

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

**Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee:
2 November 2011**

Subject: Scottish Social Housing Charter

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee on the forthcoming introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.
- 1.2 The Scottish Government has recently released a consultation paper asking stakeholders to comment on the proposed content of the charter. This follows a discussion paper released in February 2011 which helped form the basis of the draft Charter contained within the current consultation document. The Charter will come into effect, subject to the Scottish Parliament's approval, in April 2012

2. Background

- 2.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 includes the requirement for a Scottish Social Housing Charter which will come into effect in April 2012. The purposes of the Charter are to provide clarity for customers and to clearly define outcomes for landlords to aim to achieve.
- 2.2 The proposed Charter will be flexible, and will allow local standards to be set to reflect what landlords are doing for their tenants, homeless people and other service users in their areas in order to achieve the national outcomes.
- 2.3 On an annual basis, The Scottish Housing Regulator will publish reports that assess how well social landlords are doing in achieving the Charter outcomes. The Regulator has begun a consultation on how it will be carrying out its assessments, and it is likely to include proposals for an increased focus on self assessment by landlords, and how landlords should involve their tenants and other customers in these assessments.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Consultation on the Scottish Social Housing Charter began in late 2010, and in February 2011, the Scottish Government published a discussion paper outlining the feedback received from consultations so far, and suggestions for what type of outcomes tenants and other stakeholders would like to see included in the Charter.
- 3.2** The discussion paper called for further views from interested parties to be sent to the Scottish Government by 16th May 2011. This helped inform the content of the draft Charter which is contained within the formal consultation document. Copies of the formal consultation document are available within the Members Lounge and also at :-
<http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/media/29618/draft%20charter%20and%20consultation%20document.pdf>
- 3.3** On 10 May 2011, a tenant event was facilitated by West Dunbartonshire Council in relation to the discussion paper, and the proposed outcomes it contained. Following this event a submission by the WDTRO was made to the Scottish Government providing feedback on the proposals contained in the discussion paper.
- 3.4** A further formal consultation 'Scottish Social Housing Charter consultation paper' was launched in August. West Dunbartonshire Council's response to the consultation will be submitted to the Scottish Government on or before the consultation end date of 1 November 2011 and will be submitted for information purposes to the Member Officer Working Group of 2 November 2011. A further report will be presented to the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee in early 2012 on the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.
- 3.5** The draft Charter will be put to the Scottish Parliament for approval before the end of 2011, and subject to approval, the Charter will come into effect on 1 April 2012.
- 3.6** While it is unclear at this stage what the final specific outcomes in the Charter will be, it is assumed that they will be similar to the suggested outcomes contained in the consultation document. Though some changes may be required, the general areas covered by the outcomes for example, customer participation, homelessness, tenancy support, rents, anti-social behaviour, repairs and maintenance, are likely to remain. Over the coming months, officers from Housing and Community Safety will therefore take account of the draft Charter outcomes in reviewing service standards and pledges in consultation with tenants and other service users.

4. People Implications

4.1 There are no direct personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications in relation to this report, although the delivery of the outcomes of the Charter will bring together a number of resource streams from the Council and from other partner organisations.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 There is a risk that failure to continue to develop and strengthen our performance monitoring framework in parallel with the development of a Scottish Social Housing Charter could attract an adverse reaction from the Scottish Housing Regulator and may have wider consequences for the Council in the context of Best Value. Recent investment of resources in this key area of activity should assist in mitigating this risk.

7. Equalities, Health & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EIA)

7.1 The Scottish Government has carried out an Equalities impact assessment with regards the development of the Scottish Social Housing Charter; this is included within the consultation document.

8. Strategic Assessment

8.1 The development of a West Dunbartonshire approach to the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter will ensure a consistency with the Local Housing Strategy. This approach will place regeneration at the heart of local outcomes contributing greatly to social regeneration within the communities of West Dunbartonshire

8.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter will have at the forefront a commitment that all social housing landlords should ensure that their customers receive good value for rent and other charges they pay, and honest and accurate reporting of how money is spent and the value that it is achieving for them.

8.3 A number of the proposed outcomes in the draft Scottish Social Housing Charter will assist in improving the Councils housing stock.

8.4 The development of the Scottish Social Housing Charter will allow staff to operate in a better designed environment with fit for purpose resources to deliver an excellent service to our customers. Progress in delivering the outcomes contained within the charter will define an approach to meeting customer's expectations and aspirations.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.1** As a result of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, Scottish Ministers must produce a Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Charter will list the standards and outcomes that social landlords should be aiming to achieve for their customers. In assessing the performance of social landlords, the Scottish Housing Regulator will consider the Scottish Social Housing Charter.
- 9.2** The Scottish Government has recently released a consultation document which has asked stakeholders to comment on the proposed content of the charter. A copy of West Dunbartonshire response to the consultation document will be distributed to all members and discussed at the Member Officer Working Group on 2 November 2011. The Charter will come into effect, subject to the Scottish Parliament's approval, in April 2012
- 9.3** It is recommended that:
- (i) the Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee notes the current position with regard to the development of the Scottish Social Housing Charter; and
 - (ii) authority be given to the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development to report back to the committee with regards the introduction of the Charter before April 2012.

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Date: 3 October 2011

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Appendix:

None

Background Papers:

Scottish Social Housing Charter consultation document
<http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/media/29618/draft%20charter%20and%20consultation%20document.pdf>

The Scottish Social Housing Charter Discussion Paper,
Scottish Government February 2011

<http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/media/24148/discussion%20paper.pdf>

WDTRO Charter Response, May 2011

Wards Affected:

All