

## Committee – Cabinet Housing Committee

**Date 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026**

### Public and Member Questions (2 total)

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#### 1. Question from Mr. Chris Cusick

The bidding system is in place to allow a fair and equal process for everyone. It is also meant to ensure that those with a medical need priority have first access to suitable adapted properties. What circumstances would lead to the bidding system being circumvented and properties being given to people ahead of those at the top of the medical need list?

#### **Response from Councillor Julian Tooke, Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee**

Thank you for your question.

I have spoken to the Housing Options team and they have explained that the homesseekerplus partnership are committed to advertising and making available as many vacant properties as possible through the system, however on occasion there may be a need for the local authority to be able to direct match to a property.

They outlined that there are a few reasons where the policy would enable this to happen and these would be in circumstances where, for urgent operational reasons, direct offers are made outside of normal policy banding and date order.

Some examples are:

- Over-riding social reason to move the household for safety reasons, as recommended by the Police, partner organisations, or as agreed through multiagency need and risk assessment panels.
- Those let to discharge statutory duties to Homeless applicants in certain circumstances.
- Properties required for existing tenants whose properties are subject to major works requiring them to vacate their own properties (either on a temporary or permanent basis).

- Extra-care vacancies and any supported accommodation where there is an applicant with a Care package that needs a specific property.
- Applicants who have succeeded to a tenancy or, in certain circumstances such as following the death of a family member, left in occupation but who need to move to alternative accommodation.
- Where a property has been adapted and meets the specific needs of a client.
- Applications subject to the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976.

## 2. Question from Councillor Stan Smith, Prestbury Ward

As we have lots of residents and refugees within the town it has come to my attention that around this time, there are more than 130 homes vacant or unoccupied or in need of repair within (CBC) housing list.

Can you please tell me is this because of bringing (CBH) back into (CBC) or lack of funding?

With so many people on the housing list is it not possible that this maybe a priority.

This may help with some of the issues that some tenants have with downsizing or even upsizing.

Your thoughts on this matter would be appreciated, as I can then relate them back to my residents.

## Response from Councillor Julian Tooke, Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee

Thank you for your question.

I have spoken to officers regularly on this matter. They have acknowledged that there has been substantial delays in the turnaround times for our void properties. These delays were because of governance and legal issues which were identified following the transfer from Cheltenham Borough Homes.

There are several categories of voids with the main two being Major voids (these require substantive works such as new kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, plastering and decoration) and minor voids which require less works.

As a result of the issues identified, it was necessary to put a hold on all properties requiring major void works for some time, to ensure that the council was acting lawfully. Three contractors have now been appointed to deal with major voids

allowing the inhouse team to focus on minor voids. As at the end of December 2025 the number of standard HRA voids was 122 properties.

It is recognised that the number of void properties changes from week to week as properties are completed and let, and standard terminations are also received each month. These are often from existing customers upsizing or downsizing within the council's stock. In addition to the regular natural flow of new terminations each month the council are also currently dealing with new properties to let from the large new build development at Regency Village. Whilst it is pleasing to be letting new homes this development will also have an impact on void numbers as it has created movement between council properties.

The Housing Options team are also agile in their approach to deal with any urgent Housing cases. Officers will identify and bring forward any void required to resolve any urgent housing needs as a matter of urgency. Priority is also given under the countywide Homesseekerplus system (the housing waiting list) that gives priority to those wishing to downsize which in turn alleviates pressures on those that require larger homes.

I have been assured that all budgets and resources are in place to deal with the challenges that have been faced. Now that the issues have been resolved and with new contractors procured, officers are confident that work is progressing well to bring the number down to acceptable levels. Most recently and despite the Christmas period, 23 terminations were received but 33 properties were also let in December and the void rent loss had reduced from 2.71% at the end of November to 2.6%.

Void performance has been a key priority that Cabinet Housing Committee has been and will continue to monitor and receive regular updates upon.

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