

Brighton & Hove City Council

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 52

Subject: Consultation on use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation

Date of meeting: 17 March 2026

Report of: Cabinet Member for Housing

Contact Officer: Name: Genette Laws - Corporate Director for Homes & Care

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Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report introduces the council's approach to transform its Temporary Accommodation provision aligned to the priorities of the council's new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan covering 2026/27 to 2029/30.
- 1.2 It also seeks Overview & Scrutiny's feedback on the council's use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation during the interim period between 19 January and 1 May, as part of a wider public consultation.
- 1.3 This will allow feedback and comments from Overview & Scrutiny to be included in a report to Cabinet on 23rd April 2026.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview & Scrutiny provide a response to the consultation on the use of empty council homes as temporary accommodation between the period of 19 January and 1 May and possible extension for a further 12-months.
- 2.2 Overview & Scrutiny provide feedback and comment on the Policy on the use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove is experiencing some of the most significant homelessness and temporary accommodation (TA) pressures in the South East. Demand for housing support has risen sharply in recent years, driven by a complex interplay of high local housing costs, a constrained supply of affordable homes, and growing numbers of households in crisis. More than 2,100 households now rely on emergency or temporary accommodation in the city, with children making up around 40% of all residents in TA. Evidence shows that outcomes for children in nightly-paid accommodation remain significantly worse than for those in settled housing.
- 3.2 At the same time, the cost to the council of meeting its statutory homelessness duties has escalated significantly. Rising nightly-paid rates, limited TA supply, and increased demand have contributed to a forecast of £6m overspend on Temporary Accommodation this year.
- 3.3 For 2026/27, the council has invested £12 million in homelessness-related pressures, driven by challenges outlined above. To reduce the financial impact of this pressure, the service has developed £5 million in savings proposals - resulting in a net investment of £7 million for the year. Looking ahead, a further £5.4 million of savings is required over the Medium-Term Financial Plan to ensure long-term stability and to reduce reliance on costly temporary accommodation provision.
- 3.4 To manage immediate pressures, the council has already taken steps to stabilise provision and reduce reliance on high-cost nightly-paid placements. This includes issuing a Direct Award to convert existing nightly-paid placements into a contracted arrangement saving more than £1m a year and approving a time-limited use of selected empty council homes for TA between 19 January and 1 May, prioritising families and households where there are clear educational or health needs. These decisions were made to protect vulnerable children and reduce harm while longer-term solutions are brought forward.
- 3.5 To that end, a report will be brought to Cabinet in April which includes a set of recommendations that are designed to reshape the city's Temporary Accommodation portfolio so that households live in better quality, more stable and more affordable homes, while the council significantly reduces its overreliance on costly nightly paid provision.
- 3.6 Measures such as the option to extend the interim period on the use of HRA voids as temporary accommodation – a further 100 homes in addition to the 80 envisaged under the current policy – and others including expanding the council's block booking and introducing new models of Supported Temporary Accommodation which provide tailored help for people with more complex needs and work on more sustainable financial models, due to it being exempt from standard housing benefit restrictions.
- 3.7 The recommendations prioritise keeping families in the city, reducing disruptive moves, and limiting the time households spend in unsuitable

accommodation, and taken together, these actions underpin a longer-term shift that aligns with the council’s Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy.

3.8 This shift is shown in the intended trajectory for Temporary Accommodation for 2025/26 to 2029/30 is to move away from high-cost nightly-paid provision towards contracted and council-owned supply. In the intended trajectory Nightly-paid (spot purchase) reduces from 465 units in 2025/26 to 90 units by 2029/30. Block-booked provision grows from 644 to around 920 units, before stabilising. Leased temporary accommodation (PSL) steadily reduces from 550 to around 500 units over the same period. Council-owned and other non-General Fund temporary accommodation increases from 959 to around 1,280 units, providing a more stable and lower-cost core offer. Exempt and supported accommodation expands from 22 units to 146 units from 2026/27 onwards.

3.9 The graph below visualises the council’s intended high-level trajectory over the council’s Medium Term Financial Plan:



3.10 The trajectory is not final and is a live model. It includes considered assumptions on levels of demand for homelessness and temporary accommodation services and the rate at which new supply is brought forward.

3.11 The cost of and demand levels for emergency and temporary accommodation are significant drivers of pressure within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Corporate Service Pressure funding will be allocated in relation to this with £11.106m being assigned in 2026/27. However to mitigate these pressures, savings totaling £5.143m have been agreed for financial year 2026/27 across key workstreams including increasing supply, full cost recovery, improving effectiveness in prevention and accelerating move on.

3.12 To support Cabinet in deciding on some of the recommendations within this report, we are currently running a six-week citywide consultation to help shape the future of the interim policy that uses a limited number of empty council homes as temporary accommodation, as outlined in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.7.

- 3.13 We are also gathering feedback on people's experiences of temporary accommodation provided during the interim period and people's views on the current exemptions and exceptions route, which allows the council to protect specific types of homes and respond to urgent individual circumstances.

4. Using empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation

- 4.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January 2026 the interim scheme sets out how the council is making time-limited use of selected Housing Revenue Account (HRA) void properties to provide better quality, more stable temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- 4.2 This is part of the council's longer-term strategy to reduce reliance on costly nightly-paid provision, as set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.12. By using suitable empty council homes between January and May, the council aims to keep more families within the city, reduce the use of out-of-area placements, and offer households a greater sense of stability than is possible under nightly-paid arrangements.
- 4.3 The scheme is overseen by a Lettings Panel, which applies a clear prioritisation framework that focuses on families with children, households currently placed outside Brighton & Hove, and those where a move would bring clear health or educational benefits.
- 4.4 The policy on the use of HRA voids as TA also sets limits on the types of homes that can be used. Seniors housing and mobility-adapted properties are excluded to protect residents with specialist needs, and housing association properties are not part of the scheme as they are allocated through separate arrangements. The council retains discretion to make a small number of exceptions where there is a compelling case: for example, where allocating a property would enable another home to be freed up for use as temporary accommodation, or where there is a serious safeguarding or medical need that cannot be met in the household's current home.
- 4.5 The mentioned Lettings Panel considers each case individually to ensure decisions are fair, transparent and consistent. These exemptions ensure that while the scheme increases urgently needed temporary accommodation, it does so in a way that remains balanced, proportionate and sensitive to the needs of other residents waiting for council housing.

5. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 5.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January 2026, an alternative approach would be for the council to make direct offers of permanent or settled accommodation to eligible homeless households as suitable homes become available, allowing some households to move straight into long-term housing without an interim stay in Temporary Accommodation (TA). This could reduce the number of people living in TA

and lessen the impacts associated with prolonged temporary placements, particularly for children and vulnerable adults, even further.

- 5.2 However, the council's Housing Allocations Policy is based on Choice Based Lettings, with direct offers permitted only in exceptional circumstances. Expanding direct offers beyond these defined exceptions could fall outside the policy in certain circumstances, risk undermining transparency and fairness in the allocations process.
- 5.3 Given the limited supply of permanent accommodation and the scale of current homelessness pressures, widespread use of direct offers of secure tenancies would not significantly reduce reliance on temporary accommodation or address projected financial pressures. Most households would still require interim placements while awaiting a suitable property.
- 5.4 For these reasons, this option was not recommended, recognising that a more impactful approach is required to deliver financial sustainability and address the urgent pressures facing the council's Temporary Accommodation system.

6. Community engagement and consultation

- 6.1 Given the urgent financial pressures and the need to introduce the interim policy, pre-implementation public consultation was not feasible. However, a full six-week public consultation is now underway during the interim period, running from mid-February to early April 2026, with the survey closing on 1 April 2026. The consultation is to ensure that Cabinet, in April, is able to consider the views of residents, tenants, and partners before deciding whether the interim arrangements should continue, be amended, or end.
- 6.2 Through the survey, households on the housing register, people currently living in temporary accommodation and council tenants are sharing how the scheme is affecting them, their families, and their communities.
- 6.3 Respondents are also offering views on the way the scheme operates in practice – including the prioritisation criteria, the exemptions for certain types of homes, and their experiences of being placed in a void property as temporary accommodation. Alongside this, the consultation is capturing any unintended impacts, such as concerns about fairness, community cohesion, or whether the approach strikes the right balance between urgent homelessness pressures and the needs of households waiting for long-term homes.
- 6.4 All of this feedback will support the refresh of the Equality Impact Assessment, ensuring that the council fully understands how the interim scheme is affecting children, families, disabled residents, and other groups who may experience disproportionate impacts, before any decision is made about extending the policy.
- 6.5 A range of engagement methods is being used to ensure that residents can take part in the consultation in ways that work for them. The main platform is

the online consultation hub, where people can read a short summary of the interim scheme and complete the survey. Alongside this, updates in Homing In, targeted email bulletins, and direct communications to tenants, households in temporary accommodation, and people on the housing register are helping the council reach those most directly affected.

- 6.6 For residents who prefer to speak to officers or ask questions before responding, drop-in sessions are being held in community venues and at Area Panels. Tenant representatives, ward councillors, seniors' groups, and voluntary and community sector partners are also being briefed so they can share the consultation within their networks. Work is under way to ensure that groups with protected characteristics are represented in the process, with dedicated equalities analysis planned as part of the final consultation report.
- 6.7 Early responses show that the consultation is reaching the households most impacted by the interim scheme. Of the first 205 respondents, 37.6% (77 people) are on the housing register, and 35.1% (72 people) are currently living in temporary or emergency accommodation. A further 12.2% (25 people) are council tenants or leaseholders, with one respondent placed pending an eligibility decision. The remaining 14.6% (30 people) have identified themselves as "other", which likely reflects increasing engagement from the wider community as general communications about the consultation have expanded. Detailed analysis will be completed at the end of the consultation period and included in the April Cabinet Paper.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The interim and proposed extended use of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) void properties as Temporary Accommodation (TA) reduces reliance on high cost nightly paid (spot purchase) accommodation, which remains the primary driver of the forecast £6m in year overspend within the TA budget.
- 7.2 Spot purchased accommodation represents the highest cost form of provision, with weighted average nightly rates materially higher than those associated with council owned stock, where costs are largely limited to management, maintenance and re letting works. Increasing the supply of council owned TA through the use of HRA voids between 19th January 2026 and 1st May 2026 is expected to deliver savings of £0.092m for 2025/26 and £0.665m 2026/27, £0.757m per annum in total, largely through the displacement of emergency and out of area placements. The proposed extension for a further 12-months up to a maximum of 100 properties is expected to save a further £0.946m per annum in total.
- 7.3 These savings represent cost avoidance within the General Fund rather than cost removal and are partially offset by impacts on the HRA, including deferred General Needs rental income while properties are used as TA, higher turnover related management and maintenance costs, and a temporary reduction in the availability of homes for households on the housing register. Increasing the number of Council-owned temporary accommodation units by 80 is expected to have an annual cost of £0.468m

on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) allowing for necessary repairs and maintenance, of which approximately £0.120m will be a pressure above the level anticipated through voids materialising as part of the Council's regular Housing Allocations Policy. If this is extended for a further 12-months up to a maximum of 100 properties, the additional annual cost is £0.585m of which approximately £0.150m will be a pressure.

- 7.4 While income associated with TA use mitigates some of this impact, it does not provide the same level of long term income certainty as secure tenancies and, if extended beyond a clear time limited and controlled period, may place pressure on HRA Business Plan assumptions. Ongoing monitoring of both TA savings and HRA impacts will therefore be required, alongside the progression of longer-term supply solutions such as block-booked, exempt and newly acquired council-owned temporary accommodation.

Name of finance officer consulted: Ferrise Hall Date consulted 09/03/26

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 Consultation is currently being undertaken as part of a review of the council's current policy of use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation during the interim period between 19 January and 1 May, and the potential to extend the policy beyond that time period. The policy aims to address an acute lack of affordable temporary accommodation within the city, at a time of a significant increase in homeless applications, while other planned measures come on stream.
- 8.2 The current policy sets out the considerations for the allocation of HRA council voids and specifies exemptions to the use of voids for temporary accommodation, including the retention of a discretion to allocate voids from the housing register in exceptional cases
- 8.3 In considering options for the use of the void homes, the Council is entitled to consider where assets can have the greatest impact, and there is no legal bar to the use of HRA council voids for Temporary Accommodation.
- 8.4 The Council has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation pursuant to obligations under Housing Act 1996 (and The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (which amended the Housing Act 1996)). In developing the policy, the Council is seeking to meet statutory duties in relation to homelessness in a manner which is more effective in meeting the needs of those in need of accommodation and mitigate the excessive spend on Temporary Accommodation.
- 8.5 The temporary partial restriction of allocation of council voids to use as temporary accommodation will impact on those people who are on the waiting list for council accommodation or eligible for transfers, and who are not otherwise eligible to bid for voids over the specified period within the exemptions or exceptions specified in the policy.

- 8.6 HRA voids offered as temporary accommodation will be the subject of non-secure tenancies. This offers a greater degree of security to eligible households than temporary accommodation by way of licenses.

Name of lawyer consulted: Natasha Watson Date consulted 9/03/2026:

9. Risk implications

- 9.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January the most significant risk is that, without this approach, the council would remain reliant on increasingly costly nightly-paid placements, worsening the financial pressure already forecast at £4.8m overspend for the year.
- 9.2 Letting voids as temporary accommodation also temporarily reduces the number of general needs homes available for letting, which can lengthen waiting times for households on the housing register and affect the council's ability to address wider housing need. There is also a risk that increased turnover of temporary accommodation within certain blocks may affect community cohesion.

10. Equalities implications

- 10.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January (Appendix 1), an initial Equalities Impact Assessment identified a range of differential effects linked to the interim scheme, many of them positive.
- 10.2 Families with children, disabled households, survivors of domestic abuse, and households placed out of area stand to benefit from greater stability, safer accommodation and improved access to local schools, networks and health services.
- 10.3 At the same time, the temporary pause on some general needs lettings may disproportionately affect some groups on the housing register, and the council recognises gaps in equality data that require active monitoring.
- 10.4 To ensure equity, the Lettings Panel records an intersectional rationale for each decision, and outcomes will be monitored. A full updated EIA will be completed using consultation feedback before any extension of the scheme is considered.

11. Sustainability implications

- 11.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January using empty council homes within the city as temporary accommodation can help reduce travel emissions, as households are more likely to remain close to their schools, workplaces, and support networks. This supports stronger local communities and reduces disruption associated with out-of-area placements. Any additional resource use associated with bringing void properties up to the council's lettable standard will be balanced through adherence to energy-efficiency and sustainability requirements.

12. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 12.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January providing temporary accommodation in council properties that meet the full lettable standard brings significant health and wellbeing benefits for homeless households. Unlike nightly paid placements, these homes offer greater safety, stability and security, and allow households to remain within established networks, schools and healthcare settings. Evidence shows that higher quality, stable accommodation improves both mental and physical health, particularly for children and vulnerable adults. This interim scheme aligns with the council's commitment to reducing health inequalities and improving outcomes for residents facing homelessness

Other Implications

13. Procurement implications

- 13.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January, during the interim period, the council is refurbishing HRA void properties to ensure they meet the required standard for temporary accommodation, including installing flooring where needed. These works are being delivered through existing compliant frameworks due to the urgency of the scheme. A future request will seek approval to procure additional contractor capacity to support ongoing delivery and prevent disruption to wider housing repairs and maintenance programmes.

14. Crime & disorder implications:

- 14.1 As outlined in the report to the Leader of the Council on 14 January, the interim scheme is expected to have a positive impact on community safety. Providing better-quality, more stable temporary accommodation can reduce risk factors linked to crime, anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and re-offending. Keeping households within their established communities also supports social cohesion and reduces the disruption associated with frequent moves and nightly-paid placements. No negative crime or disorder impacts are anticipated, and the council will continue to monitor outcomes with community safety partners.

15. Conclusion

- 15.1 This report asks Overview & Scrutiny to consider the council's interim use of empty council homes as Temporary Accommodation between 19 January and 1 May, and to provide comments that will inform the final Cabinet report in April. The purpose of bringing this to the committee is to ensure that Members' views, alongside the findings of the public consultation, shape any decision on whether the scheme should continue for a further 12 months and, if so, how it should operate.
- 15.2 Overview & Scrutiny is therefore invited to comment on the proposed extension of the scheme – up to a maximum of 100 additional properties –

and on the policy framework that underpins it, including the prioritisation criteria and exemptions.

- 15,3 Feedback from the committee will form an important part of the evidence presented to Cabinet on 23 April, helping to ensure that the council's approach remains transparent, proportionate and aligned to its wider plans to transform Temporary Accommodation provision.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft Policy on Use of Housing Revenue Account Void Properties as Temporary Accommodation

2. Background documents

1. [Use of Housing Revenue Account voids as Temporary Accommodation.pdf](#)

Appendix 1 - Draft Policy on Use of Housing Revenue Account Void Properties as Temporary Accommodation

December 2025

Introduction and Purpose

Brighton & Hove City Council currently faces acute pressures in meeting its statutory homelessness duties, with rising demand for Temporary Accommodation (TA) and limited local supply. This policy sets out a time-limited interim position to use council-owned void properties as TA, aiming to maximise in-city placements, reduce costly spot purchases and out-of-area placements, and improve outcomes for affected households, across education and health.

This will run from 19 January to 1 May 2026, after which its impact will be evaluated. This approach is a direct response to financial pressures, the rising need for stable temporary accommodation for homeless households, and the council's commitment outlined within the Council Plan, Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 and new Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 to 2030.

Scope

This interim policy applies to council-owned Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties that become void within the window. It excludes seniors housing, extra care, and mobility/adapted properties due to their specialist nature and high demand. However, in exceptional circumstances, these property types may be brought within scope.

The focus is on general needs family-sized homes and other suitable units where compliance and lettable standards can be achieved. With the exception of the council's Large Panel System (LPS) blocks, properties already committed to regeneration or disposal, or requiring capital works that cannot be completed within the timeframe, are also excluded. This ensures the interim action targets stock that can be quickly and safely brought into use for TA, without impacting vulnerable groups or long-term strategic plans.

Policy Statement

During the interim position, all eligible HRA void properties (excluding seniors and mobility/adapted homes, other than in exceptional circumstances) will be for use as Temporary Accommodation for homeless households owed duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

Priority will be given to families, households currently placed outside the city, and those in spot purchased placements. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, as outlined below and approved by the Head of Tenancy Services.

TA placements in HRA stock are made under Part VII functions on a non- secure tenancy; they do not create secure tenancies and do not attract Right to Buy.

At the end of the period, the letting of HRA void properties will revert to standard allocation processes unless further approval is sought. This policy is designed to be transparent, fair, and responsive to the city's most urgent housing needs.

The period is not intended to be long term, as the council recognises the impact that this will have on households on the council's Housing Register and is an interim position whilst it carries out other action to address the pressures of Temporary Accommodation.

Legal and Policy Framework

The legal basis for using HRA voids as TA is included within the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Provision that they are not secure tenancies is found within the first schedule to the Housing Act 1985.

This temporary position is grounded in statutory homelessness duties under the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) and the Homelessness Code of Guidance (Chapter 17), which require all TA placements to be suitable in terms of space, location, health needs, accessibility, and affordability.

As stated, using council stock for TA does not confer secure tenancy; placements are made under homelessness duties, not the Part VI allocation scheme.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that all decisions consider impacts on protected characteristics, with an initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) available prior to the decision to adopt this temporary policy.

Definitions

- **Void:** A council property with no active tenancy, after the tenancy has lawfully ended and the rent account is closed.
- **Temporary Accommodation (TA):** Accommodation secured to meet statutory homelessness duties until settled housing is offered.
- **Lettable Standard:** The minimum safety, compliance, cleanliness, and functionality standard a void must meet prior to occupation. These definitions ensure clarity for staff, residents, and stakeholders, and align with sector best practice.

Principles

The pilot is underpinned by key principles:

- **Suitability first:** Every placement is assessed for suitability, for the purpose of Temporary Accommodation, against household needs, ensuring families and vulnerable households are prioritised.
- **Safety and compliance:** All properties must (change to will) meet required lettable standard

- **Review rights:** Households can request review of the suitability of the accommodation provided.
- **Sustaining communities:** being aware of the sensitivity of lets and supporting community cohesion where possible.

Eligibility and Prioritisation

Eligibility follows statutory homelessness duties under Part VII. During the period, prioritisation will focus on households as set out below; it will be for council officers to assess and evidence which of the criteria are met to sufficient level:

- Households located outside Brighton & Hove and assigned 'Band A' under the Temporary Accommodation Allocation Policy to return to the city, namely households who include:
 - a child in secondary school within the city in their final year of key stage 4 (generally year 11)
 - a child who has a Statement of Special Educational Needs and or an Educational Health Care Plan and is at school in the city
 - a child who is the subject of Child Protection Order Plan from BHCC
 - someone who is officially caring for another person in the city as part of a care plan agreed with the relevant social care department
 - someone in permanent or settled employment who works anti-social hours within the city and would risk losing their employment (unless they can be transferred by their employer)
 - someone who is receiving medical treatment that can only be provided by a specific medical facility within the city and that treatment requires a high volume of attendance at that medical facility (a minimum of 2 to 3 times per week)
- Households with dependent children in spot purchase or blocked booked accommodation:
 - Assessed as unsuitable for longer-term stay and prioritised for transfer
 - Made homeless due to domestic violence or abuse
 - Including a neurodiverse child (diagnosed by a qualified practitioner) or a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or other significant educational pressure.
 - Living in spot-purchase and/or block booked TA for more than 6 months
- Other households in out-of-city, spot purchase or block booked Accommodation

Policy Exemptions

While the policy aims to maximise the use of HRA void properties as TA for homeless households, it recognises that certain circumstances require individual consideration. Exemptions are therefore built into the policy to ensure that the council can respond appropriately to complex issues.

Unless needed in exceptional circumstances the following property types are exempt from the interim policy:

- **Sheltered Housing:** Properties designated for seniors are excluded due to their specialist nature and high demand.
- **Mobility-Adapted Properties:** Homes adapted for accessibility are excluded to preserve availability for those with specific needs.
- **Housing Association / Registered Social Landlord Properties:** Properties managed by partners within the council's allocation scheme are not included. On average, approximately one-quarter of homes allocated to households on the housing register are Housing Association properties.

In addition, the council retains a discretion to allocate voids to households from the housing register, and existing secure council tenants where exceptional circumstances and needs can be demonstrated in the following categories:

- Where an allocation would enable another council property to become available to use as Temporary Accommodation. For example, a Priority Transfer or Large Panel System (LPS) block property.
- Where there is a serious safeguarding risk or urgent medical need and allocating an existing council tenant, a new property is deemed the only way to safeguard.
- Where there is a household with assessed care and support need in residential or alternative care whose needs could be met within general needs accommodation.
- Any other situation where a compelling case can be demonstrated by a household on the housing register will be considered individually by the Lettings Panel.

Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by a dedicated panel.

Panel for Lettings Decisions

A dedicated panel will oversee decisions to use HRA voids as TA. The panel will include:

- Head of Tenancy Services
- Temporary Accommodation Manager
- Housing Allocations Manager
- Rehousing Manager
- Housing Operations Manager
- Empty Homes Manager

This panel will meet regularly to apply the prioritisation and decide on exceptions, and oversee offers of accommodation, ensuring decisions are consistent, fair, and well-documented.

Process Overview

The below process will be followed during the pilot period:

- **Identification:** Empty Homes team flags eligible voids weekly during the pilot window.
- **Pre-void inspection:** Condition of void recorded.
- **Void works:** Minor or major works scheduled to achieve lettable standard for TA.
- **Panel decision:** Lettings panel applies prioritisation matrix and agrees placements
- **Offer and sign-up:** TA licence or non-secure tenancy terms issued; rights and responsibilities explained; move-in supported.

Standards for TA in Council Voids

All council-owned voids used as TA must meet the council's lettable standard for TA, ensuring properties are safe, secure, clean, and ready for occupation. The following requirements apply:

- **Safety & Compliance:**
 - Valid gas and electrical safety certificates (CP12 where applicable and EICR) must be in place.
 - Hardwired smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms installed and tested.
 - No Category 1 hazards present (HHSRS compliance).
 - EPC completed and available.
- **Security:**
 - Front door lock changed; two sets of keys provided.
 - All windows and external doors checked for security and function.
- **Flooring:**
 - Minimum floor covering provided in all TA voids, unless suitable flooring already exists.
 - Kitchens and bathrooms must have suitable/non porous vinyl flooring.
- **Cleanliness:**
 - All previous tenants' effects, rubbish, and graffiti removed.
 - Property thoroughly cleaned, including sanitary ware, kitchen, and all floor surfaces.
- **Functionality:**
 - Heating, hot water, electrics, and plumbing in full working order.
 - Kitchens and bathrooms must be ventilated and have essential fixtures in good condition.
- **Decoration:**
 - Internal decoration is the incoming tenant's responsibility, unless the property is either below an acceptable standard or excessive damage requires partial redecoration at the council's discretion.
- **Adaptations & Accessibility:**
 - Existing adaptations retained unless instructed otherwise; reasonable adjustments made for accessibility where required.
- **External Areas:**

- Gardens, sheds, and boundaries cleared of hazards and bulk waste; fencing and gates made safe.
- **Handover:**
 - Welcome pack left for the incoming tenant.

Interim period and extension

This action runs from 19 January to 1 May 2026. At the end of the period, a review of the impact will be carried out, including analysis of outcomes, challenges, and recommendations.

From 1 May, the letting of HRA void properties will revert to standard allocation processes unless an extension is granted by the council's Cabinet. The decision to extend will be informed by formal consultation and an updated Equality Impact Assessment, reflecting insights and data gathered during the interim period. A detailed record of all HRA properties used as TA throughout the interim scheme will be maintained.

Notifying Residents and Housing Register applicants

Advertising of council homes via Homemove (the council's Choice Based Lettings platform) will be paused from 19 January 2026. Residents and tenants will be notified of this change, as well as any subsequent decision to extend or amend the process.

During the interim period, residents and tenants will continue to be able to bid on:

- Housing Association properties
- Council-owned Seniors Housing
- Council-owned mobility-adapted properties

Financial Impacts

Indicative modelling assumes up to 80 additional council TA units across the pilot, with estimated savings as a result of fewer households in spot purchase and block booked temporary accommodation.

The savings will take into account the impact on the HRA including additional repairs and maintenance costs.

Monitoring and KPIs

The pilot will monitor and report:

- Number of HRA voids allocated to TA
- That figure as a percentage of overall allocations in the period
- Number of voids where exceptions were applied
- Number of households in spot purchase and block booked accommodation
- Suitability reviews (s202) and outcomes

- Enquiries, complaints and Ombudsman enquiries

