

VOID PROPERTIES

Purpose of This Information Sheet

To provide Members with a summary update, in respect of the performance of empty properties.

Introduction

Re-letting properties is a key function of Tenant Services. Void properties provide landlords with a range of intelligence, which when used in conjunction with statistics provide key benchmarking information which is used to underpin and drive up service standards.

The measurement of void property turn around times is an important efficiency measure in gauging a contractor's performance. It also provides landlords with key strategic information about the condition of its stock.

The void period is calculated from when the previous tenancy was terminated and the property became available for letting, up to and INCLUDING the tenancy start date.

Background

Members present at Housing Committee, held on 22nd December 2015, requested an update on the current void property position.

Management of Void Properties

A range of issues can affect void property performance. Current and past challenges still include bedsit properties at Sheltered Schemes, non traditional properties, abandonments, and the general condition properties are returned.

Weekly meetings are undertaken with the service provider to look at trends, and issues which have arisen, or could reasonably have been foreseen. Risks are assessed and corrective action plans put in place.

Performance

Sometimes homes experience persistently low demand. Low demand homes are those which are frequently rejected by applicants or reluctantly taken and very quickly vacated.

It is important for landlords to understand the reasons or circumstances for persistently low demand of properties in a given area, in order to prevent long term voids arising.

Some of the issues concerning Stroud's long term hard to let properties have been addressed previously through reporting and other medium. The Ark presentation delivered to Housing Committee in October 2015 being the latest example.

Table 1 below provides a summary of timescales to turnaround properties. Members will already be aware of the properties and reasons that properties are void from the information contained within the weekly updates provided, which are posted on the members area of the Hub every Wednesday.

		TABLE 1									
2015/16		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
LPI 17	Time with contractor minor (12)	12.64	13.1	14.19	17.5	13.8	13.77	13.65	15.03	15.73	
LPI 18	Time with contractor major (35)	38.56	39.33	37.8	31.83	40.5	63.5	36.33	16.14	18.71	
LPI 20	Keys in to inspection (2)	1.23	1.55	0.5	1.59	1.56	1.36	1.12	1.16	0.91	
LPI 22	Keys in to Major works started (35)	22.22	19	37.4	11	3	1.5	2	1.4	1.29	
LPI 23	Turnaround year to date (22.8)	14.42	14.3	14.51	15.12	15.71	16.05	16.13	16.61	16.66	
LPI 24	Monthly turnaround (22.8) Less Major	14.42	14.18	14.92	16.97	18.07	17.76	16.57	19.97	17.07	
LPI26	Total turnaround Majors (55.36)	51.11	58.33	45.47	42.83	43.5	65	38.33	35.43	43.86	
LPI27	Total turnaround Minors (22.8)	18.09	22	21.8	22.18	22.04	19.32	19	21.75	21.05	

Peer Comparison

Overall performance has been compared against peer groups, using data provided from Housemark, which indicates that current overall performance remains in the median quartile, with the exception of financial performance as indicated within the main budget monitoring report which has slipped into the lower quartile.

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It should be noted that the benchmarking does not compare standards of work or the condition of properties, which have a direct impact on outturn performance figures.

Improving Performance

From a management position the new operating climate driven by welfare reform, and the economic environment means SDC has to be sure that tenancies are sustainable, both from a physical and social perspective. This can have an overall impact on relet times, however this can be balanced against the sustainability of a tenancy over the longer term.

The redesign of Tenant Services, aligned with the implementation of the new repairs and maintenance contract, will see a more innovative and commercially focused approach to repairs and void management.

There will be a degree of refocusing of service delivery which will involve realigning customer expectations. There will be greater interaction between housing and estate management, asset teams and contractors, lettings and sustainability teams.

The effective co-ordination and communication between these landlord functions will ensure a more holistic approach is adopted, in delivering outcomes which are sustainable and cost effective in the delivery of common business goals.

If you have any queries regarding this paper, please contact me for a more detailed discussion.