

Areas for Further Improvement and Action Updates as at the end of November 2023

Ref	Recommendation	Priority	Timescale/ responsibility	Management Response – July 2023	Update – November 2023
4.1	<p>Updates to the Housing Management System</p> <p>The Council should ensure that Northgate is updated to reflect the progress of each property against the stages of the voids re-let process.</p> <p>The Council should remind staff involved in the lettings function of their responsibilities in ensuring that updates to each property are reflected on Northgate as appropriate.</p> <p>The Council should explore the reporting functionality of Northgate, which could assist with evaluating performance against a set of defined KPIs.</p> <p>Regular checks should be undertaken by management to confirm that each stage of the lettings process is consistently recorded in Northgate.</p>	2	<p>Head of Rehousing and Lettings/ Lettings Manager</p> <p>September 2023</p>	<p>We have carried out a review of our use of Northgate and have agreed actions that will ensure that we are fully utilising the system's functionality.</p> <p>Reporting options will be utilised and exception reporting will be monitored to ensure consistent use of the system.</p>	<p>A two-day IT Health Check session was held to discuss and review IT issues preventing staff using the NEC IT system efficiently. One of the main issues raised by the team was the need to improve the speed of the software and streamline the number of clicks used for each task to access information.</p> <p>A new system upgrade took place on 2nd July 2023 has addressed these concerns.</p> <p>Exception reporting shows that Lettings staff are updating both NEC void notes and void events. Random audit checks have shown consistency in this area. In addition to this, Choice-Based Lettings and Sharepoint are also updated in a timely manner.</p> <p>ACTIONS COMPLETED.</p>
4.2	<p>Lines of communication</p> <p>The Council should ensure that Northgate is updated to reflect the status of properties where the voids re-let process has been initiated.</p> <p>In addition to the current communication arrangements in place between the teams involved in the lettings function, the Council</p>	2	<p>Head of Rehousing and Lettings to initiate.</p> <p>September 2023</p>	<p>It is accepted that all services involved need to update Northgate.</p> <p>Phone calls and emails are currently the process used across Council services to record outcomes.</p>	<p>Whilst all staff involved in the voids process can update the notes against a property using the IT system, lengthy conversations were still had at the weekly meetings. An enhanced version of the notes recording system has now been set up to transfer the latest updated note for each team from the notepad to the actual voids report now in place.</p>

	<p>could consider implementing a system workflow with the ability to alert/notify relevant teams of updates and actions requiring completion. For example, a reminder to result the viewing outcome for a property within 24 hours of the viewing.</p>			<p>Since May 2023, Viewings Officers have been recruited within the Lettings Team and outcomes of viewings are shared immediately with Lettings staff. Viewings events are recorded on Northgate within 1 working day of the viewing.</p> <p>The ability for Northgate to progress to flag the next task will be explored with IT in September 2023.</p>	<p>Each team involved in the lettings and voids process add notes on the NEC note pad that creates directly onto the voids reports, providing real time updates against each property, which allows the discussion to target specific areas requiring discussion and reduces the need for emails and phone calls.</p> <p>On 14/11/23 a date stamp was added to the voids report to indicate when the last note entry was added for each team. This will give clear indication when an action has been carried out.</p> <p>The Viewing Officers transferred to Tenancy Services in mid-October 2023, the transition has been seamless, and the communication has continued as before.</p> <p>The Lettings Team update the ADVT (advertised) and Offer tasks and the Viewing Officers update the Viewing task for general needs. The Hub- Coordinators were not updating the viewing task or notes for sheltered accommodation but training was delivered to the Hub Co-ordinators on 10/11/23 and they are now able to update the notepad and viewing tasks for sheltered accommodation.</p> <p>ACTIONS PARTIALLY COMPLETED.</p> <p>The ability for the system to flag the next task is still outstanding and requires work across the teams involved in the voids and lettings process. Due to competing priorities this will now be completed by March 2024.</p>
4.3	<p>Tenancy Allocation Records</p> <p>The Council should ensure that both Home Connections and the Northgate Housing</p>	2	<p>Lettings Team Manager</p> <p>July 2023</p>	<p>This is accepted.</p> <p>Whilst the reasons for bypassing an applicant are recorded on Home</p>	<p>When the procedures are reviewed, we will then be able to determine whether it is necessary to have officers enter bypass reasons on NEC as well as those already entered on Home Connections. Short-</p>

	<p>Management System are updated to reflect the status of each void property during the voids re-let process.</p> <p>Moreover, the Council could consider utilising the functionality of Northgate or other system/software to document the rationale for bypassing applicants when making allocations. This could be an efficient means of maintaining an audit trail in support of each allocation to demonstrate appropriate decision making.</p>		<p>Lettings Team Manager October 2023.</p>	<p>Connections, there will be occasions where this is also recorded on Northgate.</p> <p>This needs to be consistent and when the procedures are reviewed, consideration will be given whether the information is required on both systems.</p> <p>The process will though be different for sheltered lets which is currently a manual process.</p> <p>To record each by-pass activity on Northgate will not be practical as each household has very specific needs and to record each property and reasons for by-pass on Northgate will take a disproportionate amount of time.</p> <p>We want to work with Northgate to move having an automated sheltered housing list whereby a shortlist can be created for each available property, which captures the need of the household.</p>	<p>listed households on the other hand will have notes on NEC.</p> <p>Procedures were due to be updated in July, this was not possible due to staffing issues. New date for completion is February 2024.</p> <p>The automation of sheltered lettings is still ongoing with the IT Team as part of the Health Check work. This has now been programmed in for completion by the IT Team in February 2024.</p> <p>.</p> <p>LIMITED PROGRESS ON BOTH ASPECTS OF THIS RECOMMENDATION.</p> <p>Revised date of February 2024.</p>
4.4	<p>Tenancy Allocation Approvals</p> <p>The Council should develop a formal process for the review and approval of decisions made.</p> <p>This process should be documented in the relevant policies and procedures made available to members of the Lettings Team.</p>	2	<p>Head of Rehousing and Lettings/ Lettings Manager October 2023</p>	<p>We will review our processes and identify stages where sign off of decisions would be appropriate based on risk Policies and procedures will be amended accordingly.</p>	<p>Property offers are monitored through weekly voids meeting discussions. Direct lets and property adverts are quality controlled and delegated in priority order by the Lettings Senior to officers. Once a property is marked suitable for advertising, a decision is taken as to whether to advertise or make</p>

					<p>a direct let to a prospective client and the senior will delegate to the officer to action accordingly.</p> <p>Fortnightly supervision meetings take place between the Lettings senior and officers, which also includes going through void property offers. Offers are scrutinised by both the Lettings manager and senior using relevant reports and continuous discussion with staff and services connected to the voids process.</p> <p>Although the approach has changed operationally this needs to be reflected in updated procedures.</p> <p>PARTIALLY COMPLETED.</p> <p>Operational change to be reflected in updated procedures when completed by February 2024.</p>
4.5	<p>Weekly meetings</p> <p>The Council should ensure that Northgate is updated to reflect the status of properties throughout the voids re-let process. To allow for the identification of those properties requiring immediate attention at the weekly meetings held between the Lettings Team, HRS and NTLO Team.</p> <p>Moreover, updates made to Northgate in real time could contribute to an improved oversight of void turnaround times and reduce the administrative burden of updating the VD0108 Report in advance of the weekly meetings.</p>	3	Complete	<p>This has been implemented with the Lettings Team updating Northgate notes prior to the weekly meetings. Other services have started this but needs to be consistent.</p>	<p>This action was complete at the point when the report was agreed. The meetings themselves have been strengthened by the addition of a chair at Assistant Director level.</p> <p>Management in each area are monitoring the consistency of the use of notes.</p> <p>ACTION COMPLETE.</p>
4.6	<p>Key performance indicators</p> <p>As planned, the Council should continue to focus efforts on defining KPIs against which</p>	3	Head of Rehousing and Lettings/	<p>This is accepted and will need support from IT to be able to establish performance outcomes.</p>	<p>High level voids performance indicators are in place and reported to the Placemaking and Housing Board on a monthly basis.</p>

<p>performance specific to the Lettings Team can be monitored. KPIs could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average number of days to re-let empty homes; • % Tenancy turnover; • % Overall satisfaction with new home; and • % Homes empty. <p>The targets specified in the new Registrations and Lettings Team Performance Report should be reiterated within the documented procedures available to the Lettings Team to ensure compliance with KPIs.</p> <p>In addition, these reports should be presented to the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Performance Clinics with appropriate regularity.</p>	<p>Lettings Team Manager September 2023</p>	<p>A weekly meeting of senior managers from each area that are involved in the voids process from tenancy ending to relet review performance information on void flow.</p> <p>Lettings performance is reported to the monthly Housing Demand Performance Clinic.</p> <p>Planned enhancements to the IT system will help to capture the detail beneath the headline performance more easily and will help managers to monitor day to day performance.</p> <p>ACTIONS COMPLETED though further IT enhancements will help support the work further.</p>
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