

Voids	Policy
Approved by Director of Housing	Issue number 9
Approved date March 2025	Review date March 2027
	Responsible Officer Voids and Lettings Manager

1.	Aims and Objectives
1.1	Voids management is a core function of Hightown Housing Association. Hightown's aim is to minimise rent loss and ensure that applicants for housing are rehomed efficiently by re-letting empty properties quickly, to an appropriate standard.
1.2	The key aims of this Policy are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that properties meet Hightown's Void Re-let Standards upon relet. • minimise the number of days vacant and rent loss on empty properties • minimise the cost of void repairs. • ensure that outgoing tenants are aware of their responsibilities prior to the end of the tenancy in order to keep repair costs to a minimum. • set out monitoring and reporting on void performance. • ensure compliance with legal duties, regulatory requirements and good practice standards.
2.	Definitions and Scope
2.1	A void property is defined as a rented property which is vacant as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tenant having given notice and moved out of the property • The Tenant having died and there being no right of succession • The Tenant having been evicted or abandoned the property • The Tenant having been permanently decanted • A new build property that has not yet been let
3.	Policy Statement
3.1	Void Categorisation
	A void property can be categorised as being either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available to Let • Unavailable to let
3.1.1	<u>Available to Let</u> A lettable void will either be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational voids arising in the normal course of operations e.g. between the vacating of a property by one tenant and the commencement of occupation by the next tenant; or • Policy voids arising from a policy decision to hold the property empty though lettable for a reason of policy in line with Hightown's asset management policy e.g. for foreseeable future development.

3.1.2	<p>Unavailable to Let An unavailable to let void is classified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awaiting major works requiring the occupant to vacate the property either having been decanted or left the property prior to the commencement of major works – the period of void should be known and minimised. • Undergoing works until the point of handover from Development • Awaiting insurable repairs e.g. after fire or water damage. • Having been decanted for refurbishment, redevelopment or disposal
3.2	<p>The Right to Compensation for Improvements Hightown recognises that some outgoing tenants may have the right to receive compensation for certain improvement works that have been carried out during their tenancy. Please see the Compensation Policy for details.</p>
3.3	<p>Incentive Payments Tenants who satisfy criteria outlined in the “Before you move out” leaflet may benefit from an end of tenancy bonus payment of £150.</p>
3.4	<p>Minimum Letting Standards Hightown's Void Re-Let Standard is the standard which a property will be brought up to before letting it to a new tenant which ensures a property is safe and fit for occupation.</p> <p>Before a property is re-let, all repairs and checks which are considered essential to make the property habitable for health and safety and security will be completed. In the case of Intermediate Rent properties, it may be necessary to carry out work above and beyond the minimum standard in order to enable the property to be re-let. The Head of Home Ownership and Commercial will agree any additional work required with the Head of Housing.</p>
3.5	<p>Partnership Working The vast majority of void properties are let to nominations received via our Local Authority (LA) partners' Housing Register/Choice Based Lettings schemes (CBL). In order to ensure properties are re- let as quickly as possible, the Lettings Team will work with LA partners to ensure properties are advertised at the earliest date possible, and nominations are received within the timescales set out in the Agreements that are in place.</p>
3.6	<p>Accounting Treatment of Voids</p>
3.6.1	<p>Available to Let</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational void properties' rent and service charges will be charged to the income and expenditure account. The level of void rent loss should be the next anticipated let rent for that property (i.e. for General Needs social rent properties a rent of 105% of target rent) rather than the last vacated rent. • Policy voids will be accounted for by the formal renunciation of the relevant income recoverable; Rents will be zeroed and no void rent loss will therefore arise.
3.6.2	<p>Unavailable to Let Voids awaiting routine or major works are managed under the assumption that void losses can be recovered in the following ways:</p>

<p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>3.9</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurable repairs: The loss is recoverable through an insurance claim. • In some cases, recovery costs may exceed the potential recovery amount, or recovery may not be possible. If written off, the loss falls on the Association and should be avoided whenever possible. <p>The level of void rent loss is reported within the Statutory Accounts of the Association.</p> <p>Void performance is reviewed at weekly meetings by the Voids and Lettings Team. Lettings are measured against the annual void target, to ensure void loss is kept to a minimum.</p> <p>Void loss figures are reported in the monthly management information pack produced by the Business Support Team. Reasons for voids let outside of target are reported monthly as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Needs - Voids and Lettings Manager. • Intermediate Rent - Head of Home Ownership and Commercial C&SH – Head of C&SH Support
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>Other considerations:</p> <p><u>Resident Involvement:</u> In reviewing Void Management, feedback will be obtained from tenants, and used to improve service delivery by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining feedback on new tenants' satisfaction with the property and the void service through the six-week New Tenant Visit. • Monitoring comments and complaints received from tenants. <p><u>Equality & Diversity:</u> In implementing this Policy Hightown will not unfairly discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics listed in The Equality Act 2010.</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p>Role and Responsibilities/Authority</p> <p>The Voids and Lettings Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Policy/document References:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voids and Lettings Procedure • Voids Relet Standards Procedure