

Committee: Housing Board
Title: Void Update
Report Author: Judith Snares, Housing Strategy and Operations Manager
jsnares@uttlesford.gov.uk
Tel: 01799 510671

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Summary

1. This report is to brief members on:-
 - The actions taken by the housing department to improve the void re-let times

Recommendations

2. That the Housing Board notes this report

Financial Implications

3. None

Background Papers

4. None

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	N/A
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

Situation

6. The Void Indicator data attached to this report shows the current void re-let times for major and minor voids as well as the overall figure. As can be seen we are currently not hitting our targets on these figures.
7. We have recently changed the way we record these figures so that we align our calculations with how other organisations collect and publish their data on the HouseMark system. This means that going forward we can compare ourselves accurately with a peer group of similar sized organisations, both council and housing association.
8. The main reasons for current performance are the problems we have been having with our main voids contractor and the asbestos contractor.
9. The asbestos contractor's performance has been a particular issue, as without an asbestos report any other intrusive work within a property cannot be started. After discussions with the council's procurement officer regarding our contractual obligations, we have been able to suspend this contract. The work has now been given to another company who has agreed to carry out the work within the required 5 day turn around.
10. The main void contractor's performance is also be closely monitored and a default notice has been served. No extensions to time are being given unless there are unavoidable circumstances. There will be financial penalties enforced to cover rent loss if voids are not completed within the agreed deadlines.
11. Void surveyors are also now carrying as many pre-void inspections as possible with housing officers so that they can arrange for some of the checks such as asbestos to be carried out before the property becomes void.
12. The council's void co-ordinators and senior surveyor are also working on a new void tracker system that all contractors will be able to access, this will allow for better co-ordination of trades working on void properties.
13. Weekly 'bidding' has now been introduced for the council's choice based lettings system which means that properties can be advertised within days of the housing department receiving notification that they are to become void. This gives more time to ensure that a new tenant is lined up for each property as soon they are ready for re-letting.
14. There are naturally some properties that are more difficult to let than others, such as isolated bungalows, or second floor flats. It is difficult to do anything about flats but bungalows in isolated locations are advertised as being available for any age group, but with the proviso that should a person over 60

bid on the property they will get preference over younger applicants. This avoids having to advertise properties twice.

15. The housing department's development programme has been addressing the issue of hard to let sheltered schemes and these are gradually being rebuilt as in the case of Reynolds Court or re-modelled as in the case of Hatherley Court. Remaining schemes that are in need of modernisation are in the council's future development programme. We will continue to look at any other hard to let areas to see if there are any future development opportunities to make properties more attractive and more easily re-lettable

16. Managers from the housing management team and the property services team meet weekly with contractors to ensure that there is continued pressure from all sides to bear down on the void re-let times so that they can be brought within target as soon as possible.

Risk Analysis

17.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Rent loss to the housing revenue account	3	3	Ensure that the housing management and property services team carry out strict performance monitoring of contractors and re-let properties to new tenants as soon as void works are complete.

- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.