

Notice of Motion
Cork County Council Meeting
26th February 2018

Notice of Motion by Councillor Diarmaid Ó Cadhla

“That Council requests a report on the return of ‘Void’ properties (unoccupied Council owned social housing units) to active use, including the following detail for each Municipal District:

- 1. The number of voids recovered to active use each year during 2015, 2016 and 2017, and the expected number for 2018.*
- 2. The average cost of recovery of void properties, and the range of costs from the least to the most expensive involved, and what do these costs include?*
- 3. What is the average time it takes to recover a void property, from when a decision is made to do so.*
- 4. How long does a void property stand idle, on average, before a decision is made to recover it?*
- 5. Why might a void property stand idle, and how many are currently at this status*
- 6. What proportions of direct labour and/or subcontracted work is involved in the recovery of voids – is each void unit handled individually or are general contracts issued?*
- 7. What is Council’s policy and process for the recovering void property”*

Report:

The Council endeavours to return all properties to use as soon as possible after they become vacant. Significant progress has been made in relation to vacancy over the last 3 years and, at present, less than 2% of the Council’s Housing Stock is unoccupied.

The Quarterly Report provided to Members at their Divisional Meetings lists the properties that are currently vacant, by Municipal District, indicates the date on which they became vacant, whether the required works are out to tender or are underway, the estimated completion date and whether a tenant has been selected.

1. Voids returned to active use:

The countywide figures for the last 3 years are listed below.

	2015	2016	2017
Municipal Districts	5		
West	43	30	24
Bandon/Kinsale	6	7	4
Blarney/Macroom	15	6	3
Ballincollig/ Carrigaline	36	16	22
East Cork	23	10	7
Cobh	21	11	25
Kanturk/Mallow	45	18	42
Fermoy	40	20	22
Total	229	118	149

A proposal for the refurbishment of 108 vacant units will be made to the DHPLG for 2018.

2. The figures published in respect of Cork Co Council in the NOAC Report on Housing Service Indicators for 2016 show an average refurbishment cost of €13,435.35 per unit. The 2017 Indicators are being compiled and will be made available to Members shortly.

The costs range from € 1731.25 where only clean out and electrical, plumbing and asbestos checks were needed to €108,217 where works included;

- Attic Insulation
- Replacing floors
- Dry lining / Wall Insulation
- Altering layout of house including removing internal walls, stairs etc.
- Windows and door replacement
- Re wiring
- New Heating System
- New Plumbing
- New Kitchen
- New Bathroom
- New gutters / downpipes
- New external steps
- New Fencing
- Painting internally and externally

3. The average time to relet a vacant property included in the Service Indicators Report for 2016 is 16.78 weeks. As with the cost per unit Members will be provided with the 2017 figure as soon as it is available.
4. As soon as the keys are returned to the Council the property is inspected and tender documents are prepared.
5. Properties stand idle while tender process is carried out. In a small number of cases vacancy occurs but tenancy issues may need to be resolved before further action can be taken. At present there are 3 such properties in the County.
6. A direct Labour Force is involved in void refurbishment in North Cork and there are also direct labour staff in West Cork who assist in the refurbishment of vacant properties. All vacant property refurbishment in South Cork is carried out by Contractors. In general contracts are tendered individually but in some cases if more than one property is returned at the same time, in close proximity, then these can be tendered as a bundle.

7. Voids Maintenance Procedure & Target Timelines.

A new voids procedure was introduced with effect from 8th January 2018. The aim of the procedure is to categorise the void based on the level of refurbishment work required and to give target times for returning each category to productive use. A new Service Level Agreement with contractors will speed up the tendering process, set out the target return times and have penalties built in to assist in achieving the objectives of the new procedure. The categorisation system is set out on the following table;

Proposed Categorisation System for Vacant Properties		
Class 1	<p>Properties Categorised as Class 1 are properties that require planned maintenance or other minor works such as minor electrical & refreshment works, that could generally be carried out with the tenant insitu:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearance of Belongings - Minor works: minor electrical, repair of leaks etc. - Servicing of boilers and minor plumbing works - Refreshment of decoration if necessary - Other limited Planned Maintenance type works such as External Window & Door replacement, Energy upgrades. 	Target Return Time 2-8 weeks
Class 2	<p>Properties Categorised as Class 2 are properties that require a Full refurbishment and fabric upgrade, where works cannot be carried out with the tenant insitu:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full M+E Upgrade. - Windows and Doors Upgrade. - Energy Efficient Works: Cavity & Loft Insulation, Dry lining, stove installation - Internal Fabric Upgrade: Kitchen, Bathrooms, Joinery, timberwork, plastering and redecoration. 	12 weeks
Class 3	<p>Properties Categorised as Class 3 are properties that on top of requiring a Full refurbishment may also require other significant works such as asbestos removal, roof replacement or other specialist works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asbestos Removal. - Full M+E Upgrade. - Windows and Doors Upgrade. - Energy Efficient Works: Cavity & Loft Insulation, External Insulation, Dry lining. - Internal Fabric Upgrade: Kitchen, Bathrooms, Joinery, plastering and redecoration. - Roof Refurbishment 	14 weeks
Class 4	<p>Properties Categorised as Class 4 are properties that could be classed as derelict or unsafe to such an extent that they require</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete Redesign of Property Required due to fire safety and Layout issues. - Significant Structural Issues requiring input and design from a Structural Engineer. - Property in such condition as could be rendered derelict. - Partial demolition, redesign and reconstruction required. 	32 weeks if classed as a derelict void. 78 weeks if significant redesign is required and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Full Demolition and Reconstruction of Property required. <p>These properties are not available for letting from traditional means and require the input of an Architect, structural engineer or other External expertise.</p>	property becomes a SHIP type project.
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The above timelines are dependent on staff availability, contractor availability and funding.



Date: 26th February, 2018