

SUBJECT:	REVIEW OF EMPTY GARAGES
DIRECTORATE:	HOUSING AND INVESTMENT
REPORT AUTHORS:	PAULA BURTON, ACTING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, HOUSING MANAGEMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report aims to update the Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee on the number of empty garages and subsequent loss of income resulting from empty garages.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan was approved by Executive in November 2023. This business plan sets out the long-term income and expenditure plans for delivery of council housing and assets in the city over the next thirty years.

3. Garage Stock

- 3.1 The Council owns 1,134 purpose-built garages situated within 88 garage sites with an additional 16 garage plot sites. The majority of the garage stock was constructed more than 40 years ago and methods of construction have changed considerably over the years. These garages were designed for cars which were often smaller than the average car today.
- 3.2 Car usage has also changed over time with many households requiring additional parking facilities for multiple cars. Our current provision of garages is not always the best solution to resolve parking issues in our estates.

4. Current Garage Use

- 4.1 The number of garages currently tenanted is 775 of a possible 1,134. This equates to 68%. There are currently 72 garages available to let, 15 of which are in the process of signing new tenancies. There are 204 garages requiring repairs and 83 that are unavailable to let. This has resulted in a void loss of £165,099 from the beginning of this financial year to the end of December 2023.
- 4.2 The reasons for the garages remaining void this year have mainly been either a lack of need on some sites or because major works have been required to make the garage lettable.

As part of the current void process, if it is identified that a garage requires works that are likely to cost a significant amount the garage has not been allocated and has remained void whilst a decision is made about whether it is financially viable to complete any repairs or whether disposal or alternative use for the site should be considered.

5. Garage Strategy

- 5.1 It was previously identified that there was a need to improve the processes used to manage our garage stock and to explore whether the provision of garages was still a priority for the council. A working group has been in place for the last year exploring the options available.
- 5.2 The group has assessed the potential alternative uses available for each garage site and have also analysed the usage of each site and what the potential cost of any planned repairs on those sites would be. The options considered so far have been:
- Development of housing
 - Investment to provide better quality garages
 - Alternative parking provision
 - Change of use to provide community spaces such as play areas, green spaces etc.

These considerations also fit within the priorities of the HRA Business Plan and the Council's Vision priorities.

- 5.3 A draft garage strategy is currently being consulted on with other service areas within the council and will be circulated for information in due course. It is expected that this will be within the next two months.
- 5.4 The draft garage strategy contains an action plan for the coming year and some of the actions included within this commit to detailed investment costs being sought and investment work to be completed to enable the garages to be relet and generate an income again.

6. Strategic Priorities

- 6.1 The City of Lincoln Council's Vision 2025 priorities are:
- Let's drive inclusive economic growth.
 - Let's reduce all kinds of inequality.
 - Let's deliver quality housing.
 - Let's enhance our remarkable place.
 - Let's address the challenge of climate change.

This report relates primarily to 'Let's deliver quality housing' but also relates to 'Let's enhance our remarkable place.' As part of the HRA Business Plan consultation with tenants it was identified that tenants would like the parking facilities in their area to be improved. Looking at alternative ways to provide parking on the garage sites would meet this need. Another request by tenants was to provide play facilities and this is also a consideration for change of use of the sites.

7. Organisational Impacts

7.1 Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

This report is for information only so there is no direct impact on individuals.

8. Risk Implications

8.1 (i) Options Explored – Not applicable to this report.

8.2 (ii) Key Risks Associated with the Preferred Approach – Not applicable for this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 That Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee reviews and comments on the content of this report and the information contained therein.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? None

List of Background Papers: None

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