



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 17 DECEMBER 2019

SUBJECT: SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER COMPLIANCE

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the details of the Council's landlord report from the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and progress on the Annual Performance Report to tenants and other customers.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (15) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the Council's Performance Management Framework for the Communities Services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:

- i) reviews the Council's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2018/19; and**
- ii) considers and notes the Annual Performance Report to tenants and other customers.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into force on 1 April 2012. The aim of the Charter is to improve the quality and value of the services provided by social landlords. The Charter sets out the minimum standards and outcomes that tenants can expect from their landlord, including the quality of and value for money of services, the standard of homes and the opportunities to participate in their landlord's decision making processes. Using a range of performance indicators, the SHR monitors, and assesses landlords' performance against the Charter.
- 3.2 Each year, social landlords must submit an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the SHR. On 27 August 2019, this Committee was informed that the Council's ARC was submitted in May 2019 and that the results for all social landlords would be published during August 2019 (paragraph 11 of the Minute

refers). The Council submitted its first assurance statement to the SHR prior to the 31 October deadline.

4. LANDLORD REPORT

- 4.1 On 31 August 2019, the SHR published the landlord reports for 2018/19. The Council's landlord report can be found in **APPENDIX I**.
- 4.2 The landlord report compares the Council's performance on the key Charter indicators with the Scottish average. It should be noted that the average performance for local authorities tends to be below the Scottish average which includes all social landlords (local authorities, housing associations and housing co-operatives). Where appropriate, both are included in this report to provide further context.
- 4.3 The 2018/19 performance is summarised below under 6 themes:

Overall Satisfaction

- 4.4 The 2018 tenant survey found that 79.6% of tenants were satisfied with the overall service. The Scottish average was 90.1% and the local authority average was 85.7%. Improvement actions relating to the 2018 survey were reported to this Committee on 27 August 2019 (paragraph 12 of the Minute refers).

The Customer/Landlord Relationship

- 4.5 The 2018 tenant survey identified that 76.3% of tenants felt that the Council was good at keeping them informed about services and decisions. This is lower than the Scottish average (91.6%) and the local authority average (81.4%). Tenants are informed about services and decisions through a range of methods including a six-monthly newsletter, a comprehensive tenant handbook, an extensive range of leaflets, an annual performance report and also through the Council's website and social media.
- 4.6 In 2018/19, the Housing Service responded to 78.7% of 1st stage complaints within the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) timescale of 5 working days. This is below the Scottish average of 86.9% but close to the local authority average of 80%. For 2nd stage complaints, 64.4% were responded to within the SPSO timescale of 20 working days. This is below the Scottish average of 83.8% and the local authority average of 71.3%. During 2018/19, 58.9% of 1st stage complaints and 42.2% of 2nd stage complaints were upheld. The Scottish average was 55.6% and 51.3% respectively. There were no complaints relating to equalities issues in 2018/19.
- 4.7 The 2018 tenant survey found that 68.8% of tenants were satisfied with the options to participate in their landlord's decision making processes. However, just over a quarter of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and therefore performance was below the Scottish average (86.5%) and the local authority average (76.6%). The Council's Tenant Participation Strategy was reviewed in 2017/18 and the Tenants' Voice newsletter regularly contains information on tenant participation opportunities and updates on how tenant feedback has been used to improve services.

Housing Quality and Maintenance

- 4.8 At 31 March 2018, 92.5% of properties met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) which is below the Scottish average of 94.1%. There were 241 properties which did not meet the SHQS but the remainder were exempt (220 properties) because they were either 'hard to treat' or classed as an abeyance (where work cannot be done for 'social' reasons such as the tenant refusing remedial works). It is intended to reduce the non-compliant properties to 141 during 2019/20 with the aim of completing the remainder during the following year.
- 4.9 All social landlords must meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by December 2020. At 31 March 2019, 57.4% of properties met the EESH which is below the Scottish average (87.6%) and the local authority average (78%).
- 4.10 Tenants satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in (80.7%) was below the Scottish average (90.8%) and the local authority average (82.7%). However, out of the 109 responses received in 2018/19, just 14 tenants expressed dissatisfaction with the standard of their home when moving in.
- 4.11 The 2018 survey found that 73.9% of tenants were satisfied with the quality of their home. This is below to the Scottish average (88.1%) and the local authority average (85.2%).
- 4.12 In 2018/19, the average time to complete emergency repairs was 2.6 hours which places the Council within the upper quartile of local authorities (Scottish average 3.7 hours, local authority average 4.1 hours). Non-emergency repairs were completed within an average of 7.5 working days (Scottish average 6.6 working days, local authority average 8.1 working days).
- 4.13 The Council completed 82.7% of non-emergency repairs right first time in 2018/19 (Scottish average 92.5%, local authority average 91.6%). This indicator remains complex to measure and officers believe that the calculation of this indicator does not truly reflect the Council's performance.
- 4.14 The Council kept 93% of non-emergency repairs appointments. This was similar to both the Scottish average (95.6%) and the local authority average (94.9%).
- 4.15 At 31 March 2019, 100% of the Council's properties which required a gas safety record had a gas safety check completed by the anniversary date. This performance was better than the Scottish average (99.9%).
- 4.16 The 2018 Tenant Survey found that 78.6% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs service. This was below the Scottish average (91.7%) and the local authority average (86.9%).

Neighbourhood and Community

- 4.17 The 2018 tenant survey found that satisfaction with the management of the neighbourhood at 80.3% was below the Scottish average (87.8%) and the local authority average (84.1%).

- 4.18 In 2018/19, 87.1% of antisocial behaviour cases were resolved within local target timescales which is similar to the Scottish average (87.9%).
- 4.19 The percentage of tenancy offers refused (32.2%) was better than the Scottish average (36.3%) and placed the Council within the upper quartile of local authorities. A low refusal rate helps to minimise void periods and rent loss.

Access to Housing and Support

- 4.20 Tenancy sustainment, where tenancies lasted for more than 12 months, was higher in Moray (93.5%) than the Scottish average (88.8%). The Council is within the upper quartile of local authorities.
- 4.21 The turnover of properties in Moray (6.9%) was lower than the Scottish average (8.6%) and for local authorities only (7.8%). Low turnover can reduce opportunities for housing list applicants to be rehoused.
- 4.22 The Council approved 69.2% of medical adaptations and completed these within an average of 45 days. By comparison the Scottish average was 84.7% and 49 days respectively. The governance arrangements for adaptations have now transferred to the Integration Joint Board which has established a governance group to drive improvements in the delivery of adaptations. The Housing service is represented in this group.
- 4.23 The proportion of court actions resulting in eviction in Moray (17.2%) was lower than the Scottish average (19.9%) but similar to the local authority average (17.7%). All court actions in 2018/19 were for rent arrears with 10 resulting in eviction. The Housing Service only uses eviction as a last resort where all efforts to engage with the tenant have been unsuccessful.
- 4.24 The average stay in temporary accommodation (85 days) was shorter than the Scottish average (102 days). The Council made an offer of temporary accommodation to all homeless households who required it. The refusal rate for temporary accommodation (7.6%) is better than the Scottish average (10%). Most refusals were for a private sector hostel used by the Council but it is expected that performance will improve since the contract ended on 31 March 2019. The most common reason for refusing a property was location.
- 4.25 Although temporary accommodation survey response rates remains low, 85.5% of households accommodated were satisfied with the quality of their temporary accommodation which is similar to the Scottish average (88.5%).

Getting Good Value from Rents and Service Charges

- 4.26 The overall average weekly rent for a Council home in Moray (£59.88) remains significantly lower than both the Scottish average (£79.08) and the local authority average (£74.30). Moray has the lowest overall average weekly rent of all local authorities and housing associations.
- 4.27 The 2018 survey found that 83% of tenants feel their rent is good value for money which was the same as the Scottish average. The local authority average is 82.4%.

- 4.28 The rent lost through properties being vacant in Moray was 0.9%, which is the same as both the Scottish average and the local authority average. The time to re-let empty properties in Moray (48 days) was higher than the Scottish average (32 days) and the local authority average (39 days).
- 4.29 The Council collected 99.2% of the total rent due which is similar to the Scottish average (99.1%) and the local authority average (98.9%).
- 4.30 The Council had the lowest rent arrears (2.4%) of all local authorities. The Scottish average was 5.7% and the local authority average was 6.6%.

5. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5.1 The SHR requires social landlords to produce an annual report on their performance against the Charter and make it available to tenants and other customers by no later than 31 October. The Annual Performance Report can be found on the Council's website at:
www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file95927.pdf
- 5.2 The SHR expects the report to be developed in partnership with tenants and other customers, rather than exclusively by the Council. The format, content and design of the Council's report has been developed in discussion with the Moray Tenants' Forum and also from tenant feedback on the 2017/18 performance report. The report mirrors the key themes of the Charter.
- 5.3 The Annual Performance Report has been promoted through social media and also within the Summer Tenants' Voice newsletter where tenants were given the option to request a paper copy. Copies have also been issued to access points, homeless hostels and to tenant representatives.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Moray 2026 and the Service Plan (Priority 4) identify the need to involve tenants in improving service quality. Good quality services for social housing tenants will help promote healthier citizens and adults living in healthier, sustainable independent lives safeguarded from harm.

(b) Policy and Legal

Reporting on Scottish Social Housing Charter performance indicators is a legal requirement under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.

(c) Financial implications

There is a small cost associated with producing and sending out the Annual Charter Performance Report, which will be met within existing resources. Tenant feedback indicated that paper copies of the report should only be available on request and therefore ensuring that costs are minimal.

(d) Risk Implications

The Scottish Housing Regulator requires that tenants are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the management of their

homes and decision making processes. Failure to develop an appropriate tenant involvement structure presents a regulatory risk along with a failure to provide a customer focussed service.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Equalities issues have been considered as part of the development of the ARC and the Annual Performance Report to tenants and other customers.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has taken place with the Acting Head of Housing and Property, senior managers within Housing and Property, the Committee Services Officer (Caroline Howie), Senior Solicitor (Property and Contracts), the Principal Accountant (Deborah O'Shea) and the Equal Opportunities Officer. Their comments have been incorporated in this report.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The report provides the Committee with an update on the Council's compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

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Background Papers: With author
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