

DRAFT

Template Scoping Document

Community Select Committee	
Scrutiny Review Title:	Voids Review
Background issues to review – rationale for scrutinising this issue:	When Members considered their work programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year at its meeting on 16 March 2022 and then again on 7 July 2022 it was agreed to include a review item on the Voids process.
Is this issue covered by Corporate Plans?	Yes, it is one of the Council's Key Performance Indicators in its Corporate Performance suite.
Focus of the review: (State what the review focus will be)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>To look at the current issues facing Housing Investment and Direct Service officers in making void properties ready for let</u>• <u>Identify ways to improve the current service including, where possible, reducing the time to carry out works in the property before it is relet</u>• <u>Re-engineer the letting process</u> (The context is that rather than wait until any works are done on the property invite any prospective tenant to view the property first and discuss any possible works based on the condition of the property and budget available, and then keep the relationship going through the letting process following work etc. to avoid future complaints)• <u>Better define the thresholds for standard void and major void</u> – (The context is that there is a need for more rigor regarding the levels of categories for turnaround times depending on the level of work needed)• <u>Review the lettable standard</u> – (The context is that there is a need for a brief, easily readable document that can be understood and accessible via the Council's website)• <u>Benchmark with like for like "family group" or similar composition local authorities</u>. It is felt that the current benchmarking is not helpful for the Council as the benchmarking does not reflect enough similarities with Stevenage, e.g. size, demographic, urban, retained stock etc.)

<p><u>Timing issues:</u> Are there any timing constraints to when the review can be carried out?</p>	<p>None Scrutiny Officer is aware of, other than there are only 2 formal Committee meetings in the calendar of meetings earmarked for this work. Other work may need to be carried out informally and reported back to the Committee.</p>
<p>The Committee will meet on (provide <u>dates</u> if known):</p>	<p>Dates: Day/Month/Time/Venue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2022 – Cllr John Duncan, met with officers to help identify scope issues for the review • 5 Sep presentation to the Committee giving an overview of the service, including possible lines of enquiry that could lead to improvement • Some site visits to see types of void properties at various stages of the process - dates to be agreed and carried out in Sep/Oct 2022. • Oct 2022 – Scope signed off by Committee. Feedback from any site visits and from officers/Critical friend. • Early recommendations and outline draft report to Select Committee in January 2023 • Final recommendations & report – February 2023
<p><u>SBC Leads</u> (list the Executive Portfolio Holders and SD's Heads of Service who should appear as witnesses):</p>	<p><i>Officers have suggested the following people:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Executive Portfolio Holder(s) for Housing and Housing Investment</i> • <i>Operations Director, Housing Investment & Communities & Neighbourhoods, Rob Gregory</i> • <i>Cllr John Duncan has an extensive CV and experience with running a building maintenance company who provide building services in repairs and voids to the Ministry of Defence's housing stock.</i> • <i>Tracy Jackson, Operations Manager – Providing Homes</i> • <i>Dean Stevens, Maintenance Manager</i>
<p>Any <u>other witnesses</u> (external persons/critical friend)?:</p>	<p>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. <i>Possible options identified by officers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To be advised by the Operations Director, if it is possible meet with tenants/prospective tenants to discuss their views</i>
<p><u>Allocation of lead Members</u> on specific individual issues/questions:</p>	<p>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting.</p>

Any other Questions Members wish to cover:	Members will undertake their own desktop and fact-finding research and ask questions on the following areas (list the issues to address during the interviews): <i>To be identified</i>
<u>Site visits and evidence gathering in the Community</u>	Officers are arranging some site visits to properties showing voids at various stages of the process. This can be carried out during October 2022. The dates offered are 1pm and 3.30pm on Tuesday 11 th and Thursday 13 th October.
<u>Equalities and Diversity issues:</u> The review will consider what the relevant equalities and diversity issues are regarding the Scrutiny subject that is being scrutinised	It was agreed that the review would address equalities and diversity issues directly in the review. <u>Equalities & Diversity Issues</u> – Are there any E&D issues to consider in this review? – The review should consider what equality and diversity issues a Voids service should encompass such as, fair access to bids for those in digital poverty?
<u>Constraints</u> (Issues that have been highlighted at the scoping stage but are too broad/detailed to be covered by the review):	<i>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting on 11 October 2022</i> (These issues can be captured and dealt with via other means – Briefings/email/officer action etc)
<u>Background Documents/data</u> that can be provided to the review	<i>As identified by the Committee at the draft scoping meeting 20 October 2022:</i> Evidence requested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Voids standards (??)
<u>Agreed Milestones and review sign off</u> -To be agreed by Members and officers	<i>Formal response from Executive Portfolio Holder (Executives have a Statutory requirement to respond to Scrutiny review recommendations two months after receiving a final report and recommendations of a review: Date Executive Portfolio responses are expected (dependent on the final report & executive portfolio response template publishing date): DD MM YY</i> Date for monitoring implementation of recommendations – final sign off (typically one year from completion of the review): DD MM YY (Close to this date the Select Committee will receive a report at a Committee meeting to agree the final sign off of the review recommendations)