

**Scrutiny Team Report**

**Voids**

**Management Response**

**Prepared by:** Chris George

**Title:** Group Asset Director

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**1 Introduction:**

This is the tenth scrutiny team review and is focused on how we manage empty properties from when they become empty to when they are ready to be relet (but excludes the lettings process itself) and covers a range of aspects including information for customers and the operational arrangements within Silcoa.

**2 Management response:**

Silcoa enjoys working with the Scrutiny team and welcomes the review. Silcoa managers met with members of the scrutiny team and found the interviews both interesting and useful.

The head of response and voids and the voids supervisor met with the scrutiny team to provide an overview of the empty homes process and performance

**3 Findings and recommendations:**

The findings of the group are very customer focused and the recommendations are welcomed.

Some of the recommendations link to work we have recently completed and can learn from, such as the repairs handbook moving online, and we can use this to help improve the information we currently provide.

#### 4 Conclusion:

The Silcoa management team would like to thank the scrutiny team for their work and the head of response and voids will ensure that they are updated on the progress of the action plan.

#### 5 Recommendations:

	Recommendation	Management response
1	<p><b>a)</b> Scrutiny Team would like to see consistent and concise information for tenants to match across all leaflets and website.</p> <p><b>b)</b> For a continued availability in paper/ leaflet form where internet access is either not available or customers are not IT literate.</p>	<p><b>Expected completion date:</b> March 2020</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Carl Jackson</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Agreed – we will look to put empty homes information into the same format as the repairs handbook so we can introduce web pages setting out what will and won't be done and can link to helpful videos or photos that set out the voids standard. And, like the repairs handbook, there will be a printable version</p>
2	<p>The team would recommend that the <b>What You Can Expect From Your New Home</b> information is provided to the prospective tenant <u>before</u> they move in.</p>	<p><b>ECD:</b> March 2020</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Carl Jackson</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Agreed – and linking to item one above, this will be available online to link in with the lettings service moving to a new portal</p>

3	<p>The team recommends that on a trial basis, Selwood provides room layout/floor plans to prospective tenants in an attempt to avoid refusals and improve acceptance</p>	<p><b>ECD:</b> Initially July 2019 and then April 2020</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Carl Jackson</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Agreed – initially, we can just provide room sizes as we do not have the facility to record or hold floor plan, but a new asset management system will be implemented by April 2020 and this should enable us to record and hold floorplans</p>
4	<p>The team feels it might be beneficial to provide photographs of a home displaying the lettable standard as set out by Selwood. Provided to both incoming and departing tenants, these could help to normalise customer expectations and to avoid recharges.</p>	<p><b>ECD:</b> March 2020</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Carl Jackson</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Agreed – and will link into the empty property standard going on line</p>
5	<p>While it is accepted the current admin staff arrangement works well, the Scrutiny team feels it would be highly beneficial for a permanent administrator to be in place.</p>	<p><b>ECD:</b> Noted</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Carl Jackson</p> <p><b>Response:</b>          Recommendation not agreed – we have a team of 8 administrators who provide support across the whole of Silcoa and to enable us to most effectively cover holidays and sickness we will continue to cover the void functions across the team rather than with a separate</p>

		standalone voids administrator.
6	The team feels that the provision of a permanent plumber and gas engineer would greatly enhance the flow of the void process.	<p><b>ECD:</b> Noted</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Carl Jackson</p> <p><b>Response:</b>          Recommendation not agreed – there are 11 electricians across Silcoa and 11 gas engineers, and from a business efficiency perspective, it is more productive for us to not have them permanently in the voids team. We will review the current procedure to ensure it is working as effectively as possible.</p>
7	The Scrutiny team recommends and requests that in future reviews where customer interviews are proposed, that it has free access to a list of appropriate tenants from which a selection may be made totally independently and randomly.	<p><b>ECD:</b> The next scrutiny team review</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Antony Higgins</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Agreed- The tenant involvement team will work the Scrutiny Team to ensure access to a list of appropriate tenants is available from which a selection can be made to ensure a representative sample are contacted.</p>

8	<p>The team recommends that questions asked of tenants by Customer Service after moving in, be better tailored to give more accurate feedback.</p> <p><b>See appendix 2</b></p>	<p><b>ECD:</b> Q4 – January 2020</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Chris George</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Agreed – initial discussions held with CSN who carry out all our other surveys, with an anticipation that survey design will complete in Q2, initial data will be provided in Q3 and surveys commence, and revised information will be available in Q4</p>
9	<p>The Scrutiny Team recommends greater emphasis on allocation of appropriate properties to those with special needs, disabilities, vulnerability and age with reference to the Empty Homes Policy.</p>	<p><b>ECD:</b> Noted</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Carl Jackson</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Agreed – we will work to ensure that where a tenant with a specific set of needs moves into a general needs property we will carry out reasonable adjustments within reasonable timescales</p>
10	<p>The Team believes there is scope for an incentive scheme as in place with other housing associations. For example a £20 Argos voucher is given at first inspection if the property meets the standard and a possible cheque for £100 for the property returned cleaned and all rubbish removed. This could reduce the need for recharges to be incurred and for a maximum £120 outlay, reduce the key to key time and void costs of turn around.</p>	<p><b>ECD:</b> Noted</p> <p><b>Coordinator:</b> Chris George</p> <p><b>Response:</b> Recommendation not agreed – the use and benefit of incentive schemes is not clear and only a small number of organisations use them and there are questions as to how much they do actually change behaviour.</p>

