

Cabinet

22 January 2020

Report of:

**Chairman of Scrutiny
Committee**

FINAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP - HOUSING VOIDS MANAGEMENT AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

1.0 Corporate Priority:	Decision Type:
1.1 Increasing the availability of good quality homes, which meet local needs.	Key Decision
1.2 Delivery quality services to business and residents; understanding what really matters to our customers.	
2.0 Summary:	
2.1 The Final Report attached at Appendix A details the findings of the review carried out by the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group for Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation. The Task and Finish Group have proposed a number of recommendations which have been approved by the Scrutiny Committee for recommendation to Cabinet.	
3.0 Recommendations	
3.1 To approve the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group for Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation (Appendix A)	
4.0 Reason for Recommendation:	
4.1 Following careful evaluation of the evidence, the Task and Finish Group believe that the recommendations contained within the final report will ensure that alternative, more cost effective options for Temporary Accommodation are explored and void times are significantly reduced. The Group are confident that if these recommendations are accepted and implemented they will lead to better outcomes for tenants and prospective tenants and also have a positive impact on the Council's financial position.	
4.2 At their meeting on 7 January 2020 the Scrutiny Committee approved that the report and the recommendations should be forwarded to Cabinet for approval.	
5.0 Alternate Options Considered	
5.1 The Task and Finish Group have worked closely with Officers and Stakeholders to decide on the recommendations put forward in the report. The Task and Finish Group only considered options which had a clear link to the evidence base.	

6.0 Report Detail

- 6.1 On 23 July 2019 the Scrutiny Committee approved the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation.
- 6.2 On 28 August 2019 the Task and Finish Group met for their preliminary scoping meeting. At that meeting the Group were provided with some background information and performance measures on Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation processes. The Group identified issues and areas that they would like to explore further and also discussed the timetable for the review.
- 6.3 The Group felt that the original timeline to present to Cabinet in November 2019 was unachievable and agreed that it was important that the review was thorough and the Group had ample time to complete their enquiries and deliberations; as such a completion date of January 2020 was agreed to be more realistic. Minor revisions were also made to the Terms of Reference.
- 6.4 The Scoping Document for the Review and the revised Terms of Reference were presented to and approved by the Scrutiny Committee on 17 September 2019.
- 6.5 Over the last 4 months the Group has established a sound evidence base which includes performance statistics, review of current policy and process and draws on the experiences of customers, officers and other stakeholders. A summary of the evidence considered is included in the report (Appendix A). Evaluation of this evidence base has clarified the issues and lead to the identification of the underlying causes.

Using the evidence and with technical support from Officers, the Group have considered options for improvement, alongside feasibility for future delivery, realistic timeframes and performance monitoring indicators and translated their findings into a set of recommendations. Following approval by the Scrutiny Committee on 7 January 2020 these recommendations are now presented to Cabinet for approval,

The recommendations are noted below:

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.
2. 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.
3. Ensure that a framework is developed that includes TFEC in the monthly monitoring of voids and includes a written protocol from both parties so as to clarify expectations.
4. 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.
5. Review contract in relation to voids with Axis seeking to amend the terms thus enabling all works (including capital components) except gas safety,

to be carried out by one main void contractor subject to a suitable schedule of rates being agreed.

6. Review of the Allocations Policy by July 2020.
7. To develop and implement a new Voids Policy by July 2020.
8. To implement new Tenant visits on occupation and again after 6 months.*
9. 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 is an additional recommendation which was added at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 January 2020.

7.0 Consultation and Feedback

- 7.1 A list of stakeholders and expert witnesses consulted is contained in the final report.
- 7.2 The Scrutiny Committee approved the report and the recommendations at their meeting on 7 January 2020, subject to the addition of one further recommendation detailed at No. 8 above and in the report.
- 7.3 The Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder were provided with the final version, approved by the Scrutiny Committee following the meeting on 7 January 2020.
- 7.4 Some of the recommendations will require further consultation should they be approved and taken forward by Cabinet. Where appropriate this has been highlighted in the report.

8.0 Management Response

- 8.1 A management response to each recommendation has been provided by the Director for Growth and Regeneration at Appendix B.

9.0 Next Steps

- 9.1 Following approval by the Chief Executive, Cabinet will consider the recommendations and choose to reject, approve, or approve with alterations.

10.0 Financial Implications

- 10.1 Each recommendation may have financial implications which will be evaluated and further information has been provided to Cabinet in the form of a management response.
- 10.2 Prior to implementation of each proposal any costs or savings implications would be assessed and where necessary further approval would be sought in line with the constitution and financial procedure rules.

11.0 Legal and Governance Implications:

- 11.1 The recommendations contained within Appendix B are lawful but specific actions would require legal advice prior to implementation. Officers will ensure that they seek advice where appropriate.
- 11.2 Task and Finish Groups are informal meetings without decision making powers, however the Scrutiny Committee has considered the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and has determined that this report should be forwarded to the Chief Executive who has allocated it to Cabinet as it relates to the strategic management of the Councils housing function.

11.3 In accordance with the Constitution, Scrutiny Committee are able to provide recommendations to Cabinet, however Cabinet have the authority to approve, amend or reject the recommendations.

12.0 Equality and Safeguarding Implications:

12.1 Equalities implications arising out of the recommendations will be considered as each proposal is progressed.

13.0 Community Safety Implications:

13.1 There are no community safety implications in this report.

14.0 Other Implications

14.1 There are no other implications.

15.0 Risk & Mitigation:

15.1 Any immediate risks are identified within the management response. Risks arising out of the recommendations will be considered as each proposal is progressed.

Background Papers:

Report to Scrutiny Committee 23 July 2019 & 17 September 2019
Scrutiny Committee 7 January 2020 – Minutes

Appendices

Appendix A – Final Report of the Scrutiny Task And Finish Group - Housing Voids Management And Temporary Accommodation.
Appendix B – Management Response to Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

Report Timeline:		Date of sign-off:
	Equalities Check & Challenge	N/A
	SLT Sign off	N/A
	Previously Considered by Cabinet	N/A
	Scrutiny Chairman Approval	10.01.20 PC
	Director Approval	12.01.20 PP
	Legal Approval	13.01.20 AWy
	Chief Finance Officer Sign Off	13.1.20 DG
	Monitoring Officer Sign Off	13.01.20 AWy

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