

REPORT TO SOCIAL WORK & HOUSING COMMITTEE – 4 JUNE 2015

THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER – YEAR TWO (2014/15)

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the outcome of the 2015 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which will form part of the submission of the ARC (Annual Return of the Charter) to the Scottish Housing Regulator along with specific performance information.**
- 1.2 Note the actions from the Housing Improvement Plan, developed as a result of the 2014 ARC outcomes; Benchmarking; Local Housing Strategy outcomes and an integral part of the Housing Continuous Improvement process.**

2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 The Charter was introduced by legislation in 2012. As part of the Scottish Government's long term aim of creating a safer and stronger Scotland, the Charter's aim is to improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords (Councils and RSL's) provide. The Charter:
 - 2.1.1 States clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords and helping them to hold landlords to account.
 - 2.1.2 Focuses the efforts of social landlords on achieving outcomes that matter to their customers.
 - 2.1.3 Establishes a basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator (Regulator) to assess and report on how well social landlords are performing, including those areas of strong performance and areas needing improvement. The SHR reports will also help the Scottish Government ensure that public investment in new social housing goes only to landlords assessed as performing well.
- 2.2 Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 (Section 31 introduced the Charter), the Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords, individually and collectively, achieve the Charter outcomes. Year one benchmarked performance was published at the end of August 2014.

- 2.3 The Charter Outcomes & Standards is wide ranging and covers the following:
- 2.3.1 **The Customer/Landlord relationship.** This includes equalities; communication and participation
 - 2.3.2 **Housing Quality and Maintenance.** This includes quality of housing and repairs, maintenance and improvement
 - 2.3.3 **Neighbourhood and Community.** This includes estate management; antisocial behaviour; neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes
 - 2.3.4 **Access to Housing and Support.** This includes housing options; access to social housing; tenancy sustainment; homelessness
 - 2.3.5 **Getting Good Value from Rents and Service Charges.** This includes value for money issues and rents and service charges
 - 2.3.6 **“Other Customers”.** This includes Gypsies/Travellers
- 2.4 As part of the Regulator role in monitoring the Charter (see 2.2 above), all social landlords submit an annual return - the “Annual Return of the Charter”, or ARC. The first returns were submitted in May 2014 relating to financial year 2013/14. The ARC replaces the annual returns that RSL’s previously provided and also replaces the SHQS (Scottish Housing Quality Standard) annual return. The ARC is used by the Regulator to report publicly on landlords’ progress in achieving the Charter outcomes and standards as well as influencing regulatory assessments. All social landlords are required to submit the same information except that RSL’s have to report on governance issues. In year one (2013/14), returns were submitted by 157 RSL’s and 26 Local Housing Authorities (that still retain stock).
- 2.5 Social landlords report annually (by end October) to tenants, and other service users, performance in achieving or progressing towards the Charter outcomes and standards. Although the Regulator is not prescriptive as to how this should be achieved, the legislation enables them to issue guidance on how social landlords need to involve tenants and service users in the preparation of information. Aberdeenshire Council established an officer/tenant project group to manage all aspects of the SSHC, including the ARC and is now working on style and content of performance information to be provided to tenants by the end of October 2015 having issued the 2014 “Report Card” to all tenants. TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) has been working with our TPPT (Tenant Participation Promotion Team) to develop an effective scrutiny process required to monitor Aberdeenshire’s Charter outcomes.
- 2.6 The ARC is a substantial document containing a large amount of performance and survey information. There are 37 main indicators overall plus a further 32 “sub-indicators”.
- 2.7 Historically, the housing service carried out full independent tenant surveys every five years. In addition, there are regular ongoing surveys covering, for example, feedback on capital work and homelessness surveys. As a result of the Charter, the minimum required is to update full survey information every three years.

- 2.8 As part of the ARC submission in 2014 (which was year one of the Charter), it was decided to carry out an independent Tenant Satisfaction Survey using the questions set by the SHR (which all social landlords must include). This was a postal survey issued to all Aberdeenshire council tenants and other customers/service users. 5,300 tenants responded to the 2014 survey (44%). It was decided to carry out another independent survey in 2015 but on a “face to face” basis. 430 tenants were interviewed and the key outcomes show (2014 results in brackets): The full Tenant Satisfaction Survey for 2015 is available on request.
- 2.8.1 **82%** (83%) of tenants are satisfied with the overall service provided by the council as landlord (**SLIGHTLY DOWN**)
- 2.8.2 **83%** (81%) of tenants feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions (**UP**)
- 2.8.3 **66%** (70%) of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord’s decision making processes (**DOWN**)
- 2.8.4 **78%** (76%) of tenants were satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in (**UP**)
- 2.8.5 **80%** (81%) of tenants are satisfied with the quality of their home (**SLIGHTLY DOWN**)
- 2.8.6 **86%** (83%) of tenants who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in last 12 months satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service (**UP**)
- 2.8.7 **81%** (79%) of tenants are satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in (**UP**)
- 2.8.8 **77%** (79%) of tenants feel the rent for their property represents good value for money (**DOWN**)
- 2.9 As we are members of Housemark (a benchmarking organisation primarily comparing value for money issues), we decided to include in the 2015 survey, three additional questions for the first time. Although these are part of a national standard called “STAR” (Survey of Tenants & Residents), they are not included within the ARC submission (results in brackets):
- Satisfaction with the way Aberdeenshire Council deals with Repairs & Maintenance (**81% satisfaction**)
 - Satisfaction with neighbourhood as a place to live (**91% satisfaction**)
 - Satisfaction that Council listens to views and acts upon them (**54% satisfaction**)
- 2.10 The Regulator has published findings from year one of the Charter. Landlords’ results on overall satisfaction range from 65% to 100%. RSL’s have a higher average overall satisfaction rate (89%) compared to local authorities (81%).

The landlord service areas most closely linked to overall satisfaction and therefore mean most to tenants are:

- Landlords keeping tenants informed about their services and decisions
- The quality of tenants' homes
- Good neighbourhood management
- Having opportunities to participate
- Time taken to complete non-emergency repairs
- The quality of repairs & maintenance to tenants' homes

2.11 The Regulator further reports that most landlords are reporting good performance in the above key service areas, but there is room for improvement by some landlords. RSL's report better outcomes across all six compared to local authorities but the Regulator acknowledges other factors apply (example, local authorities tend to have older houses which are more expensive and difficult to maintain; local authorities tend to deliver a wider range of services and some tenants may have had this in mind when responding to survey questions.

2.12 As part of our commitment to Continuous Improvement, we are implementing a Housing Improvement Plan taking into account all aspects of current performance; the Local Housing Strategy; Surveys; Customer Feedback; Benchmarked performance information from various sources and measure outcomes against the Charter standards.

The HIP will be considered on a quarterly basis by the Housing Continuous Improvement Group (HCIG) and will be presented to all tenant groups to show our commitment to continuous improvement by:

- Demonstrating that we are serious about addressing issues raised;
- Helping to set goals to work towards;
- Helping to prioritise our improvement activities and ensuring they are strategic, proportionate and clear;
- Providing a structure to evaluate and review against.

Overall, the HIP helps to ensure that actions from the LHS and all improvement activities within Housing are being monitored regularly and updates are given to the Housing Continuous Improvement Group, Senior Management and Social Work and Housing Committee (when required). The plan looks at *new* projects/KDI/Actions for delegation, etc, *ongoing* projects and *completed* projects (which will eventually be removed).

Presently, 16 projects are being monitored within the Housing Improvement Plan. Examples of these include the development of Tenant Scrutiny, resolving anti-social behaviour cases quickly and getting repairs right first time. These are all outcomes and improvement actions required from Tenant's Survey 2014 and the Scottish Social Housing Charter return 2014. The Housing Improvement Plan 2014 – 2015 is available on request.

The Housing Improvement Plan incorporates the SMART objectives:

- *Specific* – target a specific area for improvement.
- *Measurable* – quantify or at least suggest an indicator of progress.
- *Assignable* – specify who will do it.

- *Realistic* – state what results can realistically be achieved, given available resources.
- *Time-related* – specify when the result(s) can be achieved.

3. Consultations

- 3.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and any comments have been incorporated.

4. Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 4.1 An EIA is not required as this is predominantly an update for Members information.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implication of this report.

6. Staffing Implications

- 6.1 There are no staffing implications of this report.

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