

Report for: Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel – 13th October

Title: Voids Management Performance and Improvement Programme Update

Report authorised by: Kristian Melgaard, Director of Housing

Lead Officer: Shayem Pervez, Interim Assistant Director for Housing Management

**Report for Key/
Non-Key Decision:** For information

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1. This report provides the Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel with an update on housing voids performance and progress against the Council's Voids Improvement Programme.
- 1.2. The report outlines the findings of the review of voids management undertaken during 2026, the scale and nature of the challenge facing the service, progress made to date, and the priorities for the remainder of 2026/27.
- 1.3. The report seeks to provide assurance that a structured improvement programme is in place to address the root causes of underperformance, reduce turnaround times and increase the number of homes returned to occupation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel are asked to:
 - a) Note the current position regarding voids performance.
 - b) Note the findings of the review of voids management.
 - c) Note progress made against the Voids Improvement Programme.
 - d) Note the priorities and next steps for the remainder of 2026/27.

3. Background information

Importance of Effective Voids Management

- 3.1. A void property is a council home that is vacant between tenancies. Effective void management is essential to ensuring homes are returned to occupation as quickly as possible, helping to meet housing need, reducing rental income loss to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and ensuring that housing assets are utilised effectively.

- 3.2. The timely re-letting of vacant homes is particularly important given increasing demand for affordable housing, rising temporary accommodation costs and significant housing pressures experienced across London. Every property that remains empty for longer than necessary represents a lost housing opportunity and a reduction in rental income available to support housing services and investment in Council homes.
- 3.3. Effective void management therefore has an important role in supporting both residents in housing need and the financial sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account.

The End-to-End Voids Process

- 3.4. The voids process begins when a tenancy ends and concludes when a new tenant occupies the property.
- 3.5. The process includes:
- a) Receipt of tenancy notice and tenancy termination;
 - b) Property inspection and assessment;
 - c) Clearance, repairs and compliance works;
 - d) Asset and investment assessments where required;
 - e) Advertising and allocation;
 - f) Viewings and offer management;
 - g) Tenancy sign-up;
 - h) Occupation by a new tenant.
- 3.6. The process requires coordinated activity across a number of services including Customer Service, Housing Management, Sheltered Housing, Housing Repairs, Asset Management, Allocations and Lettings, Temporary Accommodation, HCBS, Rent Accounts and Housing Delivery.
- 3.7. As a result, performance is dependent upon effective coordination, clear accountability and timely delivery throughout the entire process. Delays at any stage can impact overall turnaround times and extend the period that properties remain vacant.

Review of Voids Management

- 3.8. During 2025/26 Housing Services undertook a comprehensive review of voids management to better understand the causes of increasing void numbers, prolonged turnaround times and inconsistent performance reporting.
- 3.9. The review examined the full lifecycle of a void property and considered governance arrangements, operational processes, data quality, systems, reporting arrangements and delivery capacity.
- 3.10. The review concluded that performance challenges were not attributable to a single team, contractor or stage of the process. Instead, a number of issues had developed over time which collectively contributed to delays and reduced effectiveness across the end-to-end voids process.
- 3.11. The review identified several recurring themes:
- Inconsistent processes and ways of working across different housing tenures;
 - Limited end-to-end ownership and accountability for the overall voids journey;
 - Data quality issues and limited performance reporting;
 - Process inefficiencies and duplication of activity;
 - Delays caused by multiple hand-offs between services;
 - Capacity constraints within key stages of delivery;
 - A growing backlog of long-term vacant homes requiring substantial investment before they could be re-let.
- 3.12. The review also identified significant opportunities to strengthen governance arrangements, improve collaboration between services, standardise processes, improve performance management and make greater use of digital solutions.

Scale of the Challenge

- 3.13. As of 31 March 2026, the Council had 724 voids and 147 long-term and unavailable void properties, totalling 871 void properties and with an average turnaround time of 301 days for standard voids. Of these 871 properties, 684 are General Needs and Sheltered Housing and the remaining 187 are Temporary Accommodation and HCBS properties.
- 3.14. The void portfolio includes:
- General Needs properties;
 - Sheltered Housing properties;

- Hostels and Lodges;
- HfH and Council Private Sector Leasing properties;
- Haringey Community Benefit Society (HCBS) properties;
- Homes associated with estate renewal and regeneration programmes;
- Long-term vacant homes requiring extensive investment works.

- 3.15. Analysis undertaken during the review identified that a significant proportion of vacant homes required major repairs, refurbishment or capital investment before they could be returned to occupation.
- 3.16. The review also found that different categories of void properties were being managed through different processes and reporting arrangements. Whilst appropriate from an operational perspective, this reduced visibility of overall performance and limited opportunities to take a coordinated approach to managing the Council's void portfolio.
- 3.17. The review concluded that routine operational voids and long-term investment voids required different management approaches and performance measures in order to achieve sustainable improvement.

Data Validation Exercise

- 3.18. In June 2026 Housing Services completed a comprehensive data validation exercise to improve confidence in voids reporting and provide a more accurate understanding of the void portfolio.
- 3.19. The exercise identified and corrected a number of historic reporting inconsistencies and property classification issues. It also provided greater transparency regarding the composition of the void portfolio and established a more robust baseline against which future improvements could be measured.
- 3.20. The data validation exercise formed a key component of the improvement programme as would enable more effective prioritisation of improvement activity.

Voids Improvement Programme

- 3.21. In response to the review findings, Housing Services established the Strategic Voids Improvement Programme in February 2026 chaired by the Interim Director of Housing.

- 3.22. The programme represents a shift from viewing voids primarily as a repairs issue to managing voids as an end-to-end housing process requiring coordinated action across multiple services.
- 3.23. The programme has four overarching objectives:
- Return homes to occupation more quickly;
 - Reduce rental income loss associated with empty homes;
 - Improve the customer experience for outgoing and incoming tenants;
 - Establish a sustainable operating model supported by effective governance, reliable data and IT systems.
- 3.24. The Voids Improvement Programme is coordinated by the Senior Programme Manager, Housing Improvement and Transformation, who is responsible for programme management, reporting and assurance, ensuring that delivery remains on track and aligned with agreed objectives, milestones and intended outcomes.
- 3.25. Operational delivery of the end-to-end voids process is led by a dedicated Strategic Voids Co-ordinator, who is responsible for driving performance improvement, coordinating activity across services, monitoring delivery against targets and ensuring properties progress efficiently through the voids lifecycle.
- 3.26. Governance is provided through the Strategic Voids Improvement Group, which meets fortnightly to oversee delivery of the programme, monitor performance and drive cross-service accountability.
- 3.27. In addition, voids performance is now subject to enhanced corporate oversight through a weekly performance report provided to the Chief Executive Officer and a weekly highlight report submitted to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health. These arrangements ensure ongoing visibility of progress, risks and mitigation actions at a senior corporate level.
- 3.28. Delivery of the programme is organised through six interconnected workstreams:
- a) Housing Repairs Service Operational delivery, focused on improving void turnaround times;
 - b) Asset Management 'Project 400' delivery, focused on returning long-term vacant properties requiring significant investment works prior to occupation;
 - c) Procurement and capacity expansion, focused on securing interim and long-term delivery arrangements to increase works capacity;

- d) End-to-end process review and redesign, focused on standardising processes, reducing delays and improving accountability across all housing tenures;
- e) Reporting, performance management and data quality, focused on improving data accuracy, management information, and operational oversight through enhanced dashboards and reporting;
- f) Digital modernisation, focused on workflow automation, system improvements, and reducing manual administration.

4. Performance

Current Position

- 4.1. As of 11 September 2026, the Council had 692 voids made up of 538 General Needs & Sheltered Housing properties and 154 across Temporary Accommodation and HCBS. In addition, there are 126 long-term and unavailable void properties, providing a total of 818 across all tenures and representing a reduction of 53 properties compared with the position on 31 March 2026.
- 4.2. The reduction was achieved despite 330 new void properties arising between 1 April and 11 September 2026 through normal tenancy turnover and tenancy terminations.
- 4.3. These numbers evidence the ongoing operational demand placed on the service but demonstrates that Housing Services is now starting to reduce the historic backlog of vacant homes while also keeping pace with the flow of new voids.
- 4.4. Whilst this represents encouraging early progress, further improvements are required to achieve sustained reductions in turnaround times and deliver the longer-term ambitions of the programme.

Void Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Non-RFL (voids with HRS/Contractors)	Transitioning to Ready for Let	Long-Term & Unavailable Voids	Total
1. General Needs & Sheltered Housing Voids	450	88	0	538
2. Long-Term & Unavailable General Needs & Sheltered Housing Voids	0	0	101	101

3. TA Voids (HfH & LBH PSLs & Hostels)	114	2	0	116
4. Long-Term & Unavailable TA Voids	0	0	24	24
5. HCBS relets	34	4	1	39
Total	598	94	126	818

5. Progress Against the Improvement Programme

Governance and Accountability

- 5.1. A strengthened governance framework has been established to improve oversight of performance and support delivery across services.
- 5.2. Key improvements include:
- Establishment of the Strategic Voids Working Group;
 - Regular operational performance meetings;
 - Clearer accountability arrangements for the end-to-end process;
 - Appointment of a Strategic Voids Co-ordinator.
- 5.3. These arrangements have improved visibility of performance, strengthened ownership of actions and supported quicker resolution of operational issues.

Data Quality and Reporting

- 5.4. The June 2026 data validation exercise significantly improved confidence in the accuracy of voids reporting.
- 5.5. Progress to date includes:
- Introduction of revised reporting categories;
 - Correction of historic data issues;
 - Development of performance measures and reporting requirements;
 - Progression of enhanced Power BI dashboard reporting.
- 5.6. Improved reporting will provide greater transparency and support both operational and strategic decision-making.

Process Improvement

- 5.7. A detailed review of end-to-end processes has been completed for General Needs properties, with reviews of other housing tenures progressing.
- 5.8. Achievements include:
- Mapping of key processes;
 - Identification of inefficiencies and duplication;
 - Development of target turnaround times for key process stages;
 - Improved coordination between services;
 - Introduction of earlier property viewings where appropriate.
- 5.9. This work is supporting greater consistency, improved communication and reduced delays across the void journey.

Operational Delivery

- 5.10. A delivery target of 43 Housing Repairs Service void completions per month has been established, based on an assumption of approximately 10 new voids arising each week. Achieving this target would result in approximately 300 HRS void completions between September 2026 and March 2027.
- 5.11. Performance is monitored through regular governance arrangements and operational review meetings.

Asset Management 'Project 400' delivery

- 5.12. The review identified a substantial number of long-term vacant homes requiring significant investment works before they could be re-let.
- 5.13. To address this challenge, the most complex long-term void properties have been transferred into a dedicated Asset Management 'Project 400' programme, which has a target of delivering at least 400 of these voids back into management by September 2027.
- 5.14. This approach separates routine operational void delivery from major investment activity and enables resources to be targeted more effectively.
- 5.15. Contractors have been appointed, surveys are underway and delivery activity has commenced.

Procurement and Capacity

- 5.16. Work is progressing to secure additional delivery capacity through interim arrangements and longer-term procurement solutions.
- 5.17. The objectives are to:
- a) Increase capacity;
 - b) Improve resilience;
 - c) Strengthen performance management;
 - d) Support achievement of turnaround time targets.

Digital Modernisation

- 5.18. A dedicated Housing Voids Digital Modernisation Project has commenced.
- 5.19. The project will focus on:
- a) Improved workflows;
 - b) Automation of routine tasks;
 - c) Reduced manual administration;
 - d) Enhanced reporting capability;
 - e) Improved performance monitoring.
- 5.20. The programme will support a more efficient and consistent approach to managing void properties.

Expected Outcomes

- 5.21. The Voids Improvement Programme is expected to deliver benefits for residents, services and the Housing Revenue Account.
- 5.22. Expected outcomes include:
- Reduced turnaround times;
 - Increased numbers of homes returned to occupation;
 - Reduced rental income loss;
 - Improved accountability across the voids process;
 - Better quality management information;

- Greater operational capacity;
- Improved customer experience;
- More effective utilisation of housing assets.

6. Risk and Finance

6.1. The below table sets out the risks associated in managing and improving our approach to voids:

Risks	Mitigating Actions
Historic Backlog of Long-Term Voids: A significant number of vacant properties require extensive investment before they can be re-let.	Delivery of a dedicated Asset Management 'Project 400' project for long-term void properties.
Embedding New Ways of Working: The success of the programme depends on consistent adoption of revised processes across multiple services.	Ongoing governance, monitoring and support from the Strategic Voids Co-ordinator.
Capacity and Demand Pressures: Continuing housing growth, estate renewal activity and wider housing pressures may increase demand on void services.	Procurement activity, increased delivery capacity and strengthened performance management.
Digital Dependencies: Implementation of reporting and workflow improvements is dependent on delivery of data transformation and digital modernisation activity.	Programme oversight and weekly milestone reviews.

- 6.2. The Voids Improvement Programme will also help to mitigate the risk in regard to finance. The current void rental loss year to date is £4.029m on total rental income of £54.967m (7.33%), this percentage has remained broadly consistent across the year to date. A comparable figure for the whole of 2025/26 was 6.84%.
- 6.3. This level of rental loss will improve with the Voids Improvement Programme initiatives taking hold, particularly when factoring in Project 400 and larger homes with higher rents being brought back into use. Long-term financial targets are to be agreed for 2027/28.

7. Target Outcomes (Next 12 months)

- 7.1. The Voids Improvement Programme aims to increase the availability of council homes, reduce rental income loss, improve re-let performance, support the Council's

temporary accommodation reduction objectives and improve the experience of new tenants.

- 7.2. Increase the supply of homes available for letting:
- Return approximately 1,050 void properties to occupation over the next 12 months.
 - Manage a projected 700 new voids arising during the same period, based on current trends.
 - Deliver a net reduction of approximately 350 void properties, reducing the overall number of void homes from 818 to around 468 properties by September 2027.
 - Identify and implement any additional resources, contractor capacity, process improvements, digital solutions and IT enhancements required to achieve the target.
- 7.3 Improve void turnaround performance:
- Reduce average void turnaround times for new General Needs, Sheltered Housing and Hostels standard voids to 46 days (from 301 days in March 2026).
- 7.4 Improve Housing Revenue Account performance:
- Reduce annual rental income loss associated with empty homes by an estimated £3.15 million per annum through reducing a net reduction of approximately 350 void properties and improving re-let performance.
- 7.5 Support temporary accommodation reduction and wider housing objectives:
- Increase the number of homes available for households on the Housing Register and in temporary accommodation enabling an estimated 210 additional lettings to households in temporary accommodation based on current allocations patterns.
 - Support delivery of the Council's Lettings Plan 2026-27, which forecasts approximately 550 households moving from temporary accommodation into long-term housing, including 50 additional moves from high-cost temporary accommodation, contributing towards the Council's £700,000 MTFS saving target.
 - Maximise General Fund savings from reduced use of temporary accommodation. Current modelling indicates savings could be up to £2.3million, through increased lettings to households in temporary accommodation and reduced reliance on high-cost TA. This is still subject to completion of the financial modelling.
 - Maximise the social value of additional lettings by increasing housing opportunities for homeless households, overcrowded families, care leavers and other residents in housing need.
- 7.6 Maintain quality and improve customer satisfaction:
- Maintain high standards in the quality of homes let to new tenants.

- Achieve and maintain at least 90% satisfaction with the condition of properties at let, building on the current baseline of 89% satisfied or very satisfied.
- Increase participation in the new tenant satisfaction survey from the current 22% response rate (166 responses from 734 lets).
- Continue to monitor satisfaction across the end-to-end lettings process, including viewings, tenancy sign-up and move-in experience, and use customer feedback to drive continuous improvement.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The review of voids management identified that performance challenges were driven by a combination of process, governance, data, systems and capacity issues across the end-to-end voids service.
- 8.2 In response, Housing Services established a comprehensive Strategic Voids Improvement Programme focused on strengthening governance, improving operational delivery, increasing capacity, enhancing reporting and modernising systems.
- 8.3 The programme represents a fundamental shift from managing voids primarily as a repairs activity to managing them as an end-to-end housing process requiring coordinated action across multiple services.
- 8.4 Good progress has been made in establishing the foundations required for sustained improvement, including completion of the data validation exercise, implementation of strengthened governance arrangements, mobilisation of the Asset Management Project 400 programme, process reviews, procurement activity and commencement of digital modernisation work.
- 8.5 Since 1 April 2026, Housing Services has managed approximately 330 new void properties whilst reducing the overall void position from 871 to 818 properties. This demonstrates improved control of the voids pipeline and provides early evidence that the programme is beginning to deliver positive outcomes.
- 8.6 Over the next 12 months, the programme will focus on delivering measurable improvements in housing supply, operational performance, financial outcomes and customer experience. Key outcomes include returning approximately 1,050 void properties to occupation, managing an estimated 700 new voids, reducing the overall void portfolio from 818 to around 468 properties, reducing average turnaround times for new standard voids to 46 days, reducing annual rental income loss by an estimated £3.15 million, and maintaining high standards of quality and customer satisfaction.

- 8.7 Delivery of these outcomes will increase the number of homes available for letting, support the Council's temporary accommodation reduction objectives, contribute to Medium Term Financial Strategy savings, and create additional housing opportunities for homeless households, overcrowded families, care leavers and other residents in housing need. Based on current allocations patterns, the programme could enable around 210 additional lettings to households in temporary accommodation and contribute to wider General Fund savings through reduced reliance on high-cost temporary accommodation.
- 8.8 Housing Services will continue to monitor delivery through the Strategic Voids Improvement Group and established programme governance arrangements, whilst maintaining a strong focus on quality, customer satisfaction and continuous improvement to ensure that performance gains are sustainable and deliver lasting benefits for residents and the Council.