



# Scrutiny

2 September 2021

**Report of:** Councillor Ronan Browne -  
Portfolio Holder for Council Homes  
and Landlord Services

## Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation Update

<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Providing high quality council homes and landlord service.
<b>Relevant Ward Members:</b>	All
<b>Date of consultation with Ward Members:</b>	N/A
<b>Exempt Information:</b>	No

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 In 2019, the Scrutiny Committee undertook a comprehensive piece of task and finish work in relation to the Housing Service’s void management and temporary accommodation function. The recommendations from Scrutiny Committee were accepted by Cabinet on 22 January 2020.
- 1.2 This report seeks to provide Scrutiny Committee with an update in relation to those actions and subsequent operational changes that are related to void management and temporary accommodation.

### 2 Recommendation

**That Scrutiny Committee:**

- 1. Notes the progress and ongoing work across the Housing and Communities directorate to satisfy the recommendations made.**

### 3 Current Context and Performance

- 3.1 This paper and accompanying presentation evidence the positive progress being made against the recommendations made by the scrutiny task and finish group. This progress has been made despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.2 This progress has been enabled through a consistent focus and considerable investment in the Housing service in order that Melton Borough Council can achieve Corporate Priority 2; Providing high quality council homes and landlord service.

#### 4 Void Task and Finish Group recommendations

4.1 For ease, these are tabulated below with comment provided:

Recommendation	Current Status	Further Information
<p>1) A review of the voids module within the Northgate Housing Management System is undertaken and recommendations proposed to Senior Leadership Team as to how an improved system can be implemented along with revenue expenditure required.</p>	<p>Action taken to address voids and system inefficiency</p>	<p>Northgate development is key, including data quality, reporting, and a voids workflow. Development of assets module complete – this will ensure all stock condition data is recorded, reportable and informs service delivery. Stock condition surveys have commenced, all data will be added to Northgate and updated regularly to ensure accuracy, data integrity and business planning.</p> <p>Operational voids management is being managed through the Void Working Group and at a strategic level through the Customer and Digital Improvement Board. Our void process has been developed and agreed see appendix 1.</p>
<p>2) To consult tenants in relation to the implementation of a Golden Goodbye scheme that incentivises tenants to return their home in a good standard that in turn reduces void time and void costs to Melton Borough Council.</p>	<p>This action has been considered. It is recommended that this action is not progressed.</p>	<p>This was agreed to be trialled late in 2021-22, a date has not been set yet. There has been further feedback from neighbouring authorities that their similar schemes have been discontinued due to their cost.</p>
<p>3) Subject to the outcomes of this consultation, to introduce the Golden Goodbye Scheme on a temporary basis for one year after which time continuation of the scheme to depend on the evaluation of outcomes and success factors.</p>	<p>This action has been considered. It is recommended that this action is not progressed.</p>	<p>TFEC advised that they felt the scheme would not add value at this time and with the increased tenancy management function issues should be captured and dealt with prior to void.</p>
<p>4) The development of a framework that includes TFEC in the monthly monitoring of voids and includes a written</p>	<p>This action has been progressed. Void policy and relet standard</p>	<p>The monthly void performance report for all members is also shared to TFEC. The upcoming Tenant Engagement Strategy provides details and the</p>

protocol from both parties so as to clarify expectations.	now provide a consistent approach.	framework for future consultation with TFEC/Tenant groups on service performance and improvement. TFEC were actively engaged in the development of the Void policy and Void relet standard.
5) To reduce, with the aim of eliminating, use of private Bed and Breakfasts by introducing alternatives with options developed by officers for consideration by Cabinet by the end of July 2020. Absolutely critical.	This action remains a priority for the directorate, with a weekly focus on temporary accommodation, allocation and need.	We are continuing to utilise a pool of units of our own stock with an aim to eliminate Bed and Breakfast costs as soon as is practical. We are implementing a new tenancy agreement for use with our Temporary Accommodation residents.
6) To review contract arrangements with contractors to ensure sufficient quality and control and explore the potential to move to a single trusted contractor to manage all aspects of voids work.	This action has been progressed.	We are continuing to monitor through the weekly Void Working Group meetings with any resulting issues escalated to a senior level.
7) A review of the Allocations Policy by July 2020.	This action remains a priority for the directorate.	As previously reported, this was a very challenging timescale. To review an Allocations Policy typically takes 12 months due to the extensive consultation periods and level of research required. The Covid 19 pandemic required the Council to divert officer resource to ensure it could respond to national homelessness 'Everyone In' requirements. Some staff turnover has also created a delay.  A review of the allocations policy will begin within the next three months. This will include a consultation process. It is recommended that a revised timeline for completion of this action is March 2022.
8) The development and implementation of a new Voids Policy by July 2020.	This action has been completed.	The Voids Policy and Void Relet standard were introduced in January 2021.

9) The implementation of new Tenant visits on occupation and again after 6 weeks.	This action has been completed.	All sign ups are completed in person and have been throughout Covid-19
10) To provide an interim report to Scrutiny Committee in July 2020 detailing progress against recommendations and a full report in January 2021 to evidence the impact of improvements.		This report and update on progress aims to provide sufficient reassurance to satisfy members of the continuous improvement ongoing through the housing service.

## 5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 HRA monitoring processes identifies variations from planned void expenditure and rent loss which is reported through corporate budget monitoring process. The latest HRA monitoring report is being presented to Cabinet on 8 September and at Quarter 1 identifies a forecast rental income shortfall of £80k linked to voids. This is an extrapolation of the reduced rent income at period 3, assuming voids continue at their current level.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Deputy S151 Officer**

## 6 Legal and Governance Implications

- 6.1 The report is for information purposes only. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer**

## 7 Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Void Process  
7.2 Appendix 2 – Void and Temporary Accommodation Presentation Slides

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