

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery
DATE	19 January 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Void Housing Property performance
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/22/002
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Derek McGowan
REPORT AUTHOR	Derek McGowan
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At Operational Delivery Committee on 16th September 2021, it was agreed that a report would be brought to the Committee after two cycles to provide an update on the progress of managing Void Housing property.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the current position regarding Void Housing property performance.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Aberdeen City Council is the fifth largest Social Landlord in Scotland, with c22,000 homes available for rent. The current waiting list for a Council house is 5,248 and of those 3,783 have been assessed as having a housing need. 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.
- 3.2 As of 13th December 2021, 1251 properties are classed as 'Void', meaning that they are not currently occupied and are in the process of being returned to let. This figure is broken down into three categories:
- Properties that are unable to be relet (UTBR). These are properties requiring significant repair / capital works, for example complete replacement of electrical and / or heating systems, asbestos removal or fire damage.

- Buy back properties, which are properties the Council is buying in line with Council Policy, where this purchase will result in us being either majority or complete owner in a block of flats; or where a house of specific size or type would help us meet our aims of increasing housing stock.
- Properties that are available for allocation. These are properties that are currently with either Housing Management or Building Services, and are deemed ready to be relet to those with live applications.

3.3 As of the 13th December 2021, the figures for these are as follows:

Category of void property	Number	% of total
Unable to be relet	195	15.6%
Buy back properties	127	10.2%
Available for allocation	929	74.2%
Total	1251	100%

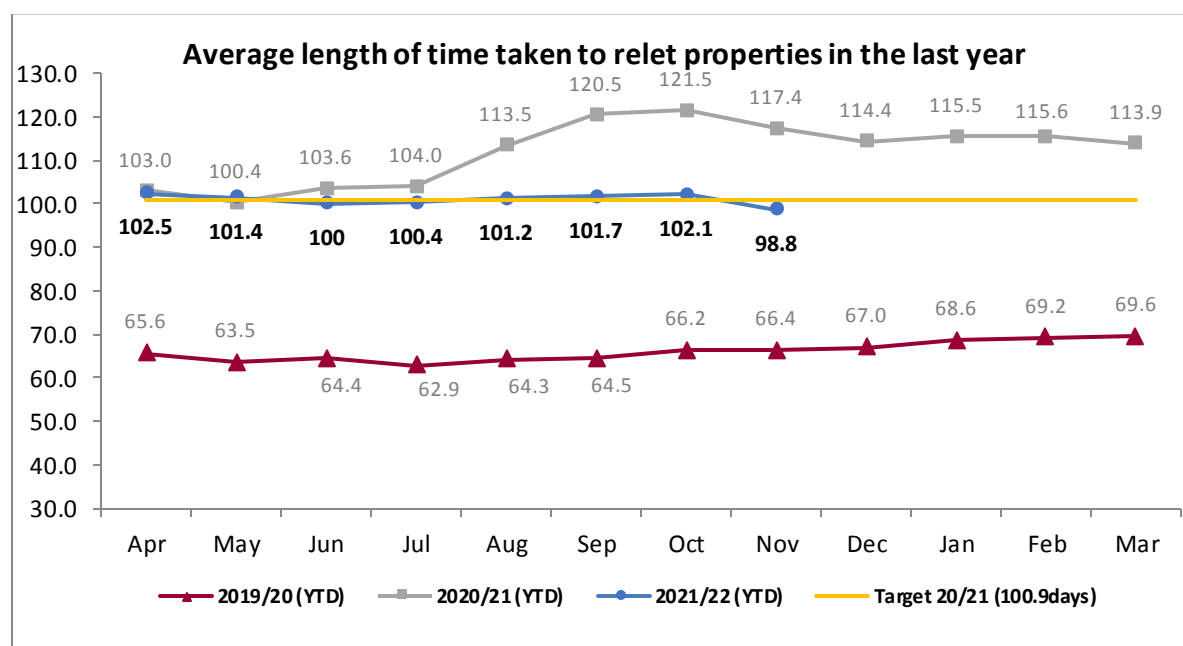
3.4 Performance in reletting properties is a core aspect of performance scrutinised regularly by Operational Delivery Committee, and also a key component of our annual report to the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of their self-assessment approach to regulation.

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS

- 4.1 The confirmed primary, single reasons for properties becoming void remain transfer of tenancy (371), tenant deceased (248) and tenant in home / hospital or prison (127). There have been 1745 terminations so far this year, which is an increase on the previous year, when 1234 had been terminated.
- 4.2 To date 194 properties have become void due to a combination of either moving to rent in the private sector (103) or transferring to another landlord (93).
- 4.3 There has been a total of 1,390 re-lets in 2021 334 (31.6%) greater than at the same period last year, of those 1,163 were general need properties. Of 1,390 relets 42.16% (586) were let to homeless households, slightly below the 50% target set. We have made 3305 offers of accommodation this year, with 1248 offers accepted. This is a refusal rate of 62.2%, which is significantly above our target of 45%. Committee will be discussing the proposal to introduce a Choice Based Letting system today and the benefits of such a system include a reduction in refusal rates, with a more targeted approach to letting.
- 4.4 A new letting standard for properties has been agreed, with properties being painted and having vinyl flooring laid in the kitchen and bathroom prior to being relet. This work has recently been implemented, with several properties being relet at this new standard. We continue to work with our approved contractor, Morrison Construction, to return properties to the market for let.
- 4.5 Tenancy termination rates are at an average of **47.16** per week since the 1st April, with the average number of properties let at **37.57** per week since the same date. On

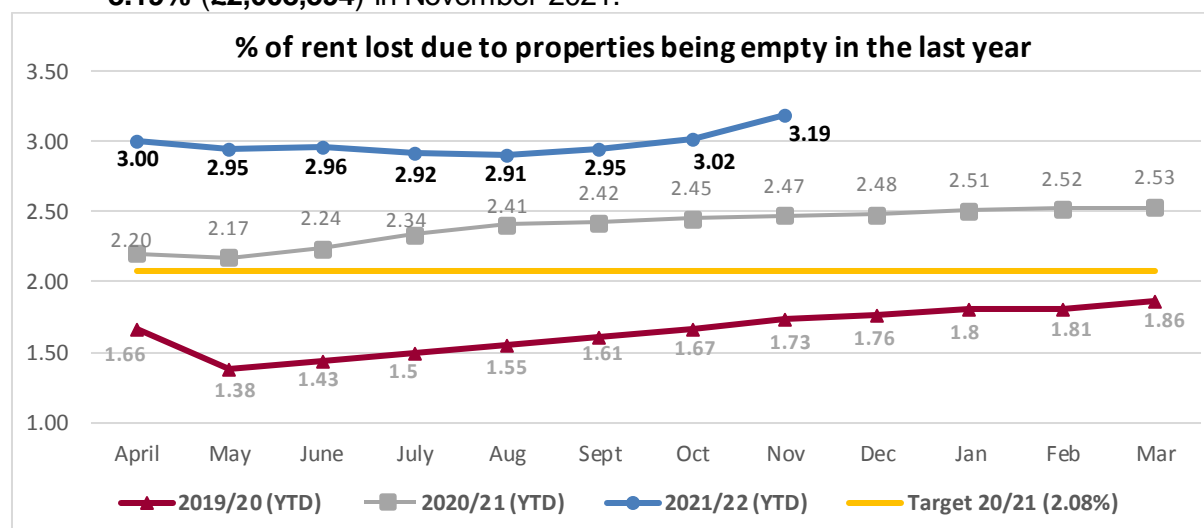
average **45.46** sets of keys are sent to repairs per week, with **40.30** sets of keys received back for let.

- 4.6 The average relet time for a property has decreased by **18.6** days since November 2020, to **98.8** days at the end of November 2021. This is due to significant focus and efforts on turning round properties within timescale, the increased ability of tradesmen to enter the properties to carry out repairs, and the support provided through the commissioned contract agreed by Strategic Commissioning Committee in June 2021.

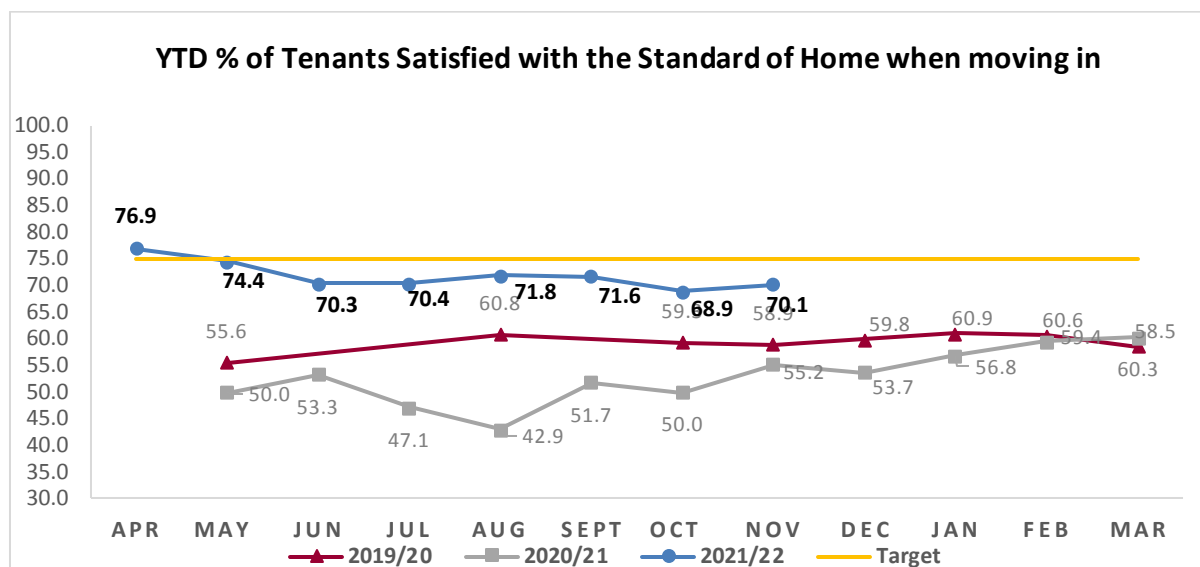


- 4.7 There has been an increase in the number of properties available for immediate rent with no confirmed offer. This has increased from **15** at 6th April 2021 to **163** at 13th December. This is primarily an increase in the number of sheltered, very sheltered, and multi-storey properties that are available but with no accepted offers for them. This is a growing trend, particularly around 2 bed properties in multi-storey accommodation.

- 4.8 Void rent loss has increased from **2.53%** at the end of the financial year 2020/21 to **3.19%** (£2,008,594) in November 2021.



4.9 There is a link between the length of time tenants have waited to access their new home, and customer satisfaction. As the average relet time reduces, we can see a sustained improvement in the customer satisfaction level reported to us.



SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

5.1 Committee has previously heard of the work being carried out through the Housing Improvement Group, with implemented actions including:

- Increasing tenancy inspections prior to a tenant vacating a property
- Refusing transfers where property would be returned to us in a worse condition than when a tenant signed their lease
- Reviewing the Letting Standard for Council properties

5.2 Since the last report to Committee, significant work has also gone into cleansing the waiting list, without around 500 applicants being removed after we have contacted them to check on their status. This makes allocating properties more efficient, and with the proposed introduction of Choice Based Letting this will enable a greater focus on demand for housing.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

8 MANAGEMENT OF RISK

8.1 Void property risk is most prevalent in four key areas:

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M)	Mitigation
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		High (H)	
Number of void properties	There is a risk that the number of void properties does not reduce.	H	Officer group looking at all aspects of Void performance to identify improvements. Approval to commission external support for reducing the number of void properties.
Void rent loss	There is a risk that void rent loss does not reduce, and that this may affect the Housing Revenue Account budget.	H	Officer group looking at all aspects of Void performance to identify improvements. Approval to commission external support for reducing the number of void properties.
Relet times	There is a risk that relet times do not reduce, affecting void rent loss but also affecting those on the waiting list who are in temporary accommodation and unable to access a permanent Council house. Temporary accommodation is more expensive than mainstream accommodation and this may have an impact on household income.	M	Approval to commission external support for reducing the number of void properties. Close monitoring of allocations made to those in temporary accommodation to ensure they are progressing to settled accommodation as soon as possible.
Council House waiting list	There is a risk that the Council House waiting list does not reduce due to the rate of empty properties.		Officer group looking at all aspects of Void performance to identify improvements. Approval to commission external support for reducing the number of void properties.

9 OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	This is an update report with no recommendations. However, improvement in void property management will aid the achievement of the LOIP outcomes in the following areas:

	Stretch Outcome 1 – No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>This is an update report with no recommendations. However, improvement in void property management will aid the achievement of the LOIP outcomes in the following areas:</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 6 - As corporate parents we will ensure 95% of care experienced children and young people will have the same levels of attainment in education, health and emotional wellbeing, and positive destinations as their peers by 2026</p> <p>Stretch outcome 10.3 - Changing attitudes about domestic abuse in all its forms and ensuring victims receive access to the right support.</p> <p>Stretch outcome 11.1 - Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups.</p>
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<p>The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.</p> <p>The other legislative provisions concerning the allocation of social housing and meeting the needs of homeless households set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.</p>

10 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Full IIA not required. No adverse equality or human rights issues were identified from the assessment.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	No full DPIA required. Screening document completed.

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Operational Delivery Committee, 17/09/2019 14:00 \(aberdeencity.gov.uk\)](#)

12 APPENDICES

None

13 REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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