

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 25 October 2023**

**Subject: Scottish Social Housing Charter – West Dunbartonshire Council
Annual Assurance Statement****1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide members with benchmarking information relating to how the Council has performed against the Scottish Social Housing Charter indicators and to provide an update into how we are meeting the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework including approving the Council's Annual Assurance Statement.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:

- (i) Notes the contents of this report recognising the ongoing legacy impacts the pandemic continued to have on 2022/23 performance;
- (ii) Approves our Annual Assurance Statement which will be signed by the Housing Convener on behalf of the Housing and Communities Committee and submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator as per our regulatory requirement;
- (iii) Notes that a Charter Improvement Plan has been developed based on a comprehensive assessment of performance and this has informed the production of our annual Charter Performance Report; and
- (iv) Notes that a further progress report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter will be submitted to the November 2023 meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Scottish Government's first Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) came into force in April 2012. This was reviewed during 2016 and again in 2021 and the resulting revised SSHC was subsequently approved by the Scottish Parliament and has effect from 1 November 2022.

- 3.2** The purpose of the SSHC is to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide by:

- Stating clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords and helping them to hold landlords to account;

- Focusing the efforts of social landlords on achieving outcomes that matter to their customers; and
- Providing the basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to assess and report on how well landlords are performing.

3.3 A revised Regulatory Framework and reporting timetable for the SSHC came into effect on 1st April 2019 is outlined below:

When	Who	What
Throughout year	Housing Services /Tenants	Assess performance against the Charter Outcomes
May each year	Housing Development	Submission of Annual Return on the Charter to Scottish Housing Regulator
August each year	Scottish Housing Regulator	Publishes a report about each social landlord with key data from its ARC on their website
October each year	Convener of Housing and Communities Committee	Submission of Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator
October each year	Housing Development	Publication of annual Charter Performance Report for tenants and other customers
by April each year	Scottish Housing Regulator	Publish an Engagement Plan for each landlord, based on performance against Charter Indicators and outcomes
by April each year	Scottish Housing Regulator	Publish a report on the analysis of the sector's performance in achieving the Charter outcomes

3.4 The main changes introduced as part of this revised framework were the introduction of the Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) which needs to be submitted to the Regulator by the end of October each year and also the introduction of an Engagement Plan published by the Regulator each year and based on performance against the Charter indicators and outcomes.

3.5 The SHR is reviewing its Regulatory Framework during 2023. An initial discussion paper was published in June 2023 and the Council's response to this is available as a background paper to this report. The SHR will carry-out more formal consultation later this year on any proposed changes to the Regulatory Framework with the aim of implementing a revised Framework in 2024.

3.6 On 6 August 2014, Members of the Housing and Communities Committee agreed that twice yearly reports be provided as follows:

- August Committee - Scottish Social Housing Charter Annual Update Report; and
- November Committee - Scottish Social Housing Charter Annual Benchmarking Report and Mid-Year Progress Report – (April-September).

3.7 As our AAS needs to be approved by the Committee and submitted to the SHR by 31 October each year, a special meeting of the Committee has been arranged to ensure that we meet this timescale. A further progress report with a mid-year update will therefore be provided to the November 2023 Committee meeting.

4. Main Issues

4.1 The key areas of focus in relation to the SSHC highlighted in this report are as follows:

- An assessment of our progress in relation to achieving the Charter Outcomes;
- The submission of our AAS to the SHR;
- The production and publication of our annual Charter Performance Report for tenants and other customers; and
- The continued development of effective tenant scrutiny arrangements in conjunction with tenants and other customers.

Assessment of progress achieving the Charter Outcomes

4.2 The SHR now uses 32 Charter Performance Indicators to monitor the performance of all social landlords against the Charter outcomes and standards.

4.3 West Dunbartonshire Council successfully submitted our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the SHR within the timescale outlined in the Regulatory Framework. This process included both internal and external validation processes. The Housing and Homelessness Service engaged with Scotland's Housing Network (SHN) in terms of a robust external validation of our data.

4.4 An annual report based on 2022/23 performance was reported to the Housing and Communities Committee (HACC) in August 2023. This report included key data from the ARC and other indicators that tenants have said are important to them and compared our performance with that of the previous year and against annual targets set.

4.5 The report outlined the ongoing legacy impacts the pandemic had on 2022/23 performance and how this has impacted service delivery and performance in areas such as repairs/maintenance, void management and the completion of medical adaptations over the recent past and has had knock on effects on depressed levels of tenant satisfaction.

4.6 Of the 30 key indicators outlined in the report, 10 met the annual target set, with another 9 narrowly missing this target. Overall this translates to 63% of these key indicators either meeting or almost achieving target (down slightly from 70% in 2021/22).

Benchmarking of key performance indicators

4.7 Our ARC submission, homelessness data submitted to the Scottish Government and our annual submission of performance information to SHN provide opportunities to compare our performance against other landlords (all Scottish local authorities and, where appropriate, Glasgow Housing Association) and to identify areas for improvement. This process is known as "benchmarking".

4.8 The SHR publishes a Landlord Report for every social landlord in Scotland on their website by the end of August each year. This report contains key data from the ARC (18 key indicators) and compares our performance with a Scottish average figure inclusive of all housing providers. Our most recent Landlord Report is

provided as a background paper to this report.

- 4.9** On 12 September 2023, SHN provided a report and feedback session for the Housing Improvement Board outlining key benchmarking data and key findings are outlined below:

Status Key						
Peer group compared to is all other local authority landlords, as well as Glasgow Housing Association						
New Charter Indicator and previous benchmark data not available	Top quartile	2 nd quartile	3 rd quartile	4 th quartile		
Communication	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2020/21 Rank	2021/22 Rank	2022/23 Rank
Average time in working days to respond to a Stage 1 complaint	10.65 days	11.78 days	10.36 days			
Average time in working days to respond to a Stage 2 complaint	35.97 days	27.03 days	34.09 days			
Customer Satisfaction	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2020/21 Rank	2021/22 Rank	2022/23 Rank
% of tenants satisfied with the overall service	78.5%	78.5%	61.3%			
% of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services	85.7%	85.7%	75.8%			
% of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in decision making	83.9%	83.9%	69.2%			
% of tenants who feel that the rent represents good value for money	77.05%	77.05%	60.5%			
Quality of Housing	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2020/21 Rank	2021/22 Rank	2022/23 Rank
% of properties meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard	82.8%	18.2%	32.2%			
% of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	76.5%	76.5%	62.7%			
Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2020/21 Rank	2021/22 Rank	2022/23 Rank
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	6.14 hours	5.81 hours	4.5 hours			
Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	6.76 days	10.16 days	9.31 days			
% of reactive repairs carried out completed right first time	89.8%	86.5%	85.7%			
How many times in the reporting period did you not complete a gas safety check within 12 months	215	0	0			
% of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	80.5%	87.7%	83.7%			

Neighbourhood and Community	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2020/21 Rank	2021/22 Rank	2022/23 Rank
% of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in	78.5%	78.5%	62.7%			
% of tenancy offers refused	46.6%	49.2%	51.7%			
% of anti-social behaviour cases resolved	92.8%	98.1%	97.1%			
% housed who maintained their tenancy for at least 12 months	91.6%	94.6%	94.1%			
The average time to complete applications for medical adaptations	123.2 days	107.8 days	73.0 days			
Homeless People	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2020/21 Rank	2021/22 Rank	2022/23 Rank
% of applications where household has experienced rough sleeping the night before presentation	3.8%	2.9%	3.3%			
Households assessed as homeless per 10,000 of households*			238			
% of all homeless cases re-assessed within 12 months (repeat homeless)	5.4%	5.3%	4.4%			
Average time in days from application to assessment	13	14	13			
Households in temporary accommodation per 10,000 of households*			68			
Average total time (days) spent in temporary accommodation for cases that closed	212	191	171			
Average time in days from homeless assessment to case closure	233	207	189			
% of homeless households referred to RSLs via section 5 referrals	27%	31%	40%			
Value for Money	2020/21 Value	2021/22 Value	2022/23 Value	2020/21 Rank	2021/22 Rank	2022/23 Rank
Average time to re-let properties	56.1 days	45.8 days	33.6 days			
Void rent loss expressed as a % of the total amount of rent due	1.20%	1.29%	1.28%			
Rent collected as a % of total rent due	98.88%	98.39%	98.50%			
Gross rent arrears as % of total rent due	10.35%	9.24%	10.00%			

*Denotes new indicator and data not available for previous years

4.10 A comprehensive assessment of 2022/23 performance against the Charter has been carried out. This has included the performance information reported to Committee in August 2023, as well as the benchmarking data now available.

- 4.11** This exercise has informed a Charter Improvement Plan which was agreed by the Housing Improvement Board (HIB) and is being implemented across all areas of the housing service with the objective of continuing to improve services for our tenants and customers.
- 4.12** Based on this exercise and the content of our most recent Engagement Plan, the HIB is monitoring on a monthly basis key work-streams aimed at driving improvements in the following areas:
- Compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS);
 - Services for people who are homeless;
 - Tenant satisfaction;
 - Void management; and
 - Complaints response times.

SHQS Compliance and Tenant and resident safety

- 4.13** Our low level of compliance with SHQS is primarily due to low numbers of valid Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs) that we hold for our properties. This is deemed by the SHR to be a tenant safety issue and has been highlighted in our Engagement Plan.
- 4.14** Issues around tenant and resident safety are monitored closely by Building Services. This includes areas such as gas safety, electrical safety, fire safety, lift safety and damp and mould.
- 4.15** We collect data for a suite of performance indicators relating to these areas, which are now reported annually to the Housing and Communities Committee and are outlined in the table below:

Tenant Safety Indicators		
Gas, Electrical and Fire data	2021/22	2022/23
Number of times not met statutory obligation to complete a gas safety check within 12 months	0	0
Number of properties that require a gas safety record	9308	9333
Number of properties which have a current gas safety records	9308	9333
% of properties with a valid EICR certificate	41.33%	50.97%
% of properties complying with Satisfactory Fire Detection and Satisfactory Carbon Monoxide Detection standards	94.22%	100%
% of periodic fire, heat and CO detection equipment checks completed within recommended timescale	89.69%	99%
Lift Safety data	2021/22	2022/23
Total number of communal passenger lifts	43	43
Number of communal passenger lifts with compliant Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) examination records	43	43

- 4.16** There are currently no cases being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) relating to the safety of our tenants and residents and there have been no cases reported or investigated during the past year.

Services for people who are homeless

- 4.17** In terms of our homelessness duties to provide temporary accommodation, we have consistently been able to offer accommodation to those households who require it. However, whilst we continue to ensure that we meet our statutory duty in this respect, delays in moving households into settled accommodation is having an impact and we have been forced to use bed and breakfast accommodation and we breached the Unsuitable Accommodation Order on 21 occasions during 2022/23.

Homelessness duties around temporary accommodation				
Indicator Description	2021/22 value	2022/23 value	2022/23 target	Target met
% of households requiring temporary accommodation to who an offer was made	100%	100%	100%	
Breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order	0	21	0	

Equalities and Human Rights

- 4.18** In keeping with the key messages from Scottish Government's programme for Government, equality and human rights are central to our delivery of our Local Housing Strategy (LHS). The development of the strategy has been underpinned by West Dunbartonshire Council's commitment to promoting and sustaining equality and inclusion, and equality and diversity principles.
- 4.19** We have worked closely with the West Dunbartonshire HSCP in piloting a Health Inequalities Impact Assessment Tool (HIIA), with each of the five themes being separately assessed and the assessments contributing to the final version of the LHS. The main actions associated with each theme are listed in the Action Plan and progress on these are being monitored as we move forward.
- 4.20** An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is used for any new and developing policies. During 2021/22 we reviewed and updated our approach to collection of Equalities data based on published guidance and continue to monitor that this is being effectively implemented.

Annual Assurance Statement (AAS)

- 4.21** The AAS requires landlords to state they are meeting regulatory requirements and that they are compliant with the legal requirements and statutory guidance relevant to the sector. Any areas of material non-compliance should be highlighted, alongside actions being taken to address these.
- 4.22** We have carried out a process of reviewing and updating our AAS, taking account of our annual ARC submission and assessment around how well we are achieving the standards and outcomes outlined in the SSHC (including the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic), and how we comply with our legal

obligations relating to housing and homelessness, equality and human rights and tenant and safety.

- 4.23** Based on this, we have highlighted the following areas in our AAS which is attached as Appendix 1:
- Low level of compliance with SHQS;
 - Low levels of tenant satisfaction; and
 - Reported breaches of the UAO.
- 4.24** As outlined in the SHR guidance, it is a short, succinct document, in a simple format. It outlines the above areas of material non-compliance and actions being taken to address these. As per a letter from the SHR sent to all social landlords in July 2023, this year's AAS also includes specific information around equalities and tenant safety.
- 4.25** A central aspect of the AAS is that the Committee has been provided with the necessary assurance in terms of information and evidence where required, to support the content of the AAS.
- 4.26** Our updated AAS self-assurance toolkit (attached as a background paper to this report), outlines the wide range of arrangements that are in place to ensure that the HACC have assurance and evidence that we are meeting our regulatory and statutory obligations. This includes providing relevant information and assurance which is proportionate and not overly burdensome, as per the SHR guidance.
- 4.27** A briefing was provided to the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Convener of the HACC in October 2023 providing an update in terms of the preparation of our AAS and outlining the areas that will be highlighted to the SHR.
- 4.28** Following the approval by the HACC of the content of our AAS, it will be signed by the Convener on behalf of the Committee and submitted to the SHR as per the regulatory requirement.
- 4.29** As per the SHR guidance, our AAS will be published to ensure that it is accessible to tenants and other customers.

Charter Performance Report

- 4.30** The SHR requires all social landlords to produce an Annual Charter Performance Report for their tenants and other customers no later than 31 October each year.
- 4.31** The statutory regulatory framework states that that this report should include:
- An assessment of performance in delivering the Charter Outcomes;
 - Relevant comparisons with previous years, other landlords and national performance; and
 - How and when the landlord intends to address areas for improvement.

- 4.32** In preparation for our first report in 2014, a working group of tenants and officers was established and successfully:
- Agreed how tenants wished to be involved;
 - Agreed which indicators will feature in the report; and
 - Agreed the best style and format to ensure that the report is user friendly and easy to understand.
- 4.33** Further engagement was carried out with tenant representatives during 2019 to review and update this report, in line with the revised Charter coming into effect. This consultation influenced the style, content and format of our Annual Charter Report and also the update of the Service Standards that are in place across housing services and which are reported regularly to tenants and other service users (via the Council website and by a performance insert provided with Housing News).
- 4.34** This years' report is attached as Appendix 2 and will be published online within the required timescale. The narrative in the report is based on the annual self-assessment exercise of our performance and a summary of the report will be sent to every tenant with the winter edition of the Housing News. The full report will be sent to all tenants groups, interested tenants, and members of the WDTRO, members of the Scrutiny Panel and also partner organisations and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Tenant Scrutiny Arrangements

- 4.35** There is a statutory requirement that tenants are involved in scrutinising landlords' performance against the Charter and requires that:
- The form of involvement has been agreed with tenants;
 - Involvement is effective and meaningful and that tenants have a real say in assessment of performance;
 - The approach is publicised to tenants; and
 - Landlords can demonstrate the agreed approach was actually implemented.
- 4.36** Developing effective tenant scrutiny is therefore a challenging process, however, following support from the Scottish Government's "Stepping Up to Scrutiny" training programme, in which elected members took part, these requirements were successfully met and in November 2014 the Housing and Communities Committee approved the establishment of our Tenant Scrutiny Panel with clear terms of reference.
- 4.37** The Scrutiny Panel has subsequently carried out the following scrutiny exercises:
- 2014/15 looking at our Anti-Social Behaviour Service;
 - 2015/16 looking at our Repairs Service;

- 2016/17 looking at tenancy sustainment, specifically the new tenant visit process;
- 2017/18 looking at SHQS compliance, specifically the number and reasons that properties that are held in abeyance;
- 2018/19 looking at the timescales taken to complete medical adaptations;
- 2019/20 looking at the timescales taken to respond to complaints; and
- 2022/23 looking at the new tenant visit process.

4.38 All of the recommendations made in the Panel's first 7 reports were approved by the HIB and progress in terms of implementing these are monitored by the HIB.

4.39 The Panel are currently looking at our most recent performance data and considering what the focus of their next scrutiny exercise will be.

4.40 The Scrutiny Panel were successful in being shortlisted for a prestigious Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) excellence award in 2021 and though narrowly missing out, this was national acknowledgement of the work that they do to ensure that tenant scrutiny is a valued part of WDC's approach to performance management.

4.41 The West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation (WDTRO) also continue to be heavily involved in the scrutiny of the Housing Service and the continuing work of the Joint Rent Group comprising tenants, Council officers and the Convener of the Housing and Communities Committee, looking at the rent setting process and the guidance in relation to the Housing Revenue Account is important in ensuring Housing and Homelessness Services provide best value for current and future tenants.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no people implications as a result of the report. Delivery on the requirements of the SSHC is managed from within existing staffing resources within the Housing Development Team.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications in relation to this report. The improvement plan informed by the Charter self-assessment exercise will be delivered from within existing budgets.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 There is a significant risk that failure to respond appropriately to the requirements of the SSHC would attract an adverse reaction from the SHR and may have wider consequences for the Council in the context of Best Value.

7.2 At the time of writing we expect our next Engagement Plan to be published in March 2024.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** Equalities legislation requires that new or significantly changing policies or services and financial decisions should be subject to an assessment of their impact on the wellbeing of certain groups of people. The recommendations within this report do not alter any existing policy or pattern of service delivery and so is not considered to require an equalities impact assessment.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** The Council has in place a well-established and proactive tenants and residents organisational structure. The WDTRO meet with the Council (chaired by the Convener of the Housing and Communities Committee) on a bi-monthly basis to discuss all issues relating to the Housing Service.
- 9.2** There remains a strong appetite among tenants and customers to continue to participate actively to improve housing services in West Dunbartonshire. This is reflected in the successful partnership approach adopted to develop the Charter Performance Report and the on-going activities of the WDTRO, the Joint Rent Group and the West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel.
- 9.3** The Council is committed to ensure effective consultation continues and will support arrangements to increase tenant scrutiny activities and assess our performance in line with the statutory requirements under the SSHC and the SHR's regulatory framework. Our approach was again commended via an external validation exercise by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Scotland, which again awarded West Dunbartonshire Council a Gold Accreditation for excellence in tenant participation in early 2023.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** Having considered the Council's strategic priorities, this report contributes significantly to all five strategic priorities and specifically to improve local housing and environmentally sustainable infrastructure.

Peter Barry
Chief Officer, Housing and Employability
Date: 11 October 2023

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Appendices:

1. WDC Annual Assurance Statement October 2023
2. Annual Charter Performance Report

Background Papers: WDC response to SHR discussion paper on review of Regulatory Framework June 2023

Scottish Housing Regulator WDC Landlord Report 2022-23
[West Dunbartonshire Council | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

AAS Assessment of compliance toolkit 2023, West
Dunbartonshire Council, September 2023

EM briefing note Oct 2023 – Annual Assurance Statement

Annual Charter Performance Report for Tenants and
other Customers 2021/22, West Dunbartonshire Council,
October 2022

[https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/our-
performance/service-performance/housing-services-
performance-information/charter-performance-report/](https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/our-performance/service-performance/housing-services-performance-information/charter-performance-report/)

The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and
Context Information, Scottish Housing Regulator
[http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/sites/default/file
s/publications/Charter%20Indicators%20Document%20-
%20Final%20Draft%20-%202027%20September_0.pdf](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Charter%20Indicators%20Document%20-%20Final%20Draft%20-%202027%20September_0.pdf)

West Dunbartonshire Council Scottish Social Housing
Charter Self-Assessment Improvement Plan

West Dunbartonshire Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2024
“Involving You”

[https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-
and-policies/housing/tenant-participation-strategy/](https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-and-policies/housing/tenant-participation-strategy/)

Scottish Social Housing Charter – Regulation of Social
Housing in Scotland Annual Update,
Report by Chief Officer, Housing and Employability,
Housing and Communities Committee,
23 August 2023

Wards Affected:

All