

Appendix 9



VOID MANAGEMENT POLICY

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1 VISION & STRATEGIC PURPOSES

To enrich the lives and aspirations of our residents, businesses, and visitors through the provision of efficiently run and high-quality services, ensuring that all in need receive appropriate help, support, and opportunities

This policy supports the following Strategic Purposes:

- Communities which are safe, well maintained and green
- Finding somewhere to live
- Living independent, active & health lives'

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Council will ensure that it provides a repairs and maintenance service in accordance with relevant policy, legislation, regulatory compliance, and Council housing service standards.

2.2 The principles underpinning the void management policy are

- The policy should provide a clear statement of the level of service and standards to which the Council will work
- Ensure consistency across the service
- Training for staff should be provided to ensure staff are equipped to carry out the roles expected of them
- Communication with tenants and service users should be 'plain language' and should make it clear in all cases who the identified officer to contact in case of queries

3 PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

3.1 The purpose of this policy document is to set out how Redditch Borough Council (RBC) will deliver its responsibilities for ensuring that Void management is an effective, timely and efficient service. This will ensure that the housing stock is safe, kept in a good state of repair and is brought up to or meets agreed standards.

3.2 Void management is a term used to describe how the Council deals with vacant dwellings. The main objective of the policy will be to reduce the loss of available accommodation and minimise the associated rent loss.

3.3 The policy objectives will cover various aspects of void management

- Tenancy Terminations
- Lettings- pre-allocating properties before they become empty and, wherever possible, taking the steps to minimise the number of refusals

- Relet standards are clear and meet an acceptable standard, which make the property lettable in terms of repair, cleanliness, and state of decoration
- A procedure for recording and pursuing repairs and disposal costs that are for the former tenants' responsibility
- Clarity around tenant responsibilities for the duration of the tenancy.

4. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

4.1 The Council will ensure that properties are repaired and maintained through the Voids process in accordance with best practice and relevant policy and legislation, including the following:

- The Gas Safety (installation and use) Regulations 1998 & 2004
- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- The Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations 2017
- The HOME standard as detailed on the Landlords Regulatory Code by Homes Communities Agency 2012
- A DECENT Home: Definition and Guidance by the DCLG 2006 as amended
- Electrical Installations BS 7671:2008 Wiring Regulations.

5 LOCAL POLICIES

5.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Tenancy Agreement
- Rechargeable Repairs Policy
- Condensation, Damp and Mould Policy
- Gas Safety (Annual Servicing) Policy
- Aids & Adaptions Policy

6 OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

6.1 All Council homes will be re-let and will

- Meet or exceeds the Government's Decent Homes Standard
- Comply with all relevant H&S policies and regulations
- Have adequate facilities
- Have modern, suitable kitchen and bathroom facilities
- Have a reasonable level of thermal insulation
- Have satisfied an empty property inspection to ensure it is free from repair and the incoming tenant is aware of their repairing rights and obligations.
- Be clean, safe, and fit for purpose, both internally and externally.

6.2 Where Non-essential repairs are identified these may be undertaken after the property is let.

Tenancy Terminations

- 6.3 Residents are required to give 4 weeks written notice as stated clearly under the terms and conditions of the Tenancy Agreement. If keys are kept longer than the 4 weeks' notice further rent will be charged.
- 6.4 If the resident fails to give proper notice but surrenders the keys, we can assume that by vacating their home the tenant has brought the tenancy to an end and can take possession of the property. Where there is no prior notification of a void, the Neighbourhood and Tenancy (N&T) will carry out an inspection within 24 hours.

Transfers

- 6.5 Tenants who have active transfer applications, with Housing Services, will have an inspection carried out on their property. This visit will be to identify any alterations or damage to the internal and external fixtures and fittings and an assessment of the decorations to ensure compliance with the lettable standard. Any defects or liabilities shall be advised to the tenant and a timescale agreed for repair or replacement. If any inspection fails, due to the repairs the tenant is responsible for, will result in the new tenancy offer being withdrawn. Only in exceptional circumstances, with prior agreement by a Tier 4 manager or above, can a transfer allocation go ahead with a failed property inspection.
- 6.6 Where Recharges are identified they will fall in line with the Rechargeable Repairs Policy, notwithstanding the cancellation of the transfer.

Pre-termination Inspections

- 6.7 Where possible the pre-termination inspection with the outgoing resident will be arranged to identify any issues, in line with the ending of tenancies procedure. The tenant will be advised of their obligations as outlined in the Tenancy Agreement and will identify aspects of disrepair, which are the responsibility of the tenant.

Rechargeable Repairs

- 6.8 The tenant will be advised to leave the property in a good condition, and free from rubbish or furniture or otherwise they will be liable for any costs incurred in line with the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.

Adaptations

- 6.9 Any adaptation or special features of the property will be identified to assist the Allocations process and in making the best use of stock.

Lettings

- 6.10 The Housing Services team will ensure prompt lettings in accordance with the Allocations Policy.

Decoration allowance

- 6.11 Internal redecoration will not normally be undertaken but a decoration allowance or materials may be given. At the Council's discretion an increase/reduction of the amount allocated on a case-by-case basis may be undertaken. The exact nature of the materials obtained will be at the discretion of the tenant provided that constitute decorating materials such as paint, wallpaper, etc.
- 6.12 All new tenants will be required to demonstrate that works of at least the value of the allowance have been carried out within 6 weeks of occupation. We reserve the right to withhold an allowance or part thereof to any existing tenant transferring to another property where the previous property itself requires an allowance.

Tenancy Agreement sign ups

- 6.13 Following acceptance of the offer and during the sign-up process tenants will be given more detailed information about the tenancy terms and conditions, the property, contents insurance, utility provider details as well as tenant groups, etc.
- 6.14 Upon completion of the voids process the following documentation will be provided to the tenant/s
- CP12 for gas servicing
 - How to report a repair and book gas Turn on and Test of their gas system
 - Energy Performance Certificate
 - Contents Insurance details
 - Utility providers contact details

7. COMPLAINTS

- 7.1 Where an applicant or legal occupier is not satisfied with any matter such as standard of service, actions, or lack of actions by or conduct Council officers or its partners or contractors, then a complaint can be made. This section should be read in accordance with the Housing Services Complaints and Enquiries Standard.

7.2 Complaints can be made in writing to:

**Housing Services Review and Improvement
Redditch Borough Council
Town Hall
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch
B98 8AH**

Or emailing: housingreviewsandcomplaints@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

8. PERFORMANCE & REPORTING

8.1 Stretching targets for key areas of this policy will be set annually to monitor performance against target. Performance will be reported in line with legislation or as directed corporately.

9 EQUALITY

9.1 The Council promotes equal opportunities in the services it provides. Our aim is to implement and maintain services which ensure that no resident is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, being or becoming a transsexual person, being married or in a civil partnership, religion, belief or lack of religion or belief, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, colour, disability, age, being pregnant or having children or sexual orientation nor is disadvantaged by the application of a rule, condition, or requirement, which has a discriminatory effect which cannot be justified by law.