



# **VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY (Legacy Rosebery)**

## **Scope**

This policy applies to the delivery of services where the legacy Rosebery part of Town and Country Housing provides the service.

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Empty property (void) management is an important area of housing management and is one of our highest priorities.
- 1.2 We are committed to meeting housing needs and maximising rental income by having the lowest possible number of empty properties in our stock.
- 1.3 The aims of the void management policy are:
  - To minimise the time taken to complete void property repairs and improvements;
  - To minimise the time taken to relet properties
  - To maximise rental income;
  - To ensure properties are re-let to the standards agreed with customers. Review of these standards will take place at least every 3 years;
  - To ensure our 'lettable' standards are visible to all prospective tenants at the time of their offer;
  - To reduce the impact of empty properties on the community;
  - To optimise the use of and return on our stock by appraisal of all voids, using the Void Dwelling Assessment (VDA) process, against agreed criteria for: retention; disposal; amendment of tenure; conversion to Affordable Rent; remodelling; prospective future development.

### **2. Performance Targets and Reporting Requirements**

- 2.1 Our performance in delivering the policy will be subject to regular performance monitoring, management and scrutiny by staff, residents, the Executive and our Board.
- 2.2 We have a number of key performance indicators. We will benchmark performance against other registered providers and aim for top quartile performance against all indicators. The indicators are:
  - The average time taken to re-let void properties for both routine and major voids;
  - The level of rent loss from void properties;
- 2.3 Performance against the targets will be monitored by the Head of Housing & Customer Experience and the Building Surveyor. Performance will be reported to the Management Team on a monthly basis and to the Board on a quarterly basis.
- 2.4 Other information is also gathered via the Continuous Recording (CORE) system which supports additional reporting where necessary eg. the number of properties allocated to BME applicants.

### **3. Implementation**

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Team will take overall responsibility for the key to key management of empty homes in their area.

- 3.2 All properties will be brought to the minimum lettable standard, (with the exception of minor works that can be completed post-occupancy). Details of this standard are available upon request and via our website.
- 3.3 Standards specific to each property group will be reviewed at least every 3 years to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- 3.4 We will implement procedures which will incorporate:
- Prompt identification of void properties and regular monitoring of existing voids;
  - Pre-inspection of properties where the current tenant provides notice of termination;
  - Where practicable, carry out repairs during the four week notice period;
  - Complete any necessary repair works quickly and efficiently;
  - Identification quickly if void properties should be offered on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme or where the property will be used for our own Transfer List;
  - Where possible carry out the pre-allocation of properties;
  - Starting new tenancies as soon as possible after the previous tenancy has ended including 'same day lets' when possible;
  - Where practicable, undertake non-urgent repairs after the new tenant has moved in;
  - When non-standard fixtures or fittings remain in the property, including such things as flooring, showers, garden sheds, porches etc; agreeing with the incoming tenant whether they will be left in situ and gifted to them or removed;
  - Providing new tenants with decorating vouchers where appropriate;
  - Producing an Energy Performance Certificate and gas and electrical safety certificates for each void property prior to let, and an asbestos report where required;
  - Carry out improvement works to improve the SAP rating of the property where possible.
  - Measuring tenant satisfaction with their new home and the allocations process via the 'New Tenant Survey';
  - Identifying patterns for the termination of tenancies by recording reasons for leaving;
  - Utilisation of housing management system and a voids-tracker to track and record progress and collect data for performance management;
  - Any works, damage, rubbish to be cleared will be charged in line with our Recharge policy and procedures.
- 3.5 We will carry out improvement works to void properties that have not already had them if the work is due and there is budget available.
- 3.6 We will work with the Local Authority to offer properties with adaptations to suitable housing applicants. Delays in matching suitable applicants, or letting a property are sometimes unavoidable in these circumstances but every endeavour will be made to minimise turnaround time.
- 3.7 We have in place housing management procedures to deal with other types of void properties including those arising due to:
- Abandoned properties;
  - Illegally occupied properties;
  - Properties in need of repair or in need of clearance;
  - Properties with family left in occupation;
  - Managed decants for major repairs;
  - Assignment of tenancies to family members.

- 3.8 The longer a property is empty, the greater the risk of vandalism. Void security will be considered on a risk assessed basis and Neighbourhood Officers will decide on the most appropriate kind of security for each void property.
- 3.9 In the event that properties remain empty for an extended period, Neighbourhood Officers will check that they remain secure and are still in a lettable condition.
- 3.10 We will ensure that any subsidiary charges against us such as Utility and Council Tax bills are kept to a minimum. This will include prompt meter reading by officers at the beginning and end of a tenancy.
- 3.11 Should an unusual or rising pattern of tenancy turnover occur in an area, measures will be developed to ensure community sustainability.

#### **4. Responsibility**

- 4.1 The Building Surveyor will be responsible for managing the performance of the Void Team and all external contractors engaged in working to repair empty properties.
- 4.2 The Head of Housing & Customer Experience will be responsible for ensuring that all property key to key void times are kept to a minimum via overall ownership of the process from tenant exit to new tenant.
- 4.3 We will ensure that officers are given clear responsibility for the void management processes and are adequately trained to deliver the procedures.