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| To: | Housing Panel |
| Date: | 13th November 2017 |
| Report of: | Head of Housing |
| Title of Report:  | Void Property Management  |

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| Summary and recommendations |
| Purpose of report: | To provide members with an update on the management of void residential properties. |
| Key Decision | No |
| Executive Lead Member | Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing |
| Corporate Priority | An Effective and Efficient Council |
| Report Author | Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager |
| Recommendation: |
| 1. | The Housing Panel is asked to note the contents of this report |
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| Appendices |
| Appendix 1 | Voids Service Agreement |
| Appendix 2 | Tenancy Management Restructure Briefing  |
| Appendix 3 | Empty and Void Property Management Audit |
| Appendix 4Appendix 5 | Void Property PerformanceKnights House Show Flat |

# Introduction and background

1. The management of the Council’s void residential properties is carried out by three service teams, Tenancy Management and Allocations in Housing & Property Services and Void Works in Direct Services.
2. The roles and responsibilities of the respective teams are set out in Appendix 1 – Voids Service Agreement.
3. Prior to December 2015, the work currently done by Tenancy Management sat in the Void Property team in Direct Services. The Void Property team functions were subsumed into the Tenancy Management team at that time although this was not operational on void properties until April/May 2016. The rationale behind this restructure was sent to members of the Audit Committee in summer 2016 and is shown as Appendix 2 – Tenancy Management Restructure Briefing.
4. The Council’s Internal Auditors, BDO, carried out an audit of Empty and Void Property Management in June 2016. This identified the same view of managers in that many of the previous procedures and processes needed to be re-engineered to work within a generic working environment rather than a specialised one
5. Throughout 2016, officers revised process and procedures and adopted the Voids Service Agreement, setting out the responsibilities of the teams.
6. Operational Managers from each of the service areas meet on a weekly basis to discuss current voids, capacity, forthcoming voids that are on notice, prioritising where required, and voids that have recently been re-let to learn any lessons.
7. Measures required to deal with hard to let properties are also agreed. An example is the show flat approach in Knights House, where a flat that had been empty for seven months with no demand was let within two weeks of being advertised with carpets and furniture. See Appendix 5 – Knights House Show Flat

# Performance Improvement

1. The re-let time performance for 2016-17 and 2017-18 is shown in Appendix 4 – Void Property Performance.
2. The overall performance for the year 2015/16 was in the bottom quartile at 34.3 days with performance in March 2106 slipping to 40.1days.
3. The improvements to process took a considerable time to bed in and results only started to significantly improve in early 2017. This was a combination of working through the processes and staff having to learn a new job role.
4. The targets set for performance are 21 days for a standard general needs void and 31 days for standard and major works general needs voids combined.
5. The performance improvement has been significant with standard voids now being re-let in less than 15 days on average and standard and major works voids combined less than 18 days. Figures are accurate up to and including 24 October 2017.
6. Sheltered properties are shown separately as some are extremely hard to let and if they are finally let, while it is in one sense a success, the impact on performance statistics can be significant.

# Additional Benefits of Performance Improvement

1. The improvement in re-let times has an impact by maximising rental income but there are also impacts in other areas. As Tenancy Management Officers are now involved in the whole process, they are able to deal with outgoing tenants in a much more managed process and in turn, it provides opportunities for properties to be advertised and prospective tenants to view properties before void property work is complete and in some cases before the former tenant has left. This means that in most cases, properties are able to be let the day that void works are finished, reducing the time that applicants are in less satisfactory accommodation.

# Conclusion

1. The changes made to the operational processes in place to manage void properties have seen significant improvements in performance.
2. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

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