

ITEM 5 – APPENDIX B

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP - HOUSING VOIDS MANAGEMENT AND TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

RECOMMENDATION	REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION PROVIDED BY THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (DIRECTOR FOR GROWTH AND REGENERATION)
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	<p>This recommendation should be accepted</p> <p>This work has started and the extent of the works required are being scoped out.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION PROVIDED BY THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (DIRECTOR FOR GROWTH AND REGENERATION)
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>This recommendation should be accepted in part.</p> <p>Exploring the potential for a positive incentive to tenants to look after the property that reduces our cost has the potential to be a welcome step forward. However, it would be prudent to base any rollout of such a scheme on experimentation and evidence.</p> <p>It is proposed to trial this suggestion on a temporary basis for a year with a view to be reviewed at the end of the year to evaluate the outcomes and success factors.</p> <p>Any consultation would need to make clear that the council is proposing to experiment with the approach and that any further roll out will depend upon success criteria being met.</p>

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<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>This recommendation should be accepted but any framework developed should give due consideration to the comments below.</p> <p>TFEC has an important role in being a conduit between tenants and the Council. Currently, TFEC are involved in undertaking post work inspections and receive monthly updates on voids numbers, costs as well as turn around times. Currently there is gap in available information and assurance on tenant experience through the process of occupying a new home. While monitoring the performance is something officers should routinely do, , TFEC can contribute significantly by seeking assurance of ongoing monitoring and in providing on going support to tenants post occupation. To ensure clarity it is proposed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MBC to revise the voids quality standard in consultation with TFEC - MBC to prepare the protocol for post-work inspections with TFEC and Axis - MBC to work with TFEC to facilitate a post-occupation visit and survey by TFEC to the tenant and report back on the tenant's experience (as per recommendation 8) - This new information to be monitored in form of KPI for both MBC and contractor

RECOMMENDATION	REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION PROVIDED BY THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (DIRECTOR FOR GROWTH AND REGENERATION)
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>This recommendation should be accepted.</p> <p>As members are aware, the use of B&B is due to a range of reasons including social and economic factors, availability of housing supply and individual preferences and life style choices.</p> <p>It is proposed to explore the options for mechanisms to increase the availability of housing to the Council to house people with the need for temporary accommodation. A broad range of options will be presented for consideration of the Cabinet in July 2020. The preferred option will be further explored with detailed feasibility and outline business case at a later date. Any preferred option will be considered on its merit, viability and deliverability.</p>

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<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>This recommendation should be accepted in part.</p> <p>In principle it makes sense to utilise a single trusted contractor for all appropriate voids work but it is too early to establish whether this is the correct course of action. The voids process review has established a new prototype method and this is being trialled currently. Further work is required prior to rolling this out and further work is also required to ensure the contractor performance is managed proactively and robustly by the Council. Internal Audit will be undertaking a consultancy review to assist the work to strengthen the approach to contract controls and management.</p> <p>Would propose amended recommendation as follows: "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."</p>

RECOMMENDATION	REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION PROVIDED BY THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (DIRECTOR FOR GROWTH AND REGENERATION)
6) Review of the Allocations Policy by July 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>This recommendation should be accepted.</p> <p>The allocations policy is already under review and this has been reviewed by TFEC and officers in its current draft form.</p> <p>The draft policy is programmed to be reviewed by Cabinet in March, including options regarding CBL, followed by a 12 week consultation with residents and stakeholders.</p> <p>The policy will not, however, be a needs assessment of residents. This is undertaken through a wider scale study, usually on a county wide basis, which flows into the Local Plan and Housing Strategy to inform longer term need.</p>

RECOMMENDATION	REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION PROVIDED BY THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (DIRECTOR FOR GROWTH AND REGENERATION)
7) To develop and implement a new Voids Policy by July 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>This recommendation should be accepted</p> <p>This work has started alongside the voids review process being undertaken by the officers. The new Housing Asset Manager is due to start early February and will be able to lead the formation of a new policy.</p>
8) To implement new Tenant visits on occupation and again after 6 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that views and feedback from tenants are collected and used to develop further improvements. 	<p>This recommendation should be accepted</p> <p>As per suggestion in recommendation 3.</p>
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that Scrutiny Committee are kept up to date with progress and outcomes 	<p>This recommendation should be accepted.</p> <p>A full progress report will be prepared by the new Housing Asset Manager and the Director for Housing and Communities.</p>