WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability

Housing and Communities Committee: 3 November 2021
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Subject: Scottish Social Housing Charter/Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland Progress Report

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.

2.   Recommendations

2.1   It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:

(i)   Notes the contents of this report recognising the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on 2020/21 performance;

(ii)   Notes that a Charter Improvement Plan has been developed based on a comprehensive assessment of performance and has informed the production and publication of our annual Charter Performance Report;

(iii)   Approves our Annual Assurance Statement and for this to be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator as per the regulatory requirement

(iv)   Notes that a full annual progress report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter will be submitted to the September 2022 meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee; and

(v)   Notes that the Council's approach to promoting active tenant scrutiny has been recognised nationally through being nominated in the Excellence in Tenant Scrutiny at the forthcoming Scottish Housing Awards

3.   Background

3.1   The Scottish Government's first Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) came into force in April 2012 and 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 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 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	Convenor 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 was 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 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 SSHC highlighted in this report are as follows:

- An assessment of our progress in relation to achieving the Charter Outcomes;

- The production and publication of our annual Charter Performance Report for tenants and other customers;

- The submission of our Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) to the SHR; 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 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 2020/21 performance was reported to the Housing and Communities Committee in September 2021. 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 that performance in 2020/21 had been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions that were put in place. This significantly impacted on the delivery of repairs/maintenance and void management throughout the year and performance was significantly negatively affected. Of the 32 key indicators outlined in the report, 16 met the annual target set (up from 15 in 2019/20), with another 6 narrowly missing this target. Overall this translates to 69% of these key indicators either meeting or almost achieving target (down from 89% in 2019/20).

Benchmarking of key performance indicators

4.6 Both our ARC submission 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".

4.7 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. This link accesses the information relating to West Dunbartonshire Council.

4.8 It is planned that on 25 October 2021, SHN provided a report and feedback session for the Housing Improvement Board outlining key benchmarking data and the key findings are outlined below:

Communication	2018/19 Value	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2018/19 Rank	2019/20 Rank	2020/21 Rank
Average time in working days to respond to a Stage 1 complaint	4 days	11.4 days	10.65 days	(not available)	4th quartile	4th quartile
Average time in working days to respond to a Stage 2 complaint	17 days	24.9 days	35.97 days	(not available)	4th quartile	4th quartile

Customer Satisfaction	2018/19 Value	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2018/19 Rank	2019/20 Rank	2020/21 Rank
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service*	84.1%	78.5%	78.5%	3rd quartile	4th quartile	4th quartile
Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services*	84.5%	85.7%	85.7%	3rd quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in decision making*	79.1%	83.9%	83.9%	3rd quartile	3rd quartile	2nd quartile
Percentage of tenants who feel that the rent represents good value for money*	75.3%	77.05%	77.05%	4th quartile	4th quartile	4th quartile

Quality of Housing	2018/19 Value	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2018/19 Rank	2019/20 Rank	2020/21 Rank
Percentage of properties meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)	91.9%	95.6%	82.8%	4th quartile	2nd quartile	4th quartile
Percentage of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	86.3%	76.5%	76.5%	3rd quartile	4th quartile	4th quartile

Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements	2018/19 Value	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2018/19 Rank	2019/20 Rank	2020/21 Rank
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	3.41 hours	4.56 hours	6.14 hours	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	3rd quartile
Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs	5.7 days	5.25 days	6.76 days	2nd quartile	Top quartile	2nd quartile
Percentage of reactive repairs carried out completed right first time	90.5%	92.9%	89.8%	3rd quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile
How many times in the reporting year did you not meet your statutory obligation to complete a gas safety check within 12 months of a gas appliance being fitted or last checked	0	0	215	Top quartile	Top quartile	3rd quartile
% of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	88.5%	68.3%	80.5%	4th quartile	4th quartile	4th quartile

Neighbourhood and Community	2018/19 Value	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2018/19 Rank	2019/20 Rank	2020/21 Rank
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in*	80.3%	78.5%	78.5%			
Percentage of tenancy offers refused	54.6%	45.6%	46.6%			
Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed target times	80.4%	94.7%	92.8%			
Percentage housed who maintained their tenancy for at least 12 months	87.1%	89.8%	91.55%			
The average time to complete applications for medical adaptations	67.5 days	67.7 days	123.2 days			
Homeless People	**2018/19 value**	**2019/20 Value**	**2020/21 Value**	**2018/19 Rank**	**2019/20 Rank**	**2020/21 Rank**
Percentage of households requiring temporary accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%	100%			
Percentage of all homeless cases re-assessed within 12 months (repeat homeless)	4.9%	4.3%	5.4%			
Percentage of temporary accommodation offers refused	1.9%	1.8%	6.97%			
Percentage of homeless households referred to RSLs under section 5 referral routes (new)		34%	27%			
Value for Money	**2018/19 value**	**2019/20 Value**	**2020/21 Value**	**2018/19 Rank**	**2019/20 Rank**	**2020/21 Rank**
Average time to re-let properties	23.3 days	26.85 days	56.14 days			
Rent loss due to voids expressed as a percentage of the total amount of rent due	0.73%	0.85%	1.20%			
Rent collected as a percentage of total rent due	98.61%	98.11%	98.88%			
Gross rent arrears as a percentage of total rent due	9.71%	10.08%	10.35%			

4.9 A comprehensive assessment of 2020/21 performance against the Charter has been carried out. This has included the performance information reported to Committee in September 2021, as well as the benchmarking data now available.

4.10 This exercise has informed a Charter Improvement Plan which was agreed by the Housing Improvement Board on 26 July 2021. This is being implemented across all areas of the housing service with the objective of continuing to improve services for our tenants and customers.

4.11 Based on this exercise, subsequent performance data 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:

- SHQS compliance;

- Medical adaptations;

- Services for people who are homeless;

- Rent collection/arrears;

- Complaints response times; and

- Void management.

4.12 The table outlined below provides a more local analysis comparing West Dunbartonshire Council's performance against comparable neighbouring housing organisations (3 neighbouring local authorities Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire and Stirling and River Clyde Homes operating in Inverclyde).

Indicator	West Dunbartonshire Council	East Dunbartonshire Council	Renfrewshire Council	Stirling Council	River Clyde Homes
HOMES AND RENT					
Total Number of Homes					
	10,153	3,549	12,212	5,800	5,827
Rent increase					
	1.5%	0.5%	1.5%	1.3%	1.8%
TENANT SATISFACTION					
% of overall satisfaction with the service					
	78.5%	79.5%	88.8%	87.1%	89.3%
QUALITY AND MAINTENANCE OF HOMES					
% of homes meeting the SHQS					
	82.8%	61%	91.7%	90.8%	67.5%
Average Number of hours – Emergency Repairs					
	6.1 hours	3.7 hours	6.2 hours	8.1 hours	5.2 hours
Average Number of Days – Non Emergency Repairs					
	6.8 days	11.1 days	10.7 days	3.2 days	4.0 days
Repairs – Right First Time					
	89.8%	77.8%	85.1%	95.3%	96.8%
% of tenants who have had repairs carried out on the last 12 months who were satisfied with repairs and maintenance service					
	80.5%	93.3%	92%	90.7%	89.2%

Indicator	West Dunbartonshire Council	East Dunbartonshire Council	Renfrewshire Council	Stirling Council	River Clyde Homes
NEIGHBOURHOODS					
% of anti-social behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets in the last year					
	92.8%	83%	99.8%	79%	95.2%
VALUE FOR MONEY					
Rent collected as % of rent due					
	98.9%	97.8%	99%	99.2%	101.1%
% of Rent due not collected through homes being empty					
	1.2%	2.2%	1.6%	0.8%	3.1%
Average length of time in days taken to re-let homes in the last year					
	56.1 days	164.2 days	85.7 days	66.8 days	109.1 days

4.13 As part of the requirements of the SSHC all performance information is made publicly available via the SHR's website.

Mid-year progress against Scottish Social Housing Charter Indicators

4.14 Performance improvement targets for 2021/22 for all the Charter Indicators have been agreed based on robust benchmarking information, previous performance and the expected impacts of the Covid-19 on activity. These targets challenge the housing service to meet our ambition to be one of Scotland's top performing landlord organisations.

4.15 Of the 32 Charter Indicators, 10 are reported on a six monthly basis to the Housing and Communities Committee, alongside 2 indicators relating to homelessness (which are not part of the Charter return).

4.16 A summary of performance for the period April 2021 – September 2021 for these indicators is outlined in the table below:

Status Key			Scottish Social Housing Charter Mid-year Performance Report (Apr 2021 – Sep 2021)		
✅ Target Met or exceeded	⚠️ Target narrowly missed (within agreed range)	⬣ Target missed			
Estate Management, Anti Social Behaviour, Neighbour Nuisance and Tenancy Disputes			**Mid-year Target**	**Mid-year Value**	**Status**
Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed target times			84%	89.2%	✅
Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements			**Mid-year Target**	**Mid-year Value**	**Status**
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs			4 hours	5.86 hours	⬣
Average length of time taken to complete non-emergency repairs			8 days	10.41 days	⬣
Percentage of reactive repairs carried out completed right first time			90%	89%	⚠️
How many times in the reporting period did you not complete a gas safety check within 12 months			0	0	✅
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service			84%	96%	✅

Vale for Money	Mid-year Target	Mid-year Value	Status
Average time to re-let properties	25 days	45 days	🛑
Percentage of rent due lost through homes being empty during the last year	0.88%	1.59%	🛑
Gross rent arrears as a percentage of total rent due	10.35%	9.55%	✅
Tenancy Sustainability	Mid-year Target	Mid-year Value	Status
Percentage of new tenants who maintained their tenancy for at least 12 months	92%	92%	✅
Homeless People	Mid-year Target	Mid-year Value	Status
% of all homeless cases who received a decision within 28 day target	95%	99.2%	✅
Percentage of households requiring temporary accommodation, to whom an offer was made	100%	100%	✅

Charter Performance Report

4.17 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.

4.18 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.

4.19 In preparation for our first report, 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.

4.20 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 website and insert with Housing News).

4.21 This years' report will be published online within the required timescale and is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. 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 of the report will be circulated to all members, 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.

Annual Assurance Statement (AAS)

4.22   The AAS requires landlords to state they are meeting regulatory requirements and that they are compliant with the relevant regulatory standards, 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.

4.23   We have carried out a process of reviewing and updating our AAS which takes account of the risks posed by, and impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.24   Our AAS is attached as Appendix 2 and as outlined in the SHR guidance, it is a short, succinct document, in a simple format. It outlines any areas of material non-compliance and actions being taken to address these.

4.25   The central aspect of the AAS is that the Convener of 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   A wide range of arrangements are in place to ensure that we meet our regulatory and statutory obligations and to provide members of the Committee with the assurance required.

4.27   An information session was held in October 2021 for the Housing and Communities Convener, to provide an overview of the Regulatory Framework, with detail around how they can be assured that we have properly assessed and can evidence compliance with our regulatory and statutory obligations.

4.28   Following Committee approval, the AAS will be signed by the Convenor of the Committee and submitted to the SHR as per the regulatory requirement. As per the SHR guidance, the AAS will then be published to ensure that it is accessible to tenants and other customers.

Tenant Scrutiny Arrangements

4.29   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.

4.30 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.

4.31 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; and

- 2018/19 looking at the timescales taken to complete medical adaptations.

4.32 All of the recommendations made in the Panel's first 5 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.

4.33 Following our 2019/20 ARC submission and involvement in our assessment of performance, the Scrutiny Panel agreed to focus their activity during 2020/21 on performance around the time taken to respond to complaints.

4.34 At the time of writing, this exercise is being finalised and a report with recommendations is expected to be provided to the HIB for approval on 25 October 2021.

4.35 The WDTRO 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 (HRA) is important in ensuring Housing and Homelessness Services provide best value for current and future tenants.

4.36 The Council's approach to the promotion of tenant scrutiny and the commitment of tenant representatives has been recognised by Chartered Institute for Housing through the nomination in the Excellence in Tenant Scrutiny category at the forthcoming Scottish Housing Awards.

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 and Homelessness Team.

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 approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in May 2021.

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 out next Engagement Plan to be published by the Scottish Housing Regulator in March 2022**.**

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 TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Scotland which awarded West Dunbartonshire Council, a Gold Accreditation for excellence in tenant participation up to 2022.

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: 20 October 2021

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Appendices: 1. Annual Charter Performance Report 2020/21

                           2. Draft Annual Assurance Statement 2021

Background Papers: Annual Charter Performance Report for Tenants and
                           other Customers 2019/20, West Dunbartonshire Council,
                           October 2020
                           https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/performance-
                           and-spending/service-performance/housing-services-
                           performance-information/charter-performance-report/

                           Scottish Housing Regulator West Dunbartonshire Council
                           Landlord Report, Scottish Housing Regulator, August 2021
                           https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/performance-
                           and-spending/service-performance/housing-services-
                           performance-information/landlord-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-%2027%20September_0.pdf

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

                           West Dunbartonshire Scrutiny Panel, Report to the Housing
                           Improvement Board October 2020, Scrutiny Exercise:

                           West Dunbartonshire Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2024
                           "Involving You"
                           https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-
                           and-policies/housing/tenant-participation-strategy/

                           Scottish Social Housing Charter Annual Update Report,
                           Report by Chief Officer, Housing and Employability,
                           Housing and Communities Committee,
                           1 September 2021

Wards Affected: All