

## ITEM NO 7 Appendix 4 (ii)



### VOID PROPERTIES DRAFT ACTION PLAN

#### Introduction

The purpose of this action plan is to increase the number of properties that are let to customers in as short a period of time as possible whilst still giving choice to prospective residents.

The action plan also aims to deliver a challenging re-let standard which customers and staff have contributed to and which is given to customers before letting of a property takes place.

The action plan also aims to take advantage of the Sheltered Housing Review currently being consulted on with residents so as to deliver a strategic framework on low demand properties especially already identified sheltered stock.

This plan reflects increased team working and consistency of approach to what our customers want when they let a property from the city council. This will reflect best practice and be innovative in balancing choice and performance and cost issues.

The Landlord Services: Tenancy and Estate Management and Allocations and Lettings KLOEs have been used as the framework for the plan.

The aim of this Void Action Plan is to ensure that 100% of our available to let homes are brought up to a void standard which is agreed with customers, managed within agreed budgets and delivered in a customer focussed and cost effective way. The Void action plan ensures that the letting of property is delivered in a consistent manner.

Our performance target is 36 days for 08/09, reducing by 2 days a year until we are within the top quartile performance (currently 30 days for Major Cities).

#### Consultation

Internal consultation between the void repairs, letting and housing management teams has taken place in developing this action plan. In 2002 the current void standard was developed through tenant consultation. Following feedback on this draft from the Housing Inspectorate, we will be sharing this plan with our customers at the Tenants Conference in September 2008 with the opportunity to provide feedback. We are setting up a tenants working group that will enable us to continually consult with customers on our voids performance and service standards.

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**Management and Monitoring of this Action Plan**

This plan is owned by the Head of Decent Homes with the involvement of the Head of Housing Solutions and Head of Housing Management.

This group working alongside the Allocations Manager, the lead Neighbourhood Housing Manager and Void Repairs Manager will progress new and existing actions which will be discussed at bi-monthly meetings.

**Version Control**

Version 1: 12 August 2008

Objective	Actions	Benefits and measures of success	Timescales and milestones	Financial and other resource requirements	Responsible Officer
1 A challenging re-let standard which residents have contributed to and which is available to customers before prospective viewings	1.1 Arrange residents and staff void working group to assess existing void standard and make recommendations to bring it up to date including visiting void properties and assessing works that could be carried out and costs associated with work	Will encourage residents to contribute to void standard and encourage them to set new standard which is affordable and achievable and meets reasonable customer expectations  Reduction in refunds by 10% by March 2010.  Increase in customer satisfaction (see xx)	Working group meetings arranged between August and December 2008  New void standard completed by January 2009 and launched in Tenants Link – March 2009 edition	Management and customer time resource	Voids Repair Manager
	1.2 Review void standards from other comparable organisations to look for best practice standards	Contribute to developing new void standard and reducing refusals	October 2008	Management resource	Voids Repairs Manager

		1.3	Review cost of meeting current void standard and assess cost of new updated void standard	Reduce void cost to comparable costs of other similar organisations	November 2008	Management resource	Voids Repairs Manager
		1.4	Make existing void standard available to all customers letting property before new home is let	Immediate awareness of void standard for potential customers – increased customer satisfaction	September 2008	Management resource	Voids Manager
		1.5	Develop agreed procedure for deciding when Decent Homes works are carried out before letting takes place	Clear understanding from customers and staff when Decent Homes work will be undertaken on a void property	Procedure to be developed with customers in conjunction with void minimum standard – December 2008	Management and customer time resource	Asset Manager

2	Provide prospective tenants with high quality and relevant information about each property's attributes and local neighbourhood facilities in advance of viewing	2.1	Consult with customers on type and quality of information required at letting stage to enable customers to make informed decisions as to whether they want to bid or live in an area, and implement findings	<p>More information for residents which will enable them to be more informed of the property available to let and the area in which the property is in</p> <p>This will contribute to reducing the number of refusals by 10% by march 2010, and reduce overall void times</p>	Procedure to be developed with customers in conjunction with void minimum standard – December 2008	Management and customer time resource	Voids Manager
3	Increase customer focused letting practices, with accompanied viewings and follow up visits	3.1	Viewing of properties is being encouraged with customers and increased accompanied viewings at various stages of the letting process are being carried out – during voids works element and after works element	<p>More viewings of property, especially accompanied viewings will lead to more first time lettings and reductions in the length of overall void time</p> <p>Performance indicator to be set up to monitor the level of viewings and correlation between acceptance of offers. Our aim is 100% accompanied viewing</p>	Performance Indicators to be established by September 08	<p>Management resource</p> <p>Possible increase in void cost although cost to be minimised as decoration work is likely to be undertaken already</p>	<p>Housing Managers</p> <p>Voids Repairs Manager</p> <p>LHO / Wardens</p>

4	Increase level of tenant satisfaction with their new homes	4.1	Carry out an ongoing representative satisfaction survey of properties let – monitor feedback and incorporate views into the tenants working group	Monitor and increase levels of satisfaction with tenants new homes and the lettings process	Introduce sample survey by October 08	Management Resource	Head of Housing Management
		4.2	Use information from 4.1 to determine what further improvements can be made to increase tenant satisfaction	Increased performance with regard to satisfaction	Use survey results from October 08 onwards	Management Resource	Head of Decent Homes
5	Develop a range of solutions available to address the problem of difficult to let properties on an individual property basis and in areas of low demand employing a range of additional means to let properties	5.1	Our only hard to let properties are in sheltered housing. A sheltered housing review is close to a cabinet decision which will address low demand and difficult to let properties, specifically re-categorising some properties for general needs or over 50's	Increased letting of hard to let properties by reclassification of certain properties as general needs  Reduce Void times	November 08 cabinet decision on Sheltered Housing	Management Resource	Head of Housing Solutions/ Head of Housing Management/ Head of Decent Homes

		5.2	At part of the sheltered housing review, we have a programme of converting all bedsits into one or two bed flats	Programme of updating properties will increase ability to let to customers and reduce void times	Properties to be converted individually when they become empty over next three years	Cost of works included in capital programme	Asset Manager
6	Ensure consistency of approach between allocations, void repairs and housing management	6.1	Develop closer working relationships between Housing Allocations, Local Housing Offices and the Decent Homes teams reinforcing team ethic of working together to meet overall objective to reduce void time and achieve best quartile performance status	Benefits of team working and closer liaison between teams will increase understanding and pressures that each team face and increase the effectiveness of the lettings process overall	As well as the regular cross team voids working group meetings, establish a senior managers meeting Head of Decent Homes, Head of Housing Solutions and Head of Housing Management September 08	Management resource	Head of Decent Homes

7	Ensure balance between offering choice in letting and performance/cost	7.1	Increasing use of internet based choice based bidding	Decrease void letting times and increase customer satisfaction with lettings process	October 08 - October 09	Management resource	Head of Housing Allocations
		7.2	Review the numbers of bids allowed in any one lettings cycle	Decrease void letting times	October 08 – October 09	Management resource	Head of Housing Allocations
		7.3	Evaluate reducing the fortnightly lettings cycle to a weekly event following the introduction of full internet based lettings	Decrease void letting times	October 08 – October 09	Management resource	Head of Housing Allocations



8	Allocation, Local Housing Offices and Voids Repairs Work Plans	8.1	All three areas have individual work plans which have been reviewed by the Audit Commission in their health check – SCC continue to implement these work plans	Work Plans will link into Action Plan and contribute to the carrying out of individual actions and reduce void times	Work is on going on both the Action Plan and Work Plans and monitored at The Voids Working Group	Management resource	Head of Decent Homes
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