



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 17 March 2025

Report of Cabinet Member for Housing,
Councillor Virginia Moran

Void Property Report

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on the Council's void property management and progress to reduce relet times.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 1. Notes the progress made to reduce the time taken to relet properties to reduce financial loss and provide affordable housing to individuals and families in need.**

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Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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 Minimising voids is key to maximising rental income and with the backlog of voids building up in previous years this has impacted on rent collection figures. Therefore, it is positive to see the reduction in rent loss from over £2,000 per property in April 2024 to around £1,500 in January 2025. It is important this improvement continues to maximise rent income and achieve budget targets.)

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance (Deputy s151 officer)

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no significant legal or governance implications arising from this report, which is for noting.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2 Background to the Report

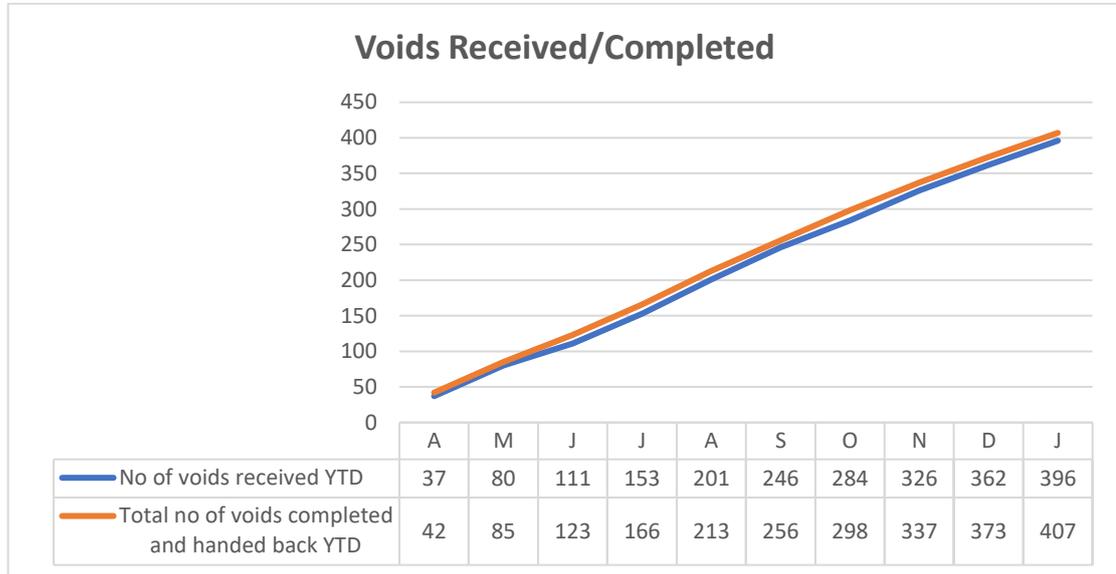
- 2.1 A void property in housing terms is when a property is unoccupied for period of time. For Housing Authorities, the aim is to keep voids to a minimum thus maximising the income generated and to ensure that the Council is maximising the supply of housing to meet resident needs.
- 2.2 A backlog of voids has built up over several years and reducing this is a key priority for the Council. The backlog has built for number of reasons including the increase in volume of works in voids which is caused by a combination of tenant neglect and the lack of planned maintenance investment over the years. This has been compounded by staff shortages, changes in management and limited use of external contractors.

3. Void Property Numbers

Voids Received/Completed

3.1 The chart below shows the number of voids received by the Voids Repair team this year. The Council has received 397 voids year to date and handed 407 back to Housing Management for reletting.

Chart 1: Voids Received and Completed



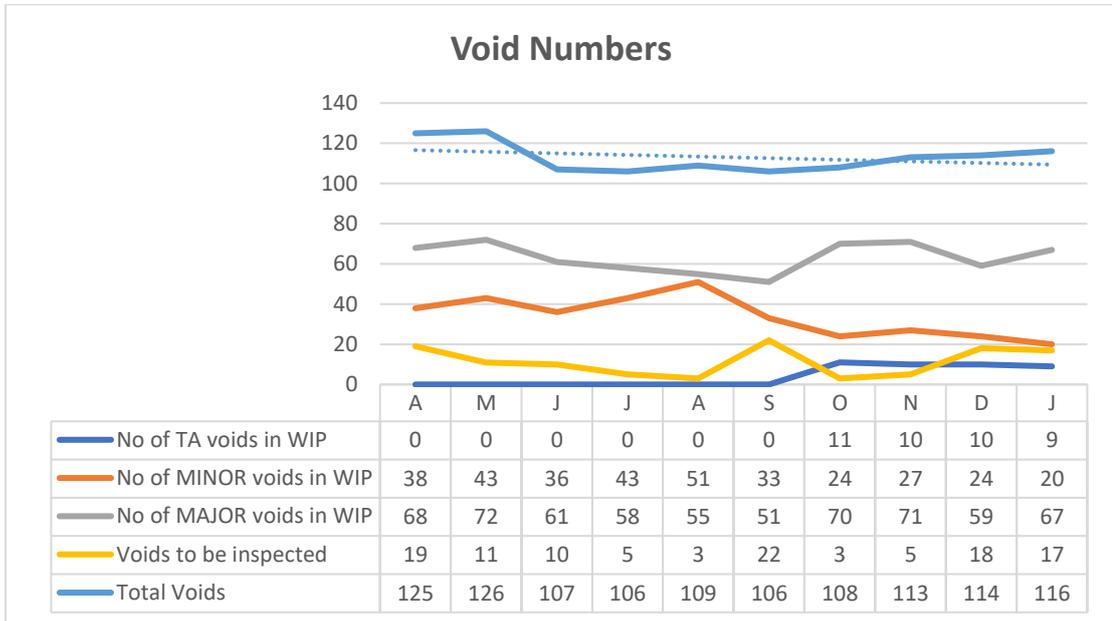
3.2 Voids are categorised as follows:

- Temporary accommodation (TA properties)
- Standard voids (under 200 hours of works)
- Major voids (over 200 hours of work)

Void Numbers in Progress

3.3 Chart 1 shows the number of voids in work in progress each month including voids to be inspected. The Council has seen an increase in voids to be inspected to 18 in December 2024 this was due to the Voids Inspector leaving the Council in November 2024. The replacement for this role started in February 2025 so the Council expects to see the number of properties waiting for inspections to reduce significantly and return to business as usual levels throughout February 2025 and March 2025.

Chart 2: Void Numbers

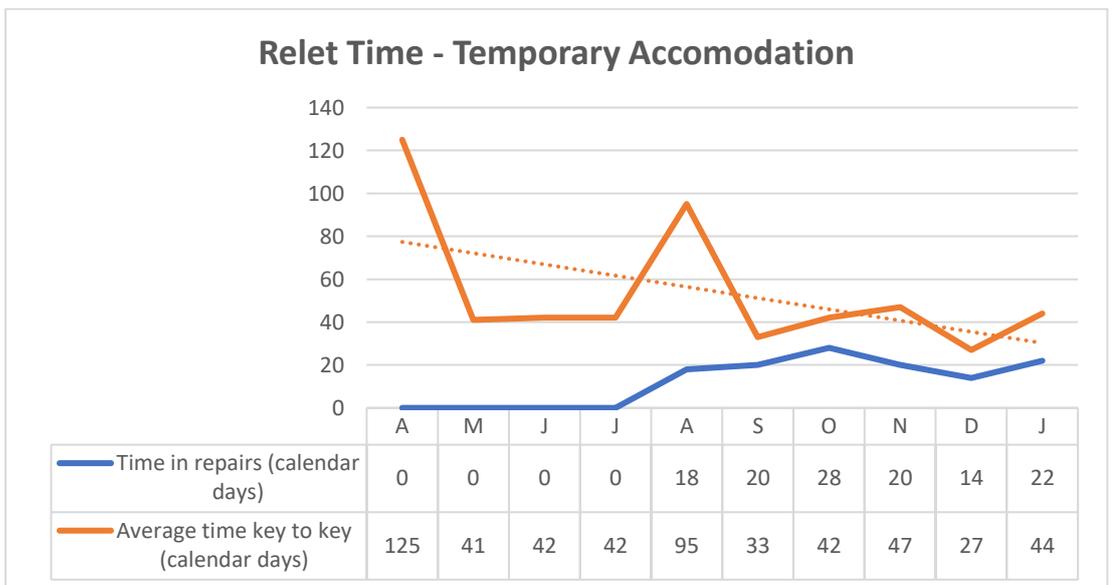


4. Relet Times

Temporary Accommodation

4.1 Chart 2 shows the relet time for Temporary Accommodation (TA's), repair time in TA's was not measured before August 2024. The chart shows a general reduction in relet times for TA's.

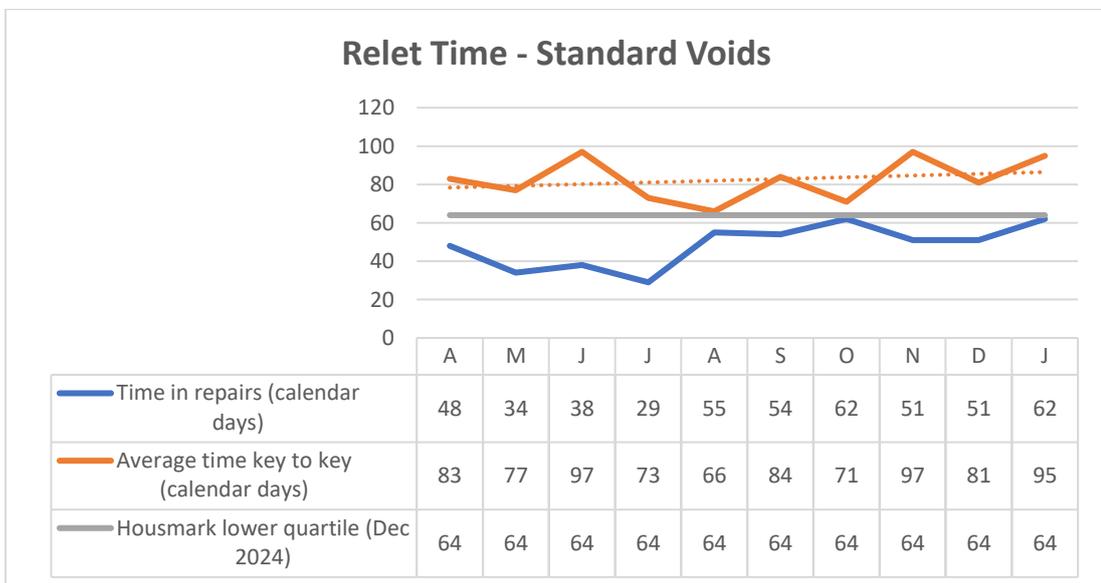
Chart 3: Relet Time – Temporary Accommodation



Standard Voids

- 4.2 Chart 3 shows the relet time for Standard Voids, the majority of work in Standard voids are carried out by the Council’s in-house team. Typically, a Standard void requires less than 200 hours work to bring it up to the lettable standard. The relet time for standard voids has fluctuated slightly although it should be noted that prior to August 2024 the relet times for Temporary Accommodation was included in these times which did reduce average time reported prior to August 2024.
- 4.3 The chart includes the Housemark benchmarking figures from the recent Pulse survey in December 2024 which provides an indication of how the Council compares to lower quartile performance. As part of the Council’s service improvement plans its aim is to focus on achieving lower quartile performance in the year ahead and then improving to median quartile the following year.

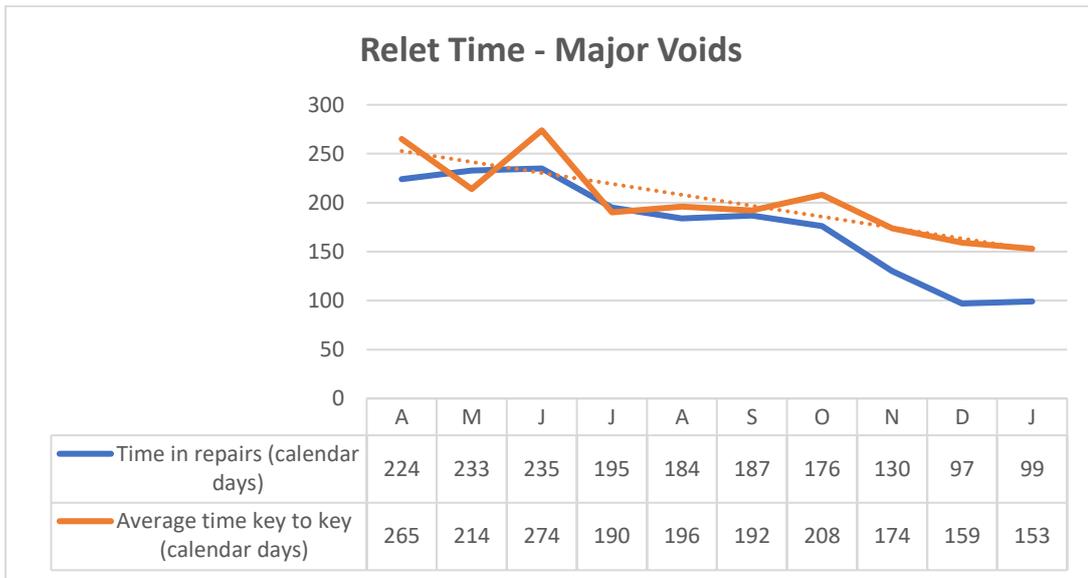
Chart 4: Relet Time – Standard Voids



Major Voids

- 4.4 Chart 4 shows the relet time for Major Voids, the majority of work in Major voids are carried out by external contractors. Typically, a Standard void requires more than 200 hours work to bring it up to the lettable standard and will include the replacement major components such as kitchens and bathrooms.
- 4.5 The Council has made significant progress to reduce to Major void relet times during 2024/25 as a result of increased capacity of external contractors, close supervision by the Void Repairs team and increased performance monitoring by management.
- 4.6 The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee will recall the recent procurement work to appoint Grattan Constructions and Fosters as the new voids contractors. Both contractors are currently mobilising their new teams to full capacity which will allow the Council to further improve performance.

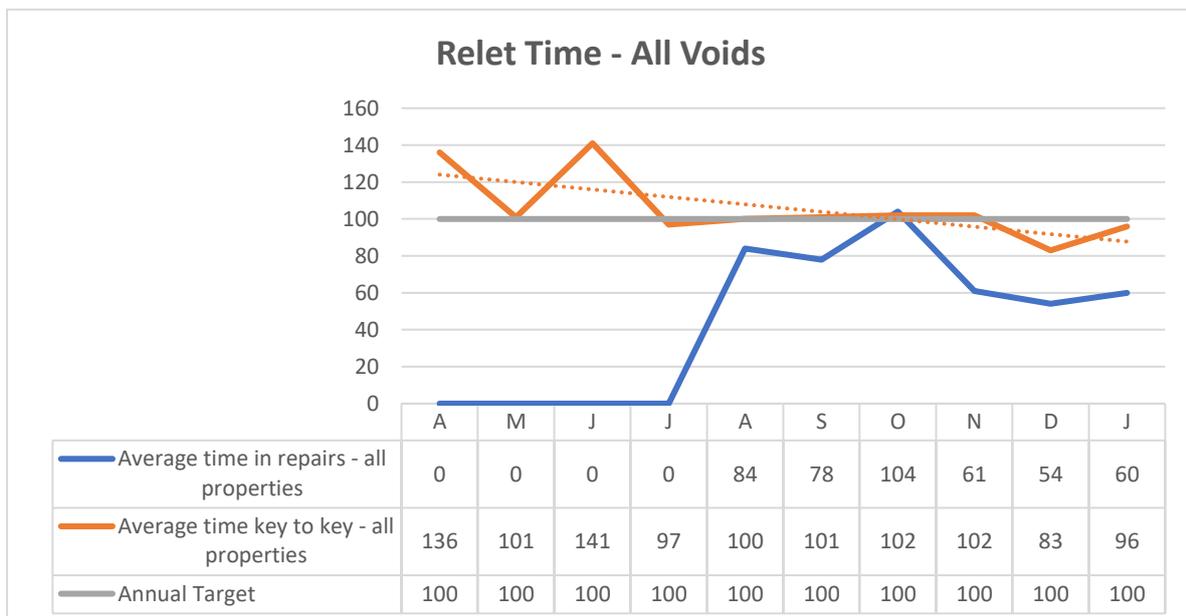
Chart 5: Relet Time – Major Voids



All Voids

4.7 Chart 5 shows the relet time for All Voids. Please note that a full set of repairs data is not available from April 2024 to July 2024. The Council’s target relet time for 2024/25 as set in the Councils Corporate Plan is 100 days and this was achieved in December 2024 and January 2025.

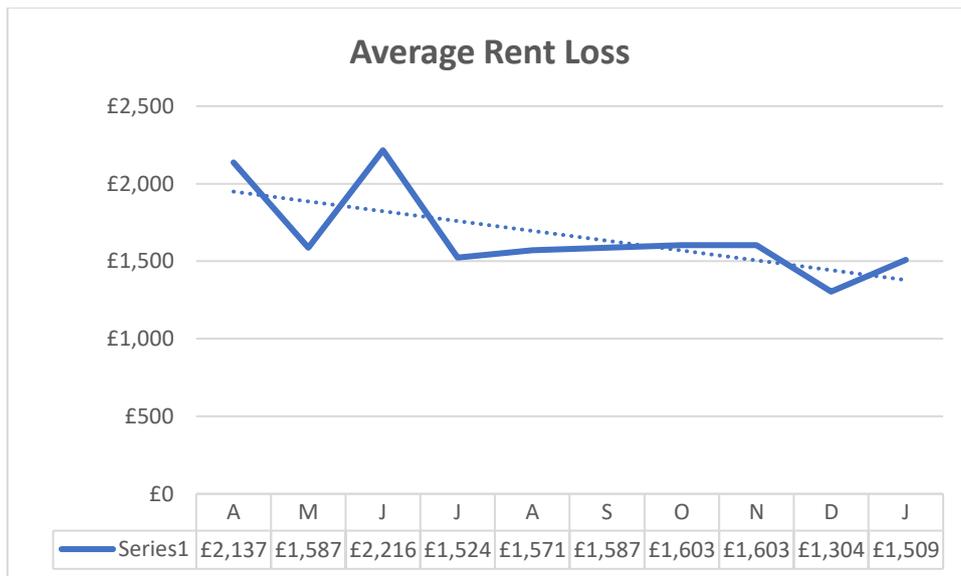
Chart 6: Relet Time – All Voids



5. Impact on Rent Loss

- 5.1 Chart 6 shows the average rent loss per property for all void properties based on a typical rent of £110 per property (excluding voids which are out of management, i.e. decant properties, and newly purchased properties which require repairs before relet). There have been 18 newly purchased properties so far, this financial year, which have been let.
- 5.2 The chart shows a reduction in rent loss from over £2,000 per property in April 2024 to around £1,500 in January 2025.

Chart 7: Average Rent Loss



6. Voids Property Improvement Plans

- 6.1 Considerable work has been completed by the Voids team during 2024/25 to improve performance including:
- Introduced weekly and monthly performance reporting.
 - Procured two new external contractors (started in February 2025) to deliver Major voids works.
 - Implemented a new interim team structure including a dedicated manager to oversee the voids team and report directly into the Head of Service.
 - Replaced the Voids Inspector role with an additional Supervisor (started in February 2025) to carry out inspections and provide more support to the in-house trades team.
 - Replaced the Northgate Housing System with QL.
 - The Council is on track to mobilise its new Project Planner IT software by the end of March 2025 which will replace the paper-based system used to schedule jobs.

- When the newly appointed void contractors have mobilised their new teams to full capacity and the major voids WIP has started to reduce, minor void's over 140 hours will be allocated to the contractors to help reduce turnaround times.
- 6.2 Whilst it is positive to report that during 2024/25 relet times have improved and rent loss has reduced, it is recognised that there is considerable work still to do to improve voids performance.
- 6.3 In 2025/26 an internal audit will be carried out on voids management to review the Council's processes and controls in place. This is welcomed and officers will work closely with the auditors to help the Council identify areas for improvement.
- 6.4 The Council will use the recommendations of the audit to inform its future service improvement plans to build on the progress made to date.

7. Summary

- 7.1 This report provides an update to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Council's work to improve void performance, including the positive progress made so far and its plans to continue to improve the repairs service.