

Appendix

- **Whether the council attempted to claim payments from tenants leaving council houses with debts incurred by causing damage to the property.**

The council does attempt to recover the costs from the ex-tenant of any recharges made where a repair or works incurred are not as a result of “fair wear and tear”

- **Whether tenants who had caused damage to council properties were prevented from occupying council houses in the future.**

The council’s allocations policy sets out that: “If a Lancaster City Council or partner Registered Social Landlord tenant owes rent, court costs, rechargeable repairs or other costs have not been paid for or an obligation of their tenancy has been broken or not performed, they can join the Lancaster City Council Housing Register but their application will be deferred until they have paid the outstanding amount(s) or remedied the breach or performed the obligation.”

- **Why properties required repairs and what steps were taken by the council in order to mitigate the problem.**

All rented properties require some repairs and work when they become available for relet. The majority of repairs the council undertakes relate to just general issues of fair wear and tear, and in addition we have statutory checks to undertake around gas and electrical safety. To mitigate against this problems we actively encourage tenants to report repairs whilst they are a tenant and also a very proactive approach in relation to planned maintenance. We also have a “rewards scheme” that encourages and rewards tenants who return properties to the council in good order. As a result of this management our void repair costs are some of the lowest in the social housing sector and the council is a top quartile performer.

- **Whether periodic inspections were carried out on council properties.**

The council does not undertake a periodic inspection of all council tenancies. As part of a targeted programme of tenancy management, tenancy audits are being introduced during 2013/2014.

- **Whether properties were inspected prior to being vacated by tenants.**

We aim to undertake a pre-vacation visit by the maintenance inspector during the period of notice.

The purpose is to enable the inspector to carry out a full inspection of the property noting the time scale for carrying out repairs, repairs which will be rechargeable to the outgoing tenant and the decoration of the property prior to the tenant leaving; this is supplemented by a full inspection once the keys have been received and the property is fully empty.

In addition the estate manager also visits to reinforce the requirements of what the tenant needs to do when moving out.

- **Why the average relet times for vacated council properties were so long.**

The average relet time has varied over time. The most significant factor that influences the time taken to relet is the number of properties that come available to relet, and the staffing resources the council has to service any increase in number of vacancies.

- **Why deposits were not taken from council house tenants.**

The taking deposits is not workable as the council could not refuse to house someone because they could not pay a tenancy deposit. The council has statutory responsibilities to rehouse through homelessness legislation and through the statutory allocations scheme where we have to give reasonable preference to specified households in housing need.

The council in its private sector housing role currently provides "tenancy deposits" to support people getting a "private rented" property through a local Deposit Guarantee Scheme.

- **Members also queried whether there had been any recent improvements regarding voids and relet times, and requested that previous years figures be provided as part of the report for comparative purposes.**

Average relet time is a key performance indicator:

	Outturn 08/09	Outturn 09/10	Outturn 10/11	Outturn 11/12	Outturn 12/13	Outturn to date 13/14
Average relet times (calendar. days)	41.89	37.8	38.31	49.9	52.78	43.46

- TARGET 2013/2014 is 38 days