



**Report Reference Number: S/22/9**

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**To:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 27 October 2022  
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**Lead Executive Member:** Cllr R Musgrave, Lead Executive Member for Housing  
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**Title:** Update report on the Council's void property portfolio

**Summary:** This report provides an update on the current position in respect of void properties within the Council's residential property portfolio.

**Recommendations:**

**The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the content of the report.**

**Reasons for recommendation:**

N/A

**1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. At its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022 the Scrutiny Committee requested an information report on the current position in respect of void properties within the Council's property portfolio.
- 1.2. By way of background, Selby District Council (SDC) currently owns circa 3,000 domestic properties across the district; with significant stock concentrations around the three main service centres of Selby, Sherburn in Elmet and Tadcaster.
- 1.3. In April 2019, the Council changed how it recorded and reported on performance in respect of its domestic void properties, moving from a single all-encompassing target to three separate categories which

better reflected the levels of work required in the properties being received.

- 1.4. Whilst it is acknowledged that in so doing, the Council increased the time available to undertake the necessary repairs in order to bring properties back in to use in two of the three new categories, the approach provided greater clarity as to actual performance.
- 1.5. Under the previous single measure arrangement, void properties requiring extensive works were classified as 'out of management' and thus 'hidden' from the performance measures until re-let. The revised methodology however ensures full visibility of all void properties as they progress through the repair and re-let process.
- 1.6. Implementation of the three void categories has also enabled the Council to better understand its stock profile and to bring forward significant investment to address residual need.

## **2. The Report**

### **2.1. Delivery categories**

- 2.1.1. As outlined, in 2019 the Council introduced three new measures for reporting on void performance as follows: In tandem with the Executive's approval of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan in December 2019, increased investment has been made in the Council's void properties over the past three years and indeed this year has seen the introduction of a capital voids programme within the HRA capital investment budget.

- Standard: target 26 working days

A standard void is categorised as one which requires minor repairs, compliance checks and cleaning only.

- Major: target 45 working days

A major void is categorised as one which, in addition to the above works, requires one of the major elements in the property e.g. kitchen, bathroom etc., replacing.

- Refurbishment: target 180 days

A refurbishment void is categorised as one which requires two or more of the major elements in the property replacing, and more often than not, requires significant levels of investment to bring it back to acceptable standards.

## 2.2. Current performance

2.2.1. Since the introduction of the new performance measures, the Council has completed works in a total of 687 void properties as follows:

Financial year	Standard	Major	Refurbishment	Total
2019/2020	142	61	55	258
2020/2021	66	27	66	159
2021/2022	66	46	70	182
Year to date	40	18	30	88

2.2.2. It is worth highlighting the total numbers of voids received in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 were significantly lower than average due to the restrictions imposed on the housing market during the Covid lockdown periods.

2.2.3. Notwithstanding, it is evident from the figures that an increasing number of properties returned to us are starting to fall into the refurbishment category.

2.2.4. Across the previous three financial years, refurbishment voids have accounted for approximately 34% of all voids received; however of the properties within the portfolio which are currently void, this figure has risen to 82%.

2.2.5. The reasons for this are twofold; firstly, the age profile of the Council's housing portfolio. 85% of the Council's existing housing portfolio is now at least 50 years old, and degradation over time means that investment in replacement of key elements such as roofs, alongside more routine elements such as kitchens or heating systems is now needed.

2.2.6. Secondly, investment in the housing portfolio over time. Following completion of its Decent Homes investment programme in 2010/2011, in keeping with the vast majority of other providers across the social housing sector, the Council reverted to a sustainable investment methodology to ensure the continued financial viability of its HRA.

2.2.7. Whilst it should be highlighted this still amounted to substantial investment of circa £18,085,000<sup>1</sup> in capital programmes targeted specifically at improving the Council's domestic housing stock between 2011/2012 and 2018/2019; following approval of the HRA Business Plan in 2020, circa £24,802,000 will have been invested in the housing stock by the end of this financial year.

2.2.8. This represents an increase of circa 37% in capital investment targeted directly towards improving our housing portfolio.

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<sup>1</sup> Sourced from budget reports to full Council 2011 - 2018

2.2.9. Turning to the current void situation, the Council currently has 87 live voids as follows:

2.2.10. In addition to the above, the Council currently has:

Standard	Major	Refurbishment
10	6	71

- 12 completed voids which are awaiting reallocation to new tenants
- 1 completed void which is required for the resettlement programme
- 2 adjoining voids which are on hold pending specialist adaptation
- 2 voids which have been taken out of the housing stock pending possible demolition and redevelopment due to the levels of investment required

### 2.3. Key Performance Indicators

2.3.1. At the end of quarter one, 2022/2023 – the latest period for which figures are currently available – performance against the Council's Key Performance Indicator (KPI's) targets outlined earlier was as follows:

Category	Target	Actual Performance
Standard	26 working days	13.11 working days
Major	45 working days	26.29 working days
Refurbishment	180 days	99.71 days

2.3.2. It is evident from the above that performance against all KPI's is currently significantly ahead of target and comparable to other providers in the sector; and in general terms, since the Covid lockdowns and the easing of associated working restrictions imposed as a result thereof, the trend in performance has been one of improvement.

2.3.3. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge these figures represent an average taken across all the voids in the respective categories and therefore it would be remiss not to recognise there have been occasions where individual properties, especially in the refurbishment category, have taken longer than the 180 days allocated.

### 3. Alternative options considered

3.1. None in respect of this report.

## **4. Implications**

### 4.1. Legal implications

4.1.1. None in respect of this report.

### 4.2. Financial implications

4.2.1. None in respect of this report.

### 4.3. Policy and risk implications

4.3.1. None in respect of this report.

### 4.4. Corporate Plan implications

4.5. None in respect of this report.

### 4.6. Other implications

4.6.1. None in respect of this report.

### 4.7. Equalities Impact Assessment

4.7.1. None in respect of this report.

## **5. Conclusion**

5.1. Providing high quality, safe and affordable homes for people who need them is a key delivery ambition for the Council; and to this end, refurbishing the Council's void properties as swiftly as possible is imperative to delivering this commitment.

5.2. The introduction of further significant capital investment through approval of the HRA Business Plan in 2019/2020 has enabled the Council to review its approach to void delivery, ensuring funds are available to undertake the improvements needed to properties when they become vacant.

5.3. Whilst it is of course recognised that increasing the capital works undertaken in our void properties inevitably means they may remain empty longer than might otherwise be the case, the investment in securing the longer-term affordability and sustainability of the Council housing portfolio is imperative if we are ultimately to achieve our ambitions.

## **6. Background documents**

6.1. None

## 7. Appendices

7.1. None

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