ITEM 4: APPENDIX 4

REPORT TO:	WECH Board
DATE:	26 March 2025
SUBJECT:	Voids Lettable Standard Policy
AUTHOR:	Scott Richardson, Head of Maintenance
ITEM FOR:	For discussion and recommendation to Board
STATUS:	Not confidential

Version Control			
Written By	Approved by Ops Committee	Approved by Board	Next Review
Scott Richardson	19 March 2025	26 March 2025	31 March 2028

1 . Electrical Tests
2.Gas Checks
3. Asbestos
4.Capital Works Program
5.Plumbing and Water systems
6.Property detection and Protection
7.Energy Performance
8.Front and Back Doors
9. Internal Doors and Windows
10. Windows
11 . Walls and Ceiling
12. Internal Decorations
13. Flooring and Stairs
14. Bathroom
15. Kitchen
16. External
17.Clean and clearance
18. Gifting
19. Recharges
20. Pest control
21. Additional void process

Void lettable standard

This lettable standard sets out the minimum standard all WECH properties will meet when they are let to new residents.

The lettable standard will make sure the home complies with relevant legislation, meaning it is safe, healthy, and free from things that could cause serious harm.

WECH property team will complete a survey and rate the property condition using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System) to ensure any category one hazards are identified and remedied whilst the property is void. Once a property becomes void, a key safe is to be installed; the property will then be regarded as a building site and require locks to be changed at handover of the property, with the keys to remain in the key safe for the duration of the void. Once the void is completed, the key safe is to be removed.

1 . Electric checks

All electrical fittings will be tested to comply with the current safety regulations (NICEIC). Safety certificates will be held by WECH, and we shall visit every 5 years to undertake safety checks.

As a minimum there should be two double switched sockets in each bedroom, one single in the hall and three double sockets in the kitchen. All wiring, fuse boards, sockets, switches, heaters, and light fittings to be in good working order. Where applicable we will upgrade extraction units to envirovent units and or a similar alternative for more efficient air management.

If any appliances are to be 'gifted' to the incoming resident, these will be tested during the void period; if deemed to be faulty or unsafe they will be removed and not replaced.

2. Gas checks

The gas system will be tested. A valid Landlord's Gas Safety Record (LGSR) certificate will be held by WECH, and a copy provided to the new resident. Boiler, radiators, thermostat, and timer to be in good working order and gas points to be plugged or capped.

Residents will be responsible for the safe maintenance of gas appliances owned by them, for example cookers will be expected to keep in safe working order. A visual check will be carried out at the same time as the landlord's safety check and any safety defects found will be explained to the resident.
If any appliances are to be gifted, these will be tested during the void period, if deemed to be faulty or unsafe these will be disposed before the property is let.

3. Asbestos

The property will be checked for asbestos at the start of the void period. Any works required will be undertaken by an approved asbestos removal contractor.

4. Capital works programme

Major components such as kitchens, bathrooms, boiler replacements and electrical rewiring due for renewal (according to the stock condition asset register) within 1 year of the property becoming vacant will be included in the void works but completed post relet, to allow the incoming resident choice where applicable. This will be completed as per the programme schedule.

5. Plumbing and water system

Plumbing and water systems will be tested to ensure there are no pipes leading to an outlet through which water flows, but the outlet is unused/rarely used, water systems will be in working order and free of leaks and blockages.

Cold drinking water is provided from the mains supplied to the kitchen sink. Taps and stopcocks will turn easily, all hot taps will be on the left and cold taps on the right; this will aid the visually impaired.

Heating and hot water will be supplied, through either gas or electrical appliances.

6. Property detection and protection

Smoke detection will be installed on the means of escape (hallway/ lobby) on every floor of the property, with a heat detection in the kitchen as a minimum standard. Unless already installed as part of a fire alarm system for the building

All properties will have mains wired CO alarms installed and tested annually where a gas supply is present.

7. Energy performance

a) A new EPC will be completed if the current in place has less than 6 months to expiry
b) We will review the report and look to improve the energy performance at the time when void. WECH will be reviewing all properties ratings with the aim of planning improvements in the future.
c) Where loft insulation is below the required standard, insulation will be increased to a depth of 270mm.
d) Where possible lighting fittings will be replaced with low energy pendant type fittings. This includes removal of nonstandard light fittings.
e) Where works affect the EPC rating of a void, a new EPC must be obtained.
f) The property will be free from damp and will be weathertight.
g) Gas Boiler will be no older than 15 years.

8. Front and Back Doors

The front entrance door will be in good working order to ensure security. It will be secured with a suitable cylinder lock or five lever lockset. The door will only be renewed if it is not feasible to economically repair or adequately secure it.

Damage resulting from any forced entries will be repaired.

In total there should be two full sets of keys to the property. No keys should be left in the property. The back/balcony doors will be checked to ensure that they open and close properly, are secure and have fully operational keys.

9. Internal Doors

The bathroom and WC doors will be fitted with a suitable lock that can be operated from the inside. No locks will be provided on other internal doors.

Internal doors should be clean, secure, easy to open and close; hinges, handles and latches to be secure and in working order. Door to be free from damage, including glazing.

10. Windows

All broken windows will be re-glazed. Security locks to be fitted to windows on the ground floor. Glazing will be intact and secure. Windows will be easy to open and close with any safety catches operational. Window restrictors to be fitted to all casements above first floor level. Keys to be available at letting. External cleaning will be undertaken as part of any applicable cyclical programme only.

1 1. Walls and ceilings

All walls within the property to be tested for damp. Walls and ceilings must be free from damp, large cracks, loose plaster, and large holes. Polystyrene tiles to be removed from property (including residue paste) and surfaces made good. Any mould growth present should be treated with a fungicidal wash, leaving the surface ready for decoration.

Mould growth must be reported, and the cause investigated and remediated prior to decoration. Curtain rails, picture rails and fixture and fittings which are in reasonable condition will be left in situ (gifted to the incoming resident).

12. Internal decorations

Redecoration will be undertaken at the discretion of the WECH surveyor and/or the Maintenance Manager or Head of Maintenance based on their judgement regarding the decorative condition each room is found to be in.

This will apply on a case by case basis with more support available to people with support needs.

Excellent decorative standard: rooms have been decorated recently, few areas with holes/marks etc. where previous fitting was removed e.g. mirrors and shelving. Action: No additional work required.

Good condition: some areas need decorations repaired e.g. some loose paper needs re-sticking, small amount of making good prior to repairing. Action: minor work required.

Fair condition: most walls and ceiling within a room are in good decorative order. Action: retouch any damaged areas.

Poor condition: property is in poor decorative condition, bare walls, and recent water damage and/or significantly discoloured, for example by nicotine. Action: Full decoration.

Please note: If it is decided that no decoration will be carried out and the incoming resident has been offered a property whilst void works are being completed, WECH will agree to decorate 1 room in the property as confirmed and agreed by the new resident, and will be subject to confirmation via the Maintenance Manager.

Alternatively a decorating allowance can be given to the tenant, the table below provides a guide:
Livingroom €60.00
Landing €20.00
Livingroom with kitchen €60.00
Bathroom E 35.00
Separate dining room/ additional public room €42.00
Shower room €35.00
Kitchen €40.00

Separate W.C. €25.00
Kitchen with dining area €40.00
Double bedroom €45.00
Hall €40.00
Single bedroom €40.00
Hall & stainªvay €70.00
Utility room €20.00
Porch/ Vestibule €20.00
Decoration allowance shall be paid up to the following maximum levels, dependant on property size.
Maximum Decoration Allowance
Levels 2 Apartment - €220.00
3 Apartment - €265.00
4 Apartment - E 375.00
5 Apartment - €415.00
6 Apartment - €455.00

These prices are as at 14 March 2025 and will be uplifted by inflation

13. Flooring and Stairs

Kitchen/ Bathroom and WC flooring will be clean and undamaged. Washable polysafe vinyl flooring or similar will be provided in the kitchen, bathroom, and WC. This will be intact, secure, level and free of trip or slip hazards.

Other types of floor covering found during void works in the kitchen, bathroom and WC will be removed and replaces with polysafe vinyl in line with Health & Safety regulations.

Sub floors and skirting boards damaged or loose floorboards will be fixed or replaced as necessary. Damaged or missing sections of skirting/ architrave will be replaced and painted to match the existing. Sub floors will be secure, free of rot, trip hazards, grippers and nails and ready to receive the residents own floor covering. If there are slight deviations in sub flooring that is not deemed a trip hazard, WECH will not relevel these. Many WECH properties are over 100 years old so there will be previous building movement which will result in levels not being 100% plumb.

Carpets and carpet grippers left by the previous resident will be removed. Floor covering is deemed to be the responsibility of the incoming resident. A risk assessment should be undertaken where laminate flooring is to be gifted to the incoming resident; if it is to be left it must be free from infestation and cleaned.

Stairs - There should be at least one handrail per staircase. Handrails, steps, balustrades, newell posts and treads securely fitted.

14. Bathroom

a) The bath or shower: will be clean and sealed where bath edges meet the tiling. Secure and free from chips below the water line. Any chips or marks above water line will be filled with a ceramic filler. Plug and chain to be secure. Bath panel and frame secure and clean. No leaks, free flowing waste.
b) Toilet pan/seat/cistern: Renewed seat, secure pan, clean and easy to flush.

c) All sanitaryware will be cleaned and descaled, if unable to be descaled, the shower head will be replaced
d) Wash hand basin must be secure, free from chips below the water line and chips above will be filled with a ceramic filler. Plug and chain secure. No leaks and free flowing waste.
e) Taps: Secure, clean, easy to operate, drip free, hot on the left and cold on the right.
f) Tiles: Sufficient rows of tiles above the wash hand basin and around the bath to fully protect the wall. Tiles must be clean, intact, and not cracked.
g) Adaptations for people with disabilities: adaptations will be clean, secure, and working.
h) Shower curtain: Will be renewed and will be fitted with a clear plastic rail with rings.
i) Bath Panel: All bath panels to be removed to check for leaks under and refitted accordingly.

1 5. Kitchen

a) Kitchen units that are damaged or unhygienic (beyond cleaning) will be repaired or replaced depending on their condition (to nearest type and colour match). The number of kitchen units will depend on the size and layout of the kitchen, and overall bedroom size.
b) The kitchen must meet compliance regulations and be in a good useable condition.
c) All drawers and doors open and close without catching, including trim to units. If possible, wall and floor units will match. Sometimes a colour variance will occur when not all units are replaced at the same time.
d) Work top and sealant will be free from damage, clean and sealed where work top meets the wall and around the sink.
e) Sinks will be cleaned, free of any stains. Plug and chain secure. No leaks and free flowing waste.
f) Taps must be clean, easy to operate, hot on the left, cold on the right.
g) Sufficient protection of the walls above the work surface and sink. Clean, and not cracked. Cooker space to be tiled or splashback installed.
h) Cooker points: Gas: clean and capped off with bayonet removed, ready for cooker to be fitted by a Gas Safe engineer. Electric: power points supplied and clean, ready for cooker to be put in.
i) Washing machine: Leave a 620mm space where possible with a cold water supply, and waste pipe ready for washing machine to be fitted. Cold water valve, labelled, clean and easy to open and close. Waste pipe secure.

1 6. External

a) WECH will complete identified external repairs to keep the building wind and watertight.
b) Balcony drains and gullies will be unblocked, and overflows repaired.
c) Trees will be reduced to a manageable height which the incoming tenant can reasonably manage during the life of the tenancy. (These works will be undertaken outside of the void time and when the resident has moved in so as not to delay the reletting of the property).
d) Garden bushes/shrubs will be cut back to a manageable state, then managed by the resident

e) The garden will be cleared of overgrowth and left in reasonable condition ready for the tenant to landscape.
f) Garden paths will be left free of damage and debris.
g) Boundary fences/walls owned by WECH will be in a reasonable state of repair (ie sturdy and secure).
h) Gates to be in working order and in reasonable condition, to include lock/handle bolt
i) Inspection chambers will be left secure and free of blockages and will be in good condition.
j) Broken glazing will be replaced in windows and doors.
k) All external storage areas such as under stair cupboards and sheds will be cleared. If a shed is left by previous resident, WECH will take no responsibility of its upkeep but gift it to the new resident if in reasonable condition.

17. Clean and clearance

When WECH have taken possession of the property, any belongings left behind in the property will be disposed of with immediate effect.

Lofts will be cleared

A builders clean on completion of any void remediation works will be completed to ensure that the property is free from dirt and dust and ready to let. This includes all floors, walls, ceiling and fixtures. Bathrooms and kitchens cleaned to a basic standard ready for the new resident to move in and complete their own domestic cleaning (please note a builders clean is not exhaustive). External windows will not be cleaned.

1 8. Gifting

There are circumstances when the outgoing residents leave behind good quality items which can benefit incoming residents. WECH supports this sustainable approach and will offer the incoming resident an opportunity to have these items gifted, on the understanding that WECH cannot accept any future liability for the maintenance of such goods.
Gifting will be limited to the following: Hard standing wardrobes, Intercom or bell (street properties only), Burglar alarm, White Goods, storage facilities such as shed.

19. Recharges

Recharges will be raised at the end of a tenancy where damage exists to the property which is not due to fair wear and tear. Where unauthorised alterations have been made to the property, a recharge may be incurred, to return the property our lettable standard.

20.Pest Control

Property is to be free from vermin. If there is an active infestation this will be remedied by a specialist contractor, points of entry to be proofed before handover. Please note infestations may not always be detected during the time the property is void, so if such become apparent after letting investigations and/or proofing may be required.

21 . Additional Notes

a) Residents must not store items in communal areas or place personal items in cupboards that are under stairs and housing electrics / gas consumer unit / landlord suppliers.
b) Once a resident accepts and signs for a property there will be no additional items added to the works unless a defect arises.
c) Although WECH will aim to address all works that are required within the void process, there will be times that repairs may become apparent within the first 6 weeks of occupation. It is the residents responsibility to contact WECH to advise us of these and agree access arrangements.
d) Residents are responsible for arranging their own utility supplies to be connected, i.e. gas, electrics, water. This may be completed once the resident has taken occupation, unfortunately this cannot delay the start of the tenancy.
e) No major alteration to the property can be carried out by the resident within the first year of tenancy e.g. removing and replacing kitchen, bathroom; removing doors, cupboards, walls. After the first year, all requests should be submitted to the Housing Team for consideration and further discussions with the Maintenance Team. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld.
f) Residents must organise and arrange for all rent and charges to be paid at the correct times and discuss any concerns with the Housing Team without delay.
g) If payments are not received WECH will take action to recover the property and monies owed.