

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 1 September 2021**

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

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report provides 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 recognising the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on 2020/21 performance (outlined at 4.5) and the key areas of focus for the Housing Improvement Board during 2021/22 (outlined at 4.17); and
- (ii) Agrees that a further progress report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter be submitted to the November 2021 meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee. This report will include detailed benchmarking performance information against all local authorities in Scotland highlighting the impacts of the pandemic on housing and homelessness services across Scotland.

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 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 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, highlighting areas where they are seeking further assurance, 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 were the introduction of the AAS, which needs to be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) by the end of October each year, and also the introduction of an Engagement Plan published by the SHR for every social landlord 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 (Now September after changes to the committee timetable) - 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 are as follows:

- an assessment of our progress in relation to achieving the Charter outcomes;
- submission of an AAS to the SHR;
- production and publication of an Annual Charter Performance 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 ARC to the SHR within the timescale outlined in the Regulatory Framework. 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 of our data.
- 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 is due to publish a Landlord Report on their website for each Scottish social housing landlord in late August 2021 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 2020/21 against those 18 key indicators and an additional 14 indicators that our tenants and 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 change from previous year		
Overall Satisfaction					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of tenants satisfied with the overall service	78.5%	78.5%*	78.5%		
Communication					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
average time in working days to respond in full to complaint - Stage 1	11.39 days	10.65 days	5 days		
average time in working days to respond in full to complaint - Stage 2	24.88 days	35.97 days	20 days		
% of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services	85.7%	85.7%*	85.7%		
Participation					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in decision making process	83.9%	83.9%*	83.9%		

Quality of Housing					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of stock meeting the SHQS	95.57%	82.84%	95.9%		
% of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home	76.54%	76.54%*	76.54%		
Repairs and maintenance					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs	4.56 hours	6.14 hours	3.4 hours		
Average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs	5.25 days	6.76 days	5.7 days		
% of reactive repairs carried out in the last year Right First Time	92.91%	89.76%	92%		
% of repairs appointments kept	90.28%	94.59%	90%		
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	215	0		
% of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service	68.33%	80.50%	85%		
Estate management, Antisocial behaviour					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of Anti Social Behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets	94.74%	92.83%	95%		
% of tenants satisfied with the landlord's contribution to the management of the neighbourhood they live in.	78.53%	78.53%*	78.53%		
Access to housing					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of tenancy offers refused	45.55%	46.61%	41%		
Tenancy sustainment					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of new tenancies sustained for more than a year, by source of let	89.83%	91.55%	90%		
tenancy termination - notice given by tenant	654	475	650		
tenancy termination – abandoned property	52	30	50		
The average time to complete medical adaptations	67.72 days	123.2 days	67 days		

Homelessness					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of homeless cases with decision within 28 days of presentation	98.2%	99.6%	95%	↑	✓
% of all homeless cases re-assessed within 12 months (repeat homeless)	4.3%	5.4%	4.3%	↓	✗
% of households requiring temporary accommodation to whom an offer was made	100%	100%	100%	—	✓
Incidences of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire	1021	1053	1072	↓	✓
% satisfied with the quality of temporary accommodation	81%	88.2%	85%	↑	✓
Value for Money – Rent Collection					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
Rent collected as a % of total rent due	98.11%	98.88%	97.5%	↑	✓
Gross rent arrears as a % of rent due	10.08%	10.35%	9.7%	↓	⚠
% of tenants who feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money	77.05%	77.05%*	77.05%	—	✓
Value for Money – Void Management					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of rent due lost through properties being empty	0.85%	1.20%	0.88%	↓	✗
Average length of time taken to re-let properties	26.85 days	56.14 days	25 days	↓	✗
% of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home moving in	82.19%	79.65%*	92.7%	↓	✗
Gypsy Travellers					
Indicator Description	2019/20 Value	2020/21 Value	2020/21 Target	Trend	Target met
% of Gypsy Travellers satisfied with the landlords management of site	91.7%	91.7%	90%	—	✓

*Value from Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out in 2019/20, next survey is planned for later in 2021. Satisfaction levels must be from within a 3 year period

- 4.6** Performance in 2020/21 has 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 above, 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).
- 4.7** During 2020/21, the Housing Improvement Board (HIB) has monitored closely key work-streams aimed at improving areas of weakness previously identified around satisfaction with the repairs service, rent collection/arrears, time taken to carry out medical adaptations and complaints response times. Progress around these areas is outlined below.

Satisfaction with the repairs service

- 4.8** Repairs activity was an area impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions and the average length of time to carry out both emergency and non-emergency repairs increased in 2020/21. The % of repairs appointments kept exceeded target and the % of repairs carried out Right First Time narrowly missed target.
- 4.9** During 2020/21 there were 215 instances when a gas safety check was not renewed by the anniversary date. All of these have been due to Covid-19 whereby tenants have refused access due to shielding or had positive Covid-19 tests and all of these have subsequently been completed.
- 4.10** Despite the challenges faced during the year, satisfaction with the repairs service has increased significantly to 80.5% from 68.3% in 2019/20.

Rent Collection/Arrears

- 4.11** The target agreed with Revenues and Benefits for 2020/21 for collecting 97.5% of all rent due for the year was met, increasing to 98.88%, from 98.11% in 2019/20.
- 4.12** In terms of arrears, the annual target to reduce arrears to 9.7% was not met, with arrears rising from 10.08% in 2019/20 to 10.35% at the end of 2020/21.

Time taken to carry out medical adaptations

- 4.13** Activity in terms of carrying out medical adaptations was also impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions. The number of medical adaptations completed reduced from 263 in 2019/20, to 119 in 2020/21, with the number of households waiting for adaptations to be completed increasing from 74 at the end of 2019/20, to 134 at the end of 2020/21.
- 4.14** The average days taken to complete these medical adaptations increased from 67.72 days to 123.25 days. This is a consistent position across Scotland and we will provide additional benchmarking information when this is available to the November Committee.

Complaints response times

- 4.15** Whilst the average days taken to respond to Stage 1 complaints improved slightly from 11.39 days to 10.65 days (against a 5 day target), the average days taken to respond to Stage 2 complaints increased from 24.88 days to 35.97 days (against a 20 days target).

2020/21 Performance and areas of focus for the HIB

- 4.16** Our most recent Engagement Plan states that the SHR will engage with the Council about our services for people who are homeless. They will discuss the impact of the pandemic on outcomes for people who are threatened with, or are experiencing, homelessness, how we are working with our Registered

Social Landlord partners to provide accommodation, and then review their engagement.

4.17 At the meeting of the HIB on 31 May 2021, 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 and monitoring closely the following areas:

- SHQS compliance;
- Medical adaptations;
- Services for people who are homeless;
- Rent collection/arrears; and
- Complaints response times.

4.18 A comprehensive assessment of performance against the Charter Outcomes has been undertaken and informs a series of actions aimed at Covid-19 recovery and to drive continued improvement. This wider Charter Improvement Plan was approved at the July 2021 meeting of the HIB.

4.19 Annual benchmarking data is expected to be published in early September 2021 and the HIB will review annual targets for 2021/22 which challenge the housing service to meet their ambition to be one of Scotland's top performing landlord organisations.

Annual Assurance Statement (AAS)

4.20 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 non-compliance should be highlighted, alongside actions being taken to address these.

4.21 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.

4.22 Our AAS is being developed, and as outlined in the SHR guidance, it will be a short, succinct document, in a simple format. It outlines areas of non-compliance and actions being taken to address these.

4.23 The 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.

4.24 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.

4.25 An information session is planned for September 2021 for the Housing and Communities Convener and other committee members, 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 and to highlight the areas of non-compliance being reported.

- 4.26** 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.

Charter Performance Report

- 4.27** 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.

- 4.28** 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.

- 4.29** 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.

- 4.30** Further engagement was carried out with tenant representatives during August and September 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).

- 4.31** 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

- 4.32** 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.
- 4.33** 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.
- 4.34** 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.
- 4.35** 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.
- 4.36** 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.
- 4.37** At the time of writing, this report is being finalised and a report with recommendations will be provided to the HIB for approval.
- 4.38** 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

- 4.39** The SHR continues to operate a risk based approach to inform its engagement with social landlords. As part of the 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.

- 4.40** As outlined at 4.6, our most recent Engagement Plan published on 31 March 2021, identifies services for people who are homeless as an area where further information is required. This is available on our website and also the Scottish Housing Regulators website.
- 4.41** The high social and political focus on homelessness within Scotland, alongside the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, has resulted in the majority of Scottish local authorities being required to provide further information in relation to services to homeless people.
- 4.42** The Engagement Plan states that the Regulator will discuss with West Dunbartonshire the impact of the pandemic on outcomes for people who are threatened with, or are experiencing, homelessness, how it is working with its Registered Social Landlord partners to provide accommodation, and review our engagement.
- 4.43** A key aspect of this will be the progress we are making in terms of delivering the outcomes outlined in our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) and an update report in relation to this is being provided to the September 2021 Housing and Communities Committee.

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 approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in May 2021.

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** Actions were taken during 2020 to ensure a speedy and positive resolution and ensure that we met the prescribed Gypsy Travelers site standards and avoided significant reputational damage and possible regulatory intervention.
- 7.3** At the time of writing we expect our next Engagement Plan to be published 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 (co-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.

Peter Barry
Chief Officer, Housing & Employability
Date: 18 August 2021

Person to Contact: John Kerr – Housing Development and Homelessness Manager, Housing Development and Homelessness Team, Housing and Employability, telephone: 07793717981, email: john.kerr@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: None

Background Papers: Draft Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21

AAS Assessment of compliance toolkit 2020, West Dunbartonshire Council, August 2021

West Dunbartonshire Council's Engagement Plan, Scottish Housing Regulator, 31 March 2021

<https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/performance-and-spending/service-performance/housing-services-performance-information/engagement-plan/>

The Scottish Social Housing Charter: Indicators and Context Information, Scottish Housing Regulator

<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/national-reports/national-reports-on-the-scottish-social-housing-charter/about-the-scottish-social-housing-charter>

Scottish Housing Regulator, Landlord Report 2019/20 West Dunbartonshire Council

<https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/council/performance-and-spending/service-performance/housing-services-performance-information/landlord-report/>

Annual Charter Performance Report for Tenants and other Customers 2019/20, West Dunbartonshire Council, October 2020

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

West Dunbartonshire Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2024 "Involving You"

Scottish Social Housing Charter Annual Update Report, Report by Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration, Housing and Communities Committee, 4 November 2020

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

Wards Affected:

All