



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 21 March 2024

Report of Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet Member for Housing & Planning

Update on Voids Performance

Report Author

Nick Thacker, Interim Head of Housing (Technical Service)

 nick.thacker@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

This report seeks to update members on the progress of the Council's void properties, the changes in the process in the past year and current performance measures.

Recommendations

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the latest performance regarding void properties.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Housing

Which wards are impacted? (All Wards);

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 For 2023/24 the year to date void rate at January was 3.6% compared to a budgeted rate of 1.5% which results in an actual income loss of £839k compared with a budgeted loss of £415k. The void rate for 2024/25 has been increased to 2.5% to take into consideration current performance and a one-off budget of £700k has been approved as part of the 2024/25 HRA budget for void refurbishment. An improvement in the number of void properties and days taken to relet the property will improve the income loss position.

Completed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Deputy Director (Finance & ICT) and Deputy S151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The report is for noting and is to inform Members of the latest performance figures on Voids.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 One of the Council's priorities in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 is Housing with the mission to: 'Ensure that all residents can access housing which is safe, good quality and sustainable and suitable for their needs and future generations'. As a

stock-retained local authority, the Council has statutory and regulatory obligations to maintain and repair all our properties.

- 2.2 The Council manages approximately 6000 properties and around 370 properties become vacant each year (known as void properties). Void days are the days that are accumulated between the property becoming vacant and subsequently relet.
- 2.3 During this period where a property is void there is no rental income being received and we try to ensure that the property is let to the right applicant as soon as possible, in accordance with our recently refreshed Housing Allocations Policy, to minimise rent loss.
- 2.4 Our voids policy ensures that a clear process is in place for both Officers and residents, adhering to best practice. This also includes practices to make sure that the Council is compliant with current legislation, for example the Regulator of Social Housing's Home Standard and current Landlord Health and Safety, Gas and Electrical requirements. The full policy can be seen in Appendix 2.
- 2.5 Similarly, the Void Quality Standard safeguards that all of the Council's properties meet a 'property standard' and the full list can be found in Appendix 1 of the requirements that are to be met. All tenants should refer to their Tenancy Agreement and Tenants Handbook to source their responsibilities for maintaining the property after it has been let from void and properties that do not meet these required conditions are subject to recharges for damage.

Current void performance:

- 2.6 The Council currently categorises voids into two classifications of void works, these are:
 - Minor void (completed by the in-house team) – this includes day to day repairs including replacing broken door furniture, replacing internal doors, rehanging doors, carry out an electrical inspection, providing an electrical safety certificate and completing any necessary repairs, plumbing checks, some decorations and matters of a similar small scale, making gardens safe and clear.
 - Major void (completed by external contractors) – this includes replacement of major elements of the property such as kitchen and/ or bathroom, new doors where needed, heating upgrade if required and all works that would be carried out in a minor void

Recent voids performance

- 2.7 Our target for void turnaround is set at sub 60 days. In 2022/23 we completed 241 void properties at an average turnaround of 106.74 days.
- 2.8 The Earlesfield project is ongoing and has had an impact on our voids times with properties being outsourced to our contractor, United Living. We are closely monitoring the performance of this contractor and currently 15 properties are undergoing works by them.
- 2.9 Over the past 6 months United Living have completed 18 properties, all within the expected timescales.

Current active void properties as at 11 March 2024

Type of Void Property	Number of Void Properties
Major Voids (including 8 – Earlesfield Project, 5 – Redevelopment and 5 – Potential Disposals)	93
Minor Voids	24
Temporary Accommodation	8
Provisional Voids	11
To be inspected	14
Ready to let (including Temporary Accommodation)	16
Decants (6 – Disrepair, 1 – Earlesfield Office, 13 – Earlesfield Project)	20
With Improvements team for Conversion	2
Properties purchased with Local Authority Housing Fund Grant not up to void standard	5
Total	193

Void properties completed during 2023/24 as at 11 March 2024

	Number of Void Properties	Average Void Days
Void Properties	282	171.23
Temporary Accommodation	97	76.49*
Void Properties		

*includes Fire Compartmentation work and properties converted from general stock

Efforts to reduce void times.

- 2.10 The Council's void process remains a high priority as effective management of housing voids is imperative for optimising housing stock utilisation and mitigating rent loss for South Kesteven District Council.

- 2.11 We are in the process of going out for procurement for an additional void contractor to reduce the number of major voids we currently have.
- 2.12 We are in the process of looking at DRS project planner which would take away the manual scheduling of internal voids to an automated system, saving time and in proving void times.
- 2.13 Our contractors are being closely monitored and regular meetings are undertaken to ensure they are delivering voids in a timely manner and to a high standard.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The key points are outlined in section 2 above.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 This report is for noting and is designed to give an update on performance.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 To give the Committee a up to date picture on the performance of Voids.

6. Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – South Kesteven Void Quality Standard
- Appendix 2 – Voids policy