



# SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## **South Kesteven District Council Voids Policy 2021 – 2024 December 2021**

## **(1) Policy Summary**

1.1 This Policy details South Kesteven District Council's approach to managing void properties with the goal of:

- Delivering a clean safe and secure property to incoming tenants, within our targets for turnaround times, standard and cost.

## **(2) Introduction**

2.1 A property is Void in the period between tenancies.

2.2 Voids are vacant properties and therefore no rent is being paid. This results in a loss of income for The Council. Therefore, we aim to minimise this loss by ensuring that a property is let to the right applicant as quickly as possible.

2.3 The Council aims to let every property to a household which is the best match for that property in order to meet the households current, and where possible, future needs. Although one of the Council's aims is to minimise rent loss, we will also seek to maximise the best match for the property through the allocations process.

## **3. Policy Scope**

3.1 This policy applies to all properties held by the Council within its Housing Revenue Account and is triggered by a tenancy ending and it being appropriate for the Council to re-let the property.

3.2 This Policy will ensure compliance with current legislation, promote good practice, ensuring consistency of approach and has regard but is not limited to:

- Regulator of Social Housing's: Home Standard
- Current Gas and Electrical safety requirements
- All current Landlord Health and Safety requirements
- Ensures value for money in void property works
- Achieves the minimum property quality standard through application of the re-let standard
- Achieves high levels of customer satisfaction with the overall allocation process and property condition
- Is consistent with the aims of our corporate plan

3.3 This Policy applies to all aspects of void management.

#### **4. Policy Objective**

4.1 This policy is designed to meet the following key themes in the Council's corporate plan:

- Housing that meets the needs of all residents
- Healthy and Strong Communities
- A Clean and Sustainable Environment
- A high performing Council

#### **5. Policy Delivery**

5.1 The operational delivery and monitoring of this policy is the responsibility of the Head of Housing Services and Head of Housing Technical Services.

5.2 The Council's staff involved in the void process have a responsibility to ensure that this policy is applied.

5.3 Properties will be re-let in accordance with the Council's:

- Allocations and lettings policy
- Void's policy and relet standard
- Chargeable policy
- Asset management strategy
- Compliance policies and procedures
- Financial standing orders

#### **6. Tenancy Sustainment**

6.1 The Council will seek to minimise unnecessary voids through:

- Effective tenancy management
- Financial inclusion advice
- The installation of aids & adaptations so that tenants and their families can remain in their home where economically viable in accordance with the Aids & Adaptations policy
- Signposting tenants to the relevant resources for the provision of housing support

6.2 The Council will record reasons as to why properties have become empty and will undertake regular root cause analysis to identify if the void could have been avoided. If the void could have been avoided, the Council will take action to minimise the potential for this happening again in future.

#### **7. Repairs and Improvements**

7.1 Repairs and improvement work are often the main factor for a delay in the re-letting of void properties. Therefore, the Council will have a void quality standard (SKVQS) detailing the standard required to let a property (see

appendix 1). This SKVQS addresses the key principles of safety, security, cleanliness and repair. This is not an improvement standard and therefore improvement work will be undertaken after the new tenant has moved in, and only prior where a repair is not viable.

7.2 Where prospective tenants have specific requirements in order to occupy a dwelling, and these are not included within the relevant void standard, then approval should be sought from the Head of Technical Services or the Head of Housing Services.

7.3 The Council will utilise their Housing IT systems to efficiently manage the void process from start to finish.

7.4 Aids and adaptations which are essential to make the property habitable for a new tenant or their family will be carried out prior to the property being let. A cost benefit analysis shall be undertaken with any decision being taken by the Head of Technical Services, Head of Housing Services in consultation with the Assistant Director of Housing.

7.5 Improvement work will normally be undertaken after the new tenant has moved in. If a repair is not viable then improvement work can be undertaken at the void stage

## **8 Tenancy Termination - Tenant Responsibilities**

8.1 All tenants will be required to comply with the terms of their tenancy agreement, including providing 28 days' notice of their intention to terminate their tenancy. A shorter period may be agreed, but this is subject to agreement by the Head of Housing Services.

8.2 Tenants must leave the property in an acceptable condition, subject to fair wear and tear. Where this is not the case, the Council will recharge outgoing tenants for any repairs required to the property which are due to tenant damage, disrepair or neglect, for changing locks or replacing keys if not returned, and for the cost of removing rubbish, furniture or personal belongings. Further guidance is detailed within the Council's chargeable policy.

## **9 Voids – The Council's Service Commitment**

9.1 We will ensure that prospective tenants are kept fully informed about the commencement date of their tenancy.

9.2 We will ensure that all void properties are brought up to our current SKVQS (appendix 1) prior to being let to the new tenant.

9.3 All new tenants will be surveyed to ensure that they were happy with the allocations process and standard of their new home. The results of these surveys shall identify and inform continuous improvement opportunities.

9.4 We will actively monitor our allocations and voids processes to minimise the period our properties are empty, so that they are available for letting to prospective tenants as quickly as possible.

## **10. Performance Management**

10.1 All activities within the Void Policy will be subject to continual performance monitoring.

10.2 Key performance targets (KPIs) will be reviewed annually. KPIs will be reported to the Council's senior housing team, committee, cabinet and periodically to our tenants.

10.3 Periodic audits will be undertaken by the heads of service to ensure compliance with the contents of this policy.

## **11. Complaints and Appeals**

11.1 All complaints regarding the service received will be dealt with in-accordance with the Council's complaint procedure.

11.2 All appeals regarding the allocation of a property will be heard in-accordance with the Allocations policy.

## **12. Other languages and Formats**

12.1 This policy will be made available in other languages and other formats on request.

## **13. Policy Review**

13.1 The policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if required, for example changes in statutory or regulatory requirements.

| <b>POLICY &amp; PROCEDURE CONTROL<br/>(TO BE INCLUDED AT THE END OF ANY POLICY AND/OR PROCEDURE)</b> |  |
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