

Report to Clydebank Housing Association Management Committee

From the Tenant Panel –Carole Sweeney, Gavin Lang (Central Clydebank), Sandra Queen, Jessie McCormick, Elma Stewart, Jim Stewart (Radnor Park)

Apologies – David Sweeney (Central Clydebank)

14 December 2018

We took the task of reviewing the Association's **voids and allocations processes** seriously. We commenced in July 2017 and concluded in November 2018, with a break October 2017 – March 2018 due to various issues including awaiting internal audit results on the Tenant Consultation and Scrutiny function. We are pleased to say that **overall we felt satisfied with the Association's voids and allocations processes.**

Aim

We set out with the aim that any improvements identified could help:

- Decrease overall letting time
- Improve procedures, policies and processes, where possible
- Bring voids in on budget (£100k)
- Free up time for monitoring contractor performance
- Provide time for analysing and reflecting on the service

Scrutiny Activity

To gather information and inform our report on the processes we:

- Participated in a presentation with the Housing and Maintenance Managers on void properties including information regarding the % of lettable houses which became vacant, average re-let times and trends from 2013/2014 onwards
- Viewed photos of a wide variety of void properties before and after work was carried out and the costs
- Reviewed the joint void report 2016/2017 and also for April and May 2017 and asked for details on a number of cases outwith target which included an eviction of a sensitive nature and a homeless referral appeal (report numbers 868, 954 and 970)
- Reviewed relevant ARC statistics including refusal rate
- Spent time with the Housing Officer reviewing the Termination of Tenancy procedure in detail
- Reviewed all the relevant end of tenancy material, including the pre-end of tenancy advice leaflet and void pack
- Visited a void property both pre-works and post-works with the Maintenance Manager and discussed the Maintenance Void Inspection/Condition Survey Form in detail
- Spent time in Maintenance with a Maintenance Assistant processing the void property repairs on the Kypera system

- Reviewed the Allocations Policy in detail with the Head of Housing Services and Housing Officer and all associated paperwork
- Carried out a 'live' end of tenancy and 'live' allocation with the Head of Housing Services using the Kypera test system

Separately, we also:

- Visited Dunbritton Housing Association's Tenant Panel drive to provide guidance and encouragement to potential members
- Fully participated in the Association's Business Plan review 2018/2023 and target review 2018/19
- Reviewed the Tenant Panel pack further to internal audit recommendations
- Had a member attend Management Committee training on 'Questions you should be asking Maintenance'

Observations/Recommendations

What works well?

- **Reporting** – it was clear there was a good grasp on the voids and allocation functions and detailed reporting to the Management Committee
- **Termination of Tenancy** – the procedure works well
- **Contractor Relationships** – it was evident that the Maintenance staff have a good relationship with the contractors
- **Partnership Working** – a good example of partnership working is the Association using British Gas Voidcare to speed up the process of identifying who supplies the property with gas to minimise rent loss, as British Gas take over the supply from the end of tenancy date
- **Refusal Rate** – refusal statistics were noted but that this is an improving statistic as procedures have been put in place to address the previously higher percentage
- **Maintenance Void Inspection/Condition Survey Form/ End of Tenancy Form/Housing Application Form** – we feel all of these forms are very comprehensive
- **Kypera Void System** – we noted that a detailed void spreadsheet back-up had been in use but the data on Kypera was now up-to-date and accurate so double entry was no longer required
- **Allocations Policy** – we were satisfied of the key principles and the operation of the 3 lists

What can be done better?

- **Lettable Standard** – we recommend that consideration be given to the Lettable Standard and the cleanliness of the properties being allocated. We found the property we visited post-works to be untidy (screws and plaster chunks etc. on the floor) and it had an unpleasant odour. We feel this could be detrimental to someone accepting the property. We recommend better communication with contractors to ensure work is done right first time
- **Accompanied Visits** – we feel that accompanied visits by staff to void properties would be useful to best promote the features of the property/vicinity to the potential tenant but appreciate this is currently a resource issue

- **Paperwork** – we noticed a significant amount of paperwork was used in the void process which then had to be manually entered. We feel internal processes could be improved/streamlined with forms and the use of technology
- **Co-ordinating Keys** – we understand that various contractors are often needed for voids and multi-trade contractors were discussed and it was noted this is something which the Association is looking into to reduce void days
- **Void Rent Loss** – we noticed that the Kypera system was doubling rent loss. We appreciate that this is a system error in the current version of the system and is manually altered each month by staff. We note that it can only be addressed by a system upgrade and this is unlikely in the near future
- **New Tenant Repairs** – we noted the suggestion to have a ‘new tenant repairs’ category where minor repairs which could safely wait until the void is allocated are carried out when the new tenant moves in and we thought this was reasonable and could improve timescales
- **Offer Letter** – we recommended a number of changes to the provisional offer of housing letter and worked with the Housing Officer to develop a shorter letter and a new accompanying leaflet which will be in place from January 2019
- **House Visit Form** – we worked with the Housing Officer to develop a more user friendly form which is now in use
- **Annual Visits** – during the end of tenancy visit discussion we thought it would be useful to do annual visits as we acknowledge potential end of tenancy repairs can be hidden by furniture. We are aware this is currently a resource issue
- **Non-Standard Fittings** – we noted the Association come and go on high quality fittings left at the end of tenancy, with a signed disclaimer, for example, high quality flooring or blinds/curtains, which is good practice and can be a help to the incoming tenant. However, it was noted that good quality blinds left in the void property visited had been damaged by a contractor during void works and therefore required removal
- **Medical Form** – we felt that a section on mental health should be included. This was acknowledged by the Head of Housing Services and may be included in the Medical Points Policy review

We again enjoyed the process and experience and are looking forward to scrutinising the ESSH processing and recording function within the Association from January – May 2019.

Any feedback from the Management Committee is of course welcome on the process we followed and the points raised/conclusion.