

Bolsover District Council

Meeting of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee on 3rd June 2024

Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group – Review of The Voids Process

Report of Portfolio for Housing

Classification	This report is Public
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PURPOSE / SUMMARY OF REPORT

- To inform Scrutiny of the completion of the recent review by Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group.

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the Tenant Engagement Strategy, one of the ways in which tenants can engage with the Council is via the Challenge and Change Group. This Group delivers the tenant scrutiny function of the tenant engagement and governance structure (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 The review has taken place between July 2023 and April 2024, across five meetings.
- 1.3 Tenants were supported by the Tenant Participation and Liaison Officer, Catherine Ford, and a number of officers from the Housing Repairs service.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

- 2.1 The tenants chose to review the Voids Process as their first piece of work. Tenants had concerns as to whether some voids were being completed to the required standard and were aware that this area had not been reviewed for a while.

- 2.2 As part of the review tenants spoke to a number of officers. They completed a site visit to the offices at Doe Lea to look at the systems and processes that were in place, and review how officers manage the voids process. They also visited 3 void properties, all of which were at different stages of the void process, to understand first-hand the level of work required to return the properties to a lettable standard.
- 2.3 The group looked at cost comparisons across the properties visited and as part of this compared the difference in costs between Dragonfly and external contractors. What was clear to tenants was the substantial cost of bringing them to re-lettable standard, while at the same time bearing the cost of lost rental income.
- 2.4 Following this we undertook a thorough look at the Lettable Standard (Technical) Document, which was last reviewed in 2018, this included making a number of recommendations for change including changes to provision of electrical outlets, no longer fitting gas cooker points due to changes in the building regulation and so on. One suggestion coming from a letter from tenants regarding retaining floor coverings if possible.
- 2.5 The tenants have agreed recommendations across six different areas (see section 6 in Appendix 2):
- Lettable Standard
 - Void costs
 - Void Timescales
 - New tenant information (with Quality Certificate showing a Tenant approval mark)
 - Use of site visits as part of reviews
 - Tenant Satisfaction (with close the loop-feedback)
- 2.6 Attached at Appendix 2 is the final report from the review for Members information.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 In order to ensure good communication between the Member and Tenant Scrutiny functions, it is essential that Members are informed of completed reviews and their recommendations. This will ensure there is no duplication of review by Members in to the same service area, allowing time for tenants recommendations to be implemented.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Members could choose not to be informed of the work completed via tenant scrutiny, but this creates a risk of duplication of review work.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee note the recommendations of the Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group in relation to the Voids Process.

Approved by Portfolio Holder for Housing – Cllr. Peake

IMPLICATIONS:

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details: None from this specific report.

On behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details: The suggested revisions to the Lettable Standard have been checked for compliance with current legislation.

On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Environment: Yes No

Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal / report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment.

Details: The proposals in the revised Lettable Standard include low energy LED light bulbs will be installed in all light fittings. Furthermore, in line with the move away from gas installations, the cooker position will have electric supply only, unless there is an existing gas cooker point which is fully compliant to regulations. Gas bayonet fittings to be removed and capped off.

Staffing: Yes No

Details: There are no human resource implications from the Tenants recommendations.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No

District Wards Significantly Affected	All indirectly
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/> SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Details:

Links to Council Aims: Customers, Economy, Environment and Housing.
The Tenant Engagement Strategy and our objectives link to the following corporate aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Customers by providing excellent and accessible services • Our Housing by delivering social and private sector housing growth

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Appendix No	Title
1.	Tenant Engagement and Governance Structure
2.	Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group – Review of The Voids Process

Background Papers
<i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>