

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

Subject: Scottish Government Consultation on a review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of West Dunbartonshire Council's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on a review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and seek approval to submit this response as part of the consultation process.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:
- (i) Approve West Dunbartonshire Council's draft submission to the Scottish Government's consultation attached as Appendix 1;
 - (ii) Note that if approved, our consultation response will be submitted to the Scottish Government by the 9 September 2021 closing date; and
 - (iii) Note that following the consultation, the Scottish Government will develop an updated Scottish Social Housing Charter and ask the Scottish Parliament to consider the changes and approve a revised Charter from 1st April 2022.

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, homeless people and other customers can expect from social landlords;
 - Giving social landlords a clear understanding of what they should be delivering through their housing activities;
 - 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 monitor, assess and report on how well landlords are performing and if necessary to require compliance with the Charter;

- Giving landlords the information they need to achieve continuous improvements in their performance and in the value for money they provide; and,
- Giving tenants and other customers' information on how their landlord is performing in relation to other landlords, so that they can actively engage with their landlord in discussions about performance.

3.3 The Scottish Government are currently carrying out a review of the SSHC and a consultation exercise is underway seeking views on the current outcomes and whether anything further should be added.

4. Main Issues

4.1 Our full consultation response is attached as Appendix 1 and some of the keys views included are outlined below.

4.2 Section 1 of the consultation document asks about the impact of the current SSHC on services provided by social landlords and the outcomes being achieved for tenants and other users of housing services.

4.3 West Dunbartonshire Council is a strong supporter of the SSHC and our draft response to the consultation exercise reflects this. The quality of landlord services has improved as a result of the SSHC being introduced and this is evidenced by the National Reports on the SSHC published by the SHR which outline the improvements made by the sector as a whole.

4.4 A key benefit of the SSHC is that it ensures that all social landlords focus on delivering the same outcomes and standards for tenants and other customers and those individual landlords have an increased awareness of their performance as a result.

4.5 A core part of the improvements seen as a result of the SSHC has been the increase in focus on tenants and customers and the increased partnership working witnessed across the sector in terms of better communication, increased opportunities for participation and the development of the scrutiny of housing services by those they are delivered for.

4.6 Section 2 of the consultation asks about the current 16 outcomes and the supporting descriptions that accompany them.

4.7 As outlined above, the SSHC was reviewed in 2016 and some wording was updated to reflect new legislation and guidance published since the initial Charter was introduced. These changes included reference to the Scottish Government's HRA Guidance in the supporting description for Outcomes 14 and 15.

4.8 Broadly speaking we think the the wording of the outcomes and supporting descriptions are clear and concise and outline clearly what landlords should be achieving.

4.9 Our consultation response reflects this, though makes some comments on how the wording of following outcomes could be improved:

- Outcome 5 – Repairs, maintenance and improvements;
- Outcome 12 – Homeless people; and
- Outcomes 14 & 15 – Rents and service charges.

4.10 In addition, we have made suggestions on how the supporting descriptions for the following outcomes could be improved:

- Outcome 1 – Equalities;
- Outcome 5 – Repairs, maintenance and improvements;
- Outcome 6 – Estate management, anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes; and
- Outcomes 14 & 15 – Rent and service charges.

4.11 Section 3 of the consultation asks whether anything should be added to the Charter that is not covered by the current Outcomes.

4.12 We have suggested in our submission that the Charter should introduce an outcome in relation to social housing development. This should assess the wider impacts of new build housing, should gauge the ongoing improvement and measure satisfaction levels within new build homes. This could also assess the value of investment in this area by landlords and Scottish Government.

4.13 The consultation period opened on 19 June 2021 and all responses must be submitted by 9 September 2021. Following this consultation the Scottish Government will develop an updated version of the SSHC and ask the Scottish Parliament to consider the changes and approve a revised Charter from 1st April 2022.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no direct people implications from the contents of this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial or procurement implications from the contents of this report.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 There are no direct financial or regulatory risks associated with the contents of this report.

7.2 There will be regulatory risks associated with not meeting any changes made to the SSHC that are made following this consultation.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 This consultation response does not propose changes to any service provision and does not require an Equalities Impact Assessment.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** The Scottish Government carried out a number of virtual events during June and July 2021 in order to gather the experiences of social housing tenants and housing and homelessness staff.
- 9.2** These events were hosted by the Tenants Information Service (TIS) and Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland (TPAS) and were highlighted to the WDTRO.
- 9.3** Staff from West Dunbartonshire's housing and homelessness service attended these events, as did a number of WDTRO tenant representatives. Housing Development team members have supported the WDTRO in developing their own response to the consultation. While our draft response is planned to be discussed and shared with the WDTRO in August before submission.
- 9.4** Our consultation response is a collaboration of views by staff across housing and homelessness services and other support services. The current draft was discussed and approved at the July meeting of the Housing Improvement Board.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** Having considered the Council's strategic priorities, this report contributes significantly to all strategic priorities.

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Date: 29 July 2021

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Appendices: Appendix 1 West Dunbartonshire Council's draft response to Scottish Government Consultation on the review of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

Background Papers: The Scottish Social Housing Charter April 2017: Scottish Government
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017/>

Wards Affected: All