

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL****Report by the Strategic Lead, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 2 September 2020**

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**Subject: Scottish Social Housing Charter 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 ongoing improvements within housing and homelessness services in West Dunbartonshire;
- (ii) Note the new regulatory requirements detailed within this report and in particular the consultation being carried out by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) on the future regulatory approach in response to the Covid-19 pandemic; and
- (iii) Agrees that a further progress report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter be submitted to the November 2020 meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee. This report will include detailed benchmarking information and the Council's Annual Assurance Statement.

**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 Annual Assurance Statement, which needs to be submitted to the 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.

#### **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 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 Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the SHR within the agreed timescales (which were extended this year by 2 months due to the Covid-19 pandemic). This process included both internal and external validation processes and covers the period

2019/20 (1<sup>st</sup> April 2019-31<sup>st</sup> March 2020). West Dunbartonshire's Housing and Homelessness Services 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 publish a Landlord Report on their website for each Scottish social housing landlord in August 2020 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 2019/20 against those 18 key indicators and an additional 10 indicators that our tenants and wider 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    |   |                            |   |   |
| Customer Satisfaction   |                               |   |                            |   |   |
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value                 | 2019/20 Value   | 2019/20 Target             | Trend   | Target met  |
| % of tenants satisfied with the overall service   | 84.1%                         | 78.5%   | 84%                        |  |  |
| % of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services    | 84.5%                         | 85.7%   | 84%                        |  |  |
| % of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to participate in decision making process | 79.1%                         | 83.9%   | 85.9%                      |  |  |
| % of tenants who feel that the rent represents good value for money                           | 75.3%                         | 77.05%  | 81.3%                      |  |  |
| Quality of Housing  |                               |   |                            |   |   |
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value                 | 2019/20 Value   | 2019/20 Target             | Trend   | Target met  |
| % of stock meeting the SHQS   | 91.92%                        | 95%   | 95%                        |  |  |
| % of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home                                | 86.25%                        | 76.54%  | 88%                        |  |  |

| Repairs and maintenance   |               |               |                |       |            |
|---|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------|------------|
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value | 2019/20 Value | 2019/20 Target | Trend | Target met |
| Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs                  | 3.4 hours     | 4.56 hours    | 3.4 hours      | ↓     | ✘          |
| Average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs                    | 5.7 days      | 5.25 days     | 5.7 days       | ↑     | ✔          |
| % of reactive repairs carried out in the last year Right First Time         | 90.48%        | 92.91%        | 91%            | ↑     | ✔          |
| % of repairs appointments kept  | 86.13%        | 90.28%        | 90%            | ↑     | ✔          |
| % of properties which had a gas safety check by anniversary date            | 100%          | 100%          | 100%           | -     | ✔          |
| % of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service             | 88.51%        | 68.33%        | 90.9%          | ↓     | ✘          |
| Estate management, Antisocial behaviour                                     |               |               |                |       |            |
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value | 2019/20 Value | 2019/20 Target | Trend | Target met |
| % of Anti Social Behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets     | 80.42%        | 94.74%        | 88%            | ↑     | ✔          |
| Tenancy sustainment   |               |               |                |       |            |
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value | 2019/20 Value | 2019/20 Target | Trend | Target met |
| % of new tenancies sustained for more than a year, by source of let         | 87.1%         | 89.83%        | 89%            | ↑     | ✔          |
| tenancy termination - notice given by tenant                                | 752           | 654           | 660            | ↑     | ✔          |
| tenancy termination – abandoned property                                    | 67            | 52            | 66             | ↑     | ✔          |
| The average time to complete medical adaptations                            | 67.54 days    | 67.72 days    | 43 days        | ↓     | ✘          |
| Homelessness  |               |               |                |       |            |
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value | 2019/20 Value | 2019/20 Target | Trend | Target met |
| % of homeless cases with decision within 28 days of presentation            | 99%           | 98.2%         | 95%            | ↓     | ✔          |
| % of all homeless cases re-assessed within 12 months (repeat homeless)      | 4.9%          | 4.3%          | 4.8%           | ↑     | ✔          |
| % of households requiring temporary accommodation to whom an offer was made | 100%          | 100%          | 100%           | -     | ✔          |
| Incidences of homelessness in West Dunbartonshire                           | 1037          | 1021          | 1040           | ↑     | ✔          |
| % satisfied with the quality of temporary accommodation                     | 76.3%         | 81%           | 80%            | ↑     | ✔          |
| Value for Money – Rent Collection   |               |               |                |       |            |
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value | 2019/20 Value | 2019/20 Target | Trend | Target met |
| Rent collected as a % of total rent due                                     | 98.61%        | 98.11%        | 98%            | ↓     | ✔          |
| Gross rent arrears as a % of rent due                                       | 9.71%         | 10.08%        | 9%             | ↓     | ⚠          |

| Value for Money – Void Management                                     |               |               |                |   |   |
|---|---------------|---------------|----------------|---|---|
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value | 2019/20 Value | 2019/20 Target | Trend   | Target met  |
| % of rent due lost through properties being empty                     | 0.73%         | 0.85%         | 0.88%          |  |  |
| Average length of time taken to re-let properties                     | 23.33 days    | 26.85 days    | 25 days        |  |  |
| % of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home moving in      | 87.35%        | 82.19%        | 92.7%          |  |  |
| Gypsy Travellers  |               |               |                |   |   |
| Indicator Description   | 2018/19 Value | 2019/20 Value | 2019/20 Target | Trend   | Target met  |
| % of Gypsy Travellers satisfied with the landlords management of site | 85.7%         | 91.7%         | 90%            |  |  |

- 4.6** The table above outlines continued good performance, with 25 of the 28 indicators, or 89% 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 rent collection/arrears, medical adaptations and homelessness services. 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 homelessness services, with all key indicators meeting the annual target set. ESSH compliance has risen to 79.7% and we are now fully compliant with the Gypsy Traveller Site Standards, with satisfaction with the management of the site improving to 91.67%, surpassing the annual target set.
- 4.9** There are a number of areas where performance has not met target notably there remains concerns around the level of rent arrears, the time taken to carry out medical adaptations and satisfaction levels with the repairs and maintenance service.
- 4.10** At the meeting of the Housing Challenges Group on 9 June 2020, 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;
  - satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service; and
  - time taken to carry out emergency repairs.
- 4.11** In addition, to the increased challenge around those performance areas there will be a paper brought to a future Housing and Communities Committee which will set

out a number of improvement actions around the repairs service aimed at ensuring tenant satisfaction levels are increased.

- 4.12** Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, annual benchmarking data has not been published at the time of writing. This data is expected to be published in late August 2020 and the HIB will agree annual targets for 2020/21 which challenge the housing service to meet their ambition to be Scotland's top performing landlord organisations.
- 4.13** At the time of writing a comprehensive assessment of performance against the Charter is being carried out and will inform a further series of actions to drive continued improvement. This wider Charter Improvement Plan is due to be approved at the August meeting of the HIB and there are a number of key improvement actions contained within the Housing and Employability Delivery Plan seeking approval by the Housing and Communities Committee in November 2020.

#### Annual Assurance Statement

- 4.14** 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.
- 4.15** Our first AAS was approved by the Housing and Communities Committee on 6 November 2019, signed by the Convenor on behalf of the full committee and submitted to the SHR.
- 4.16** A consultation is being carried out by the SHR on the future regulatory approach in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which opened on 17 July 2020 and closed on 14 August 2020. The consultation document proposes that this timeframe is adhered to and that all regulated bodies should submit their AAS by 31 October 2020.
- 4.17** Any regulated body which cannot achieve this should contact the lead regulator for the organisation. Through the lead regulator we will provide as much support and assistance as possible to facilitate compliance with the requirement to provide an AAS.
- 4.18** We plan to review and update our AAS and submit this to the SHR within the required timescale and seek retrospective approval for AAS from the Housing and Communities Committee in November 2020.

#### Charter Performance Report

- 4.19** 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.
- 4.20** 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.
- 4.21** 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.
- 4.22** 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 and homelessness services and which are reported regularly to tenants and other service users (via website and insert with Housing News).
- 4.23** 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.
- 4.24** The Consultation being carried out by the SHR on the future regulatory approach in response to the Covid-19 pandemic proposes that due to the difficulties faced by landlords and taking account of the fact that they extended the submission date for the ARC return by two months, that there is a similar modification for the report to tenants and other service users for this year only.
- 4.25** If this is supported following the consultation period then the final date for each landlord to publish its charter performance for tenants and service users will be the end of December 2020. However after consultation with our tenants we propose to provide our Charter Performance Report in November 2020.

#### Tenant Scrutiny Arrangements

- 4.26** 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.

- 4.27** 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.
- 4.28** 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.
- 4.29** 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.
- 4.30** Following our 2018/19 ARC submission and involvement in our assessment of performance, the Scrutiny Panel agreed to focus their activity during 2020 on performance around the time taken to carry out medical adaptations.
- 4.31** At the time of writing, this report is being finalised and recommendation will be made to the HIB for approval.
- 4.32** 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

- 4.33** 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.
- 4.34** Our first Engagement Plan was received on 1 April 2019 and initially identified two areas where further information was required; services for people who are homeless and progress in terms of compliance with Gypsy Traveller site standards.
- 4.35** Following full compliance with the Gypsy Traveller Site Standards, our most recent Engagement Plan for the period 28 August 2019 to 29 March 2020,

now only 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.

- 4.36** 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, resulted in the majority of Scottish local authorities being required to provide further information in relation to services to homeless people.
- 4.37** The Engagement Plan states that the Regulator will meet with West Dunbartonshire biannually to discuss progress being made. We have engaged positively in that respect, and all information requested has been provided.
- 4.38** The Covid-19 pandemic has delayed the publication of an updated Engagement Plan due to be published in April 2020. The Consultation being carried out by the SHR on the future regulatory approach, proposes that the SHR should deliver updated engagement plans for all regulated bodies by the end of March 2021.

## **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 is seeking approval by the Housing and Communities Committee in November 2020.

## **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** At the time of writing and subject to the outcome of the SHR consultation, we expect our next Engagement Plan to be published in April 2021.

## **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.

**Peter Barry**  
**Strategic Lead, Housing & Employability**  
**Date: 18 August 2020**

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**Appendices:** None

**Background Papers:** WDC Response Scottish Housing Regulator Consultation, August 2020

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](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

