

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Strategic Lead, Housing and Employability

Housing and Communities Committee: 14 August 2019

Subject: Scottish Social Housing Charter/Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland Annual Update Report

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide Members of the Housing and Communities Committee with West Dunbartonshire Council's annual progress report on meeting the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:

- (i) Notes the contents of this report and recognises the continued improvements within housing services in West Dunbartonshire;
- (ii) Note the new regulatory requirements detailed within this report and in particular the briefing sessions to be held to look at the Annual Assurance Statement; and
- (iii) Agrees that a further progress report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter be submitted to the November 2019 meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee. This report will include detailed benchmarking information.

3. Background

3.1 The Scottish Government's first Social Housing Charter (SSHC) came into force in April 2012 and this was reviewed during 2016. A revised Charter was subsequently approved by the Scottish Parliament and came into effect in April 2017.

3.2 The purpose of the Charter 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 shown below:

When	Who	What
Throughout year	Housing Development/Tenants	Assess performance against the Charter Outcomes
May each year	Housing Development	Submission of Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) 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 (AAS) 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	Publishes an Engagement Plan for each landlord, based on performance against Charter Indicators and outcomes
by April each year	Scottish Housing Regulator	SHR will publish a report on the analysis of the sector's performance in achieving the Charter

3.4 The main changes introduced as part of this revised framework are the introduction of the Annual Assurance Statement 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 On the 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).

4. Main Issues

4.1 The key areas of focus in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter are as follows:

- an assessment of our progress in relation to achieving the Charter Outcomes;
- submission of an Annual Assurance Statement to the SHR;
- production and publications of an Annual Charter Tenants Report for tenants and other customers;
- the development of effective tenant scrutiny arrangements in conjunction with tenants and other customers; and
- the publication by the Regulator of an Engagement Plan for every social landlord

Assessment of Performance against the Charter Outcomes
Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) and Landlord Report

- 4.2** West Dunbartonshire Council has successfully submitted our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the SHR within the agreed timescales. This process included both internal and external validation processes. The Housing Service engaged with the Scottish Housing Network (SHN) in terms of a robust external validation.
- 4.3** The SHR uses these Charter Performance Indicators to monitor the delivery of housing and homelessness services of all social landlords against the Charter outcomes and standards. A copy of the full list of indicators can be accessed via the link included as part of the background papers.
- 4.4** The SHR will publish a Landlord Report on their website for each Scottish social housing landlord on 31 August 2019 and this report will contain key data from the ARC (18 key indicators) and will compare our performance with a Scottish average figure across all social housing landlords.
- 4.5** Performance in 2018/19 against those 18 key indicators and an additional 11 indicators that our customers have informed us are important to them are outlined in the table below.

Table Key Index					
	Annual Target Achieved		Positive Performance Trend		
	Annual Target Almost Achieved		Negative Performance Trend		
	Annual Target Not Achieved	No updated values for 2018/19 as no further comprehensive tenant survey require to be carried out until 2019/20.			
Customer Satisfaction					
Indicator Description	2017/18 Value	2018/19 Value	2018/19 Target	Trend	Target met
% of tenants satisfied with the overall service	84.1%	84.1%	84%		
% of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services	84.5%	84.5%	84%		
% of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in decision making process	79.1%	79.1%	78%		
% of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	86.25%	86.25%	85%		
% of tenants satisfied with the management of neighbourhood	80.3%	80.3%	80%		
% of tenants who feel that the rent represents good value for money	75.3%	75.3%	75%		
% of factored owners satisfied with the factoring service they receive	33.1%	33.1%	33%		

Quality of Housing					
Indicator Description	2017/18 Value	2018/19 Value	2018/19 Target	Trend	Target met
% of stock meeting the SHQS	90.23%	91.92%	91.3%	↑	✓
% of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home moving in	94.87%	88%	94.9%	↓	⚠
Repairs and maintenance					
Indicator Description	2017/18 Value	2018/19 Value	2018/19 Target	Trend	Target met
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	3.67 hours	3.41 hours	3.6 hours	↑	✓
Average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs	7.08 days	5.7 days	6.8 days	↑	✓
% of reactive repairs carried out in the last year Right First Time	88.1%	90.48%	90%	↑	✓
% of repairs appointments kept	86.05%	86.13%	90%	↑	⚠
% of properties which had a gas safety check by anniversary date	99.13%	100%	100%	↑	✓
% of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	92.31%	88.51%	93%	↓	⚠
Estate management, Antisocial behaviour					
Indicator Description	2017/18 Value	2018/19 Value	2018/19 Target	Trend	Target met
% of Anti Social Behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets	81.37%	80.42%	82%	↓	⚠
Tenancy sustainment					
Indicator Description	2017/18 Value	2018/19 Value	2018/19 Target	Trend	Target met
% of new tenancies sustained for more than a year, by source of let	88.5%	87.1%	89%	↓	⚠
tenancy termination - notice given by tenant	701	752	680	↓	⚠
tenancy termination – abandoned property	61	67	60	↓	⚠
The average time to complete medical adaptations	90.3 days	67.54 days	43 days	↑	✗
Homelessness					
Indicator Description	2017/18 Value	2018/19 Value	2018/19 Target	Trend	Target met
% of homeless cases with decision within 28 days of presentation	100%	99%	95%	↓	✓
% of all homeless cases re-assessed within 12 months (repeat homeless)	5%	4.9%	4.9%	↑	✓
% of households requiring temporary accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%	100%	-	✓
Incidences of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire	1048	1037	1099	↑	✓
% satisfied with the quality of temporary accommodation	82.97%	76.3%	85%	↓	⚠
Value for Money – Rent Collection					
Indicator Description	2017/18 Value	2018/19 Value	2018/19 Target	Trend	Target met

Rent collected as a % of total rent due	98.63%	98.61%	100%		
Gross rent arrears as a % of rent due	8.83%	9.71%	8.4%		
Value for Money – Void Management					
Indicator Description	2017/18 Value	2018/19 Value	2018/19 Target	Trend	Target met
% of rent due lost through properties being empty	0.9%	0.73%	0.88%		
Average length of time taken to re-let properties	35.56 days	23.33 days	25 days		

- 4.6** The table above outlines a journey of continued improvement, with 27 of the 29 indicators, or 93% of the key indicators either meeting or almost achieving target.
- 4.7** Over the past 12 months the Housing Improvement Board (HIB) has monitored closely key work-streams aimed at improving areas of weakness around gas safety checks, services to factored owners, the time taken to complete aids and adaptations and rent collection. The West Dunbartonshire Better Homes Group also monitored compliance with the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) and compliance with the Gypsy Traveller Site Standards.
- 4.8** There have been sustained improvements in relation to gas safety checks being carried out within statutory timescales, progress in terms of reducing the time taken to carry out medical adaptations and actions taken to improve services to factored owners. ESSH compliance has risen from 55.9% to 77.3% and progress made in terms of ensuring compliance with the remaining elements of the Gypsy Traveller Site Standards. Universal Credit was rolled out across West Dunbartonshire during 2018/19 and the level of rent arrears remains a concern.
- 4.9** The HIB have agreed annual targets for 2019/20 which were set using benchmarking information and challenge the housing service to meet their ambition to be one of Scotland's top performing landlord organisations.
- 4.10** At the HIB meeting on 27 May 2019, annual performance was discussed and it was agreed that in addition to quarterly performance reports covering the whole service, the HIB would monitor key work-streams aimed at driving improvements in the following areas:
- rent collection/arrears;
 - medical adaptations/tenancy sustainment;
 - compliance with Gypsy Traveller site standards; and
 - homelessness services
- 4.11** ESSH compliance will remain a key work-stream area within the remit of the Better Homes West Dunbartonshire Group.
- 4.12** A comprehensive assessment of performance against the Charter has been carried out and has informed a further series of actions to drive continued

improvement. This wider Charter Improvement Plan was approved at the July meeting of the HIB and there are a number of key improvement actions contained within the Housing and Employability Delivery Plan approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in May 2019.

Annual Assurance Statement

- 4.13** A new aspect of the Regulatory Framework which came into effect in April 2019 is the requirement for all social landlords to prepare an Annual Assurance Statement (AAS), outlining how regulatory requirements and guidance are being met and highlighting any areas of non-compliance, with actions being taken to address this.
- 4.14** The guidance states that the AAS should be completed and agreed by the Housing and Communities Convener on behalf of the full committee.
- 4.15** We propose to hold two briefing sessions for members of the Housing and Communities Committee on the Annual Assurance Statement, and these will be arranged shortly.

Charter Performance Report

- 4.16** The SHR requires all social landlords to produce an Annual Charter Tenants Report for their tenants and other customers no later than 31 October each year.
- 4.17** The Regulator states that it 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.
- 4.18** 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.
- 4.19** Engagement is planned with tenant representatives during August and September to review and update this report in line with the revised Charter coming into effect.
- 4.20** The narrative in the report is based on the annual self-assessment exercise of our performance and the report will be published online, with a summary being sent to every tenant with the winter edition of the Housing News. The full report will be sent to tenants groups and interested tenants, partner

organisations and elected members. Hard copies will be made to any tenant who requests a copy.

Tenant Scrutiny Arrangements

- 4.21** The Scottish Housing Regulator demands 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.
- 4.22** 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.
- 4.23** 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; and
 - 2017/18 looking at SHQS compliance, specifically the number and reasons that properties that are held in abeyance.
- 4.24** All of the recommendations made in the Panel's first 4 reports were approved by the HIB and progress in terms of implementing these are a standing agenda item at the monthly meetings of the HIB.
- 4.26** The Scrutiny Panel are also now focusing on our 2018/19 ARC submission and our assessment of performance and will agree an area of activity based on this performance to focus on during 2019/20. We will inform a future Committee on the basis of this scrutiny activity and its outcome.
- 4.27** The WDTR0 continue to be heavily involved in the scrutiny of the Housing Service and the formation of the Joint Rent Group comprising of 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 (HRA) is a further mechanism in ensuring the Housing Service provides best value for current and future tenants.

Engagement Plan

4.28 The SHR continues to operate a risk based approach to inform its engagement with social landlords. As part of the new Regulatory Framework the Regulator now publishes an Engagement Plan for all landlords based on our ARC submission and our homelessness submissions to the Scottish Government.

4.29 Our first Engagement Plan was received on 1 April 2019 and is available on our website and also the Scottish Housing Regulators website. Our Engagement Plan identifies the following areas where the Regulator requires further information:

- services for people who are homeless; and
- progress in terms of compliance with Gypsy Traveller site standards.

4.30 The Engagement Plan states that the Regulator will meet with West Dunbartonshire biannually to discuss progress being made in these areas; these meetings will be programmed after August.

4.31 The high social and political focus on homelessness within Scotland, including the SHR's commitment to prioritise the regulation of homelessness services in light of the requirement to develop and implement Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans has resulted in the majority of Scottish local authorities being required to provide further information in relation to services to homeless people. We will engage positively with the SHR in that respect, inclusive of the implementation of our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

4.32 We are aware that the only area of non-compliance in respect of meeting fully the Gypsy Traveller site standards is the provision of adequate street lighting to be located in the access road to the site. The access road is not in the ownership of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and such the HRA cannot financially contribute to the provision of adequate street lighting. However, we have engaged with a number of stakeholders to ensure that the provision of adequate street lighting is prioritised to ensure that the Council is not subject to any regulatory intervention and reputational damage.

5. People Implications

5.1 None.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications in relation to this report. The improvement plan which will result from the Charter self-assessment exercise will be delivered from within existing budgets. These are detailed in the Resources section of the Housing and Employability Delivery Plan, which was approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in May 2019.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** There is a risk that failure to respond appropriately to the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter would attract an adverse reaction from the Scottish Housing Regulator and may have wider consequences for the Council in the context of Best Value.
- 7.2** In addition to above, the risk highlighted in paragraph 4.32 of this report requires a speedy and positive resolution to ensure that we meet the prescribed Gypsy Travelers site standards and avoid significant reputational damage and possible regulatory intervention. The ongoing engagement with key stakeholders is designed to ensure this significant risk is eliminated.

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 and the West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel.
- 9.3** The Council is committed to ensure consultation continues and will support arrangements to increase tenant scrutiny activities and assess our performance in line with the requirements under the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the new regulatory framework introduced by the Scottish Housing Regulator. Our approach was again commended in 2019 via an external validation exercise by TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Scotland which awarded West Dunbartonshire Council, a Gold Accreditation for excellence in tenant participation.

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.

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Date: 31 July 2019

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: West Dunbartonshire Council's Engagement Plan, Scottish Housing Regulator, June 2019

The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information, Scottish Housing Regulator
http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Charter%20Indicators%20Document%20-%20Final%20Draft%20-%2027%20September_0.pdf

Scottish Housing Regulator, Landlords Report – West Dunbartonshire Council, August 2018
<http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/performance-and-spending/housing-services-performance-information/landlord-report-20172018/>

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing Improvement Board March 2018, Scrutiny Exercise: SHQS, properties held in abeyance

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing Management Team March 2015, Scrutiny Exercise: Anti-social behaviour

West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing Improvement Board June 2016, Scrutiny Exercise: Repairs and Maintenance

Wards Affected: All