

**HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP  
17 JANUARY 2023**

**MID DEVON HOUSING DRAFT VOIDS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**Cabinet Member(s):** Councillor Stuart Penny, Cabinet Member for Housing

**Responsible Officer:** Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing

**Reason for Report & Recommendation:** An updated, draft policy on the management of void properties within the Council's housing stock is presented to Members. This has been developed following an in-depth review of voids management and with an aim to ensure that properties which become void continue to be re-let as quickly and efficiently as possible. The policy also seeks to balance this approach with the needs of tenants and the requirement to maintain our properties to an appropriate, safe lettings standard whilst retaining a sustainable stock and Housing Revenue Account.

**Recommendation: That the PDG recommends that Cabinet adopt the updated Voids Management Policy contained in Annex B.**

**Financial Implications:** The activity of the landlord service, known as Mid Devon Housing (MDH) is accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is ring fenced and subject to specific financial controls. There is a financial impact of properties being empty for longer than is necessary since the potential for lost income then becomes a factor in management of the HRA stock; this is referenced in the policy as recommended.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** There are no direct budget implications arising from this policy proposal. More information on the policy framework is set out in section 1 of this report and within the draft, updated policy itself.

**Legal Implications:** The Housing Act 1985 applies with regard to the management of Council housing. The relationship with tenants is set out in our Tenancy Agreement. This details the rights and responsibilities of both parties including those obligations relating to the termination of a tenancy. Other legislation relevant to the safety of our properties (e.g. gas, electrical and water safety) as well as construction/design and management regulations are all applicable in the context of inspecting and undertaking works to void properties.

The policy also aims to enable compliance with the mandatory Decent Homes Standard and the consumer Home Standard set out by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). This legislation and standards cover what social landlords should be achieving in all their properties in respect of decency, modernisation, repair and safety.

Following publication of the Social Housing White Paper in late 2020, the Social Housing Regulation Bill is currently on its way through Parliament and, once implemented, this will impact the regulatory framework for social housing. One aim of the new legislation is to ensure that providers of social housing, such as the Council, keep its properties and estates safe and clean.

The existing Neighbourhood and Community Standard which forms part of the regulatory framework for social housing is also relevant to discussion about how the Council manages and re-lets its properties and in what standard.

**Risk Assessment:** The Council has approximately 3,000 homes in management. Failure to provide an effective housing management service has the potential to result in failure to meet legal and statutory obligations. There are regulatory requirements to maintain safe and clean properties and quality accommodation as highlighted.

Social landlords manage all aspects of their business so that: tenants, owners and customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay. These standards therefore also cover the efficient and effective management of services and specifically refer to minimising the time houses are empty but that these houses also are safe and maintained or modernised in an efficient way. Any Voids Management Policy must therefore strive to achieve the correct balance between short-term occupancy, property standards and longer-term, effective asset management.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** There is a suite of housing related policies, the use of which helps to ensure that service delivery is consistent and fair. There is also a regulatory requirement for registered providers of social housing to tailor their service to meet the needs of the tenants and diversity data is requested from tenants at sign up to enable compliance to be monitored. Within this overarching context, nothing has been identified in the draft, updated Voids Management Policy is likely to directly or indirectly disadvantage any incoming or outgoing tenant on the basis of any legally protected characteristics that may be relevant.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** A stated aim of the Council is to deliver sustainable communities.

**Impact on Climate Change:** None directly relevant to this report.

## **1. Introduction and context**

- 1.1 MDH, as a provider of social housing (RP), is subject to the provisions of the regulatory framework for social housing, which is issued by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH).
- 1.2 The Home and Neighbourhood & Community Standards are two of the consumer standards and are therefore applicable to the work of MDH. These Standards require RPs to provide tenants with quality accommodation and a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service as well as keeping the neighbourhood and communities safe. Landlords are expected to work in partnership with their tenants to achieve compliance.
- 1.3 The Social Housing White Paper and pending legislation (Social Housing Bill) present a significant shift the regulation of the social housing sector towards a proactive, consumer led regime with increased powers being granted to both the RSH and Housing Ombudsman. The White Paper sets out a charter that is leading towards clear the standards that every social tenant in England is entitled to expect from their landlords.

- 1.4 These new standards are there to ensure people feel safe and secure in their homes with no significant issues or safety concerns when they take on a new tenancy. They are also there to ensure problems are fixed before they spiral out of control, and see exactly how good their landlord is performing giving tenants a stronger voice. Of the seven chapters within the White Paper, several are particularly relevant to the aims of this policy:
  - o To be safe in your home (Chapter 1)
  - o To know how your landlord is performing (Chapter 2)
  - o To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly (Chapter 3)
  - o To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in (Chapter 6)
- 1.5 As part of the new consumer regulation regime, from April 2023, the RSH is introducing a series of 22 mandatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services. These measures include those applicable directly to building safety as well as those based on tenant perception surveys capturing tenant views.
- 1.6 The new TSMs will form part of the key benchmark for all major registered providers of social housing including MDH. The emphasis behind these measures is firmly on tenant experience or satisfaction and how tenants perceive we are performing alongside management information/data on repairs, safety, complaints and anti-social behaviour.
- 1.7 Our voids management policy and subsequent performance have the potential to directly or indirectly impact on almost all of these TSMs. The measures are set out on the RSH website and within the policy in more detail.
- 1.8 There is no TSM on void turnaround times or overall occupancy rates and taking into account the new focus of the regulatory regime has required a shift away from the more singular, historic focus on simply minimising void turnaround times and letting as we seek to concentrate on the priorities of the new regulatory regime.
- 1.9 Within this changing and developing legislative framework and in the context of increasing demand for affordable housing within the district a review of the MDH Voids Management Policy is therefore timely.
- 1.10 As members will be aware, a voids review was completed by officers working with the Cabinet Members for Housing and Continuous Improvement between July – October 2022. An audit by the Devon Audit Partnership (DAP) was subsequently completed in December 2022 to supplement this review with a specific focus on void management procedures but with a wider overview on performance. More information on the audit findings and management actions are set out in Section 4.0 and Annex A.
- 1.11 As a result of the above, having also taken on board comments made by members during the review period, it was concluded that the current policy document was in need of updating to reflect the relevant changes in the regulatory landscape and pressures on MDH arising from an increasing complexity of asset management and void numbers. Annex B contains the updated policy and more information on the policy detail is provided in Section 2.0 below.

## **2. The updated MDH Draft Policy relating Voids Management**

2.1 Overall, the policy sets out how voids are defined within a legal framework, the role of outgoing tenants, technical standards to be achieved and how different voids will be measured and reported on. It also links to reviewed void procedures.

2.2 The policy aims are to ensure compliance with our regulatory framework and balance the need to ensure maximum occupancy of homes and minimum void re-let times with needs of tenants and to ensure our void periods used as part of an overall asset management. This asset management must also be as efficient as possible to deliver works required on the most cost effective basis and enable new Council homes to be built in line with our overarching Housing Strategy.

2.3 Within these aims, the policy provides new and updated clarity in respect of:

- Void definitions
- Void management objectives
- Performance management – management information, benchmarking and reporting (targets – see report Section 5)
- Areas of responsibility
- Risk management
- Linked procedures and policies
- Information and data protection
- Tenant obligations
- Complaints procedure
- Letting standards
- Policy review (see report Section 5)

2.4 Within the updated policy, voids are defined as

- **A property that can be re-let but is unavailable**

Typically a property undergoing works for repair, modernisation, decarbonisation or to facilitate wider development and held by our voids team within Building Services

- **A property that is available but is not re-let**

Typically a property going through the allocation process via Devon Home Choice and being re-let including prospective tenant viewing, checks and assessments prior to award of a new tenancy and held by our allocations team within Housing Management

2.5 These aims and the policy detail therein have also be informed by the review with regard to historic performance outcomes and other review findings as outlined in Section 5.0 below.

## **3. Historic Performance and review highlights**

- 3.1 Historically, for over ten-years, and as referenced in the current adopted 2019 policy, voids have been subject to the following classification and targets:
- Standard voids (no more than a single major works) – 14 working days
  - Major voids (two or more major works) – target as above
- 3.2 These targets only applied to the period when the property was undergoing inspection and works (repairs etc) and therefore held by our voids team in Building Services. It did not cover the period whilst the property remained void following transfer to our Tenancy Management function and allocations team for the purposes of re-letting.
- 3.3 Furthermore, there was no classification or inclusion of the voids management of MDH properties specifically used for temporary (homelessness) accommodation. This is despite these properties typically being re-let for such use (where the rent is paid by the Homelessness team as a statutory general fund function) more quickly than is the average for standard voids. Conversely, long-term empty properties scheduled for demolition and redevelopment (i.e. not available to re-let in short-term to medium term subject to permissions) have been included in the voids reporting, adversely impacting on reported working-days performance.
- 3.4 More recently, MDH have been providing an independent benchmarking organisation (Housemark) with our overall void performance times in working days for the whole period between the end date of the previous tenancy and date of commencement of a new tenancy alongside the overall occupancy rates in our available to let stock (as a %) for the purposes of sector comparison.
- 3.5 Finally, members have also continued to receive quarterly service performance reports which from 2021/22 onwards have including updates on the overall void numbers at the end of each reporting period.
- 3.6 The recent voids review has identified that historic voids performance has the following characteristics:
- The standard voids 14 working days target (Building Services work only) has never been met since adoption – the best year was pre-Covid in 2017/18 when the voids team completed required works in 16.4 days on average prior to handing over the property to the allocations team
  - A comparison of local and regional standard void targets in working days shows the historic MDDC target to be significantly lower (fewer working days) on average than other stock-holding local authorities and remains lower when adjusted to include the allocation or re-letting period
  - Void numbers peaked during and immediately after Covid and remain high, however have improved from over 70 going into 2021/22, to 55 presently (end of Q2 2022/23) including long-term empty properties which will not be re-let. The projected outturn for Q3 this year is 45.
  - Mid Devon has upper quartile performance (against sector and English Local Authority averages) for proportion of properties let based on Housemark data, so prior to the consideration of changes to this policy the

Council is in the top 25% of performers on voids – this Council understands the importance of managing our housing stock effectively.

- 3.7 The review has therefore highlighted that the historic, adopted target fails to capture the entire void period and all relevant voids (homelessness exclusion and unavailable to re-let inclusion).
- 3.8 Furthermore, that the historic working day target for Building Services has never been fully achievable, likely reflected by the fact that it is lower (shorter) than peer local authorities. Going forward, it does not take into account increasing material lead times for essential repairs (e.g. windows and fire doors) or the increasing complexity of voids work including decarbonisation works.
- 3.9 The review also highlighted an increasing number voids requiring pest control with a corresponding lead time and treatment period by competent contractors.
- 3.10 Finally, our historic performance on voids under current policy has been delivered in the context of only undertaking safety repairs, fixing major faults and cleaning, therefore not undertaking any cosmetic works at properties unless unavoidable, with tenants responsible for any redecoration (decorating pack provided) irrespective of property type or tenant needs. Contrary to current policy MDH are increasingly having to redecorate properties to bring them up to a lettings standard
- 3.11 Notwithstanding the above, our recent occupancy rates compare very well with the sector including private housing associations and peer local authorities.

#### **4. Audit findings and agreed management actions**

- 4.1 The draft December voids audit completed by DAP as an advisory report therefore did not provide an overall assurance rating or direction of travel. Nonetheless, the report narrative is informative on overall performance and positive with regard assurance whilst identifying several medium to low actions for improvement, many of which were also identified in the preceding review and some already actioned.
- 4.2 The audit specifically found processes for the management of voids to be generally sound with no significant weaknesses, but does reiterate the need to update the void policy to reflect current and forecast requirements and needs whilst ensuring performance is deliverable and targets relevant within a changing regulatory landscape.
- 4.3 In summary, the findings and management actions are set out in the draft audit report which is due to be considered at the 23 January 2023 Audit Committee and duplicated in Annex A of this report. Overall, the audit findings and actions have been reflected in the updated policy where relevant and as noted.

#### **5. New targets/standards and wider policy updates**

- 5.1 In order to address the review findings and ensure void management is both achievable and fit-for-purpose in the future, then the updated policy sets out that voids will be categorised and measured as follows with start-to-end targets:

- **Standard voids including temporary accommodation – 35 working days** (split as 20-days Building Services/works and 15-days Tenancy Management/allocations)
- **Major voids – 55 working days** (split as 40-days Building Services/works and 15-days Tenancy Management/allocations)
- **Decent Homes – 75 working days** (split as 60-days Building Services/works and 15-days Tenancy Management/allocations)
- **Development – 1 calendar year** (no split between Building Services and Tenancy Management).
- **Occupancy rate – 97% of stock** (rolling target/at any one time)

- 5.2 The targets are believed to be realistic and achievable but will nonetheless be reviewed alongside the overall policy after 12-months to allow for sufficient data on performance and outcomes. Part of this review will be a more extensive consultation with tenants, targeting those incoming tenants that have moved into a void process under the revised policy approach. Targets and approach can then continue to be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect against tenant feedback and any changes arising from key considerations e.g. material lead times, repair times and costs or additional/new safety or Decent Homes standards etc.
- 5.3 In context, meeting the new occupancy rate target would require no more than approximately 90 properties to be void at any one time on the basis of circa 3,000 properties within our stock.
- 5.4 In order to reduce the level of complaints from incoming tenants, the standard for voids will now incorporate a basic, neutral redecoration of the property as required alongside a pre-inspection or checklist for existing, outgoing tenants for completion once tenancy notice has been given but prior to the formal end of the tenancy and handing back of keys.
- 5.5 Research and experience shows that improving the appearance of our properties improves both the perceived quality of the property and how it is treated by tenants during their tenancy. In the long-term this may reduce subsequent void costs and also increase MDH performance within future tenant perception surveys and RSH mandated reporting on Tenant Satisfaction Measures which we must measure from April 2023.
- 5.6 Full definitions of each void category are provided within the updated policy for the avoidance of doubt but in general terms then major voids refers to a time/cost threshold and Decent Homes refers to the most structural and/or significant works to meet not just safety standards but also Decent Homes legislation and/or our decarbonisation programme. Redevelopment voids are held longer-term for potential adjacent development subject to consultation and planning permission – if the development does not go ahead these will not be demolished and will be returned to stock and may also be used for temporary accommodation. Standard voids includes every other void including those used for temporary homelessness accommodation as set out below unless Major or Decent Homes works are required.
- 5.7 Long-term properties scheduled for demolition and/or subsequent replacement through redevelopment that may not be re-let have a new 1-year, long-term voids performance target to allow for feasibility studies, budget and permissions to be

put in place. If development plans can be advanced and planning permission granted and it is identified that specific individual properties cannot be re-let until development proceeds then these will be removed from reporting as they no longer meet the void definition. These will only be a very small number of properties at any one time.

- 5.8 The exception to the above is where properties meet essential safety standards and can be used for temporary homelessness accommodation in the short-term via direct, licensed lettings until demolition orders and planning permissions etc are in place. MDH will endeavour to demolish any empty properties not suitable for this use as soon as practicable to avoid any long-term Council Tax liabilities arising from empty homes status where as a local authority we don't have access to legal exemptions available to private property owners.
- 5.9 The decarbonisation programme refers to reduction in carbon emissions from our housing stock and significant investment in retro-fit works including energy efficiency measures, new heating systems and solar energy generation to improve energy performance and improve the property EPC rating/reduce tenant running costs.
- 5.10 Voids will only be formally categorised and assigned a turnaround target once an initial inspection of the empty property has been undertaken and key asset management decisions undertaken. This is to allow for proper, cost-effective asset management as well as a full check for damage/repairs and required works with all relevant spaces fully accessible and visible. Re-categorisation may have to take place where significant additional works are uncovered during the repairs process. Provisions for recharging former tenants for lost keys, replacement locks and damage remain in place.
- 5.11 Each component of the voids target within the relevant category will be recorded as routine management information. In respect of the re-let times once a void is available to the Allocations team then it is important to note performance within this activity is not fully within the control of MDH. For example, where properties are refused following DHC bidding and offer before or after viewings and the allocation has commence again (and sometime on several occasions) or occasional difficult to let properties in more remote, very rural areas where local demand is limited. A summary of this information will be available to members as a matter of course through each future review of the policy.
- 5.12 Finally, it is helpful to highlight that the policy sets out an ongoing commitment to around financial monitoring regarding voids. In particular, the cumulative income loss through voids (£ and as a % of annual rent including lost rent, council tax payments against decant and related disturbance/moving costs avoided) as well as the cost of tenant damage in returning voids to availability (£ repair and refurbishment).

## **6. Recommendation**

- 6.1 In accordance with the above, it is recommended that Members recommend to Cabinet that they approve the revised Voids Management Policy as attached in Annex B.

**Contact for more Information:**

Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing  
[snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk).

**Circulation of the Report:**

Members of the Housing PDG  
Cllr Stuart Penny, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services  
Leadership Team  
Corporate Management Team  
Service/Operations Managers  
Legal Services

**List of Background Papers:**

Current MDDC Voids Management Policy 2019  
<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/191681/void-management-policy-obs-004-v32.pdf>

## Annex A – Draft Internal Audit - Advisory Report on Voids Management (December 2022)

### Detailed Audit Observations and Action Plan

1. Risk Area: There are un-necessary voids because of weaknesses in the process					
No.	Observation and Implications	Impact / Priority	Management response and action plan including responsible officer		
1.1	There used to be void turnaround time targets but they are very old and are not realistic to today's requirements processes. A review of void turnaround times to be in line with processes needs to be carried out to provide a more realistic target time.	Medium	<p>Updated voids targets and categorisations are included in the updated Voids Management Policy (December 2022) and are based upon the current legal, strategic and operational context with realistic turnaround times encompassing the end – to – end voids management process both building services and tenancy management.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Responsible person: Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing</td> <td>Target date: 31 March 2023</td> </tr> </table>	Responsible person: Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing	Target date: 31 March 2023
Responsible person: Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing	Target date: 31 March 2023				
1.2	Part of the policy is that a 'pre-void' inspection will occur before the tenant vacates the property to identify and works that may be required as part of the voids work. Some of this work may be rechargeable. The 'pre-void' inspection is no longer carried out. This could be helpful in advising the tenant of their responsibilities and providing them time to rectify some of the works instead of being recharged. This might reduce the level of works required by the voids team.	Medium	<p>Physical, pre-void inspections were stopped during Covid and have not recommenced due to Neighbourhood Officer resource pressures. A full team has now been recruited with no officers with MDH greater than 12-months, resulting in an extended training and development period. From April 2023, targeted pre-void inspections will recommence and all voids where tenants give notice to end tenancy will complete a void/damage checklist. The update Voids Management Policy (December 2022) reflects this.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Responsible person: Operations Manager for Housing Management</td> <td>Target date: 31 March 2023</td> </tr> </table>	Responsible person: Operations Manager for Housing Management	Target date: 31 March 2023
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1.3	<p>The void policy states that the Council will not carry out any painting to a property and that they will provide a paint pack to the new tenant to enable them to paint. There is no clause in the tenancy contract to stop tenants painting in vibrant colours. The majority of void properties now require a full redecoration prior to re-let due to the colour and condition of the decoration. This increases the work required and the knock on effect is that the time the property is void is increased. Therefore, the current process is that painting is required by the Council whilst the property is void to return the property to a re-let able standard. The policy needs to be updated to reflect the current process</p>	Medium	<p>The updated Voids Management Policy (December 2022) reflects this improvement in lettings standard and accommodates recent, within budget practice to introduce redecoration where required and current process</p> <p>Currently we have no clauses within a tenancy agreement that states that any tenant cannot carry out decoration works to their property, this would require a full consultation with tenants and rewriting of Tenancy agreements. Furthermore, such clauses are not practicable or realistic for the majority of MDH tenancies which are secure and would represent an unreasonable control over tenancies long-term homes. Excessive bold redecoration will be picked through the voids inspection process with outgoing tenants (those providing notice) given the opportunity to update neutral redecoration and have it recharged by MDH</p>	
<p>Responsible person: Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing &amp; the Operations Manager Building Services</p>			<p>Target date: 31 March 2024</p>	
1.4	<p>It was found that data entry for some voids categorisation onto the Orchard Housing system is not accurate against current policy. Due to staff shortages and no procedure notes for a period of time all voids were being added as standard voids. This has had an effect on stats. Procedure notes are required to ensure that data entry is consistent.</p>	Medium	<p>This has been addressed and actioned already and updated training and instruction provided. The management system will also be updated for the new, proposed categorisation of voids from April 2023 as set out in the updated Voids Management Policy (December 2022) with dedicated members of staff responsible for the raising of all voids</p>	
<p>Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services</p>			<p>Target date: 31 March 2023</p>	
1.5	<p>Total rent lost for the 15 samples reviewed amounts to £26,352. If you exclude the homelessness properties from</p>	Medium	<p>Within the 15 sample voids there were several that required extensive modernisation and decarbonisation works which</p>	

the costings the total rent lost is £25,731.

have had a negative effect on the length of time a property has been void.

The homeless adjusted figure equates to £1,715 per property or 20 weeks 1-bed rent and may inc. some long-term redevelopment properties. The total rent loss for the sample set or any selection of voids excludes any consideration is better considered as net £ loss. A level £ loss due to rent loss is nonetheless unavoidable to enable repairs and modernisation to be carried out.

However, for most major voids and some standard ones these works avoid decanting existing tenants with the significant upheaval for tenant that would otherwise occur, especially for significant works. Every decanted tenant is legally entitled to a decant, home-loss payment updated by regulations annually (currently £7,800) plus other expenses. An average decant therefore costs over £8,000 per property or over 100-wks rent for a 1-bed property.

Taking the opportunity to undertake planned and unplanned major works, Decent Homes works and decarbonisation works during more quickly and efficiently in with a further £ saving against rent loss.

The updated Voids Management Policy (December 2022) sets out a wider consideration of financial information that the service will hold and assess as management information including net £ loss (typically rent loss and empty home Council Tax charges against decant costs, efficient repairs savings). The cost of necessary void works is also closely monitored and recorded.

Long-term empty, redevelopment properties are also replaced by a greater number of new properties resulting in

			<p>longer-term additional rent gain to the Housing Revenue Account and more social or affordable rent accommodation to meet critical housing needs.</p> <p>With the number of void properties dropping the amount of time that any Major/Development Void is vacant will decrease.</p>		
			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services</td> <td>Target date: 31 March 2024</td> </tr> </table>	Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services	Target date: 31 March 2024
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1.6	There are some voids where a strategic decision has been made to not carry out the void. In these cases, Orchard has not been updated to reflect that the property is no longer void. This is having an effect on stats.	Medium	<p>This is addressed through the revised categorisation of voids in the updated Voids Management Policy (December 2022)</p>		
			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services</td> <td>Target date: 31 March 2024</td> </tr> </table>	Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services	Target date: 31 March 2024
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1.7	Housing stock is used by Homelessness. If a property used by homelessness becomes void, these properties are given priority over any other void. This is to reduce the need to spot purchase accommodation which costs the Council additional expenditure. It is understood that the housing stock used for homelessness is not included in stats for voids. This provides a distortion in voids stats and reduces turnaround time as the time spent in these properties is not considered.	Medium	<p>This is addressed in the updated Voids Management Policy (December 2022). From April 2023, homeless voids used for temporary accommodation will be included with the overall voids reporting going forward and will have the same target as standard voids reflecting the typically quicker turnaround.</p>		
			<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services</td> <td>Target date: 31 March 2023</td> </tr> </table>	Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services	Target date: 31 March 2023
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1.8	We understand that once a void has been categorised on Orchard it is not possible to change the categorisation at a later stage i.e. if the void was a 'standard' void and then when works commenced there was more work than initially thought resulting in the void now being a 'major' void. It is not possible to change the void from 'standard' on the system to 'major'. It would be helpful to establish if the system supplier is able to help with this issue.	Medium	<p>This is a system issue and workaround has been identified and is in place.</p> <p>Although we are unable to change a category of void after it has been raised we are confident that with the new procedure notes that have been created and the dedicated members of staff who will be responsible for the raising of all voids along with the detailed description of which works</p>		

			fall within each category of void we will be able to ensure that all voids are raised correctly. However some retrospective reconciliation of categorisation and target adjustment will always be required. especially in respect of the revised categorisation and targets proposed in the updated Voids Management Policy)
			Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services
			Target date: 31 March 2023
1.9	The total number of re-let days for the 15 samples was 502 (ranging from 1 - 87 days per void), average number of days is: 33.47. If the homelessness properties are excluded the total number of days are: 494, average number of days is: 41.17. N.B. NUMBER OF DAYS IS BASED ON WORKING DAYS	Medium	<p>Within the 15 sample voids there are voids that have required extensive modernisation and decarbonisation works which have had a negative effect on the length of time a property has been Void. With the number of Void properties dropping the amount of time that any Major/Development void is vacant will decrease.</p> <p>Nonetheless, updated voids targets and categorisations are included in the updated Voids Management Policy (December 2022) and are based upon the current legal, strategic and operational context with realistic turnaround times encompassing the end – to – end voids management process both building services and tenancy</p>
			Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services
			Target date: 31 March 2024
1.10	The void categorisations are not documented, incorporation of these into the voids policy would be informative.	Low	See 1.1
			Responsible person: Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing
			Target date: 31 March 2023

1.11	Voids workmen do not book jobs in the same way as the repairs team. They do not have PDAs where they can book time and materials through their PDAs which links to the Orchard system.	Low	PDAs are available and training has been successfully rolled across Building Services with priority given to repairs and maintenance teams. Some voids works is now undertaken using PDAs and training has commenced for the remaining team members. It is expected that PDAs will be further deployed and in use within the first QTR of 23/24, aiming for full implementation of mobile working by the end of 23/24	
			Responsible person: Operations Manager Building Services	Target date: 31 March 2024