

Scrutiny Commission
Tuesday 09 May 2023

Report Title	Housing Voids and Responsive Repairs
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List of Appendices

- Appendix A – Reducing the Responsive Repairs Backlog
- Appendix B – Preparing Void Properties for re-letting
- Appendix C – Lettable Standard

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. Following Scrutiny Commission requesting officers to attend a Scrutiny Commission meeting to provide information on, and answer members questions, around the housing responsive repairs backlog, and preparing void properties for re-letting, the following report and appendices provides reference material for members to aid the scrutiny discussion.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The report, and in particular the appendices, provide reference material to aid the scrutiny discussion on the two housing related subjects they will be discussing during the Scrutiny Commission meeting.
- 2.2. The material has been prepared by Strategic Leads responsible for the improvement plans that have been put in place by Housing Services.
- 2.3. Three appendices are included:
- i) Appendix A – Reducing the Responsive Repairs Backlog
 - ii) Appendix B – Preparing Void Properties for re-letting
 - iii) Appendix C – Lettable Standard
- 2.4. Appendix A and B provide both data and narrative explanations around the subject areas they relate to.

- 2.5. Appendix C is a copy of the Lettable Standard the Council has in place for housing stock. Void properties are expected to meet this standard, before being re-let to tenants.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Commission:

- a) Note and consider the information provided in Appendices A – C.
- b) Consider any areas that members would wish to discuss, ask questions of, and provide feedback to officers in the meeting in relation to the information provided.
- c) Consider if any further progress updates should be added to the forward plan for the Scrutiny Commission.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations:

- a) To undertake effective scrutiny of the work of a service area.
- b) To inform the future forward plan of the Scrutiny Commission.

4. Report Background

4.1. The report background for each area being considered is set out in the contextual information within Appendices A and B appended to this report.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1. The main considerations for the Scrutiny Commission are:

- (a) To establish an understanding of the two subject areas, the challenges being faced, and the work being undertaken by the service area
- (b) To consider if further updates on progress are required to be added to the forward plan, particularly in relation to the progress and impact associated with the additional funding that has been made available with the aim of reducing the responsive repair backlog

6. Next Steps

6.1. The service is in the progress of recruiting the additional staffing that will form the team that will aim to reduce the responsive repair backlog and therefore sufficient time needs to be given to get those staff members in post and enable them to start working on the responsive repairs.

6.2. With a newly created Assistant Director role and the officer in place, further reviews and options appraisals of the performance and transformation of these services will be undertaken.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1. There are no direct resources and financial implications because of this report to Scrutiny Commission, however the papers do summarise additional investment that has been put in place through a previous Executive decision.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. Whilst there are standards and legal requirements in relation to Housing Services, there are no direct legal implications arising from this report to the Scrutiny Commission

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. The work of the housing department contributes to several areas within the Corporate Plan including:
- a) **Active, fulfilled lives:** We will help people live healthier, more active, independent, and fulfilled lives.
 - b) **Better, brighter futures:** We will care for our young people, providing them with a high-quality education and opportunities to help them flourish.
 - c) **Safe and thriving places:** We will enable a thriving and successful economy that shapes great places to live, learn, work and visit.
 - d) **Green, sustainable environment:** We will take a lead on improving the green environment, making the area more sustainable for generations to come.
 - e) **Modern public services:** We will provide efficient, effective, and affordable services that make a real difference to all our local communities.

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1. The service has risk registers in place and as part of undertaking this activity will consider how those risks are affected by the work undertaken.
- 7.4.2. The Assistant Director, in consultation with the Executive Director, will review the service risk register and consider whether any specific risks associated with the two areas being considered should be escalated to the Corporate Risk Register.

7.5. Consultation

- 7.5.1. Voids and Responsive Repairs have been subject to recent internal audits. Whilst Void Turnaround received a satisfactory assurance, responsive repairs received a limited assurance audit and was considered and discussed at the Audit and Governance Committee on 24 April 2023.

7.6. Consideration by the Executive

- 7.6.1. The information, in the format being presented to Scrutiny Commission, has not been presented to Executive. However, the challenges identified were considered during the budget setting for the 2023 – 2024 financial year resulting in releasing additional budgets to implement the dedicated backlog reduction team.
- 7.6.2. A further report will be considered at the Executive in relation to the re-procurement of external contracts that undertake a number capital works on the councils housing stock at its meeting on 11 May 2023.

7.7. Equality Implications

7.8. Climate Impact

- 7.8.1. Many of the housing capital programmes intend to positively reduce the impact of the councils housing stocks on the climate. Where capital programmes have an impact, this is usually possible to demonstrate through improved EPC ratings.

7.9. Community Impact

- 7.9.1. With over 8,000 tenanted properties, improving both responsive repairs and void property turnaround impacts on a significant number of households in North Northamptonshire, aiming to improve outcomes individually and for the community.

7.10. Crime and Disorder Impact

- 7.10.1. There are no direct impacts on crime and disorder. However, work undertaken can often reduce the risk of crime to tenants and their properties, through either repair to, or replacement of, doors and windows that could be used as entry points for criminals into properties.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1. Appendix C: Lettable Standard provides background information in relation to the standards that the teams adhere to prior to re-letting a property to tenants.