



**VOID
MANAGEMENT
POLICY**

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1.0 Scope

This policy applies to all properties let by Broxtowe Borough Council. Including both General Needs and Independent Living. It does not apply the void management of garages which is covered by the Garage Management Policy. **This policy does not apply to mutual exchanges.**

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the way in which Broxtowe Borough Council will control and manage void properties within its housing stock. The void period is the time between the date of termination of the previous tenancy and start date of the new tenancy.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

We are committed to meeting housing needs and maximising rental income by having the lowest possible number of empty properties in our stock. The aims of the void management policy are:

- To minimise the time taken to relet properties
- To maximise rental income **by minimising void rent loss**
- To minimise the time taken to complete void property repairs **or modernisations**
- **To ensure properties are let to the requirements set out in the lettable standard**

4.0 Regulatory Code and Legal Framework

Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – Part XII covers the storage and clearance of belongings and will be applicable if belongings are not removed when a tenancy is terminated.

Information on the number of voids and the length of time properties have been vacant is reported annually to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government through the Local Authority Housing Statistics.

5.0 Policy

5.1 Tenancy Termination

Most properties become void following a notice period of 4 weeks given by the tenant. The Council will aim to receive a full notice period wherever possible.

During the notice period the property will be advertised and pre-allocated. There will be occasions when this is not possible, for example where the void is due to eviction or abandonment. Through effective tenancy management the Council will ensure prompt identification of any abandoned properties.

When termination is due to the death of the tenant or transfer to another property owned by the Council the full notice period will not be enforced and the property will terminate on the Sunday following the receipt of keys.

If keys are handed in by the tenant within the 4 week notice period, the tenancy will not be ended early as it is a term of the tenancy agreement that 4 weeks notice is given. This will be classed as a surrender of the property by the tenant. If the tenant changes their mind, the Housing Operations Manager will decide whether the tenancy can be reinstated. Keys must be returned to the Council by 10am on the Monday following the termination of the tenancy, otherwise another weeks rent will be charged, this in accordance with the terms of the tenancy agreement.

5.2 Inspections

All properties will be inspected prior to works commencing. Inspections will normally be completed when a property becomes void and the keys are returned, but can be carried out in the notice period when possible.

For all tenancies where notice is given, a pre-termination visit will be completed. The purpose of the visit is to discuss how the property should be left to minimise rechargeable works and to identify any potential issues which may affect the relet of the property.

If after inspection it is identified that a property requires major works, such as a new kitchen or bathroom, it will be considered whether this work should be completed during the void period, or whether it is possible to let the property and complete the works as part of a modernisation programme. It is preferable for the works to be completed after the new tenancy has commenced as this reduces the void rent loss.

If works are required to bring the property back to the lettable standard that the Council believes is as a result of tenant neglect, the Council will raise charges and a recovery process will begin to recover those costs.

5.3 Property condition

All properties let will meet the Council's lettable standard. **Decoration packs will be offered as appropriate to assist the new tenant in personalising their new property.**

If non-urgent works have been identified for completion following tenancy commencement, this will be fully explained to the incoming tenant.

If items within the property have been altered or improved by the previous tenant, the Council will decide whether they need to be removed and be returned to their original condition or can remain in the property for the new tenant. The Council will advise the new tenant, in the form of a disclaimer, what items are covered. If the Council does leave certain items in the property, it may not be able to replace or repair them should the need arise.

No tenancies will commence without a gas certificate (where there is gas at the property), electrical certificate and energy performance certificate (EPC)

The Council will ensure that there is means of the new tenant accessing essential services such as gas and electric, this includes the management of debts that may have accrued that are attributed to the previous tenant.

5.4 Allocation of property

Viewings will be completed as early as possible in the process, taking void works into account. This will allow the property sign up to be completed as a soon as the property is ready to let. This also provides an opportunity to reoffer the property early in the process if the property is refused.

Two separate appointments for viewing and sign-up will be completed. A sign-up will only be completed on the same day as a viewing in exceptional circumstances.

Once a property has been allocated, the applicant will be kept informed of progress and expected ready to let date.

The Council aim to ensure that every allocation is sustainable, through effective pre-tenancy checks and referrals to appropriate support. Sustainable lettings will reduce the number of terminations and void properties. **The Council will also take rent in advance payments from tenants to ensure that they do not start their tenancy in rent arrears.**

5.5 Difficult to let properties

Through monitoring of refusal reasons and relet times, the Council will identify properties/schemes that are more difficult to let than others. When a 'difficult to let' property becomes void pro-active steps will be taken to identify extra work that could be completed. This will vary between properties and will take into account previous reasons for refusal.

The Lettings Team will prioritise 'difficult to let' properties for pre-allocation.

Average relet time and void rent loss will be monitored on a monthly basis and analysed to identify emerging trends.

5.6 Transfers

Full inspections will be completed prior to transfer. Only in exceptional circumstances will a tenant be allowed to transfer where there is property damage or rent arrears.

Mutual exchanges will be promoted to reduce the number of transfers. When a mutual exchange takes place gas (where there is gas at the property) and electrical checks must be completed but neither property becomes void. Therefore, this policy is not applicable to mutual exchanges.

6.0 Related Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- Allocations Policy
- Tenancy Termination Procedure
- Transfer Procedure
- Decoration Allowance Procedure
- Difficult to Let Procedure
- Storage and Clearance of Belongings Procedure
- Lettable Standard

7.0 Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years. It is not expected that there will be changes to regulation or legislation which will have an impact on the need to review this policy sooner.

8.0 Document History and Approval

Date	Version	Committee Name
1/11/2017	1	Housing Committee
18/11/2020	Review	Housing Committee