

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL Scrutiny Report Template

Committee:	Corporate Scrutiny Committee
Date:	19/02/2025
Subject:	Recommendation from Corporate Scrutiny task and finish – Housing Services voids & allocations
Purpose of Report:	To provide an update on actions to date
Scrutiny Chair:	Councillor Douglas Fowlie
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Robin Williams
Head of Service:	Ned Michael
Report Author:	Linos Wyn Williams
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Local Members:	Not relevant

1 - Recommendation/s

The Committee is requested to:

It is felt that more time is needed to see the results achieved on performance indicators following the report undertaken by the task and finish group and interventions put in place by Housing Services following the work of the task and finish group but would ask the committee to:-

R1 - to note this report as an interim report on progress to date following recommendations made by the task and finish group on void turnaround and days taken to re-let properties.

R2 – to note the void turnaround improvement action plan, which can be found in annex 2.

2 – Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

Housing – Ensuring everyone has a place to call home

- We remain committed to working with the Welsh Government and partners, such as registered housing associations, to respond to local housing challenges.
- We will work together to identify the island's housing needs so that we can provide for the recognised need and the required tenures.
- Continue to invest in our housing stock by remodeling property that is no longer suitable and work towards achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standards II.
- Reduce the requirement for emergency accommodation units by increasing the number of permanent homes developed.
- Continue to bring empty homes back into use across the island

3 – Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members

To assist Members when scrutinising the topic:-

3.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities (focus on customer / citizen)

3.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality [focus on value]

3.3 A look at any risks [focus on risk]

3.4 Scrutiny taking a performance monitoring or quality assurance role [focus on performance & quality]

3.5 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:

- Long term
- Prevention
- Integration
- Collaboration
- Involvement

[focus on wellbeing]

3.6 The potential impacts the decision would have on:

- protected groups under the Equality Act 2010
- those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (when making strategic decisions)
- opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language

[focus on equality and the Welsh language]

4 - Key Scrutiny Questions

1. In what ways will the Housing Service incorporate and apply the best practice examples from the Housing Quality Network that have led to a reduction in void turnaround days, and how will these strategies be integrated into our current processes?
2. The action plan is ambitious, with several actions already implemented or completed. What assurance can you provide that all remaining actions will be finished by their deadlines, while also meeting the necessary resource and financial requirements?
3. In what ways will the Housing Service ensure effective communication of challenges and demands with all potential tenants waiting to move to their new homes and other stakeholders moving forward?
4. In terms of the Action Plan, Action point 11 (regular management meetings) and action point 14 (examine current processes and timeline in HMU) do not have specified completion dates. What is the proposed expected timeline for completing these actions?

5 – Background / Context

Background of task and finish group

On the 21st of November 2023 and during the scrutiny of the Corporate Scorecard within the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, it was recommended that an Elected Member led task and finish group be created to review the performance of housing services indicators PI29 and PI30, which relate to housing voids. The aim of this review was to observe current working practices and make recommendations to improve the process, in order to lower the number of days taken to complete a void property.

- **Indicator 29** - The average number of calendar days to let lettable units of accommodation (*excluding Difficult to Let – DTL's*) – it was red with a performance of 48 days against a target of 40 days. This was a decline on the 30 days seen for the same period in 2022/23 and the 35 days seen in 2021/22.
- **Indicator 30** – the outcome of indicator 29 influenced indicator 30 whereby the percentage of rent lost due to properties being empty, the corporate scorecard noted that 1.58% of rent was lost.

In the following months, the task and finish group agreed their Terms of Reference (ToR) and held several meetings with Housing Services Management team.

The task and finish group used a methodology based on a methods investigation and improvement technique called SREDIM (select, record examine, develop, implement and maintain)

Panel Membership:

Cllr Ieuan Williams, Chair, Cllr Keith Roberts, Cllr Geraint ap Bebb, Cllr Sonia Williams, Cllr Arfon Wyn and Cllr Dyfed Wyn Jones.

The task and finish group consisted of the following meetings:

- 8th February 2024 to agree the TOR and discuss the methodology
- 4th and 6th March 2024, to meet with housing staff to ask questions on the information supplied.
- 19th March 2024 to meet with the maintenance unit staff to understand the refurbishment process in further detail.
- 22nd April 2024 to discuss progress to date.

General overview of the Housing Services void operations

On an annual basis, Housing Services receives circa. 260 property notices. When a property is under notice, the term used for this is a void. Income is lost for every day a property is void. Tenant turnover is a significant and costly challenge within the housing sector.

Despite a void property being a challenge, it also provides an opportunity to inspect, refresh and improve the efficiency of each home longer term. It is also an opportunity that our homes meet statutory standards, including WHQS2023 compliance.

The target timescales for the refurbishment of a property is 50 calendar days. This classification is for any works associated with minor repairs, decoration, statutory safety checks and servicing.

The refurbishment of a property classified as a major void has significant resource and budgetary implications for the void process. This classification is for any works associated with major repairs, major plastering works, capital investment works such as component renewals (kitchen / bathroom / heating etc.), safety checks and servicing.

The cost of refurbishing these properties can run into tens of thousands of pounds.

Effective and efficient void management is necessary to:

- Maximise rental income
- Reduce waiting times so that tenants can access properties more quickly
- Meet housing demand and increase stock available for homeless households / applicants.
- Maintain and ensure the quality and safety of council homes

There are several teams that form part of void turnaround work, including:

- **Housing Solutions** – responsible for allocating properties as part of the housing register. There are circa. 900 applicants on our housing register, which is a substantial increase when comparing to 2019.
- **Housing Maintenance Unit (HMU)** – responsible for the end of tenancy inspection, void planning works and Maintenance completion of properties, ensuring they are within our Minimal Lettable Standard alongside the Wales Quality Housing Standard 2023.
- **Estate Management team**– responsible for signing new tenants and provide ongoing intervention and support where required.
- **Housing Occupational Therapist** – responsible for assessing each applicant with a medical housing need alongside assessing prospective properties to ensure they achieve long term independent living.

Key Challenges assessed by the task and finish group alongside Housing Services response & mitigation;

Risk number	Aspect assessed	Housing Services mitigation
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1	<p>Housing Maintenance Unit key risks identified;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Housing Maintenance Unit (HMU) has never been fully staffed. 2. There are ongoing challenges with recruiting painter and decorators, Electricians and Heating Engineers. 3. The poor condition that properties are handed back from some tenants. 4. Issues such as rubbish left in properties, unauthorised groundworks such as ponds and outbuildings alongside poor decoration. 5. Carrying out carbon reduction work (<i>removing fireplaces, oil boilers and moving to electric heating</i>) 6. Challenges with utility companies regarding power and meters. 7. The HMU struggle to accommodate the peaks and troughs the way voids key come in. We experience difficulties managing approx. 50 void programs of work, all running at the same time. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a review of the HMU structure has commenced. Our starting point was to develop and advertise a new Voids Supervisor role. The Voids Supervisor, alongside our Maintenance Team Leader & Manager will assess the productivity of our workforce. 2. We have recruited x 8 apprentices within the last 2 Years. A further x 5 apprentices will be appointed during 2025-26. We have recently gone out to tender for our sub-contractor framework, which consists of 23 lots. Once the framework has concluded, contractor monitoring meetings will commence with providers, ensuring they are achieving our agreed SLA. 3. End of tenancy inspections will commence in April 2025. In addition to this, we are commencing on a planned monitoring exercise of annually inspecting 10% of our properties. 4. Will be addressed as above. 5. This is undertaken as part of our void works alongside WHQS2023 and the decarbonization programme. Our action plan aims to fully cost this programme. 6. We are actively discussing issues with utility companies, with our main provider, Energy Angels. Over the last 3 months, we have had two void properties affected by this issue. 7. The void monitoring sheet is now in place and will monitor all voids closely. A weekly inter-departmental meeting to discuss voids of concern will occur as per our action plan.
2	<p>Technology risks within the voids process;</p> <p>The Housing Asset Management system, Accuserve was assessed as</p>	<p>- Since the voids review, our Housing Information Systems officers have gone back to basics with the Accuserve system through training and development for operational</p>

	being administratively heavy and adds to the hours of work required when preparing for void properties.	staff. This, alongside the successful recruitment of our new Maintenance Information Systems officer, of whom started in post on the 6 th January 2025.
3	<p>Adaptation requirements by our OT</p> <p>At the time of review, a % of applicants with adaptation needs that required OT support, resulted in an increase days taken to assess the suitability of accommodation for their longer-term social housing needs.</p>	<p>Since the task and finish group, Housing Services have worked on defining the role and responsibility of our Housing OT. This is to ensure the workload is manageable and partners, applicants and other stakeholders are fully aware of the remit. This can be found in appendix 2.</p> <p>There are no longer delays with assessing prospective properties for housing applicants with an adaptation requirement.</p> <p>We adopt a common sense approach whereby if an applicant requires a certain level of adaptations and is matched to a suitable void property, suitability assessments are no longer undertaken. This is for lower-level adaptations such as level access showers and / or grab rails.</p>
4	<p>Sensitive Let Policy review</p> <p>The Sensitive Let policy leads to an increased number of void days due to the requirement to undertake additional checks for applicants being considered for properties in Tyddyn Mostyn, Peibio Close, Ty'n Caeau and Ger y Graig (<i>all designated as sensitive let areas since 2017 due to ASB challenges</i>)</p> <p>(18.09.2017) – Executive Committee Sensitive Let Policy approval)</p>	<p>The current format of our Sensitive Let Policy has been in situ since 2017. It does not reflect some of the current complexities that Housing Services are presented with. The policy in its current form has aimed to achieve its purpose, which is to reduce the risks of ASB in areas that have previously been prevalent with challenges. In addition to this, the Policy is intended to provide additional reassurance to that provided in the Common Allocations Policy regarding achieving balance and social inclusion on our estates.</p> <p>An internal review is underway, and an updated version of the revised Sensitive Let Policy will be discussed at the February 2025 Senior Management meeting.</p> <p>This policy will require democratic approval.</p>

5	<p>Property affordability assessments</p> <p>Some delays with housing allocations where a financial assessment is required to ensure incoming tenants can afford rental costs.</p>	<p>Pre-tenancy financial due diligence checks are paramount to sustainable and affordable longer term secure contracts.</p> <p>Housing applicants are required to provide an overview of their financial position at the time of application alongside when they are being considered for a property.</p> <p>A new process has been agreed whereby;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applicants that are in employment can be financially assessed by our Housing Solutions Team at the point they come up on the list for a property. - Applicants that have more complex income streams, such as being supported by welfare benefits, are financially assessed by the Financial Inclusion Team
6	<p>Challenges with new builds and our old stock</p> <p>An increase in some tenant expectations comparing existing housing stock to new build stock, remembering a large proportion of our stock is approaching 80 - 100 years old.</p>	<p>All void properties undergo full decoration alongside installation of flooring.</p> <p>This is to ensure the quality of our homes upon allocation achieved the Renting Homes Wales Act 2016, Wales Quality Housing Standard 2023 alongside our minimal lettable standard.</p> <p>Void turnaround on an existing property when comparing a new build will always be much higher, especially if a tenant has lived within the property for decades.</p>
7	<p>Housing Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telephone sign up were viewed by the Solutions team to increase void days - Very short notice of some HMU handovers given to the Housing Solutions Team for property sign up. 	<p>Sign-ups are offered both by phone and face to face. The drive for sign ups will always ensure that void days are not impacted, ensuring incoming tenants can move into their homes as soon as possible.</p> <p>Virtual sign ups can provide a degree of flexibility for incoming tenants – examples of this is someone who works full time, being able to undertake the sign up by phone, sign and return the Secure Contract on the same day to which they are provided with the key safe code to enter.</p>

8	<p>Renting Homes Wales Act 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adding additional void days when a property is handed back due to tenants passing away. - Increased compliance requirements as part of the property sign up. 	<p>The Act has increased our void days by an average of 4 days per void property when a tenant passes away.</p> <p>The increase in compliance required as part of the property sign up has added pressure onto our void teams, however this aspect of compliance is essential to maintain the Law and re-assure our homes are fit for human habitation. An extract from Inside Housing can be seen below, providing information on associated risks of not conforming with the Renting Homes Wales Act.</p>
9	<p>Wales Quality Housing Standard 2023</p>	<p>WHQS 2023 is a positive program for the social housing sector in Wales. As with phase one of WHQS, the Council embraces the required changes and improvements to achieve compliance within the realms of phase two.</p> <p>There are however, cost and resource implications that will continually be assessed and monitored as per our Housing Revenue Account business plan.</p> <p>The x 8 essential requirements of WHQS 2023 includes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Homes must be in good condition - Homes must be safe and secure - Not cost too much to heat. And not be bad for the environment - Have an up-to-date kitchen - Have an up-to-date bathroom - Be comfortable. And suit the person living there - Have a garden if possible. - Have nice outside space if possible

In addition to the above, the following actions have been achieved;

- Developed a real time data-led voids monitoring document, which enables the department to view in real time status of any current void property turnaround timescales, alongside income lost per property.
- This data is reviewed the bi-weekly operational voids meeting whereby operational staff meet every week to hold in-depth property-based discussions alongside a management monitoring group
- Recruited an additional painter and decorator (*this role was advertised x 4 times before we appointed*) and appointed 2 Contractors who can carry our work on Major Void Properties

Actions going forward

Action Plan

- Develop a Void Policy document and review Letting Standards document.
- Setting a realistic target for void turnaround in 2025/26 of 35 days
- End of tenancy inspections will occur between Housing Management and Housing Maintenance to address issues and requirements prior to tenant departure.
- Develop a tenant departure survey to understand the rationale behind notices given. Some notices will be outside of our control, including tenants passing away and tenants moving into residential homes.
- Recruit to roles with full consideration given on specific hard to recruit Maintenance roles and arranging a meet the employer employability event, in partnership with Môn CF and DWP.
- In depth property analysis as per our newly developed void monitoring spreadsheet to identify problems earlier and resolve through an increase in discussions and plans to troubleshoot issues (*for example, the new data document can inform us of when a property is becoming problematic through either resource issues such as sickness or delays in capital orders, for example a new front door*)
- Learn from other areas and the Housing Quality Network (HQN) on good practice and examples whereby void turnaround days have decreased due to various interventions, that aren't currently within our practice.
- More departmental emphasis given on the void income loss as we're currently driven by void turnaround days. The balance between both PI's and income loss monitoring is essential for positive business management.

6 – Equality Impact Assessment [including impacts on the Welsh Language]

6.1 Potential impacts on protected groups under the Equality Act 2010

6.2 Potential impacts on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (strategic decisions)

6.3 Potential impacts on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language

Not applicable

7 – Financial Implications

Financial implications is one of the key risks with the authority's void work requirements. The longer and the more properties that are on our void list, the larger the income loss will be.

With the introduction of WHQS 2023, the renting Homes Wales Act. and the very nature of an ageing housing stock, means increasing financial implications.

8 – Appendices:

<u>Appendix one - Task and finish report</u>

<u>Appendix two - Proposed action plan</u>

9 - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):

None

Report on the conclusions of the voids task and finish work group

1. Introduction

In the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on the 21st November 2023 following the scrutiny of the Corporate Scorecard it was decided that a task and finish group be created to review the performance of Indicator 29 – The average number of calendar days to let lettable units of accommodation (excluding DTLs) – it was red with a performance of 48 days against a target of 40 days. This was a decline on the 30 days seen for the same period in 2022/23 and the 35 days seen in 2021/22.

This has an effect on indicator 30, the percentage of rent lost due to properties being empty, the corporate scorecard noted that 1.58% of rent was lost. Assuming that the total rent is approximately £22.5 million this equates to a sum of roughly £355,500 per year. The closer we can bring the number of empty days to the target or set a new target based on the optimum time to carry out repairs or refurbishment will bring this loss of income down.

In the following months the group was set up and terms of reference agreed, see appendix 1. It was decided to use a methodology of SREDIM, select (the problem), record (the current process), examine (the current process), develop (a new process or identify the problem), implement (the new process or recommendations), maintain (the improved situation).

The group met informally in early February to decide on a set of questions to begin the work, see appendix 2. After receiving the questions from the group and a set written by scrutiny officers, staff from housing prepared a detailed set of information to assist the group in understanding the process of letting out our social housing. See appendices 3 and 4. We were also supplied with the Lettable Standards document – appendix 5 and the new tenancy agreement/contract appendix 6.

Following this the group has met on 5 occasions:

8th February to agree the TOR and discuss the methodology

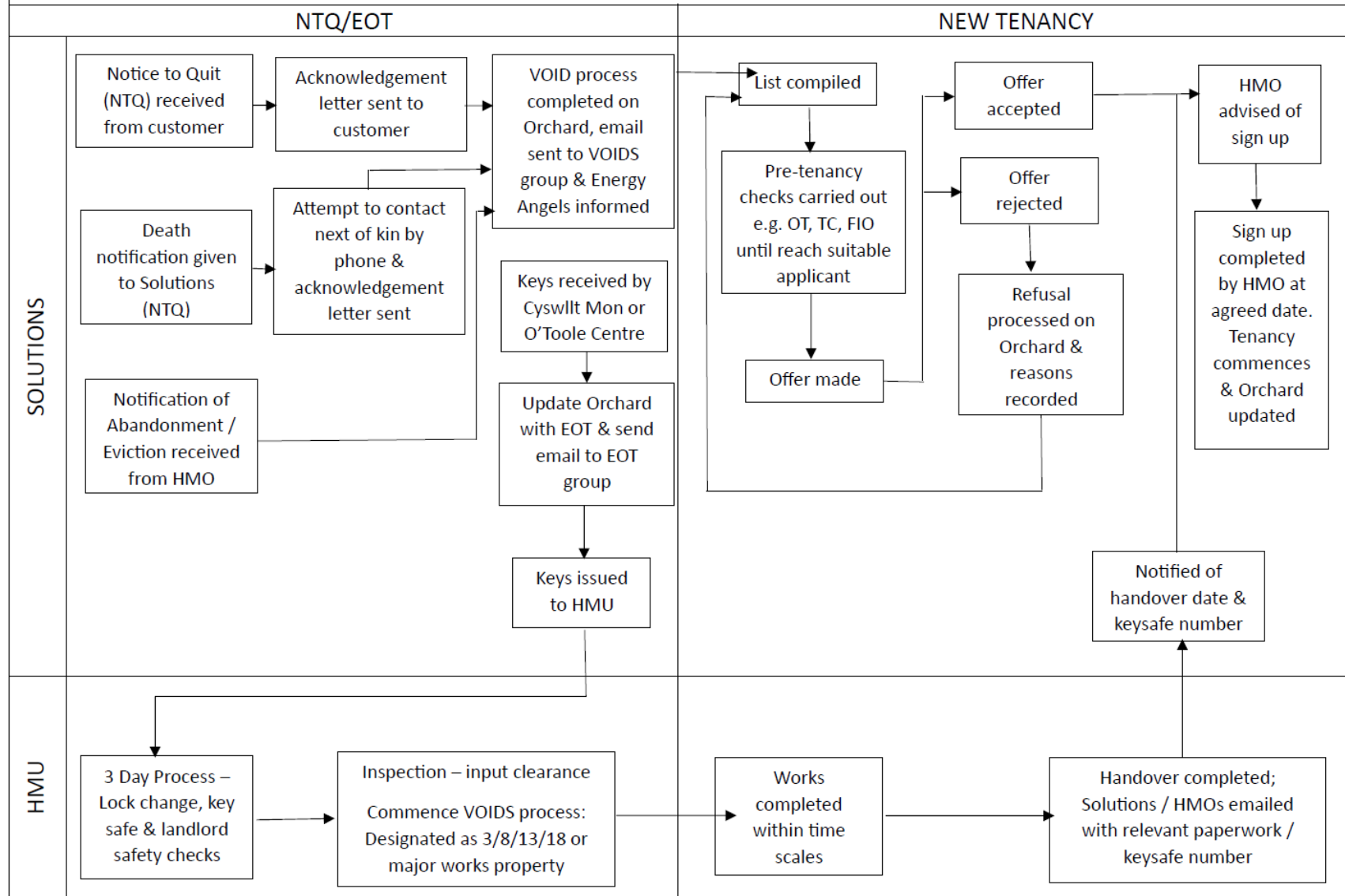
4th and 6th March – to meet with housing staff to ask questions on the information supplied.

19th March to meet with the maintenance unit staff to understand the refurbishment process in further detail.

22nd April to discuss progress to date.

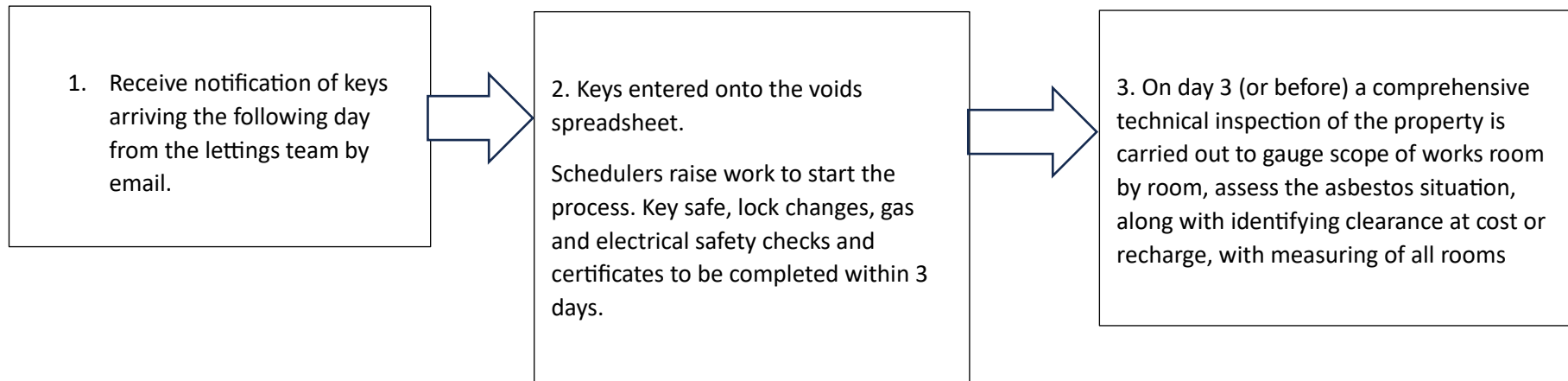
2. Record – documenting the process of letting out a property. Below are two detailed flowcharts of the process followed by the Solutions team and the HMU (Housing Maintenance Unit)

VOIDS PROCESS – ALLOCATIONS PERIOD

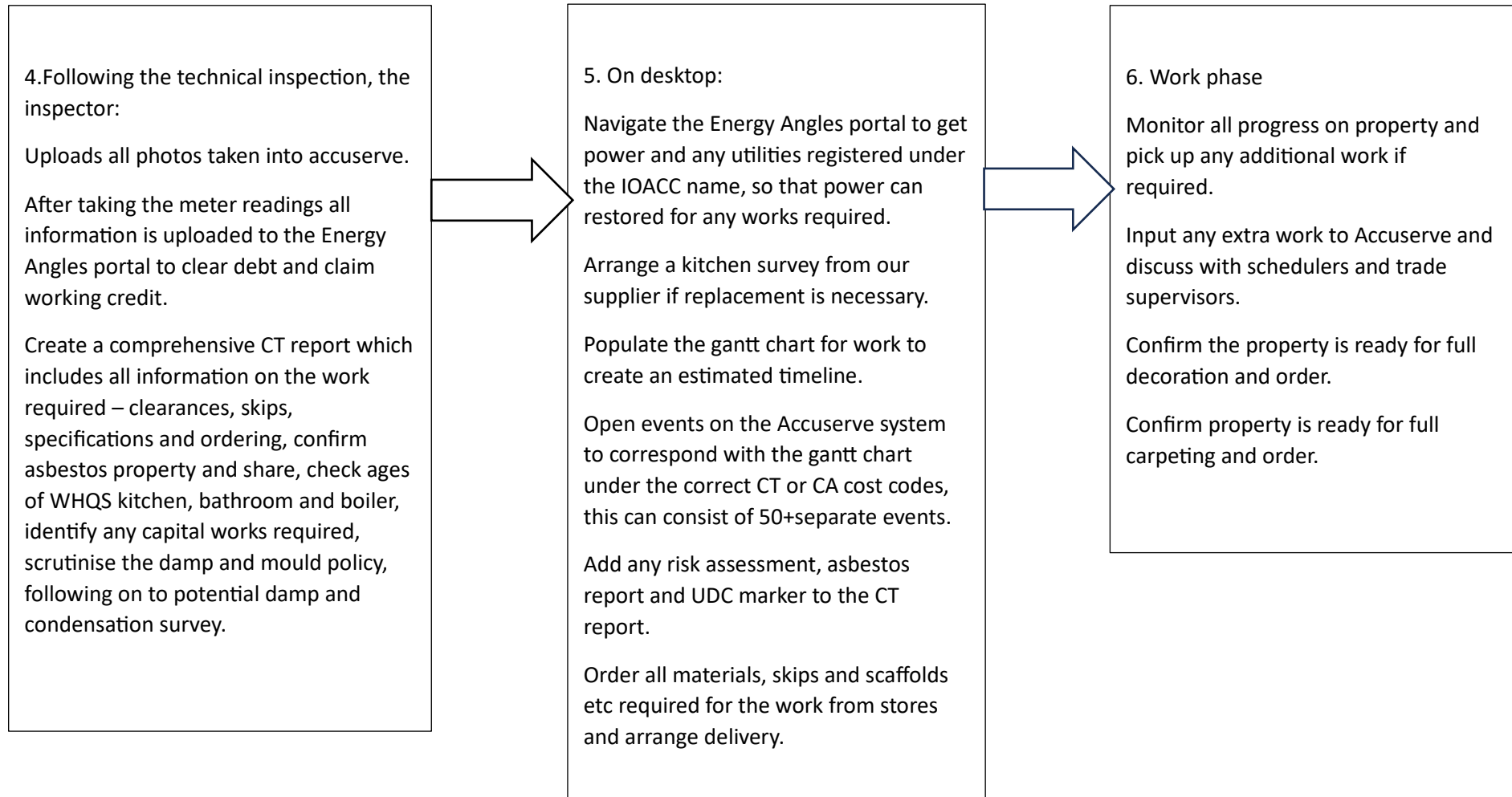


Detailed voids process for the HMU section

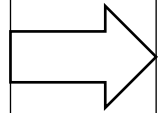
The first 3 days



Following on from the first 3 days



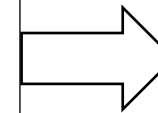
7. Carry out a pre-handover check 48 hours prior to handover to ensure all works required can be completed in time, arrange last minute works if needed



8. Create a Pre-handover file which consists of the following:

- CT report
- Fuel certificate
- Electrical Certificate
- Legionella Certificate
- EPC Certificate
- WHQS compliance sheet
- Damp and mould literature

Ensure there is enough power on meter to carry out a recommission.



8. Carry out the technical handover, ensure that the handover file is left within the property.

Ensure that all paperwork is scanned and sent over to the solutions team.

Put the property keys in the keysafe, ensure the property is secure.

3. Examine – analysis of the process

The Solutions team have identified 6 areas that are problematic, see appendix 3 for the detail:

1. Lets where an occupational therapist is involved.
2. Sensitive to let property.
3. Short notice of handovers from the HMU.
4. Lets where the a financial inclusion assessment is required.
5. The delivery of keys from the HMU.
6. Telephone sign ups.

The next section will document the solutions proposed by the Solutions team.

The HMU unit noted 14 areas that influence on the complexity of the refurbishment process:

1. All voids target times were set before RHW, WHQS, Damp + Mould and other W.G. targets have been introduced, with no amendments to compensate for all additional work resulting from the additional legislation.
2. Tenant expectations due to comparing existing housing to new build specifications, remembering a large proportion of our stock is approaching 80 - 100 years old.
3. The poor condition we receive a lot of our properties back from tenants.
4. Shortage of available trades/contractors and supervision resource due to support required to other areas such as reactive maintenance, tight repair priority times and managing staff leave and sickness absences, all made worse since all visits to our customers are on appointment only basis.
5. The HMU struggle to accommodate the peaks and troughs the way voids key come in. We experience difficulties managing approx. 50 void programs of work, all running at the same time.
6. Property clearance, where tenants are just walking out and leaving large amounts of rubbish and old furniture.
7. Our properties are now expected to be brought up to a refurbished state, rather than a minimal lettable standard.
8. Dealing with external gardens and fencing, where tenants have built their own sheds and fencing etc., which need to be removed, made safe and reinstated for incoming tenants.
9. I.T. concerns, Accuserve voids management can be time consuming.
10. Meeting Welsh government standards. Pre Covid, an average of 20% of voids were major. Now, 80% of voids are major as more kitchens + bathrooms are being fitted as we are approaching WHQS2
11. It could be stated that we are approaching a time where all voids will be major, considering WHQS2023, full decoration, full flooring just as a starting point.

12. New standards from RHW (Full decoration + Full floor covering + additional smoke alarms) and Capital works (Front + rear doors, E7 heating, boiler exchanges) and Damp + Mold (PIV + Humidity fans) work now being completed whilst void.
13. Carrying out carbon reduction work (removing fireplaces, oil boilers and moving to electric heating)
14. Challenges with utility companies regarding power and meters.

These issues were discussed in the meeting at the HMU on the 19th March and are discussed in the next section.

4. Develop – possible solutions to the problems identified.

The solutions team have already thought about potential solutions to the 6 problem areas they identified. These are:

1. Limit number of OT referrals sent for an applicant to 2 properties, which will allow solutions to proceed with other lists should the applicant come up top for another property.
Give deadlines to the OT for feedback if the keys for the property is with HMU – e.g. 5 working days. Should no feedback be received within the deadline the solutions officer will carry on with the list.
Solutions to by-pass the OT referral in situations where the property is a bungalow and only a LAS is required for the applicant – subject to management approval.
2. Review the S/L policy and the process needed to allocate properties within these estates.
Arrange a quick 30 minute meeting with the relevant HMO / ASB officer to discuss the applicants instead of sending an email and waiting 5 days for a reply.
3. Receive handover emails earlier in order for solutions to arrange a sign up ASAP, but explain to the customer that there *might* be a delay in the handover. Explain that this is due to the fact that we now carpet and decorate the property for them. However, if the sign up is done remotely (i.e. telephone) then it will just be a case of releasing the keysafe number once the handover has taken place. This would only work if the sign up was done over the telephone and not in person.
4. Solutions team leader to review with FIO team leader their capacity on a two monthly basis and if FIO are able to conduct the FIO to save time they would do so. If not, Solutions to continue to assess the affordability of applicants who work full time and receive no benefits / UC, however need to remind customer services to encourage the applicant to complete the Income and Expenditure form with the application form.
5. HMU staff re-commence collecting the keys from Llangefni office when they are passing throughout the day.

6. Still offer the telephone sign up for applicants who wish to do the sign up this way, however not to offer this as the 'default' option and to ask if they would like a face to face sign up in order for the keys to be given the same day. If a face to face sign up is requested, solutions officer to send a copy of the occupation contract via email beforehand in order to save time during the sign up appointment.

A few but not all of the issues raised by the HMU were discussed in the meeting on the 19th March. Accuserve is not viewed as a concern, but the administration time involved in fully documenting a refurbishment is noted. The extra information is seen as a benefit when evidence is required that the Council is complying with the many extra requirements that we have to comply with today.

The main issue is one of capacity. The HMU manager shared the voids gantt chart/spreadsheet which highlighted the issue. On the 19th March there were 46 voids in the system, 31 (67%) were classed as major works. The gantt chart covered 12 days. If we multiply those days by the 46 properties being worked on we have 552 days that could be productive if we had the workforce. The number of days with resources working on properties was 201, leaving 351 days without a trade working on a property, 64% non-productive days.

The HMU manager shared an updated gantt chart in early May. The number of voids had risen to 59 houses. 37 (63%) were classed as major works. The gantt chart covered 19 days from 3rd to the 31st of May. 59 voids over 19 days is 1121 days. 766 of these days had no resource allocated to the voids, taking the percentage of non-productive days to 68%.

There are roughly 200 voids a year with the numbers varying from 6 a month in July and August 2023 to 26 a month in April 26.

The HMU Manager believes that a major refurbishment would take 25 days to complete if resources were available from start to finish.

The obvious solution is to employ more tradesmen. The HMU currently have two teams working on voids. These teams comprise of 2 electricians, 2 plumbers, 2 joiners, 2 plasterers and 2 labourers. External tradesmen are also contracted to complete work like fitting kitchens. Often many of the voids team have to work on day to day maintenance if staff from that team are on holiday or sick leave. The HMU was brought in house in 2015 and has never been fully staffed.

Following conversations with the Head of Service and the Section 151 Officer the task and finish group recommended that:

1. the local performance target for Key Performance Indicator 29 be set at 35 calendar days to relet lettable units of accommodation (excluding difficult to let units).

2 the Housing Service prepare a costed action plan to reduce the number of calendar days to relet units of accommodation from current performance to 35 calendar days. The plan should include steps to reduce the current level of unproductive time in the reletting process.

3 the task and finish group request the Housing Service to prepare a costed action plan to ensure sufficient resource to complete the necessary works on an average number of 4 vacant units per week and in order to ensure that units are ready to relet within the revised target

4 recommend that the Housing Service examines current processes and the Housing Maintenance Unit in order to reduce the current level of unproductive time lost.

The new Housing Asset management plan to reach WHQS needs to be considered in association with voids. If a maximum number of voids were set for any one time should and external company be used to bring the number down.

5. Implementation and maintenance

The suggestions from the Solutions team to be implemented as soon as possible.

A comprehensive and detailed business plan to achieve recommendations 1 to 4 above to be developed by December, with implementation over the following six months and the new target of 35 days set by April 2025.

6. Lessons learned

Although this task and finish project has been a valuable experience, the question should be considered if a task and finish group by committee is the most effective way of investigating performance? A committee is confined to a few meetings and doesn't want to impede on Officers time in areas that can be sensitive. The Authority has a transformation section, should the Senior Management team and the Executive consider training them in business process improvement techniques and should that work be considered as normal and valuable if it can bring about improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. Should the Council consider other Total Quality Management or Continuous Improvement methods to improve productivity and performance in the future. This would be akin to making the Council a Learning Authority as was suggested in Education a couple of years ago.

7. General Comments and thanks

The task and finish group acknowledge that the Housing Departments performance is amongst the best in North Wales and that all Authorities and Housing Associations face challenges in keeping void times down to targets.

We are facing an unprecedented period in housing with over 700 on the list for a house and many private landlords deciding to pull out of the market. Being able to squeeze all improvements in void performance should assist us in bringing the numbers on the list down sooner.

The group would like to thank all of the Housing staff that gave of their time to answer all our questions and provide us with the required documentation.

Action No.	Action	Lead Officer	Completion date
1	Develop a void management policy that encompasses Renting Homes Wales Act, WHQS2023 and the Councils' Minimal lettable standard	Llinos Williams	April 2025
2	Review the Sensitive Let Policy to ensure it achieves the required outcomes and has the least impact on void turnaround days as possible	Llinos Williams Dewi Parry	March 2025
3	Develop the live / real time void monitoring database for continuous monitoring	Darren Gerrard	January 2025

4	Develop the operational void monitoring group	Darren Gerrard	January 2025
5	Workshop with all staff involved in voids turnaround once policy is in place	Ned Michael Llinos Williams Dafydd Rowlands	April 2025
6	Review Maintenance workforce capacity, ensuring performance is continually high. Consideration given to business cases on invest to save recruitment vs sub-contracting.	Dafydd Rowlands	Ongoing to commence from January 2025
7	Develop operational procedures as part of the wider voids policy	Solutions and Maintenance Operational Team	June 2025 (post approval of voids policy)
8	Ongoing housing application to go live via CRM	Llinos Williams	June 2025

9	Elected Member workshop on voids policy, procedures and how best they can support with reducing demands on officers (for example, persistent contact from housing applicants)	Llinos Williams Dewi Parry	Summer 2025
10	Cost out WHQS2023 and decarbonisation in respect of voids for the next 10 Years	Dafydd Rowlands	
11	Regular Management meetings regarding properties that are becoming a concern (i.e. they are heading to be out of target) – agree on a property specific plan of action)	Hefin Thomas Llinos Williams Dewi Meredith Dafydd Rowlands	
12	Commence end of tenancy inspections – inform outgoing tenants of their end of tenancy requirements and our re-charging policy	Community Housing Technical Services	April 2025
13	Develop an end of tenancy survey in order to understand why tenants are looking to move on from their homes	Llinos Williams Dewi Parry Karen Roberts	April 2025

14	Examine current processes and timelines in the Housing Maintenance Unit in order to reduce the current level of unproductive time lost.	Hefin Thomas Dafydd Rowlands Darren Gerrard	
15	Review performance indicator for 2025-26 based on a costed forecast on completing a minimum of x 4 void properties per week. Task and Finish group recommends x 35 days.	Tim Rheoli Tai	February 2025