requirements, or to be transferred, disposed of or demolished.
- Empty properties where an insurance claim was raised due to fire or flood damage.
- Empty properties awaiting or undergoing major structural works (e.g. modernisation) during which period it would be unsafe for them to be occupied.
- Houses held for decanting tenants.
- Lock-ups and garages

7. AUTHORISED SIGNATURE

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8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Commserve/admin/committee formats/new report template

