Scrutiny Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group

Final Report
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Foreword - Chairman of Scrutiny Committee

When Melton Borough Council changed to the Cabinet system in May 2019, it was also the start of the Council’s Scrutiny Committee.

Committee Members were aware that the average ‘void time’ was unacceptably lengthy and with an increasing need for social housing, it was essential that our properties should be empty for as little time as possible. As such this particular review was seen as high priority and considered appropriate for the Council’s first Scrutiny Task and Finish Review.

In July 2019, the Committee’s first Task and Finish Group was established to review Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation.

We are very appreciative of all the hard work of officers who have supported the Task Group in our first review, especially our Scrutiny Officer, Natasha Taylor.

We are very grateful too, for the willing and helpful co-operation and information which we received from officers who are involved in various parts of the Voids process.

We also conducted research and gathered evidence from other people and organisations including TFEC who represent the Council’s tenants.

Over the last few months, we have seen that officers have already started to implement changes to the Voids Process and we understand that there will be continued improvement over the coming months. We have seen how there is a willingness amongst officers and stakeholders to change practices and make improvements to provide tenants and prospective tenants with a better quality service. We hope that the conclusions we have drawn and the recommendations we have made will be a positive contribution to the overall improvement journey.

Councillor Pat Cumbers

Members of the Task and Finish Group

Councillor Pat Cumbers (Chairman)  Councillor Rob Bindloss  Councillor Ronan Browne  Councillor Elaine Holmes
Background and Introduction

On 23 July 2019 the Melton Borough Council Scrutiny Committee approved the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review Housing Voids Management and Temporary Accommodation. This topic was chosen after having been raised by elected members as a response to identified issues within the voids and temporary accommodation processes both in terms of performance, costs and customer satisfaction. The number of void properties (properties without a tenant) and the period for which these properties remained empty had risen and this was having a negative impact on the Council’s income both in rental and Council Tax receipts, from its housing stock. It was also felt that the cost incurred in housing people in temporary accommodation were too high, especially when there were properties which were empty, albeit waiting for repairs and improvements to be made.

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 agreed the timetable for the review and made some revisions to the Terms of Reference.

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.

The Group agreed they would commence the review by establishing an evidence base which would include performance statistics, review of current policy and process and draw on the experiences of customers, officers and other stakeholders. Evaluation of this evidence base would clarify the issues and assist with the identification of the underlying causes. The Group, with officer support, would then move on to consider options for improvement, feasibility of options for future delivery and the way in which outcomes could be measured and monitored. This would be translated into a set of recommendations to be presented to Scrutiny Committee for approval and following review by the Chief Executive, further recommendation to Cabinet in January 2020.
Process and Methodology

As detailed within the scoping document, it was agreed that the enquiry would take the form of:

- Desk-based review of papers
- Site visits / observations
- Comparisons with other authorities
- Workshops / Focus Groups
- Interview officers and stakeholders
- Calling witnesses to give evidence

The Group heard evidence from a number of different sources including peer group authorities, interest groups, Melton Borough Council Officers, the housing improvement project group and contractors. A summary of the evidence collated can be found below.

Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 August 2019 – 3pm</td>
<td>• First meeting: Summary/Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review Terms of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Agree timetable and scope of review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 September 2019 – 2pm</td>
<td>• Agree dates (early October) and schedule of evidence/witness sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review current process/model of delivery (Flowchart to be provided in advance of meeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review draft revised tenancy agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October – November 2019</td>
<td>• Series of evidence sessions to hear from key witnesses/stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 October 2019 – 2pm</td>
<td>• Summary of evidence sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review Draft Standards Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review Draft Allocations Policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Member feedback on Show and Tell Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 November 2019 – 2pm</td>
<td>• Summary of evidence sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussion: Voids Policy (Opportunity for Task and Finish Group to feed into the new policy)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discussion: Expectations regarding Performance Measures and monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 December 2019</td>
<td>• To discuss format and content of final report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 December 2019 – 2pm</td>
<td>• To agree the final recommendations and report for Scrutiny Committee – January 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2020</td>
<td>• Report to Scrutiny Committee (Special Meeting – 7 January 2020)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Review by Chief Executive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Report to Cabinet – 22 January 2020</td>
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</table>
Summary of Evidence Considered

A summary has been provided for each piece of evidence considered by the Group during the review.

Full details of any of the evidence listed can be obtained from democracy@melton.gov.uk quoting the Voids/Temporary Accommodation Task and Finish Group and the reference number detailed below.

Evidence Sessions (Expert witnesses/stakeholders)

E1. Tenants Forum Executive Committee (TFEC) (11 October 2019)

- TFEC reported that communication between them and the Council was unsatisfactory and that the flow of information and responses to feedback were poor;
- TFEC consistently experienced work that had not been carried out to satisfactory standard and/or tenants were often waiting too long for remedial works to be completed;
- TFEC felt they were not involved in the process at an early enough stage;
- A protocol or agreement on the remit of TFEC’s role and clarity on the expectation of the relationship with the Council would be welcomed;
- TFEC were aware that there was a shortage of 2/3 Bedroom properties and that delays in releasing houses had been caused by outstanding compliance/safety checks as well as long waiting times for the contractors to commence works;
- TFEC were positive about the idea of the “Golden Goodbye”.

E2. Melton Borough Council Customer Services Lead & Housing Officer (The Customer Experience) (11 October 2019)

- The service received high volumes of calls from customers who had successfully bid for a property and wanted to know when it would be ready for occupation and also from customers chasing information, or complaining about timeframes for repairs. Some of these repairs related complaints were early on in the tenancy;
- The team did not always feel equipped to deal with customer queries as they were not kept informed and response times were poor;
- Recently checks on properties prior to be vacated had not been carried out, but this practice was to be reinstated;
- Communication between MBC and the contractors and internally between members of different housing related services required improvement;
The current ICT system for logging and tracking housing was time consuming to keep up to date and not fit for purpose;

Tenants were issued with a handbook at the start of the tenancy and this was currently being revised. A FAQ’s document would be helpful;

The officers believed that having one ICT system to record all data and a designated officer to oversee the process would improve the situation with regards to void properties.

E3. Head Of Housing & Property and Interim Asset Management Project Manager – North West Leicestershire D.C. (16 October 2019)

NWLDC provided the following statistics on average key turnaround (time between key handed in to new tenant takes ownership of property):

- 2016/17 – 37 days
- 2017/18 – 30 days
- 2018/19 – 21 days
- 2019/20 – YTD 17 days

They had achieved these improvements in relation to void periods by:

- Communication with colleagues in the Housing Management team, providing excellent customer service and ensuring a high level of team performance;
- Oversight of the voids process by three key officers working closely together;
- Permissions process implemented for tenants who wish to do work to a property. In cases where tenants had undertaken work without permission, they could ask for retrospective consent. If this was not given, they were asked to either undo the work or NWLDC would do this and would charge the tenant;
- NWLDC was a ‘direct labour organisation’. This enabled the Council to be in more control of its voids and had cost benefits;
- NWLDC had a ‘one team ethos’. Working together was key – there needed to be thorough and effective communication between the Housing Management team, Asset Management team and DLO;
- NWLDC were planning to replace its current 4 housing management software systems with a single system;
- NWLDC undertook visits when tenants move in and again after 6 months (routine visits would be undertaken for those who require support);
- When advised of termination of tenancies, NWLDC advertised properties 2 weeks before they were vacated;
- Turnaround of 20 days was considered good;
- NWLDC had put resources into increasing staffing;
- ‘Golden goodbyes’ were not successful at NWLDC. The trial showed that the Council spent more than it was getting back;
- Some properties were able to be let on the day they became void, some tenants were provided with ‘paint packs’, so that they could do their own decorating, rather than waiting for the Council to arrange for the decorating to be done.

E4. **Axis (Contractor) (15 November 2019)**

- Axis reported that communication between the council and them was good;
- The presence of asbestos would delay the commencement of work, but otherwise there was approximately one week between the initial survey and commencement of work;
- Sometimes Axis experienced issues with additional requirement for work which had not been identified until they accessed the property;
- Axis reported that they usually achieved target dates for completion of works, but they did sometimes extend these periods. The maximum duration for works was 25 days;
- Axis believed they were currently exceeding the voids standards in most cases;
- Axis worked with other authorities who had more advanced ICT software, which improved the process;
- Axis was not aware of the total number of void properties currently, they only knew the ones they were currently dealing with which at that time totalled 14.

E5. **Melton Borough Council – Team Leader Housing Options (15 November 2019)**

- There was often a delay between ready to let dates being released and properties actually being fit for occupation;
- Lines of communication between different housing related services was not good;
- Properties were released on a specific day weekly, if furniture was not delivered by this day, the tenant could have to wait until the following week;
- There were approximately 20 high priority customers who needed to be housed, 5 of whom were homeless.
- Demand was currently high enough that tenants could be found for all currently void properties if they were ready for release;
- The ICT system was currently not working to its full potential ad could not be used in a multi disciplinary way;
- Delays in the voids process was contributing to the high level of people currently in temporary accommodation, this was not good for tenants’ welfare and was also costly for the council;
• The voids process needed to be robust, quicker and more efficient. A commitment to implementing a robust policy and procedure and clear communication between all involved in the voids process was needed. The targets on the turnover of void properties should be written into the Voids Policy.

E6. **Melton Borough Council Housing & Commercial Manager, Interim Asset Manager & Voids & Responsive Repairs Officer (15 November)**

• There was good communication between Axis and MBC;
• Work was generally to a good standard but sometimes there were issues. This was sometimes due to a breakdown in communication between the contractor and the tradesmen;
• Audits were undertaken and sometimes tradesmen were requested to come back to rectify any issues with work that had been done;
• A new tick sheet had been devised to assist with void inspections;
• The current ICT system did not allow for information to be shared across services, data was not sufficiently maintained and users did not utilise all of its functionality;
• There was a housing voids project group working on improvements and also a new Voids Policy.

E7. **Show and Tell Sessions – Housing Improvement Project**

• These weekly sessions take place to allow an opportunity for officers to share their voids-related experiences from the previous week and think about what lessons have been learnt and what could be done differently.
• Each session shows a list of new Voids, describing the type of property, the size and location and the reasons the properties were vacated.
• Problems encountered are added to a list each week. The list of identified issues (some of which have been addressed) includes:
  o Medical Equipment e.g. beds not owned by tenants which have to be returned
  o Clearance – causes long delays
  o Fire Doors might take 6-8 weeks delivery
  o RTI code needed to obtain power
  o Removal of Citex – the metal barriers used to board up.
  o Rewiring – additional work delay due to poor workmanship by Newel
  o Snagging
  o Scheduled work incomplete
  o Keys mis-management
  o Cleaning
  o Returning to a job after a needle sweep
No dedicated resource for Voids
- Renuvo checks (gas)

- At these sessions, problems are discussed and some solutions have been found. Procedures have been changed where appropriate
- There was a suggestion that an accessible electronic record for each MBC property would be useful. It could include full details of the property plus the history of planned maintenance, repairs, problems etc.
- The voids process is described as having been ‘transformed’
- Generally officers are confident their service to tenants has improved
- Generally officers are much happier in their work.

**Statistical Data**

**E8. Void Performance Analysis 2018/19**

Average void turnaround times (in days) for 2018-19 were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average time LAHS definition</th>
<th>Gross average time definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End-to-end</td>
<td>Repairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>46.23</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>37.05</td>
<td>21.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>31.93</td>
<td>10.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>34.74</td>
<td>19.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full yr</td>
<td>37.49</td>
<td>15.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Rent loss due to voids full year £148,791.87
  - Comprising:
    - Non-core rent (charges etc.): £17,238.08
    - Core rent (basic property rent): £131,553.79
- No of voids received into Housing Repairs- **170**
  - 144 completed and returned
  - 25 carried forward
- Average spend per void- £3600; average revenue spend per void: £2800
- Total revenue spend - £412,223.00
- Total capital spend - £107,516.80

Axis target contract timescales: (Since October 2018):
- 4 working days- minor works
- 8 working days- intermediate works
- 15 working days- major works
E9. Homelessness costs

The actual cost of providing temporary bed and breakfast accommodation to residents is as follows. This is offset by Housing Benefit payments in most cases.

Temporary Accommodation Spend against Budget:

Note: 19/20 figures are part year only

The number of people in temporary accommodation has increased considerably over the past 2 years. Factors relating to this include:

- Availability of MBC owned properties, and the release of properties through the Void process
- Continued Rollout of Universal Credit, and the private sector’s ability to cope with arrears
- Domestic violence/abuse
- Increases in the number of section 21 notices issued by private landlords
- Relationship breakdowns
- Lack of budgeting knowledge and knowledge of where to receive assistance.
- Unaffordability of long term housing in Melton Borough Council
- Lack of availability of private sector housing
- Allocations Policy, and the advertising of properties before homelessness can be determined.
Current Policy/Processes

E.10  **Tenancy Agreement and Handbook**

The Group considered the Draft Revised Tenancy Agreement on 20 September 2019 and provided the following feedback/observations:

- Difficult document to follow, if it was in plain English (Easy read version) it would be easier to understand so people less likely to contravene.
- The agreement had a lot of duplication and repetition.
- Clarity on mutual exchange and acceptance of specification of the property on exchange.
- Provision on communal areas and restrictions on encroachment should be added.
- It would be useful to highlight the top 10 things that tenants regularly did without realising they were breaching the terms of the lease. Also list of expectations on leaving the property.
- Add provision for “Golden Goodbye”.

E.11  **Voids Process**

The group considered the current and evolving voids process on 20 September 2019 and provided the following feedback/observations:

- There are a variety of events which lead to a property becoming void such as death, transfer to alternative property, or termination of tenancy as a result of a possession order.
- Properties were often vacated in a poor state of repair and/or requiring clearance which adds time and costs to the process. As inspections were not being carried out at an early opportunity it is difficult to require the tenants to either do remediation works or pay for damage.
- Tenants were often found to have done work without permission which was impossible to guarantee in terms of quality/safety.
- Joint inspections were being trialled with Axis and MBC to ensure there was understanding of expectation between all parties. TFEC do pre and post work inspections, but there is a lack of clarity on the Voids Standards, Tenants expectation and the contractor responsibilities.
- TFEC had been focusing on some areas (such as the state of the garden) which were outside of the voids standards, however the Tenancy Agreement includes responsibilities regarding gardens and possible recharging when the gardens are not properly maintained.
- The 28 day period for inspection of the property needed to be addressed.
- The possibility of providing a financial incentive to the tenant for leaving the property in a good state of repair in order to save the authority time and money in getting the property in an acceptable standard to re-let should be explored further.
E.12 Voids Standard

The Group considered the Voids Standard Policy on 25 October 2019 and provided the following feedback:

- The policy was not detailed enough which led to confusion regarding expectations.
- Focus should be on standard specification and value for money, not purpose built, bespoke options.
- Showers were not included as standard in properties – the group discussed the benefits of electric showers in terms of accessibility, cost and environmental advantages.

E.13 Draft Allocations Policy

The Group considered the Draft Allocations Policy on 25 October 2019 and provided the following feedback:

- The policy should make provision for allowing only one property of the correct size to be refused.
- The problem was often providing the right property to the right tenants, even if all the currently void properties came on line they this would still be a problem in terms of allocation as not all the properties would be suitable.
- Restrictive covenants by Parish Councils contribute to delays in finding suitable tenants which leads to long term voids in certain areas.

Current Legislative Guidelines

E.14 The Decent Homes Standard

MBC is committed to the Decent Homes Programme and is carrying our works to ensure all its Council owned homes are safe and decent places to live for its tenants.

Since 2010, the number of ‘non-decent’ homes, has risen steadily from around 1% to 32% in 2018. The rewiring project was set up in July 2018 to reduce the number of ‘non-decent’ homes. This is having a positive impact and the numbers are slowly, but steadily coming down. At the current time the number of non decent homes has reduced to 27.5%. It should be noted that how we assess the Decent Homes standard is currently under review.

A programme of planned maintenance projects is proposed through the Housing Improvement Plan approved by the Council in November 2019. This will include projects to reduce the number of non-decent homes significantly over the next three years.
E.15  **The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

In force from 3 April 2018, the Act created new legal duties on English Local Authorities and some public bodies, with a focus on preventing homelessness mainly:

- An extension of the period ‘threatened with homelessness’ from 28 to 56 days.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need.
- A new ‘duty to refer’ - public services will need to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Central Government introduced the Flexible Homelessness Grant to support Councils in implementing duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018. This grant has totalled the following since 2017/18:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>£50140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>£53315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/20</td>
<td>£58020</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This grant is ringfenced for spend towards preventing and relieving homelessness, and has been utilised for:

- Additional officer resource
- System and software upgrades
- Administration and reporting to central government
- Assisting residents with rent deposit schemes and rent in advance payments to access the private housing sector

Grant funding will continue in 2020/21 and potentially beyond, however funding levels have not yet been confirmed.
# Conclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAIN ISSUES IDENTIFIED</th>
<th>LINK TO EVIDENCE</th>
<th>PROPOSED SOLUTION (S)</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Length of void period</td>
<td>E1, E5, E8</td>
<td>A new Voids policy. Improved oversight of the process. Review agreement with Contractor.</td>
<td>R2, R3, R5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tenant not complying with terms of tenancy agreement</td>
<td>E1, E2, E3, E7, E10, E11, E12</td>
<td>Revise Tenancy Agreement and ensure that duties and obligations are clarified. Consultation on Golden Goodbye Scheme.</td>
<td>R2, R7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cost and frequency of use of Bed &amp; Breakfasts (B&amp;B’s)</td>
<td>E5, E9, E13, E15</td>
<td>Make more temporary use of MBC properties which are not completely ready for re-letting. Officers to investigate other options to reduce the use of expensive, unsuitable Bed &amp; Breakfasts.</td>
<td>R4, R7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Current ICT system not fit for purpose having a negative impact on communications between different housing related services</td>
<td>E2, E3, E5</td>
<td>Improved digital asset management system improve communication between officers and other stakeholders and to provide management with easy access to what is happening at each property.</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Current agreement on the relationship between TFEC and MBC is outdated and lacks detail on roles, responsibilities and remit.</td>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Consultation with TFEC and relevant officers. Creating a revised protocol between MBC and TFEC New Voids Policy.</td>
<td>R3, R7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inadequate communication between MBC and Contractors</td>
<td>E2, E4, E6, E7</td>
<td>Improved ICT system. Ongoing regular meetings.</td>
<td>R1, R3, R7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAIN ISSUES IDENTIFIED</td>
<td>LINK TO EVIDENCE</td>
<td>PROPOSED SOLUTION (S)</td>
<td>RECOMMENDATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Poor communications with tenants and prospective tenants</td>
<td>E2, E5, E10, E12</td>
<td>Work more with TFEC to keep tenants informed re Housing matters Ensure that prospective tenants are provided with realistic ‘move-in ’ dates and they are informed if those dates change Collate views and feedback from tenants to inform future improvements.</td>
<td>R1, R6, R7, R8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Customer Service do not always having access to all the relevant information.</td>
<td>E2, E6</td>
<td>Provide access to up to date information about properties which are void.</td>
<td>R1,R6, R7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lack of information on each property (e.g. history of planned maintenance, ad hoc repairs etc.)</td>
<td>E4, E5, E6, E7</td>
<td>Use improved ICT systems to produce and manage these records.</td>
<td>R1</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Recommendations

Following careful evaluation of the evidence, the Task and Finish Group believe that the following recommendations 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.

Recommendation 1 (R1)

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.

Reasons for Recommendation (R1)

- Improved communications within MBC are necessary
- Improved communications between MBC and others are necessary
- An up to date ‘picture’ accessible to all those who need to know
- Officers including Management need to know exactly what is happening at any time so delays are noticed and dealt with
- Patterns of particular issues can be identified and dealt with

Recommendation 2 (R2)

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.

Reasons for Recommendation 2

- Should encourage prompt payment of rent (GB not payable if there are rent arrears)
- Should help improve general maintenance of properties
- Should encourage tenants to ensure repairs are undertaken when required
- Could therefore reduce need for repairs for vacated properties
- Could potentially reduce the time needed to make the property lettable

Recommendation 3 (R3)

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.
Reasons for Recommendation 3
- It appears that Voids have been a major concern to TFEC (and tenants) for years – it appears that they should have been listened to more when they were providing well – informed information to officers
- TFEC do represent the tenants and when they raise particular issues, they should not be ignored
- It also appears that tenants are more likely to complain to TFEC rather than MBC

Recommendation 4 (R4)
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.

Reasons for Recommendation 4
- It is possible to manage without using Bed & Breakfasts as North West Leicestershire District Council does so
- Extremely expensive for (general) taxpayers
- The majority of B&B’s are not based in Melton
- If not very local, unacceptable for families – perhaps away from friends and schools
- Difficult to find suitable employment if not housed in the area where the prospective tenant wants to live permanently
- If not local, there could be difficulty accessing a doctor, dentist etc.
- A person with multiple issues might not have access to appropriate assistance
- Alternatives could provide income for MBC

Recommendation 5 (R5)
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.

Reasons for Recommendation 5
- Will save time and overall void time
- Reduce costs
- Avoid duplication and confusion over responsibilities by having one responsible contractor
- Improve quality of works by having a single contractor
**Recommendation 6 (R6)**

Review of the Allocations Policy by July 2020.

**Reasons for Recommendation 6**
- To ensure that there is a good understanding of the sort of property which is needed and would be suitable for different types of tenant (e.g. elderly, disabled etc.)
- To ensure that tenants have a good understanding of the sort of housing which MBC believes would be appropriate for their circumstances
- To consider whether 'choice based lettings' is still appropriate
- To establish reasons for properties being hard to let (Granby House etc.)
- To ensure transparency
- To improve customer satisfaction

**Recommendation 7 (R7)**

To develop and implement a new Voids Policy by July 2020.

**Reasons for Recommendation 7**
- To ensure that the voids process is robust, quicker and more efficient
- To reduce void time
- To clarify inclusion of TFEC
- To ensure that Customer Service is kept properly informed
- To ensure that prospective tenants are provided with a realistic move-in date and that they are then kept fully informed if that date might possibly need to change
- To introduce measurable targets
- To set expectations on standards of vacated properties

**Recommendation 8 (R8)**

To implement new Tenant visits on occupation and again after 6 months.

**Reason for Recommendation 8**
- To ensure that views and feedback from tenants are collected and used to develop further improvements.
**Recommendation 9 (R9)**

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.

**Reason for Recommendation 8**
- To ensure that Scrutiny Committee are kept up to date with progress and outcomes
Acknowledgements

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Axis Contracts Manager and Team
Chair and Vice Chair of the Tenants Forum Executive Committee
MBC Customer Services Lead
MBC Deputy Chief Executive (Director People and Communities)
MBC Director for Growth and Regeneration
MBC Democratic Services Team
MBC Housing Officers
MBC Housing Options Team Leader
MBC Housing and Commercial Asset Manager
MBC Housing and Communities Lead
MBC Housing and Communities Manager
MBC Interim Asset Manager
MBC Voids & Responsive Repairs Officer
North West Leicestershire District Council – Head of Housing & Property
North West Leicestershire District Council - Interim Asset Management Project Manager
Strategic Change Consultant