

S5. REVIEW OF STANDARD FOR RE-LETTING PROPERTIES

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services which provided information on the implementation of the new Standard for Re-letting Properties. The report set out the background to the introduction of the revised Standard, performance information, and information on other changes. A copy of the revised Standard was appended to the report. David McGhee provided an overview of the report.

Members asked for information on the number of properties which were rejected and the number of call backs which were made of the voids team. David McGhee stated that the data was not available but that the Service allowed a period for tenancy settlement of approximately one month. If recurring issues were identified in that period then they would be addressed. The inspection process which was in place reduced the number of points of contact for the tenant. The staff member who identified work was also responsible for the quality of it. In relation to the number of call backs to the voids team he stated that although the information was not collated currently, with there being no requirement to report it, it was good management data to identify where issues arise.

The committee discussed the average time taken to re-let a property and that this had increased to 50 days following the introduction of the new Standard. David McGhee stated that the Service worked to identify vacant properties early and reallocate them. He highlighted that early engagement with tenants was key. Kenny Gillespie advised that the new Standard was superior to that of other local authorities and that the level of work required impacted on the timescale to re-let. He commented that a full asbestos check was carried out and that the Service tried to do any capital works while void rather than during occupancy. The Service continued to look at ways to work smarter and targeted a reduction in the number of days taken to re-let.

Members stated that there was a need to improve the situation with gardens. They highlighted this was important and commented that this could be looked at during voids as it was a recurring issue. The committee requested a further report back on this area.

The committee sought information on the reasons for 9% of tenants not being satisfied with the condition of their home following the introduction of the new Standard. Kenny Gillespie stated that of those who were not satisfied about half tended to be dissatisfied that the general level of the Standard was not high enough. The other half were generally as the result of small issues like a leak in the heating system or certain aspects of fitting. He stated that some issues could only be identified through the property being lived in.

Members asked why some properties were left in a poor state when vacated, which resulted in a more lengthy time to re-let. David McGhee stated that the review of services to tenants sought to identify more opportunities for staff to identify and visit at risk properties where inspections or interventions were needed. One possibility was having neighbourhood officers attend more frequently. There was a principle to inspect high flatted properties once a year from a housing management perspective. There would be savings in the long term through more active engagement but neighbourhood officers would need sufficient capacity to do so.

The committee asked about the review of the offer process for applicants in the 'Home Seeker' banding. David McGhee stated that there was a desire to have more continuity in the process with accommodation officers carrying out engagement and sign ups which neighbourhood officers currently do. The aim was to have less points of the contact.

Members then asked about the approach to recharging and if this was sometimes pedantic for natural wear and tear. David McGhee advised that the approach to recharging was being unpicked and worked through. He noted that with older properties there were demands on condition.

The committee asked why, in some cases, existing fixtures and fittings were being removed. Kenny Gillespie stated that fixtures and fittings have to comply with all relevant regulations. Therefore if any existing fittings did not meet legal standards during, for example, the electrical check they were removed. Where possible the Service ensured that existing fixtures are left in place. There had been positive feedback from tenants where fittings and fixtures were left.

Members asked about the consultation undertaken with incoming tenants on the layout and style of kitchen units, where assessed as needing a new kitchen. Kenny Gillespie stated that the consultation work was carried out by the single point of contact and the Service sought as much tenant involvement as possible.

The committee asked to have the number of council house inspections included in reports to the performance panel. David McGhee stated that the Service could look to gather data and build an evidence base.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the position regarding the implementation of the new Standard Re-letting Properties, and**
- (2) requested a report on the standards of gardens for re-letting.**