

Agenda Item 16

Housing Review Board

10 September 2009

JG/DB



Empty Properties (Voids)

Summary

This report sets out the 4th Quarter performance in respect of letting void properties required by the Housing Review Board for the period January 2009 to March 2009. It also provides the void performance for the financial year 2008/09.

The report shows the average length of time taken to relet properties. Performance for the year April 2008 to March 2009 shows that it has taken on average 22 days to relet each empty property. This compares favorably with the relet performance in earlier years and our target of 28 days.

Recommendation

1. That the report is noted.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To inform the Board about the current number and type of empty properties available during the quarter and the length of time taken to relet the properties.

b) Alternative Options

To receive less frequent reports on void performance.

c) Risk Considerations

Poor performance in void turnaround times impacts on rental income to the Housing Revenue Account and maintains households in temporary accommodation longer than is reasonable.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

These are set out in the report.

e) Date for Review of Decision

A quarterly report on void management is proposed

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The letting of Council and housing association homes is one of our core functions as a Housing Authority. This aspect of work is monitored regularly. The Council varied the Choice Based Lettings Scheme earlier this year in accordance with Government guidance.
- 1.2 The Council has a performance indicator – BV212 Average time to relet Local Authority housing with a target for 2008/09 of 28 days.
- 1.3 In addition the length of time taken to relet properties impacts on other areas of performance such as the length of time homeless households stay in temporary accommodation and the loss of rental income to the HRA because properties may remain empty longer than necessary.

2. Empty Properties/Performance 4th Quarter 2008/09

2.1 A list showing the number and type of empty properties let during the 4th quarter 2008/09 is at **Annex 1**. This shows an **average relet time of 25 days** for the quarter. This is within the target of 30 days. The monthly figures are as follows:

- January - 20 days
- February - 27 days
- March - 27 days

2.2 The increase in timescales for February and March are a result of shortages of Technical Officers who normally undertake the survey of the void property and specify the works to be done to bring the property up to the lettable standard,

2.3 The figures have been calculated in accordance with the Audit Commission guidance for BV212. This figure is calculated from the day the property became empty (Sunday of each week) to the day the 'new' tenancy started (Monday of each week).

2.4 The guidance sets out clearly the criteria to enable a local authority to discount a property from the calculation for BV212 if the property required 'major' works. The property should be included in the overall number of void properties, but the local authority should only include the number of days it takes to let the property following completion of the work to bring the property up to a lettable standard. These properties are shown at the end of each monthly schedule.

3.0 Empty Property Performance for the 2008/09 Financial Year

3.1 The average relet time for empty properties for the financial year 2008/09 is **22 days**. The actual figure is 21.36 days, but this has been rounded up to reflect that the turnaround is greater than 21 days). The quarterly figures are provided below

- 1st Quarter - 20 days
- 2nd Quarter - 22 days
- 3rd Quarter - 20 days
- 4th Quarter - 25 days

3.2 This financial year void performance has been maintained at a low level and within the target set. Housing staff should be congratulated on this achievement.

3.3 Overall the Council relet 277 properties in 2008/09. A breakdown of the type/size of properties is given below. In brackets are the comparable figures for 2007/08.

General Housing

	Flat	Bungalow	House	Total
Bedsit	5			5
1 Bed	41 (31)	1 (6)	0 (0)	42 (37)
2 Bed	51 (52)	7 (4)	15 (13)	73 (69)
3 Bed	0 (0)	0 (0)	33 (45)	33 (45)
4 Bed +	0	0	2 (3)	2 (3)
Total	97 (83)	8 (10)	50 (61)	155 (154)

Sheltered Housing

	Flat	Bungalow	House	Total
Bedsit	4			4
1 Bed	51 (54)	32 (33)	0 (0)	83 (87)
2 Bed	12 (22)	21 (32)	2 (5)	35 (59)
Total	67 (76)	53 (65)	2 (5)	122 (146)

3.5 In addition our **nominations to Housing Associations** secured a further 71 properties that were relet to households off of the Council's Housing Register. A breakdown of type/size is provided below:

	Flat	Bungalow	House	Total
1 Bed	18 (11)	0 (0)	0 (2)	18 (13)
2 Bed	11 (5)	0 (4)	15 (16)	26 (25)
3 Bed	0 (0)	0 (1)	27 (9)	27 (10)
4 Bed +	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (1)
Total	29 (16)	0 (5)	42 (28)	71 (49)

3.6 Of the 277 General Housing lettings, 134 were to applicants from the waiting list, 53 were to existing tenants who required a transfer, and 64 were to applicants who were considered homeless.

4.0 Summary and Conclusion

4.1 The reletting of empty properties is a core function of our service. Our aim is to provide efficient and effective services to minimise the time properties are empty. A significant reduction in the letting of empty properties has been achieved. The target for 2009/10 is 25 days and it is expected that this target will be met and possibly exceeded by 31st March 2010.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications set out within the report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this matter, other than any improvement in void turnaround timescales directly reduces the rent loss to the HRA.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

The Tenant and Leaseholders Customer Panel receive regular reports on void properties and performance.

Background Papers

Monthly performance monitoring reports.

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