

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Corporate Manager – Housing Options	Report Number: JSC/01/16
To: Joint Scrutiny Committee	Date of meeting: 17 February 2016

VOID PERFORMANCE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee with information regarding void re-let performance in the two districts.
- 1.2 To provide information about measures which have been taken to improve performance and work which is on-going.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the contents of the report and the on-going work to improve performance be noted.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Re-let performance has a direct impact on resources within the HRA. Rent loss and payment of council tax reduces the funds available for other activities.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 Extended void periods and the resulting loss of rental income presents a risk to the two Councils' business plans.

5. Equality Analysis

- 5.1 There are no equality issues associated with this report.

6. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 6.1 Currently Mid Suffolk has an in-house team which carries out repairs in void properties whereas Babergh uses an external contractor. Work is in progress to review the delivery of responsive repairs, including repairs in void properties, across the two districts.
- 6.2 The review will consider the options for improving and integrating the service to provide the best quality and value for money service for residents in both Council areas.

7. Void Management

- 7.1 In each authority just over 200 properties become void each year and are re-let following repairs and safety checks via Gateway to Homechoice.

- 7.2 Management of this process involves staff from two teams; Housing Options and Asset Management. The Housing Options Team carries out the administrative work required when a tenancy is brought to an end, arranges for invoices to be paid, visits the property before the tenancy ends, advertises and allocates vacancies to new tenants and carries out accompanied viewings.
- 7.3 The Asset Management Team is responsible for inspecting properties when they become vacant, specifying the work required to bring them up to the two Councils' lettable standard and completing or arranging for repairs and safety checks to be carried out.

8. Recent Re-let Performance

- 8.1 Appendix A shows the average number of days properties were void and compares 2014/15 with the current year. The graphs show performance for all properties, those requiring only standard repairs, those requiring major works, for example a fire damaged property and those requiring minor capital work such as a new kitchen or bathroom.
- 8.2 The target is to achieve an average re-let performance of 28 days for all properties. Whilst this will not be achieved this year there has been an improvement compared to the same period last year. The average time has reduced from 48 to 42 days in Babergh and from 70 to 45 days in Mid Suffolk. The average times to re-let those properties requiring only standard repairs has reduced from 39 to 26 in Babergh and from 53 to 34 in Mid Suffolk.
- 8.3 The figures in Appendix A and 8.2 above are a calculation of the whole time a property is void i.e. from the end of one tenancy to the date a new tenancy starts.
- 8.4 The tables below break the time into the number of days to carry out repairs for the different types of work required and the time taken after the work is complete and before a new tenancy begins.
- 8.5 The table highlights the differences between properties requiring major works and those requiring only standard repairs. It also shows that the time to allocate properties to new tenants is higher for sheltered and very sheltered housing. Babergh has two very sheltered schemes which are often harder to let due to lack of demand from people who require on-site care provision and for whom there is funding available.
- 8.6 The sheltered housing review will take into account demand in recommending the best future use for each individual scheme.

Table 1: Babergh

	April – December 2015	Target (days)	Actual (days)
Time taken to carry out repairs	Average time to carry out repairs (all properties)	no target	40
	Average time from keys received to Ready to Let (RTL) (properties requiring major works)	54	154
	Average time from keys received to RTL (properties requiring some capital work)	14	51
	Average time from keys received to RTL (properties requiring only standard repairs)	7	22
Time taken to re-let after repairs complete	Average time from RTL to tenancy start date (all properties)	no target	9
	Average time from RTL to tenancy start date (general needs properties)	no target	6
	Average time from RTL to tenancy start date (sheltered properties)	no target	8
	Average time from RTL to tenancy start date (very sheltered properties)	no target	51

Table 2: Mid Suffolk

	April – December 2015	Target (days)	Actual (days)
Time taken to carry out repairs	Average time to carry out repairs (all properties)	no target	41
	Average time from keys received to RTL (properties requiring major works)	54	148
	Average time from keys received to RTL (properties requiring some capital work)	14	46
	Average time from keys received to RTL (properties requiring only standard repairs)	7	29
Time taken to re-let after repairs complete	Average time from RTL to tenancy start date (all properties)	no target	9
	Average time from RTL to tenancy start date (general needs properties)	no target	7
	Average time from RTL to tenancy start date (sheltered properties)	no target	14

9. Action plan

- 9.1 In September 2014 V4 Services were commissioned to carry out a review of void management.
- 9.2 V4 organised three workshops attended by all staff involved with void properties, examined our procedures and processes and produced an action plan (see appendix B).
- 9.3 Some of the actions identified have already been completed. Others are dependent on the implementation of a single consolidated IT system for both authorities which is due to be introduced in May 2016.
- 9.4 Two assistant surveyors and a surveyor specify the work required in void properties across the two districts and are now all employed in Asset Management. To improve communication a move within the Needham Market offices will see the Asset Management and Housing Options Teams located in adjacent areas.
- 9.5 Regular meetings are held between the Senior Surveyor and Housing Options Manager to review performance throughout the year.
- 9.6 The two Councils will shortly have established a standing list of contractors who are approved for specific categories of repair work. This will speed up the administration of properties requiring major works which the in-house team is unable to take on.
- 9.7 A new mobile working IT module called Total Mobile which will be introduced in May will improve efficiency. Tradesmen will receive notification of their jobs and report completion electronically.

10. Trades Team Review

- 10.1 The action plan identified that improvement in performance is also dependent on a review of the delivery arrangements for responsive repairs. An options appraisal is currently being undertaken with two options under consideration. Option 1 is to invest in a rejuvenated in-house team to provide repairs for both districts. Option 2 is to outsource repairs and maintenance services to an external provider.
- 10.2 Option 1 will be recommended to Executive and Strategy Committees in February. The in-house option provides greater flexibility and presents an opportunity to expand the business in the future to undertake works for other organisations. It would also build on the positives of the existing Direct Labour Organisation, such as high customer satisfaction, whilst implementing a robust set of performance measures.

11. Appendices

Title	Location
(a) Performance Graphs	Attached
(b) Action Plan	Attached

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Average re-let times Mid Suffolk

The vertical axis shows the cumulative average number of days properties were void

Table 1 All properties

Number of properties April – Dec

2014/15: 155

2015/16: 151

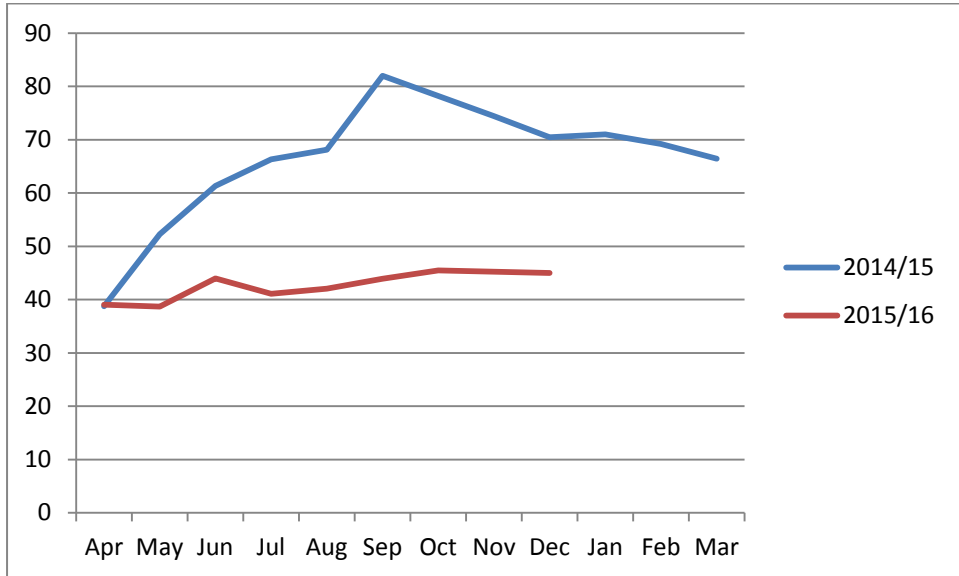


Table 2 Properties requiring only standard void repairs

Number of properties April – Dec

2014/15: 87

2015/16: 99

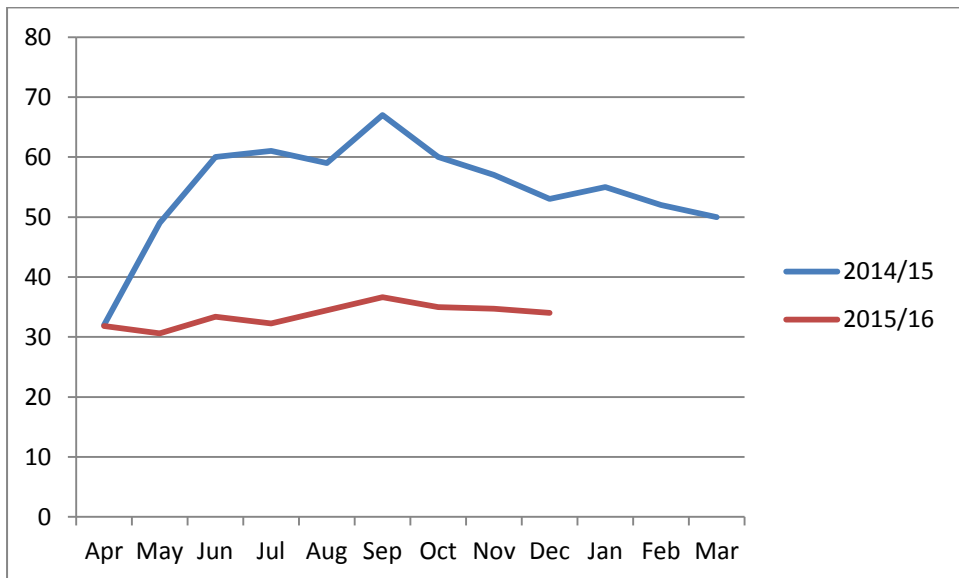


Table 3 Properties requiring major works

Number of properties April – Dec

2014/15: 26

2015/16: 9

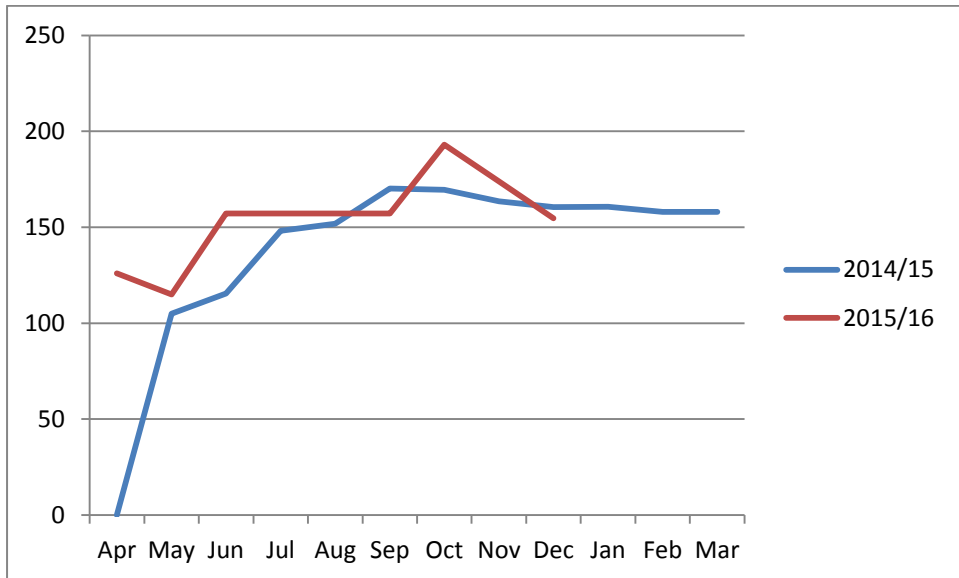
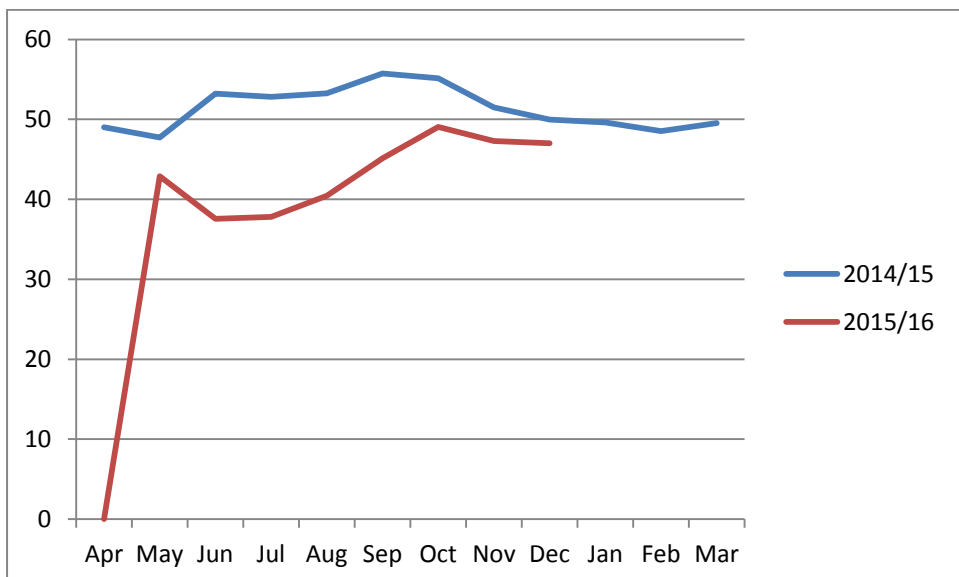


Table 4 Properties requiring some capital expenditure such as a new kitchen or bathroom

Number of properties April – Dec

2014/15: 42

2015/16: 43



Average re-let times Babergh

The vertical axis shows the cumulative average number of days properties were void

Table 1 All properties

Number of properties April – Dec

2014/15: 158

2015/16: 163

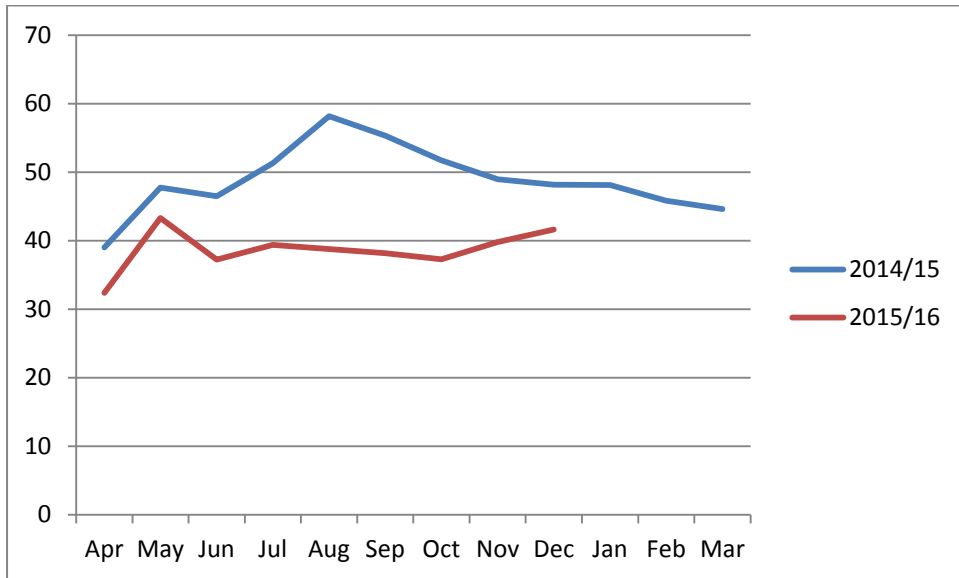


Table 2 Properties requiring only standard void repairs

Number of properties April – Dec

2014/15: 92

2015/16: 112

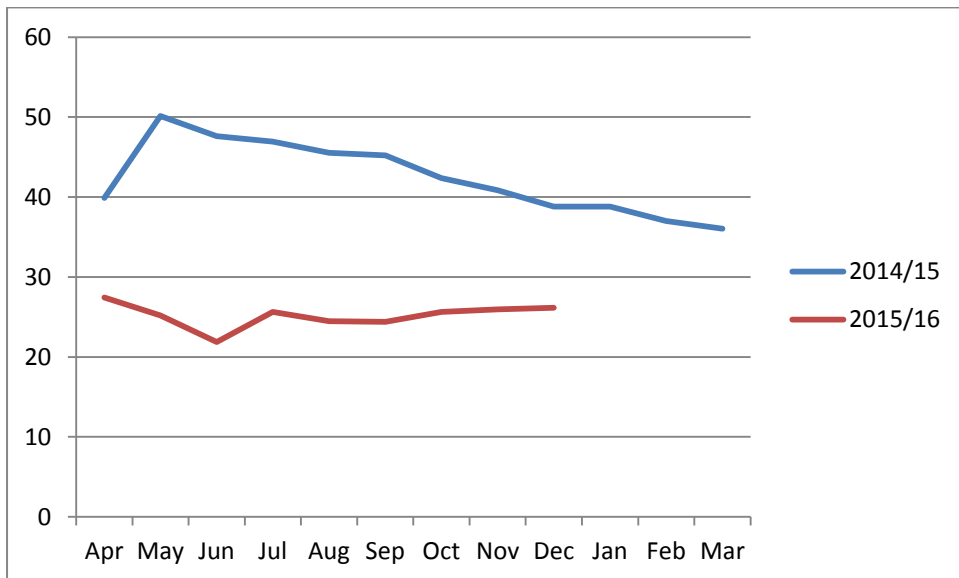


Table 3 Properties requiring major works

Number of properties April – Dec
 2014/15: 7
 2015/16: 12

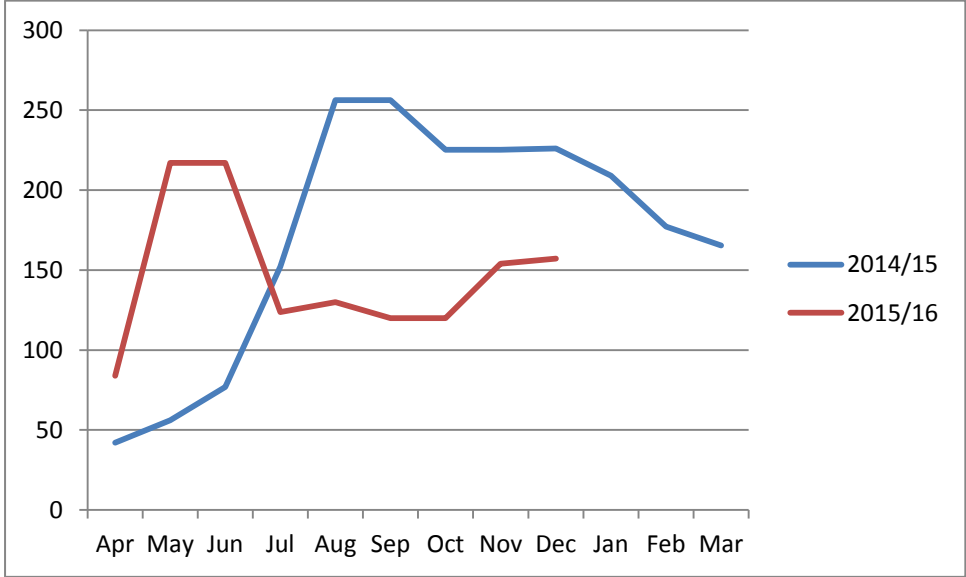
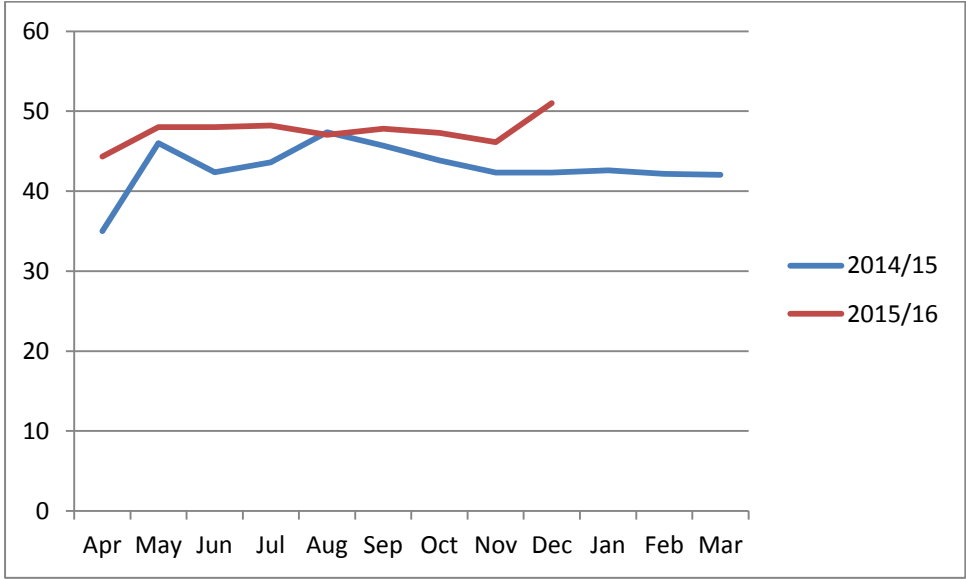


Table 4 Properties requiring some capital expenditure such as a new kitchen or bathroom

Number of properties April – Dec
 2014/15: 58
 2015/16: 39



Voids: V4 Action Plan

Update: January 2016

Ref	Action	Issues	Dependencies on other projects	Progress	Status
1	Agree a schedule of recharges which can be provided to tenants	Adapt Babergh schedule (based on SoR's) for use across both councils	Review of tenancy conditions	Completed – in use	Complete
2	Design a single pre-term/ advert/ inspection form which can be pre-populated with property information	Currently no capability to both pre-populate and upload from forms (can do either)	Capita system upgrade due May 2016	Pre-term form designed and in use. Cannot be pre-populated until Capita upgraded. Raised with Capita	Outstanding – issues to resolve
3	Produce criteria for determining whether kitchens or bathrooms require renewal at the void stage	To assist at pre-termination inspection stage		Criteria to be drafted and VLOs/VOs to be trained.	Complete Voids Handbook contains traffic light system for kitchen and bathroom renewal
4	Develop a process to better identify the need for major works at voids stage	Traffic light system to be developed		VLOs to make initial assessment at pre-term. VO's to confirm at Works Survey	Complete Voids Handbook contains traffic light system to identify properties which require major works
5	Adapt the information provided at Weekly Void Meeting to enable Trades Team and Morrisons to forecast work volume and resourcing	Need to ensure PTI enables better resource planning – little/no opportunity to subcontract MSDC work	Trades Team Review Review/ re-procurement of repairs contract	Information for weekly voids meeting to be provided by process in action 3	Partially complete. Information from Pre-termination inspections utilised but further work dependant on Trades Team Review / procurement of repairs contract

APPENDIX B

Ref	Action	Issues	Dependencies on other projects	Progress	Status
6	Improve system for the tracking of keys returned to BDC/ sheltered schemes	Still need to resolve whether sheltered tenants to be allowed to hand in keys to Scheme Managers. Training required for BDC Customer Services staff (high turnover)	Sheltered scheme review Customer services delivery	Tenants to be instructed to return keys to scheme managers. Admin staff to phone scheme managers on termination date to check keys received. Stop keys being handed in at Sudbury Town Hall.	Resolved
7	Implement single Schedule of Rates	Need to agree and standardise how Capita records asset/ component info	Capita system upgrade due May 2016		Outstanding – issues to resolve
8	Optimising the trades team in Mid Suffolk	Lack of supervision on site – proposal for Interim Trades Team Supervisor	Organisational structure Trades Team Review	Interim to be appointed to supervise DLO and undertake options appraisal re future provision of responsive repairs	Interim appointed June 2015
9	Ensure that trades teams are set target dates for the completion of works	Need to set dates in line with BDC target dates. Requires greater level of supervision to perform against	Organisational structure Trades Team Review	Service Level Agreement between Housing options and Asset Mgt to be introduced. Void categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard 14 calendar days 	Drafted and times for repairs changed to 7

APPENDIX B

Ref	Action	Issues	Dependencies on other projects	Progress	Status
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini major 21 calendar days • Major 63 calendar days 	14 54
10	Flooring contractor – scheduling of work to MSDC voids	Undertaken at end of void stage, delay can have impact on letting date. Need to improve co-ordination Potentially no contractual cover	Trades Team Review Review/ Re-procurement of repairs contract	Flooring is just one of numerous trades required to complete work within SLA timescales – see action 14 below	No action required
11	Consider how best to determine when properties down for major works are suitable to view	Need to make use of weekly void meetings to ensure this is picked up. Will be assisted by Capita Workflow when implemented	Capita systems upgrade	To address through weekly meetings as arise	No action required
12	Improvements to reporting to improve/ replace current spreadsheet system	Pending implementation of Capita upgrade/ workflow, opportunity to improve efficiency and reduce reporting errors		<p>Voids running spreadsheet to be reviewed and timely completion by appropriate staff ensured</p> <p>Asset Mgt to complete Repairs columns Hsg Options to complete allocations parts</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

Ref	Action	Issues	Dependencies on other projects	Progress	Status
13	Review organisational structure to reflect requirements of new process	Changes required to structure – job roles and reporting lines – to reflect new process	Organisational structure Trades Team Review	Issues and options highlighted in this report	Administrative staff responsible for work on void properties within the Housing Options Team changed after Voids Co-ordinator left. Further changes will be required following Trades Team Review / procurement

Staff

Voids Surveyors

- Surveyor to oversee void works programme & specify major works
- Assistant Surveyors X 2 to specify void works

Voids Liaison Officers

- Role: pre-term inspections, accompanied viewings, some housing register visits
- VLO's 1.5 FTE's