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## Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

### Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board

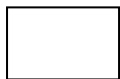
Date: 24 October 2007

### Subject: ALMO Performance on Void Properties

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#### Electoral Wards Affected:

ALL



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Environment and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board on the proportion of void properties for local authority housing stock in Leeds, and in particular the Middleton area.

## 2 City Void Trends

- 2.1 The proportion of empty local authority properties in management in Leeds at the point that the ALMOs were set up was 2.6% (as at end of 2002/03). Since the ALMOs have been responsible for the management of empty properties there has been a gradual improvement in performance and at the end of September 2007 the proportion of empty local authority homes in management in Leeds had reduced to 1.42%, that is 836 voids across the city. This represents an improvement of over 1%.
- 2.2 The main reason for this improvement in performance has been the increased demand for council housing, reflecting the changing housing market in Leeds. Since the introduction of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) in 2003 a number of properties which were thought to be in areas which were unlettable have been marketed through the CBL process and successfully let. The perception of council housing has positively improved with increased investment in properties to bring them up to the Decent Homes Standard, and the increase in house prices in Leeds has meant that other housing sectors have become unaffordable for many residents in Leeds.
- 2.3 Back in 2003 there were considerable variances between the ALMOs in the proportion of void properties in management, ranging from Leeds North East Homes (LNEH) with 1.5% voids, to Leeds South East Homes (LSEH) with 3.9% voids (a difference of 2.4%). However, by September 2007 this variance had reduced considerably, ranging from East North East Homes Leeds at 1.36% voids, to Belle Isle Tenant Management Organisation (BITMO) at 1.66% (a difference of 0.3%).

- 2.4 While ALMOs with higher void levels have been able to improve performance considerably, ALMOs with lower void levels have seen less improvement, and all ALMOs now have similar proportions of empty properties. This is because ALMOs have reached an optimum void rate which reflects the level of tenancy turnover in Leeds.
- 2.5 In addition to the 836 empty properties in management, there are also 531 empty properties where approval has been given to demolish the properties. These void properties have been taken out of charge and are awaiting demolition, but the demolition has not yet taken place. These properties are not included in ALMO void performance because there is no intention to relet the properties.
- 2.6 These 531 empty properties awaiting demolition are properties to be included in planned regeneration schemes, e.g. EASEL, Little London Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and the Housing Market Renewal Package. Many of these voids are being held for demolition whilst tenanted properties in the vicinity are rehoused.

### **3 Voids in the Middleton Area**

- 3.1 As at 8 October 2007, there are 35 empty local authority properties in management in the Middleton area, that is 1.5% of total local authority stock in the area. In the Thorpes and Throstles area there are 10 empty local authority properties which are in the process of being let, and 2 empty properties awaiting demolition. The demolition programme in the Thorpe and Throstles area has largely been completed over the last 4-5 years.
- 3.2 In addition to local authority void properties, there are a number of privately owned empty properties in the area, which are a hazard and are in the process of being re-purchased, in order for them to be demolished. These properties have been a long standing problem in the Middleton area. It is possible these may be contributing to the overall visibility of empty properties.
- 3.3 The Middleton Partnership Board is a multi-departmental board which has been looking at the regeneration objectives for the Middleton area. A draft strategy and action plan have been produced. To compliment this the Housing Strategy Team, Aire Valley Homes and Re'new are currently working together to draw up a masterplan for the area as the sites are included within the 77 acres designated for the Affordable Housing Strategic Partnership.

### **4 Recommendations**

- 4.1 Scrutiny Board are asked to note this report and identify issues that they would like further information.