

SCRUTINY COMMISSION - MONDAY, 7 AUGUST 2023

Report of the Director of Housing and Wellbeing Lead Member: Councillor Colin Hamilton

Part A

UPDATE ON VOID PROPERTIES

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the position in respect of voids (empty properties) at Council accommodation, the recent actions taken, in progress, and planned to reduce both the number of voids and the length of time properties stand empty.

Recommendation

To consider the update and identify any further actions that should be taken.

Reason

To provide effective scrutiny of actions taken, in progress, and planned to improve void performance.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

At its meeting on 12th December 2022 the Commission considered a report on Void Property Information. It was resolved that:

the issue return to Scrutiny Commission with information showing the issues that had come off the list and with Key Performance Indicators...

...to ensure the Scrutiny Commission progress the issues identified by the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee in the most appropriate way.

KPIs relating to void loss contained in the Council's Corporate Business Plan 2023-24 are set out below along with the Q1 2023/24 outturn.

KPI	Q1 Target	Q1 Actual
<i>KI 11A Percentage rent loss from void properties (Proxy Target) Age restricted properties.</i>	11%	11.76%
<i>KI 11B Percentage rent loss from void properties (Proxy Target) Non age restricted properties.</i>	4.75	5.4%

At the end of Quarter 1 2023/24 both targets were graded amber.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions

The committee is not being asked to make a decision with an attached timeline.

Report Implications

Financial Implications

There are none. The report is for information and comment only.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks arising from the committee's consideration of the update.

Equality and Diversity

There are no specific equality and diversity issues arising from the committee's consideration of the update.

Climate Change and Carbon Impact

There are no specific climate change and carbon impact issues arising from the committee's consideration of the update.

Crime and Disorder

There are no specific Crime and Disorder issues arising from the committee's consideration of the update.

Wards Affected

The committee is not being asked to make a decision affecting wards. The report is for information and comment only.

Publicity Arrangements

Not applicable.

Consultations

Not applicable.

Links to the Corporate Strategy

Caring for the Environment	No
Healthy Communities	Yes
A Thriving Economy	No
Your Council	Yes

Key Decision: No

Background Papers:

Scrutiny Commission Monday 12th December 2022.
Item 7 available at: [Agenda for Scrutiny Commission on Monday, 12th December, 2022, 6.00 pm - Charnwood Borough Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/Agenda/Agenda-for-Scrutiny-Commission-on-Monday-12th-December-2022-6.00-pm-Charnwood-Borough-Council)

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Part B

Background

The reasons for the increase in voids and actions already taken to improve performance can be found in the report to Scrutiny Commission on Monday 12th December 2022 (Item 7), linked (electronically) above.

The total number of voids over time split by category can be found at *Appendix 1 - All Voids by Category - Stacked Bar Chart*.

Allocation of Properties

A review of the Housing Needs Service structure has been completed. The number of Allocations Officers has been increased from 0.6 full time equivalent officers (FTE) to 4.0 FTE. This has sped up the letting of properties.

The chart at *Appendix 2 - Total Voids Week by Week and Rate of Weekly Change* shows a reduction in voids from around week 46 of the financial year 2022/23.

This positive trend was interrupted around week 6 of this financial year 2023/24 due to staff turnover in the Housing Needs management team. Interim resources are now in place and the position has stabilised.

Age Restricted Properties and Sheltered Accommodation

Appendix 3 - Snapshot of Void Property Position at Week 16 (mid July 2023) - General Needs shows there are 69 general needs properties with a status of Ready to Let. A significant proportion (30) are accessible only to people aged over 45, and 5 only to people aged over 60. These age restricted properties are hard to let.

Analysis has been undertaken which shows 1,071 homes, or nearly 20% of the Council's stock, is restricted for allocation to those applicants aged 45 and over. Collectively around 45% of the waiting list is excluded from bidding for these properties. It is likely declassification of these properties would support faster re-let given the pool of potential tenants on the housing waiting list would be much larger.

A report is scheduled for the September 2023 Housing Management Advisory Board to consult with tenants on the approach to classification. There are tenancy management risks associated with declassification, and mitigation is currently being considered.

Appendix 4 - Snapshot of Void Property Position at Week 16 (mid July 2023) - Sheltered Accommodation shows there are 67 properties in sheltered accommodation that are ready to let and 47 that require major works. Many of these properties will never be let. The recent decommissioning of St Michael's Court pending re-development led to a technical reduction in the number of overall voids. A wider review of sheltered accommodation is in progress.

Void Repairs

The size of the in-house voids team has been increased; however, recruitment has been challenging in a competitive labour market.

Mobilisation with the Council's major voids contractor J Tomlinson Ltd was slower than expected, and the company is now understood to be in administration. No work on the Council's major voids is therefore currently being completed through the Contract. The negative performance impact in this respect is reflected in the chart at Appendix 5. The blue line labelled Major Works GN shows an increase in the number of major voids. An alternative delivery option is being progressed.

J Tomlinson Ltd is also contracted to deliver kitchen and bathroom works. That work stopped abruptly in July 2023 and it has been necessary to divert in-house voids team capacity to complete unfinished works in tenants' homes.

To overcome the backlog more capacity to work on void repairs is needed. Cabinet authority is therefore being sought to procure a contractor to undertake void repairs and associated works, and to request that Cabinet recommend to Council an increase in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) annual budget of £858.1k to fund both the estimated maximum cost of the works delivered through the contract, and the officer resource needed to support the effective management of the contract and void repairs generally.

A service level KPI relating to the time standard voids spend in works can be found at *Appendix 6 - KPI - Time in Property*. Supply chain issues with the cleaning of voids were experienced in June 2023. An additional cleaning contractor has therefore been procured.

Monitoring, Identification and Delivery of Improvements

A corporate project focussing on improvements to the void process is in progress. The void process has been mapped in detail and a further workshop is planned to streamline it.

The Housing Quality Network has been commissioned to and has delivered a voids masterclass, the learning from which has been used to inform the approach to improvements.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - All Voids by Category - Stacked Bar Chart

Appendix 2 - Total Voids Week by Week and Rate of weekly Change

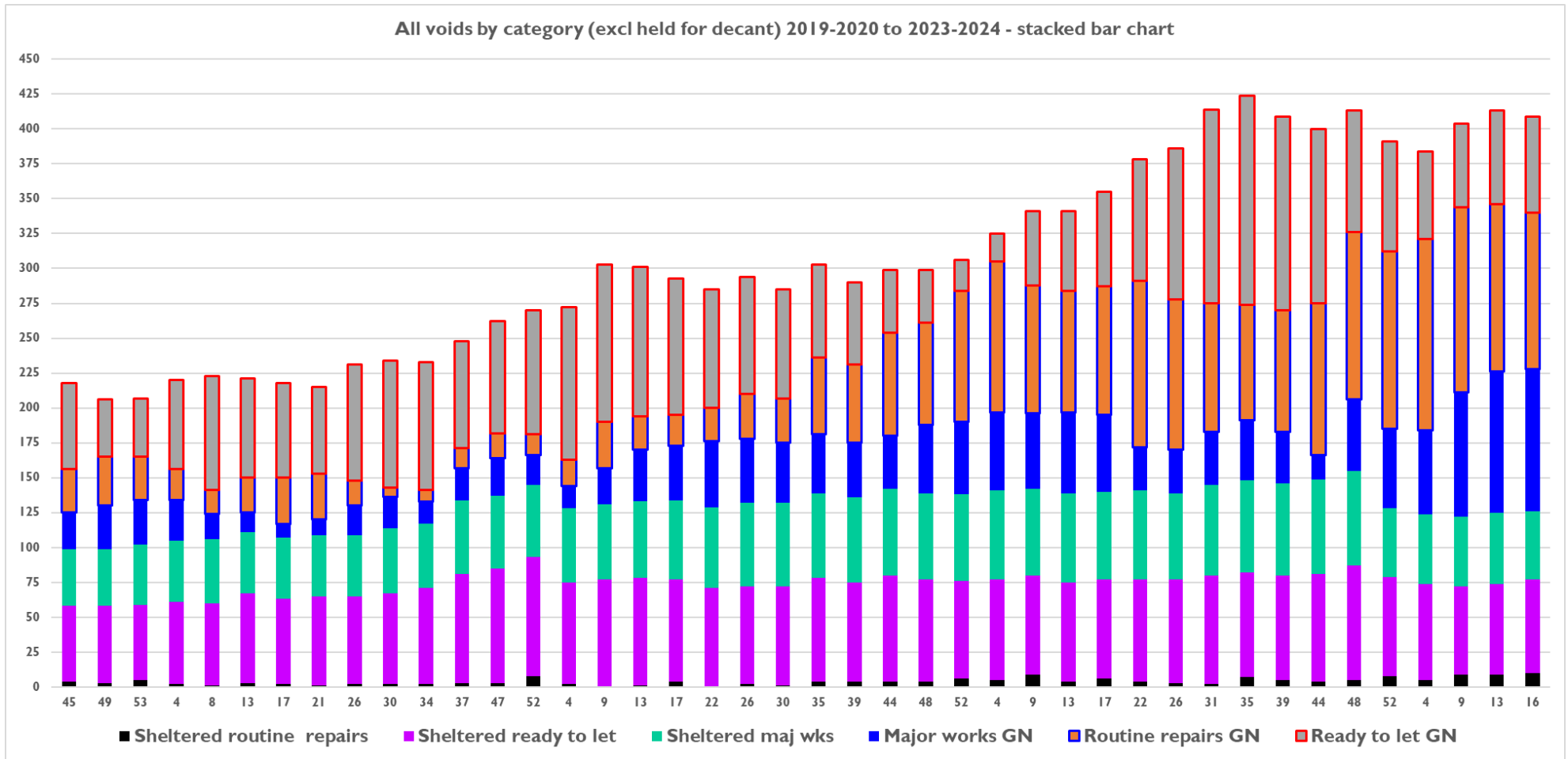
Appendix 3 - Snapshot of Void Property Position at Week 16 (mid July 2023) - General Needs

Appendix 4 - Snapshot of Void Property Position at Week 16 (mid July 2023) - Sheltered Accommodation

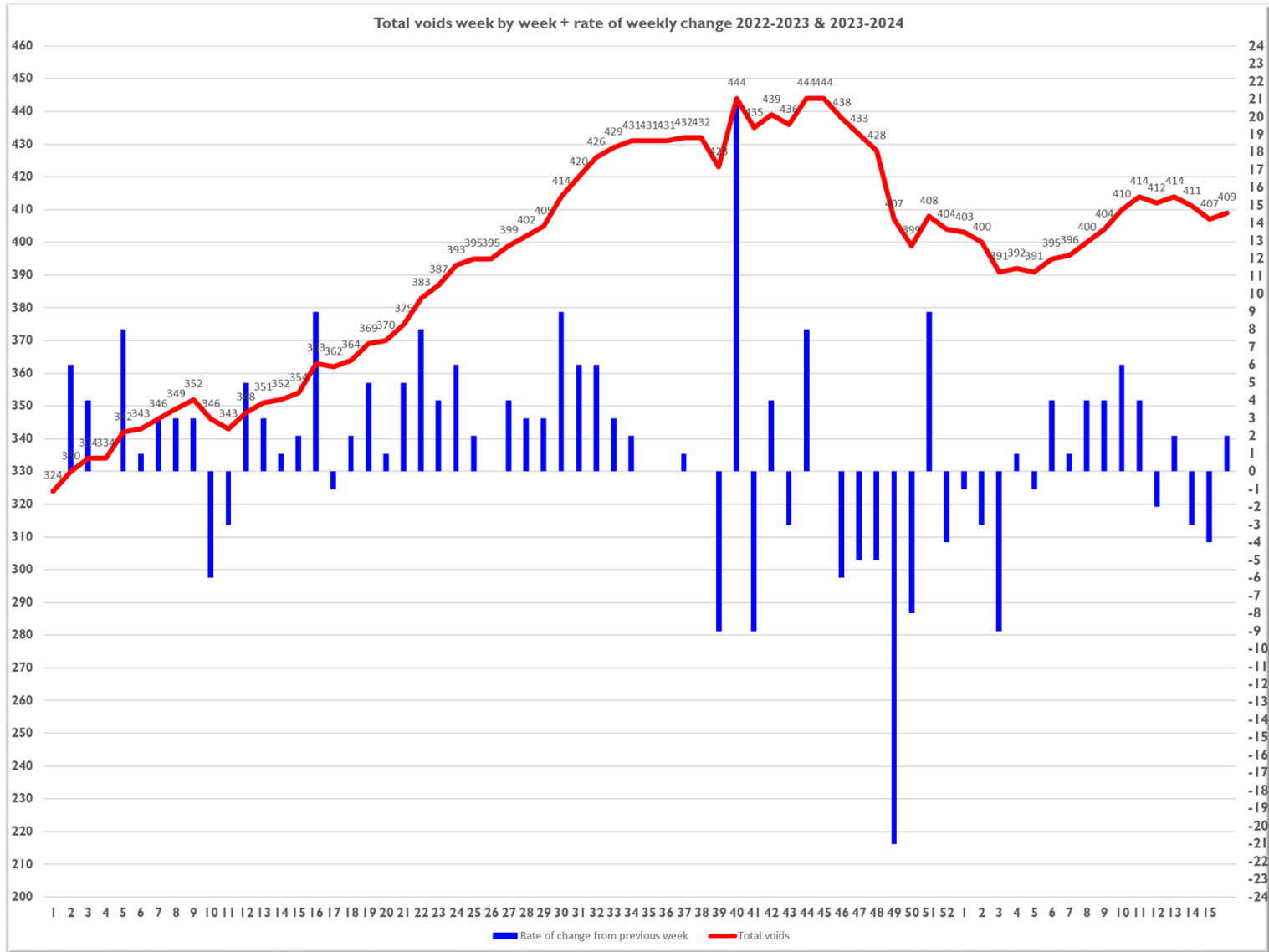
Appendix 5 - Voids by Category

Appendix 6 - KPI - Time in Property (Standard Voids)

Appendix 1 - All Voids by Category - Stacked Bar Chart



Appendix 2 - Total Voids Week by Week and Rate of Weekly Change



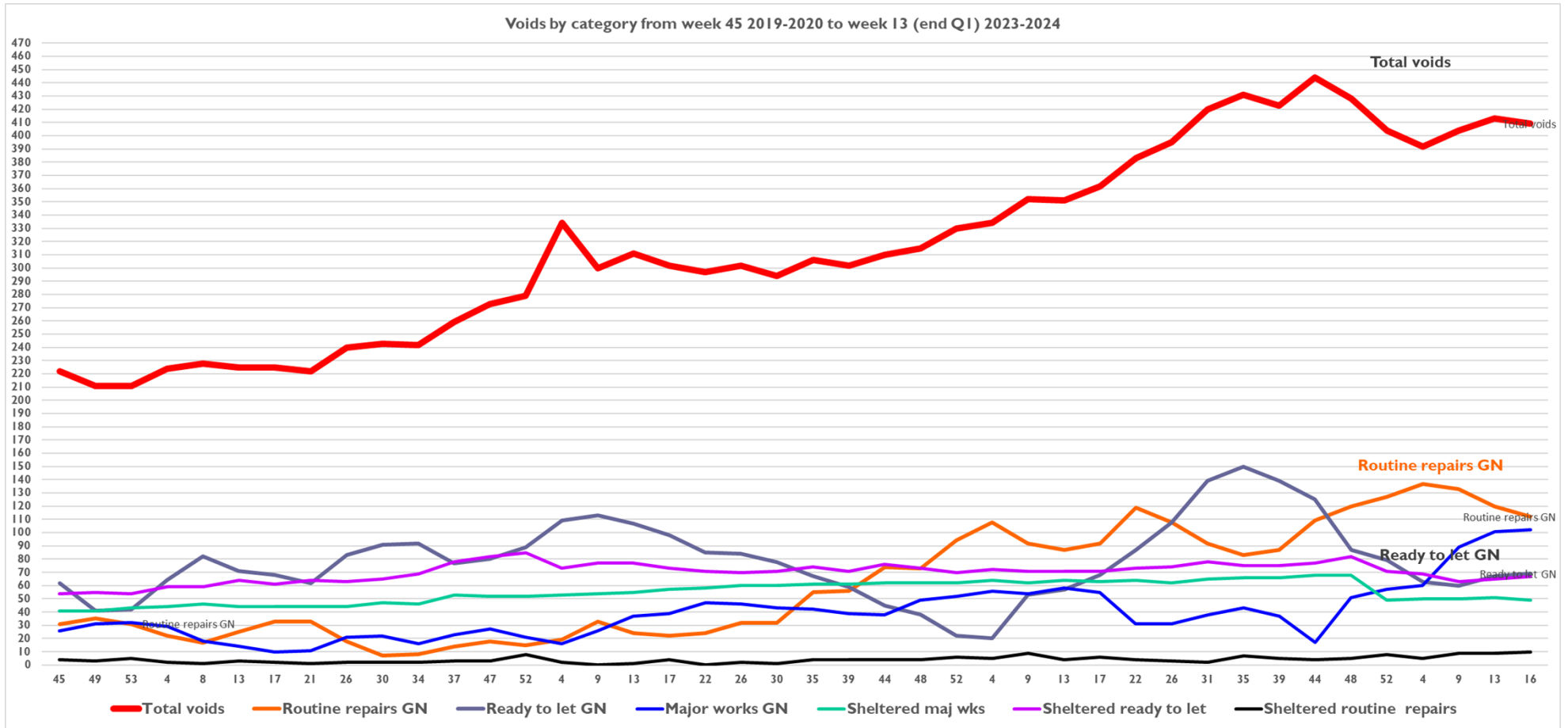
Appendix 3 - Snapshot of Void Property Position at Week 16 (mid July 2023) - General Needs

Week's summary: general needs																
GN designation	Ready to let		Routine repairs		Major wks in-house		Major wks o'sourced		Decant		Adaptations		Asbestos		Pre-voids	
Property type	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos pre-void	Change on last week
Bedsit	2	1	11	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Bungalow	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flat	17	1	46	-3	8	0	12	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	8	0
House	13	-1	26	2	7	-1	25	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	-4
Maisonette	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
45+ bedsit	3	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	-1
45+ flat	27	2	21	-3	6	0	12	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	2	-1
60+ bungalow	5	0	4	0	4	0	8	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	69	3	112	-3	25	-1	59	2	15	-1	0	0	3	1	14	-5

Appendix 4 - Snapshot of Void Property Position at Week 16 (mid July 2023) - Sheltered Accommodation

Week's summary: sheltered																
Sheltered designation	Ready to let		Routine repairs		Major wks in-house		Major wks o'sourced		Decant		Adaptations		Asbestos		Pre-voids	
Property type	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos void	Change on last week	Nos pre-void	Change on last week
Bedsit	47	0	5	0	47	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Bungalow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flat	20	2	5	-1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-1
TOTAL	67	2	10	-1	48	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	-1

Appendix 5 - Voids by Category



Appendix 6 - KPI - Time in Property (Standard Voids)

