

Operational Procedure 49

SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCIL

VOIDS POLICY



Responsible Officer	Service Manager – Housing and Property						
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			Certificates	

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Introduction

Shetland Islands Council's Housing Services shall be responsible for minimising the number of empty properties in stock and the length of time they are empty.

This is not a straightforward task as the void rate is highly dependent on policies and performance in a variety of service areas, including application management, allocations, and repairs and maintenance.

This details the policy and procedures to be followed when a tenant gives notice of their intention to terminate their tenancy.

Principles and Objectives

The principles and objectives of the Void Management Policy are drawn from the need to ensure that this policy adheres to the legal requirements placed on the Council and reflects the aims of the Community Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan, Local Housing Strategy and good practice.

Principles

Legality

We will ensure that our void policy and procedures reflect the legal framework and relevant codes of guidance.

Consistency

We will apply the void policy in a consistent manner in all areas of Shetland so that existing and new tenants are treated in a similar manner regardless of tenure.

Social Inclusion

We will not discriminate against existing and new tenants on the basis of their sex, marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientations, language, social origin, religious beliefs or political opinions.

Responsiveness

We seek to have a policy, which is capable of responding to a wide range of complex individual needs and circumstances.

Openness

We will ensure that the void policy is operated in an accountable manner with regular performance monitoring and reviews. We will publicise the results of the performance monitoring. In doing so an individual's right to confidentiality and the requirements of the Data Protection Acts will be safeguarded. Individual tenants personal details will not be disclosed.

Objectives

The key aims are:

- To ensure that individuals are allocated property that meets the defined re-lettable standard
- To minimise the void days lost and the rent loss
- To minimise the cost of repairs
- To ensure that tenants are aware of their responsibilities with regard to décor, cleanliness, repair and authorised/unauthorised alterations
- To ensure that prospective tenants are aware of availability of support and assistance
- To monitor and report on void performance in order to highlight successes and weaknesses
- To comply with health and safety, legal duties, regulatory requirements and good practice standards
- To ensure effective, efficient and accountable, management of the process

Training

Officers shall be fully trained and given sufficient flexibility to make reasonable judgements in dealing with individual cases.

Clear procedures are provided to officers to ensure there is a consistent approach to managing voids complying with equal opportunities principles and best practice.

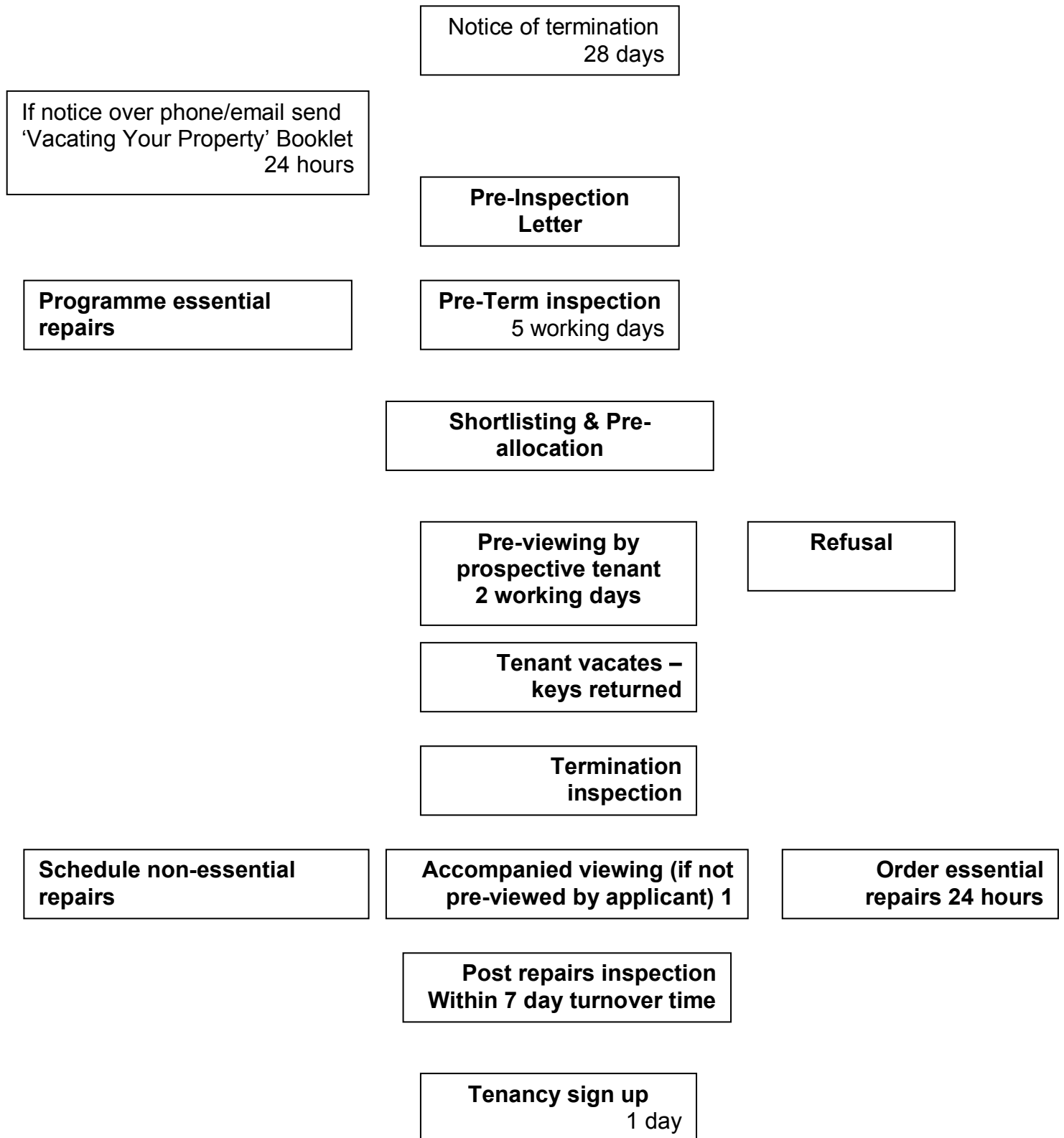
Links with Legislation, other policies and procedures

The void management policy will assist the Council to meet its Local Housing Strategy, Corporate Plan and Service Plan aims and priorities. In particular, it will assist the Council to provide decent, secure and affordable housing to meet housing need. The void management policy will also assist the Council to achieve 'best value' in the use of its resources.

In meeting the principles and objectives of the void management policy we will take account of the following legislative and policy requirements:

- Community Planning Framework
- Council's Corporate Plan
- Housing Service Plan
- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003
- Shetland Islands Council's Child Protection Procedures
- Sex Offenders Joint Protocol
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Data Protection Acts

Basic Stages of a Void



Notice of Intention to Terminate

Most tenancies will terminate by a tenant giving notice. The tenancy must end on a Sunday. Rent liability will be for the full 28 days up to the termination date.

Notice to terminate a tenancy can be received in various ways from the tenant:

- By phone to Housing Office
- By letter or e-mail to Housing Office
- In person at Housing Office

The notice should include:

- Tenant/s name and address
- Date of actual leaving
- Forwarding / contact address and telephone number
- The tenant's signature – if the tenancy is in joint names, both tenants must sign the notice

The 28 days notice period will begin only on receipt of written evidence. This could be by letter or the completed 'Vacating Your Property' booklet ([VP0001](#)).

In all cases it is necessary for the tenant to complete the 'Vacating your property' booklet, therefore if a tenant initiates request by phone/e-mail/letter then the 'Vacating Your Property' booklet should be posted 2nd class within 24 hours of request.

On receipt of the completed 'Vacating Your Property' booklet or written termination, the Housing Assistant, Business Support will:

Action Checklist	√
Check that the booklet is completed accurately	
Create the void on Orchard and complete the 'Notice' folder	
Arrange a pre-termination inspection with the Technical Officer for within 5 working days of the notice date	
Arrange a post-termination inspection appointment with the Technical Officer within two days of the keys in date	
Notify the DLO of the prospective void property, so that it can be included in the void works programme	
Arrange a PAT and / or electrical test with the DLO for the expected keys in date	
Notify the rents section, and request details of the outstanding balances of rent / Council Tax / rechargeable repairs to ensure payment before the outgoing tenant moves	
In cases where a debt is due the Housing Assistant will inform the Recovery Section. They will arrange to visit the tenant and negotiate an arrangement to pay. The Arrears Officer must aim to recover the debt/s or confirm the repayment agreement in writing before the tenancy ends	
Check if the outgoing tenant has an active application on the housing list and cancel application	
Acknowledge the notice of termination within 1 working day (VP0002)	
Create a void pack	
Start the void monitoring sheet (VP0003)	

Orchard Procedures

The void is created on Orchard by entering the property address, highlighting the property and going to the Tenancy Management by Property screen, by clicking on Task, Common, Tenancy Management by Property.

You then click on Void Property

Add Void Notice Details

Void Type: Main S.I.C. Void Type

Vacating Tenancy Number: 0
Void Tenancy Number: 0 Next Tenancy Number: 0

Notice Date: 20/07/2007
Expected Termination: 12/08/2007

Allow Pre-Void Letting: Yes No Unknown
Reason:

Void Reasons:

Code	Description
TE	Termination-By Tenant

Buttons: Add, Delete, OK, Cancel, Help

The Void Type will default to Main SIC Void Type.

The Notice Date will be today's date – this should be changed to the date notice received

The Expected Termination Date should be the Sunday, four weeks after the notice was received

Allow Pre-Void Letting will default to Yes.

The Void Reasons will default to Termination By Tenant. This should be changed if the termination is for any other reason e.g. if a tenant has died, or if the tenancy was abandoned.

Click on Ok and enter the tenants forwarding address.

Forwarding Address

Address	From	To
Mrs L Johnson, 12 Sunry Street, Lerwick, ZE1 0EG	07/08/2007	

Buttons: Add, Modify, Delete, Exit, Help

You then have to select the void event of Notice Received (if notice of intention to terminate has been received) and click ok.

Select Next Void Status

Position
Code:
Description:

Sort by
 Code
 Description

Code	Description
NONOT	No Notice Received
NOTICE	Notice Received

The void will then be created.

Void Management

Vacating Tenant: Mrs L Johnson
6 Bakland
Lerwick
Shetland

Void Status: NOTICE Notice Received
Offer Status: ALLDC1 Awaiting Pre-Allocation
Void Type: MAIN Main S.I.C. Void Type

Void Number: 16101 CURRENT VOID Expected Termination: 12/08/2007 Expected Available:

Nominations Offers Targets Tenants Quota Band Appointments
Notice Events Pre Void Inspection Full Inspection Notes Key Management Letters

Vacating Tenancy Number: 13835
Void Tenancy Number: 22371 Next Tenancy Number: 22372

Notice Date: 20/07/2007
Expected Termination: 12/08/2007

Allow Pre-Void Letting: Yes No Unknown
Reason:

Void Reasons:

Code	Description
TE	Termination-By Tenant

Click on the Events folder

Click on Next Void Event and select pre-void inspection arranged

Description	Code
Keys Not Returned By Tenant	35
Keys Received From Tenant	30
Occupied	210
Pre-Inspect Previously Comp.	395
Pre-Void Inspect Arranged	33

Click on ok

Event Code:	0033	Pre-Void Inspect Arranged
Previous Void Status:	NOTICE	Notice Received
Next Void Status:	INSP1	Pre-Void Inspect Arranged
Previous Offer Status:	ALLOC1	Awaiting Pre-Allocation
Next Offer Status:	ALLOC1	Awaiting Pre-Allocation
Officer:	VSIMP	Vaila Simpson
Event Date/Time:	20/07/2007	09:27

Click on ok

The Technical Officer will then update the void, once the pre inspection has been completed.

Acknowledgement Letter ([VP0002](#))

The acknowledgement will contain:

- Confirmation of the termination date
- The amount of rent due to be paid to the date of leaving
- A reminder that the rent account must be cleared up to the termination date
- A reminder to notify utilities
- Confirmation of the pre-termination inspection date
- A claim form for any improvements qualifying under compensation regulations
- Information on where to deliver keys to, and by when
- Advice on what to do if the notice to terminate the tenancy is to be withdrawn
- Advice on completing a new application form within 4 weeks if they wish to be considered for Council housing after they move

Void Pack

The Void Pack should have the address clearly marked on the front and all relevant forms placed inside along with the copy of '[Vacating Your Property](#)' booklet. (See checklist).

- Void Monitoring Sheet (VP0003)
- Pink Sheet for the pre-termination and termination inspections (VP0006)
- Copy of acknowledgement letter confirming pre-inspection to tenant ([VP0002](#))
- Repair Agreement (VP0012)
- Inventory form (For abandoned properties only)
- [D:\letters and formsvoidsnew1.doc](#) Register Tenant List ([VP0004](#))
- Do and Don't Sheet ([VP0005](#))
- Advice Note on Right to Repair
- Advice Note on Right to Compensation
- Copy of the Customer Service Standards
- Copy of the Void Property Standards
- Sign up checklist ([VP0018](#))
- Tenancy Agreement (VP0017)

PRE-TERMINATION INSPECTION

The Housing Assistant should arrange a pre-termination visit by phone and / or letter as above. This appointment should be entered in the Technical Officers schedule for one hour and Orchard should be updated.

The majority of pre-terminations should be completed within five working days.

The main purpose of the pre-inspection is:

- To identify any repairs which are the responsibility of the tenant and advise the tenant of the recharge policy
- To identify any repairs that are the responsibility of the Council, and to decide which repairs are essential repairs that will be required prior to re-let to make the property safe and which are non-essential repairs that can be carried out as routine
- To advise the tenant that some repairs will be carried out as routine and may be undertaken prior to them moving out - suitable appointment times should be noted
- To identify any major works that may be required to the property as part of planned maintenance e.g. replumb, kitchen replacement
- To agree what will be removed from / what will remain in the property and in particular, if the property is suitable for pre-allocation and if there is demand for the property, to list any items that the tenant wishes to leave or sell onto the new tenant and advise the tenant of the procedure
- To check on and list any alterations carried out by the tenant, to determine qualifying improvements for compensation and to advise the tenant of the 'Right to Compensation' scheme
- To identify any adaptation or special features of the property to assist in the allocation process
- To advise the tenant of the general condition the property should be left in on termination and give them a copy of the Void Property Standards
- To determine whether prospective tenants can view the property
- To complete the 'Vacating Your Property' booklet if one has not been returned and to obtain a forwarding address or contact phone number

Essential repairs will include:

- Repairs essential to make the property habitable
- Health, safety and security repairs
- Repairs considered essential to achieve a quick letting
- Repairs that are impractical to do in an occupied property
- Removal of substandard tenant alterations

A standard report form (VP0006 - pink sheet) will be completed at the pre-termination inspection, signed by the Technical Officer and the outgoing tenant.

The Technical Officer should arrange for a copy of the report to be given to the outgoing tenant, within 1 day. The tenant will then have the opportunity to remedy any defect for which they are responsible prior to the end of the tenancy.

If any such defects are not remedied prior to the end of the tenancy, or if the work is not of a satisfactory standard, a recharge may then be raised for the cost of the works.

Relevant information from the inspection will be made available to any prospective tenant to whom an offer of tenancy has been or is to be made.

Following the pre-termination inspection, the Technical Officer will discuss and agree with the Housing Officer:

- If the property can be re-let or if a 'Policy Void' form ([VP0007](#)) needs to be completed
- If the property can be pre-allocated
- If the property is likely to be a no / low demand void ([VP0008](#))
- If the property can be viewed by prospective tenants

The Technical Officer will then update the pre-void inspection, notes (void notes, garden condition) and tenants folder (improvements, items left, rechargeable repairs) on Orchard

The Technical Officer will notify the DLO of any essential works, so that these can be incorporated into the voids programme

The Technical Officer should

- Update the pre-termination folder on Orchard
- Check the property details to make sure the number and sizes of the bedrooms are correct, the heating type is correct, details of any special adaptations are noted
- Enter the relevant details into the tenants and notes folders.
- Update the void monitoring sheet

This should be done within 24 hours of the pre-termination visit.

ORDERING REPAIRS

The Technical Officer will programme / order any repairs to be carried out on return to office or within 1 working day of the pre-termination inspection.

The priority timescale for repairs orders will be at the discretion of Technical Officers but will have regard to the overall targets for void management and the nature of the repair.

Wherever practicable all essential repairs to properties required prior to a new tenancy, should be given a 7-day priority or less.

All other works should be given a 28-day priority or less. However, some repairs may be outside of the existing repair contract and completion within 28 days may not be enforceable.

Work given a 28+-day priority shall be any work that cannot reasonably be expected to be done within 28 days. An example would be new windows.

Essential repairs (to be completed prior to the occupation of the property) will be ordered separately from more routine repairs, which may be completed during the void notice period or after occupation of the property as appropriate.

Any work to be completed after the new tenancy starts must be agreed and signed by the area Technical Officer and the new tenant.

A target of 10% post-inspection will be sought.

The Technical Officer should apply the following standards during Void Inspections. Unless otherwise specified this standard applies to all void properties and is to be included in the Tenant's Handbook.

These conditions will ensure that Shetland Islands Council new tenants will have accepted a property that is:

- Wind and water tight
- Secure and safe
- In a habitable condition

Void Property Standards

Living room

Decoration intact and clean
Floor coverings removed (Not Temporary Tenancies)
Doors and woodwork clean and operational
Windows clean and operational
Floor coverings intact and clean (Temporary Tenancies only)
Furnishings clean and in place as per inventory (Temporary Tenancies only)

Kitchen

Decoration intact and clean
Floor coverings removed (Not Temporary Tenancies)
Doors and woodwork clean and operational
Windows clean and operational
Kitchen fitments clean and operational
Floor coverings intact and clean (Temporary Tenancies only)
White goods clean and acceptable for use and equipment in place as per inventory (Temporary Tenancies only)

Bathrooms

Decoration intact and clean
Floor coverings removed (Not Temporary Tenancies)
Doors and woodwork clean and operational
Windows clean and operational
All sanitary ware clean and acceptable for use
Floor coverings intact and clean (Temporary Tenancies only)

Bedrooms

Decoration intact and clean
Floor coverings removed (Not Temporary Tenancies)
Doors and woodwork clean and operational
Windows clean and operational
Floor coverings intact and clean (Temporary Tenancies only)
Furnishings clean and in place as per inventory (Temporary Tenancies only)

Front / Rear doors

Locks operational / secure and all keys returned

Services

Electricity and heating suppliers advised of leaving date and final meter readings

External

Garden areas maintained and free of rubbish

General

There should be no personal belongings or rubbish left from previous tenant.
Inventory items only in temporary tenancies.

Void Property – Action Guidance

The Technical Officer should take the following action if non-conformance with the Void Standard is identified.

Action Guidance to be inserted

Pre-Allocations

When a property can be pre-allocated, the Housing Officer will select prospective tenants in accordance with the Council's Allocations Policy, on the Thursday following the pre-inspection and record any offers on the void monitoring sheet.

The Housing Officer will ensure that all matches are recorded on Orchard and that a paper copy of all housing lists at the time of making the selection is placed in the void file.

When selecting prospective tenants, Housing Officers will check that the top five applicants in all quotas have been awarded the correct level of points and will correct any errors before proceeding with the allocation.

They will also check that the selected applicant is eligible to be made an offer of housing. A record will be held in the file of the checks carried out.

Prospective tenants will be notified verbally and interest or refusal recorded by file note and on Orchard. If a property is refused as a result of a verbal offer, this should be confirmed in writing (VP0009) in line with the allocation policy.

If an applicant indicates an interest in the property, an appointment will be arranged for a home visit, followed by an accompanied viewing. It is intended that this will take place within 2 days of the verbal offer of tenancy being made.

Purpose of home visit

- To confirm the details held about the applicant's housing needs are still the same
- To confirm that the information the applicant has given the Council is correct

Purpose of accompanied viewing

- To enable the applicant to view the offered property
- To answer any queries the applicant has about the property
- To provide information on the tenancy agreement, rent, repairs and planned maintenance that will be carried out to the property
- To advise the prospective tenant that the tenancy will commence on the Monday following sign up, and that sign up will take place as soon as the property is ready to let.

It should be noted that accompanied viewing must take place on all voids and pre-lets.

If the outgoing tenant will not give permission for an accompanied viewing, the prospective tenant should be given a virtual tour where possible, of the property from photos held on the database.

An applicant will be expected to verbally indicate their acceptance / refusal of the offer within 2 days of the viewing taking place.

Formal Offers

All formal offers will be made in writing (VP0010) within 2 days of the offer being accepted verbally.

Every offer of tenancy will contain at least the following information:

- Size / type of property
- Rent
- Proposed date of entry where possible
- Viewing arrangements
- Arrangements for accepting, signing leases etc
- Named contact for queries

Applicants are required to respond to a formal offer within 2 working days of receiving the letter. A standard form (VP0011) is enclosed with the offer letter for this purpose.

The prospective tenant should be advised in writing (VP0012) of the principal repairs to be carried out on the property and of any programmed capital work due, such as kitchen replacement, refurbishment etc.

If an offer is refused, the applicant will be asked to complete a refusal form (VP0013), giving details of the reason for refusal. Where these reasons relate to the condition of the house or concerns about neighbours etc, the issue will be referred to the Housing / Technical Officer for comment / action.

The Housing Officer should then update Orchard and the void monitoring sheet.

If there is No Demand for the property, the Housing Officer should update Orchard to reflect this and complete a form with recommendations for how the void can be let e.g. advertise vacancy, change of use ([VP0014](#)) to temporary accommodation, relocating workers property etc.

The form should be passed to the Service Manager – Housing & Property. If the change of use is authorised, KRL will update Orchard, following the guidance in the Orchard procedures folder.

TERMINATION OF TENANCIES

Keys

The outgoing tenant must return two sets of keys for each door, properly labelled to the Housing Service by the date specified in the acknowledgement letter.

If the outgoing tenant has handed in one set of keys only, then a second set of keys should be cut.

As long as the full four weeks notice has been given, rent will be charged up to the end of the week (Sunday) in which the keys are returned, unless the keys are returned the next working day after the termination period ends.

When the keys are returned to the office the Housing Assistant will organise the tenant to sign the Vacating Your Property booklet and log the keys. The keys in sheet and Orchard will be used to track keys once they are received.

The Housing Assistant should then update Orchard to record the return of the keys and the termination of the tenancy.

Orchard Procedures

Enter the property address and highlight the property. Click on Task, Common, Tenancy Management by Property. Click on Modify Void.

Go to the Event folder and click on Next Void Event.

Description	Code
Keys Not Returned By Tenant	35
Keys Received From Tenant	30

Select Keys Received From Tenant and enter the keys in date

Key Holder Type:	Outgoing Tenant
Person:	1264 Mrs Laurna Johnson
Key Set:	0 Default Key Set
Date/Time Issued:	/ / :
Date/Time Returned:	07/08/2007 09:32
Deposit Paid:	0.00
Deposit Returned:	/ / :

Click on Next Void Event again and select Tenancy Terminated

Select Next Void Event

Position
Code:
Description:

Sort by
 Code
 Description

Description	Code
Not To Be Terminated	39
Tenancy Terminated	100

Click on ok and enter the actual termination date

Void Termination

Expected Termination: 12/08/2007

Actual Termination: 12/08/2007

Click on ok, then click on Next Void Event again, and select Technical Inspection Arranged.

Select Next Void Event

Position
Code:
Description:

Sort by
 Code
 Description

Description	Code
Lock Change Arranged-No Keys	52
Lock Changed Arranged	42
Technical Inspection Arranged	45

Click on ok

Add Void Event

Event Code: 0045 Technical Inspection Arranged

Previous Void Status: TERM Tenancy Terminated

Next Void Status: INSP2B Tech Inspection Arranged

Previous Offer Status: ALLOC2 Terminated-Awaiting Allocation

Next Offer Status: ALLOC2 Terminated-Awaiting Allocation

Officer: VSIMP Vaila Simpson

Event Date/Time: 20/07/2007 09:34

Click on ok

The Rents Section should be notified using the standard form ([VP0015](#)) of the termination and keys in dates and the void monitoring sheet should be updated.

If no notice received prior to keys being handed in, the Housing Assistant must complete a Vacating Your Property booklet with the outgoing tenant ensuring that a forwarding address is given and advising the outgoing tenant of the Council's 28 days notice policy and rechargeable policy.

If the keys are put through letterbox, the Housing Assistant should tie up with Vacating Your Property booklet.

If there is no Vacating Your Property booklet, and the tenant has not given any written notice, the Housing Assistant should notify the Housing Officer of the possible abandoned tenancy. The Housing Officer should then follow the abandoned tenancy procedure.

Keys for vacant properties should be split and labelled with both sets being kept in the key cabinet.

Both sets of keys should be handed over to the new tenant at sign up stage. Spare keys should not be kept in the office for repairs if there is a current tenant.

Termination Inspection

The Technical Officer will carry out the majority of post termination inspections within 1 working day of keys being received.

The purpose of the post-termination inspection is:

- To ensure that the outgoing tenants have complied with the current Void Standard procedures
- To ensure that the property meets the Council's minimum standards for properties to be re-let
- Identify any further repairs that are required to the property
- Identify whether there are any outstanding items of disrepair, which are the responsibility of the outgoing tenant
- Review qualifying improvements for compensation
- To ensure that the property has a current up to date Energy Performance Certificate as required by the Building (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2006. For further information, please refer to Policy Guidance Note 34 - Energy Performance Certificates.
- To take meter readings as a record in case of queries from electricity and district heating suppliers

The Technical Officer will update Orchard within 24 hours of the termination inspection visit. The Technical Officer should advise the Housing Officer if the property is ready to let, or provide an expected ready to let date and update the void monitoring sheet.

If further repairs are required, these should be ordered as essential or non-essential repairs in line with previous timescales.

The Technical Officer should ensure that any deviations from the Void Property standard that are to be carried out after the new tenant has moved in are agreed with the incoming tenant

The Technical Officer should ensure that within 10 working days of the post-termination inspection, the outgoing tenant is informed in writing if there are outstanding items, which will be recharged (VP0016).

Sign Up & Creating tenancies

When a prospective tenant has indicated their acceptance of a vacant property, the date of entry to the house must be agreed. This will be as soon as possible after all **essential** repairs are completed and the property is ready to let.

Once the Technical officer has advised the Housing Officer of the ready to let date, the Housing Officer should contact the tenant to explain the sign up process and arrange the sign up interview with them. The Housing Officer should then advise Finance of this date.

It is the responsibility of the Housing Officer to have all relevant documents ready for the sign up, copies of which should be available in the void pack:

- Tenancy Agreement (VP0017)
- New Tenant Sign Up Checklist ([VP0018](#))
- Advice notes for tenants on the Right to Repair (VP0019) and the Right to Compensation ([VP0020](#))
- Copy of the Customer Service Standards (OP46)
- Copy of the Void Property Standards
- Tenants Handbook
- Register Tenant List ([VP0004](#))
- Do and Don't Sheet ([VP0005](#))
- Instructions for heating systems (TO to supply) link to inspection
- Purple tenant questionnaire (annual survey) link to sign up form
- Home Safety Pack

The Housing Officer should ensure that the keys are delivered to Finance on the day of the sign up interview.

At the sign up interview, the area Housing Officer will go through the sign up checklist and explain the items noted before the lease is signed.

The Housing Officer should also arrange a post tenancy visit for the area Technical Officer and / or themselves with the tenant for approximately four weeks after the sign up date. If the tenant is being offered secure accommodation as part of the Council's duty to them under the homeless legislation, this visit should be a joint one with the person's named Housing Officer and the area Housing Officer.

When the lease is signed the tenant should be advised to go to Finance for the second stage of the interview, where they will pay their rent in advance or complete a Housing Benefit claim form before collecting their keys.

The Housing Officer should then update Orchard to create the new tenancy and complete the void monitoring sheet, which should be passed to the Policy & Strategy team for analysis and filing.

Finance staff will carry out a second pre-tenancy interview with the new tenant, collect their payment of rent in advance or complete a Housing Benefit claim form with them, and issue the keys.

The New Tenant [Sign-Up Checklist](#) should be completed and signed by the tenant(s) at the end of the second sign-up interview. This should then be copied and returned to Housing, as the original should be kept on the tenancy file. The new tenant's should also be given a copy of the checklist, as this will confirm the date of the new tenancy visit.

NEW TENANCY VISIT

The Technical Officer and / or Housing Officer should carry out a courtesy new tenancy visit approximately 4 weeks after the sign up. The Housing Officer will arrange this visit during the sign up.

The Technical Officer and / or Housing Officer should record the visit using the new tenant visit form (VP0022). They should also ask the new tenant to complete the new tenants' Customer Satisfaction Survey ([VP0023](#)), which should be returned to the Housing Policy & Strategy section.

TENANT'S IMPROVEMENTS TO HOME – RIGHT TO COMPENSATION

Tenants may be entitled to claim compensation at the end of their tenancy for certain types of improvements, which they have undertaken during the course of their tenancy.

This only applies to work started after 1 April 1994 and for which they received the written permission of the Housing Service.

The tenant can claim compensation when one of the following items has been installed or replaced:

- Bath or shower
- Wash-hand basin
- Toilet
- Kitchen sink
- Storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen
- Work surfaces for food preparation
- Space or water heating
- Thermostatic radiator valves
- Insulation of pipes, water tank or cylinder
- Loft insulation
- Cavity wall insulation
- Draught proofing of external doors or windows
- Double-glazing or other window replacement or secondary glazing
- Rewiring or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings (including smoke detectors)
- Security measures, excluding burglar alarm systems

Making a claim for Compensation

The tenant must make their claim in writing and tell us:

- Their name and address
- Details of each improvement they have made
- The cost of each of these improvements (include copies of receipts or invoices)
- The dates on which each improvement was started and finished
- Details of any grants or other financial assistance they received for the work
- Details of any other compensation they have claimed for the item of work
- The date on which their tenancy ends
- Where they would like us to send their payment

The Technical Officer should reply within 28 days of their tenancy ending, or within 28 days of their application

The Technical Officer should tell the tenant the amount of compensation they are entitled to, or that their claim has not been accepted

The tenant has the right to appeal the decision if they disagree with it

RECHARGES

Recharges can be raised against any tenant for recovery of costs to the housing service for repairs that are not due to fair wear and tear, or because they are tenants responsibility.

Recharges should not be raised to try and recover costs of £25 or less. This is on the basis that the administrative cost of recovery exceeds the amount.

When raising a recharge consideration should be given to supporting evidence. There should be detailed and valid reasons for raising a recharge, supported by photographs, correspondence, inspection records, police reports etc, wherever practicable. The ultimate test would be could this recharge be validated in a court? If the answer is NO, then a recharge should not be raised. Similarly suspicion alone is not enough to validate a recharge, without any supporting evidence.

In the event of any recharges arising from or following inspections, all details are to be recorded on an inspection sheet (or “pink form”).

Where the inspection is a pre-void inspection, the vacating tenant should sign the inspection form agreeing to the recharges.

Where it is considered by a member of the housing staff that a recharge is appropriate, the recharge is to cover all items that have been damaged or made defective during the tenancy, unless the damage can be considered as fair wear & tear. Tenants can still be recharged for damage to their current or former property.

The recharge procedure (OP5) should be followed in all cases.

NEW PROPERTY ACQUISITION

A property, which may be suitable for purchase by the Shetland Islands Council, will be identified when advertised for sale, by the Service Manager – Business Support or the Asset & Properties Unit, in consultation with the Service Manager – Business Support.

A joint viewing should be arranged between the officer responsible for progressing the purchase (usually Alan Rolfe or Grant Gilfillan), the Senior Housing Officer – Asset Management and the area Technical Officer.

The purpose of this viewing will be to assess the suitability of the property for addition to the Council's stock, taking into account alterations carried out (check that planning permission / building warrants are in place) and repairs needed to bring the property up to a lettable standard (as defined in the Voids Policy).

A recommendation on whether or not to proceed with the purchase will then be made to the Service Manager – Business Support.

If a decision is made by the Service Manager – Business Support to put in a bid, the offer price will be discussed and agreed between the Asset & Properties Unit and the Service Manager – Business Support.

The Asset & Properties Unit will then submit the agreed offer.

If the offer is successful, the Asset & Properties Unit will advise the Service Manager – Business Support and the Service Manager – Housing & Property. They will then arrange for Legal Services to carry out the conveyance for the sale.

The Service Manager – Housing & Property, will decide, in consultation with HMT on how the property should be used e.g. general needs let, temporary accommodation, decant etc. This decision will be emailed to KRL for information in relation to adding the property to the Orchard system.

Once the sale is complete, the Asset & Properties Unit will then arrange for the keys, legal documents and plan of the house and land to be collected from the seller's solicitor.

The Asset & Properties Unit should complete the new property form ([VP0024](#)) and deliver it to Housing along with the keys and legal documentation.

The Housing Assistant receiving the form and the keys should log the keys as being received on the 'keys in' sheet and create a house file for the property, filing any documentation received from the Asset & Properties Unit.

The form should then be passed to KRL for the property to be added to Orchard, Servitor and Rents, and the Service Manager – Housing & Property notified when this has been completed.

If the area Technical Officer has not already carried out an inspection of the property, this should be arranged, and any works ordered as required.

If the property is to be used as temporary or decant accommodation, the area Housing Officer should also visit the property and arrange for carpets / curtains and furniture to be ordered and delivered as required.

NEW BUILD

When the Shetland Islands Council builds new houses, the use of these properties should already have been agreed by HMT. This decision should be notified to KRL for information in relation to adding the properties to the Orchard system.

When the new build is completed, the Senior Housing Officer – Asset Management should ensure the Assessors register the property, and that the new property form ([VP0024](#)) is completed. This form should be delivered to the Housing Assistant along with the keys and any documentation for the property e.g. plans.

The Housing Assistant receiving the form and the keys should log the keys as being received on the 'keys in' sheet and create a house file for the property, filing any documentation received from the Asset & Properties Unit.

The form should then be passed to KRL for the property to be added to Orchard, Servitor and Rents, and the Service Manager – Housing & Property notified when this has been completed.

If the property is to be used as temporary or decant accommodation, the area Housing Officer should also visit the property and arrange for carpets / curtains and furniture to be ordered and delivered as required.

APPEALS / COMPLAINTS

If the tenant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the void management process they should contact the Housing Service, if possible in writing. The complaint will be acknowledged in three working days, and a full response will be provided in 10 working days in line with Housing's Complaints Procedure (OP42)

If they are not satisfied with the outcome, they should write requesting a review of the original response. This will be acknowledged in three working days. A senior member of staff will carry out a review of the original complaint and provide a full response within 10 working days.

These appeal procedures do not replace their rights to use the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure or the right to refer a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

[Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure](#)

[Local Government Ombudsman](#)

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Any Council policy and procedure should ensure accountability, and monitoring is the means of achieving this, as well as a high quality service.

We will monitor and publicise the following aspects of the void management policy and procedures:

Total Stock and total number of tenancies in management
Number of properties sold
Number of new build / property acquisitions
Number of tenancies given up
Turnover (number of new vacancies arising as % of total dwellings)

The percentage of properties in each quota band as a percentage of all re-let in the year
% of total lets to current tenants
% of total lets to homeless applicants (duty)
% of total lets to other housing list applicants

Ethnicity by lets

Total number of re-lets
% let in < 2 weeks
% let in 2-4 weeks
% let in > 4 weeks
Overall days to relet
Average time to let

The above information should be reported on for:
Voids with demand; and
Voids with no / low demand

In relation to:
General needs accommodation; and
Supported accommodation; and
Temporary accommodation; and
Lerwick voids; and
Landward voids

Rent & Service charges charged
Cumulative actual income charged
Annualised income charged % of total annual rental due lost due to voids

Total number of 'policy voids' and reasons for the 'policy voids'
Total number of 'no / low demand voids' and reasons for the 'no / low demand voids'

Number of nominations offered by HHA
Number of applicants nominated to Hjaltland

Number of tenants not giving the full notice period
Number of tenancies given up within 6 months
Number of dwellings abandoned
Number of mutual exchanges
The number of houses refused 2 or more times, by reason
The number of refusals as a percentage of all offers
The number of appeals and complaints made each month
The results of the Customer Satisfaction Surveys

The Allocations Policy Monitoring Group will undertake this monitoring. The Allocations Policy Monitoring Group is a working group made up of Councillors, Housing Staff and the Shetland Tenants Forum to ensure that the allocations policy and the voids policy remain effective and accountable.

Information will be circulated annually to all tenants, local Community Councils, the Tenants Forum, as well as being made available at the housing office to applicants and members of the public.

The views of applicants on the voids policy, the procedures adopted and the manner of dealing with individual tenancy changes will be welcomed.

A feedback form requesting comments on the level of service received and inviting comments for improvement will be issued to vacating tenants once they have moved out and new tenants at the post tenancy visit. Comments received are included in the monitoring process described above.

We will also produce a monthly report, which will be available on the Council's website detailing, the number of allocations each month, whether the quota was met, whether 'best fit' was achieved, the number of applicants on the waiting list for the void and the points range of the applicant's allocated (e.g. 250 – 300 points).

We will also produce a monthly report showing the number of days for essential repairs to be completed from the date the keys are returned; and the number of days to sign up from the date the keys are returned for each property let. This report will clearly show the area the void is in, and the type of void property e.g. temporary, general needs, sheltered.

In all reporting the confidentiality of allocations and individual tenant's circumstances will be maintained.

Timescales and Targets Summary

Void stage	Responsibility	Timescale	Target
Notice of termination	Tenant	28 days	90%
Issue VYP booklet	HA	24 hours	100%
Issue pre inspection letter	HA	24 hours	100%
Pre term inspection	TO	5 days	98%
Programme essential repairs	TO	24 hours	98%
Report to vacating tenant	TO	1 day	100%
Short listing & pre-allocation	HO	5 days	100%
Formal offer	HO	2 days	98%
Pre-viewing	HO	2 days	100%
Response to formal offer	Applicant	2 days	90%
Keys back from tenant	Tenant	28 days	90%
Termination inspection	TO	1 day	98%
Order essential repairs	TO / DLO	24 hours / 7 days	98%
Order non essential repairs	TO / DLO	24 hours / 28 days	98%
Order planned works	TO / DLO	24 hours / to programme	98%
Accompanied viewing	HO	1 day	100%
Post essential repairs inspection	TO	7 days	100%
Tenant advised of recharges	TO	10 days	100%
Post non essential repairs inspections	TO	28 days	10%
Tenancy sign up, Housing & Finance	HO	1 day	100%
New tenancy visit	HO / TO	28 days	100%

Shetland Islands Council
Operational Procedure (OP) 49 – Voids Policy

Timeline	Day	Housing Assistant	Technical Officer	DLO	Housing Officer
-28	Mon	Notice Received			
-27	Tues	VYP & pre-inspection letter issued			
-26	Wed				
-25	Thurs				
-24	Fri				
-23	Sat				
-22	Sun				
-21	Mon		Pre-term inspection		
-20	Tues		Essential repairs programmed / routine repairs ordered		
-19	Wed			Routine repairs carried out	
-18	Thurs			Routine repairs carried out	Shortlisting & pre-allocation
-17	Fri			Routine repairs carried out	
-16	Sat				
-15	Sun				
-14	Mon			Routine repairs carried out	Accompanied viewing
-13	Tues			Routine repairs carried out	
-12	Wed			Routine repairs carried out	Acceptance / refusal
-11	Thurs			Routine repairs carried out	Shortlisting & pre-allocation
-10	Fri			Routine repairs carried out	
-9	Sat				
-8	Sun				
-7	Mon			Routine repairs carried out	Accompanied viewing
-6	Tues			Routine repairs carried out	
-5	Wed			Routine repairs carried out	Acceptance / refusal
-4	Thurs			Routine repairs carried out	
-3	Fri			Routine repairs carried out	
-2	Sat				
-1	Sun				
0	Mon	Keys in	Termination Inspection		Accompanied viewing if not already carried out and / or tenancy sign up
1	Tues		Essential repairs ordered		
2	Wed			Essential repairs carried out	
3	Thurs			Essential repairs carried out	
4	Fri			Essential repairs carried out	
5	Sat				
6	Sun				
7	Mon			Essential repairs carried out	
8	Tues			Essential repairs carried out	
9	Wed		Post repairs inspection		
10	Thurs				Accompanied viewing if not already carried out and / or tenancy sign up
11	Fri				
12	Sat				
13	Sun				
14	Mon				

STANDARD LETTERS & FORMS

<u>VP0001</u>	Vacating Your Property Booklet
<u>VP0002</u>	Acknowledgement Letter
VP0003	Void Monitoring Sheet
<u>VP0004</u>	Register Tenant List
<u>VP0005</u>	Do and Don't sheet
VP0006	Pink Sheet
<u>VP0007</u>	Policy Void Form
<u>VP0008</u>	No / Low Demand Void Form
VP0009	Offer Refusal Letter
VP0010	Offer Letter
VP0011	Offer Reply Form
VP0012	Repairs Form
VP0013	Refusal Form
<u>VP0014</u>	Void Property Change of Use Form
<u>VP0015</u>	Rents Section Notification Form
VP0016	Recharge Letter
VP0017	SST
<u>VP0018</u>	Sign Up Checklist
VP0019	Advice Note – Right to Repair
<u>VP0020</u>	Advice Note – Right to Compensation
VP0022	New Tenant Visit Form
<u>VP0023</u>	New Tenants Customer Satisfaction Survey
<u>VP0024</u>	New Property Form
VP0025	Vacating Tenants Customer Satisfaction Survey