

27<sup>th</sup> June 2024**Report of the Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee****Matters referred to Cabinet in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules**

<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Title of Matter referred</b>	<b>Date of Scrutiny meeting</b>
Corporate Scrutiny	Housing Voids Update	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2024

**Exempt Information**

None.

**Purpose**

To notify Cabinet of the report and recommendations from the Housing Voids Update item that was discussed at the meeting of Corporate Scrutiny on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024

**Recommendations**

**Following consideration of the item the Committee agree to the following recommendations being made to Cabinet:**

1. To instruct Officers to review the costs versus return, of employing an in-house inspection team to see if we can drive down the costs of voids.
2. To review how we recover damages costs from existing tenants and see if there is a more proactive way we can approach this long term.
3. That the Portfolio Holder calls Equans in to address Members major concerns around void turnaround times and ask them what their action plan is to improve this.

*(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor B Price)*

**Back Ground Information**

Further to the Housing repairs Performance update on the 20<sup>th</sup> June and the follow up Update on the Housing Repairs Services on the 27<sup>th</sup> July along with requests from the other two Scrutiny Committee to look at housing repairs a cross Committee working group was established under Corporate Scrutiny.

The Working Groups first item was to look at Damp and Mould. At the meeting of the Committee on the 7<sup>th</sup> February general housing repairs were considered. The working group then met on the 6<sup>th</sup> March where a focus was taken on Voids, a number of questions were emailed to Officers who provided the working group with information they had requested and attended a Committee Meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> March to answer initial questions with a view to return to full Committee on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April with a full response.

## **Executive Summary**

At the Meeting of Corporate Scrutiny on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April, where the housing Void update report had been circulated the Committee raised a number of concerns around the Voids process including –

- The time taken to turnaround voids and the associated costs.
- The capacity of the contractor to manage the work and the change in turnaround times seen since the change of contractor.
- The current recovery rate of rechargeable repairs.
- Concerns around the possibility of the contractor completing property inspections on Council assets on behalf of the Council.
- The Council removing some improvement that could benefit the incoming tenant.

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods who attended on behalf of the assistant Director, Assets provided an update on how the rent loss was addressed including Liquidated and Ascertained Damages (LAD) from the contractor where properties were not returned within expected times.

They update the committee on Ideas for addressing turnaround times through working with the contractor on service improvement as well as tenancy management to promote prevention, such as annual inspections, incentive to return properties in good condition etc.

The Committee were advised that whole stock survey that was taking place to provide a baseline for the Council to look at Improving the service.

The Officer updated the Committee upon the barriers to recovering rechargeable repairs.

Following the discussion the Committee resolved to make three recommendations to Cabinet in this area.

## **Key considerations**

1. Scrutiny committees have statutory powers to make recommendations to the Executive, and the Executive (Cabinet) has a statutory duty to respond. They may also make reports and recommendations to external decision making bodies.
2. The agenda for Executive meetings shall include a standing item entitled 'Matters Referred to the Cabinet In Accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules'. The reports of overview and scrutiny committees and sub-committees referred to the Executive shall be included at this point in the agenda (unless they have been considered in the context of the Executive's deliberations on a substantive item on the agenda) within one

calendar month of the overview and scrutiny committee or sub-committee completing its report/recommendations.

3. Scrutiny recommendations are addressed to the Cabinet, as the main Executive decision making body of the council (or, where appropriate, an external agency).
4. Cabinet is being asked to note the scrutiny report / recommendations and that an Executive Response to the scrutiny recommendations be prepared for consideration by the Cabinet within two months from receiving the report or recommendations.
5. The minutes of the meeting of the scrutiny committee provide the record of the scrutiny committee's consideration of the issue and the scrutiny recommendations made during the meeting.
6. The scrutiny committee will be notified of the Executive Response made in respect to the scrutiny recommendations and may track the implementation of the Cabinet decisions and any actions agreed. This enables the scrutiny committee to track whether their recommendations have been agreed, what actually was agreed (if different) and review any outcomes arising

### **Report Author**

Daniel Cook Former Councillor and Chair of Corporate Scrutiny

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