

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

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Report Originator	John Conway Head of Housing	<i>Fwd Plan Ref No:</i>	
Wards Affected	All	5 th February 2019	
Title	MANAGEMENT OF VOID PROPERTIES		

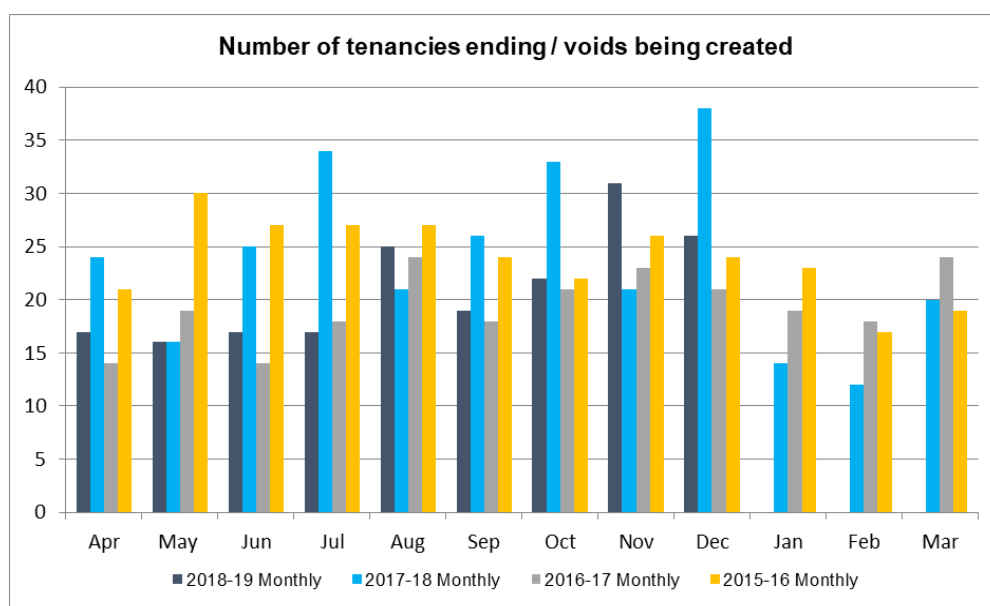
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mark Rowley

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report reviews progress in improving the Council's performance in managing void properties.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 A key priority for the Council is to improve performance in managing the turnaround of void properties between lettings. In 2017/18, the average void time was 93.02 days. This was a significant increase on the figure of 60.02 days in the previous financial year and is a matter of concern as the Council should be turning properties around in 30 to 35 days as a matter of routine.
- 2.2 We experienced a significant increase in the number of tenancies ending during 2017/18 and this had a considerable impact on the turnaround times for void properties – between April and December 2017, 238 properties became void which compared to 171 for the same period in 2016 – an increase of 39.2%.



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3. A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

3.1 During the course of this financial year considerable efforts have been made to improve the Council's performance in managing void properties through the Reinventing Repairs service improvement programme. The main actions that have been taken are set out below:

- Responsibility for all stages of the voids process is now the responsibility of the Housing service unit. This has enabled us to take a comprehensive view of the entire voids process, simplify processes, improve monitoring and achieve better co-ordination between teams.
- The existing contract for major works to void properties was terminated and new contractors have been procured through the Efficiency East Midlands framework.
- A Voids Project Manager has been appointed to review all aspects of the voids process from receipt of notice to quit right through to re-letting, and introduce new ways of working.
- A new management structure has been put in place to manage the day-to-day delivery of works
- A 10-step process for undertaking works to void properties has been introduced. This involves taking a standardised approach to all properties, as follows:
 - Initial assessment by surveyor
 - Lock change, clearance and environmental clean, if required
 - Asbestos survey and removal, if required
 - Services: gas and electric to cap off / isolate supply
 - Rip out / minor demolition works
 - 1st fix electrics / joinery / plumbing / heating (trades work concurrently and the order of approach can vary depending on the work with electrical work usually takes precedence so as to avoid large amounts of surface mounted cabling)
 - Plastering
 - 2nd fix
 - Decorative / finishing work
 - Final clean
- Work schedules are now routinely issued to tradespersons using portable digital devices by a dedicated Dispatcher. This cuts down paperwork and improves productivity.
- A new Lettable Standard for void properties has been introduced in order to achieve a more consistent standard of work across the housing stock

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and improve the offer to new tenants. The Tenants Forum was consulted in detail about the content of the Lettable Standard.

- Arrangements for monitoring the voids process from end-to-end have been strengthened with a suite of management reports being reviewed by senior managers on a weekly basis.
- Regular team briefings have been introduced for tradespersons so that they are kept informed on progress and have an opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the service.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 As at 25 January 2019, there were 80 void properties under maintenance and repair work. Although this compares favourably with the peak of 106 properties that were at the depot in December 2017, it does represent an increase on the figure of 59 properties that was achieved at the end of October. The increase reflects the impact of the Christmas break and a surge in the number of tenancies ending since the beginning of November, with the keys to 81 properties being handed back to the Council since early November. With the resumption of work after Christmas, it is anticipated that the number of void properties will be reduced considerably over the coming months.
- 4.2 For properties becoming void over the last three months, we are now achieving an average void time of 46 days to complete maintenance works and re-let properties. This compares to an average of 93.02 days in 2017/18 and 55 days at the end of November 2018.
- 4.3 The number of void properties where work has been completed and the property is in the course of being let to a new tenant has also been reduced by 50% from 14 at the end of October to seven at 25 January.
- 4.4 Similarly, the average length of time that properties remain empty between tenancies has been reduced considerably over recent months. At the end of October, 30 properties had been empty for longer than two months but by 25 January the number of voids over two months had been reduced by 43% to 17 properties.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Whilst we continue to improve performance by streamlining and simplifying the processes for maintaining and repairing void properties, we are now turning attention to other areas. These include
- Programming works to individual properties in response to specific housing management requirements

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- Strengthening processes for inspecting properties before tenants move out and return their keys to the Council
- Improving how we communicate with customers who are waiting to move into their new homes
- Establishing a bespoke procurement framework for contractors to supplement our own workforce at peak times.

6. **RECOMMENDATION**

The Monitoring and Audit Committee is asked to note the report and comment on its contents.

Background Papers:

Title of Document: N/A

Date: -

Contact Officer: John Conway

Previous Reports/Minutes:

Ref: N/A

Date: -