

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

**HOUSING MANAGEMENT
SERVICES COMMITTEE**

21 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING OPERATIONS

NON-LETTABLE PROPERTIES

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is to provide the members of the Housing Services Committee with an update on the numbers, criteria classification and potential options for the reduction in non – lettable properties in the City.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Housing Management Services Committee:

- 2.1 Comment and approve the proposals contained within the report
- 2.2 To receive further reports as to the progress being made in the reduction of non-lettable properties.

3 CURRENT CONTEXT OF NON LETTABLE VOIDS

- 3.1 As of 3June 2010 there are currently 596 non- lettable voids , these are broken down as follows:-

Void Status	Number of Voids
Demolition	299
On Hold	101
Returned to RSL	4
Disposal Transfer	4
Disposal	113
Potential Disposal Awaiting Decision	74
Development	1
Total	596

3.2 Summary of Status

Void Status	Description
Demolition	Properties which are part of a decommissioning scheme which are to be demolished. Once demolition has taken place these will be removed from the system
On Hold	This is broken down into several classifications and paths :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works: Fire Viability Assessment • Management: Unlawful occupation Held for Decant Use Emergency Accommodation Police use
Returned to RSL	properties which have previously been managed by NCH on behalf of RSLs/charity trusts and are now being passed back to them.
Disposal Transfer	properties which are being transferred to a RSL for them to manage.
Disposal	properties which NCH has approval to sell, and the keys have been passed back to NCC. Mainly consists of street corporate properties.
Potential Disposal Awaiting Decision	Properties which are currently being held and not being allocated but which NCH have not had approval to either decommission, sell or dispose of.
Development	Void properties which are situated within part of a development scheme within the City.

4 SUMMARY OF VOIDS TO BE REMOVED FROM NCC/NCH STOCK

4.1 The table below details those properties that are already in the process of being removed from the overall non-lettable total.

Void Status	Number of Voids	Removal from system
Demolition	299	When demolition has taken place
Returned to RSL	4	When returned to RSL
Disposal Transfer	4	When transferred to RSL
Disposal	113	When sold
Development	1	When demolished
Total	421	

4.2 If the above with 421 non-lettable voids were removed from the system today, this would leave **175 non-lettable voids**, which are the ones which NCH can have a direct impact on getting re let.

Below is a table showing a breakdown of the remaining 175 non lettable voids and what action is proposed/required to remove these from the non lettable status.

Void Status	Number of Voids
On Hold	101
Potential Disposal Awaiting Decision	74
Total	175

4.4 BREAKDOWN OF THOSE PROPERTIES CURRENTLY ON HOLD

Void Status	Breakdown by Path	Number in each path
On Hold	Held for Decant	33
	Emergency Accommodation	11
	Fire	3
	High Cost Voids Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 general voids • 16 ex-wardens accommodation 	46
	Temporary Police Use	6
	Unlawful Occupation	2
Total		101

The above properties are ones which will come off non-lettable voids and

go into the routine lettable void path at some point in the future.

4.5 **Decants**

A decant property is one that is used for temporary accommodation by an existing tenant who cannot occupy their own tenanted address at present, for example: fire, domestic violence etc.

There are currently 33 void properties held for decant use.

- 6 due to Repairs
- 5 due to Fire
- 20 due to Housing Management issues - e.g. fear of reprisal attacks, threats to kill etc...
- 2 due to Domestic Violence

The Tenancy and Estate Management (T.E.M.) section, and Lettings teams are in the final stages of reviewing their system for monitoring decanted tenancies, to ensure that they move speedily through the process and the occupant either returns to their substantive home or a found permanent accommodation elsewhere.

Lettings Officers are currently going through all the decanted properties, and liaising with service referrals and Housing Patch Managers to ensure that these are being processed swiftly.

4.6 **Emergency Accommodation**

There currently are 11 void properties being used by Housing Aid for emergency temporary accommodation. There is currently a full review being undertaken on how Nottingham City Home manages emergency accommodation.

It is likely that one recommendation from the review will be that overnight or short stay occupants are signed up and rent is collected on a daily basis. This will reduce the rent loss currently incurred and remove the properties from the non-lettable voids status.

Two Lettings staff are currently going through all emergency use accommodation and liaising with Housing Aid to get these signed up for non-secure tenancies or taking action to gain possession of the property.

4.7 **Fire**

Properties that are held in this classification are those that are currently having works done due to fire damage. Works costing between £5 and £42 thousand pounds are currently being undertaken on the three properties in this category.

4.8 High Cost Viability Assessments

There are 30 general voids in this status and 16 sheltered voids

The 16 Sheltered voids are ex Scheme Managers accommodation. Nottingham City Homes are currently in the process of looking at each property individually to assess the viability of bringing each one into useable lettable stock.

Out of the 30 general voids, 9 are currently on offer and 4 have been advertised. A list has been passed to Property Services showing the priority the Lettings Team would like the repairs carrying out on the remainder of the properties as soon as possible.

There are currently 2 properties within this status, Cockington Road and Brindley Road. These are both un-modernised Newlands properties which require major repair works in the region of £15 to £20 thousand pounds to bring up to a lettable standard. These 2 properties are adjoining on a corner plot, and it is recommended that the complete plot be considered for sale rather than carrying out the expensive repairs.

4.9 Police Use and Unlawful Occupation

There are eight properties held in these two categories – these will include properties that are illegally occupied (2) or, properties that the Police are using for surveillance/entrapment purposes.

4.9 Awaiting Decision

There are currently a total of 74 properties held in this category. These are a mixture of some sheltered accommodation, H.I.M.O.'s, and structural viability properties across the City. Once a decision is taken as to the future of these properties, swift progress to move them from the non-lettable status will take place.

However, due to the complex and sensitive nature of the issues surrounding some of these properties, Officers need to work on a set of value for money proposals to bring these properties back to re-letting/disposal and members will be detailed in a further report.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 The number of non lettable voids can and does fluctuate as decommissioned properties become void and decants, emergency accommodation, high cost voids are fed back into the lettable voids. Out of the 596 current non lettable voids NCH can influence 175 of these.

5.2 The 30 High Cost assessment general voids, are having Property Services review these, to ensure that they are put through the voids process as quickly as possible, whilst maintaining budgets prudently.

- 5.4 The demand for decants is again increasing, Officers are currently liaising with Legal Services to look at the possibility of signing people up on licence for the decant property. From initial advise it would appear that this is able to be done and Officers are currently working towards a change in our decant procedures. This will reduce the number of non lettable voids.
- 5.5 Discussions are also taking place on properties the Police use for surveillance/entrapment to look at the possibility of signing these up on a temporary licence with a nil or reduced rent charge.
- 5.6 The Temporary Accommodation use is also currently under review. It is essential that occupants are signed up for temporary use properties as soon as possible. Housing Benefit can then be back dated to when they moved in, thus reducing non-lettable voids and increasing rent revenue. This process is being reviewed by the Lettings Team and it is envisaged that the existing temporary use properties will reduce significantly within the next few weeks.
- 5.7 Colleagues in TEM are acting on the 2 illegally occupied properties to ensure these are being dealt with swiftly.
- 5.8 The above actions will result in a decrease in non-lettable voids.

6 OTHER OPTIONS

- 6.1 Regular update reports will be provided to members of this Committee to advise on the progress being made in reducing the numbers of non-lettable properties.
- 6.2 Doing nothing is not an option, as without intervention the number of non lettable voids will continue to rise.

7 FINANCIAL RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 By being prudent in its management of non-lettable properties, the Company will be providing value for money services, and furthermore it will miss out on additional income streams by properties being kept void longer than is necessary.
- 7.2 There will also be savings made to the property management charges, e.g. cost of Sitexing property, amenities standing charges, Council Tax etc.

8 IMPLICATIONS FOR NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

- 8.1 Dealing with empty properties, and delivering value for money savings and efficiencies, is a key priority for the Company.
- 8.2 By not managing effectively with non lettable properties effectively there

may be a potential for poor P.R., with over 12,000 applicants on the housing register.

9 VALUE FOR MONEY AND EFFICIENCY ISSUES

- 9.1 Failure to take action in relation to non lettable voids will result in an increase in lost revenue and a rise in associated void costs. By bringing more non lettable voids into use, the income in the Housing Revenue Account will increase.
- 9.2 Long term void properties cause blight on estates and can attract crime and A.S.B.
- 9.3 By adopting the proposals contained within this report, it is anticipated that considerable savings and efficiency gains will be made.

10 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct Equality and Diversity implications associated with the content of this report

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