

REPORT TO SOCIAL WORK AND HOUSING COMMITTEE – 31 MARCH 2016

TENANCY SUSTAINMENT

1 Recommendations

The committee is recommended to:

1.1 Acknowledge and comment on the contents of this report

2 Background/Discussion

- 2.1 The Housing Service monitors a large amount of performance and statistical information, some of which is used to populate the annual Social Housing Charter return. Only a very small percentage is reported to Committee as it is not included within the Covalent reporting system but used extensively, for example, as part of our Continuous Improvement process and the day to day delivery of services at a local level and shire-wide Functional Team meetings.
- 2.2 Aberdeenshire Council has 12,800 properties in ownership and stock turnover (vacancies) varies from year to year. In 2014/15, there were 972 vacancies (755 mainstream and 217 sheltered housing) (7.5% turnover).
- In 2015/16 (January 2016) there is 813 vacancies (613 mainstream and 177 sheltered housing) (6.3% turnover). Turnover by area varies from (this year) 5.5% in Kincardine, Mearns and Marr to 7.2% in Banff & Buchan. A similar trend last year with Banff & Buchan turnover slightly higher than the shire average.
- 2.3 The clear objective is to allocate properties as quickly as possible to minimise voids (rent loss) and at 1.15% rent loss year to date, Aberdeenshire is one of the best performers in Scotland. A key target is “Average days to let”. Year to date this year is currently 24 against a full year last year of 25.
- 2.4 When applicants are allocated properties or transfer from one property to another, they are given SST’s (Scottish Secure Tenancies) as required by legislation. This involves a face to face “sign up” after allocation followed by a Settling-In visit by Tenancy Services staff. One key aspect of success is to ensure tenancy sustainment, with or without Housing Support, which is offered if the circumstances require it. The Housing Service does everything in its power to sustain tenancies. We have policies and procedures for dealing with breaches of tenancy (ASB/Rent Arrears etc) and the remainder of this report analyses cases where tenancy sustainment has failed and evictions have been carried out. It compares 2013/14 with 2014/15
- 2.5 The graphs in **Appendix 1** show the position at a housing management area level. This shows the total number of evictions year on year since 2001/2 (Scottish Govt. stats) and a more detailed analysis of shire-wide figures under

various eviction criteria. (There is a slight difference in the numbers depending on the definition of eviction). In addition, when the figures were analysed, Housing Finance and Tenancy Management were separate Functions; each having three teams. Since integration of these two Functions in September 2015, Tenancy Services has reverted back to four areas, but in “area team” terms previously:

North was mainly Banff & Buchan plus Turriff and surrounding areas

East was mainly Peterhead and surrounding areas plus Ellon and surrounding areas in Formartine

South included Garioch; parts of Formartine and Kincardine, Mearns & Marr

2.6 Almost all of the eviction reasons related to rent arrears (as opposed to ASB) and shows that total evictions in 2014/15 (25) was lower than 2013/14 (30). This in part was due to the introduction of the “Pre-Action Requirement” legislation in 2012 by the Scottish Government which added extra steps in the recovery procedure. However, evictions have increased again in 2015/16 YTD (see 2.8 below). There are some concerning trends; examples being the number coming through the homelessness route (albeit reducing in 14/15); an unwillingness to engage with housing support; and the number of single persons unable to sustain tenancies:

Type	2014/15	2013/14
Length of tenancy	13 out of 25 evictions (52%) had tenancies under two years	14 out of 30 evictions (47%) had tenancies under two years
Homelessness	56% of shire wide evictions were previously homeless	87% of shire wide evictions were previously homeless
Family type	22 out of 25 evictions (88%) were single persons	21 out of 30 evictions (70%) were single persons
Housing Support	Shire-wide, 68% of those evicted had previously been offered Housing Support and 0% engaged	Shire-wide, 63% of those evicted had previously been offered ongoing Housing Support and only 26% engaged
Debts	At eviction, a total of £80,994 was owed by those evicted, including £55,568 in rent and £25,427 in other debts (eg rechargeable repairs etc). An average of £3,240 per eviction (£2,222 rent)	At eviction, a total of £100,057 was owed by those evicted, including £56,400 in rent and £43,659 in other debts (eg rechargeable repairs etc). An average of £3,335 per eviction (£1,880 rent)

2.7 Aberdeenshire Council does all it can to avoid evictions. However, there are cases where multiple arrangements to repay are broken and our rent arrears recovery escalation process provides ample opportunities to maintain agreements. We work closely with a range of voluntary organisation to offer advice and assistance. As part of the housing restructure in 2015 creating Tenancy Services, we employed 7 new posts of Early Intervention Officers (2

each in Buchan and Banff & Buchan and 1.5 each in G&F and KMM). These officers deal with “low level” arrears (up to £150) and Cat 3 ASB cases and to cope with the demands of welfare reform. All are now in post with fairly high workloads, but it has enabled Housing Officers to do more intensive work with higher/serious tenancy cases. Aberdeenshire Council is still in the best “quartile” of arrears performance amongst local authorities

2.8 Evictions are now tracked monthly as part of our performance management process and in 2015/16 (YTD at end January 2016):

- Banff & Buchan (8)
- Buchan (13)
- Formartine & Garioch (6)
- Kincardine & Mearns. Marr (1)
- Aberdeenshire (28)

2.9 The Head of Finance, the Monitoring Officer within Corporate Services and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development have been consulted on the contents of this report, and are in agreement with it.

3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

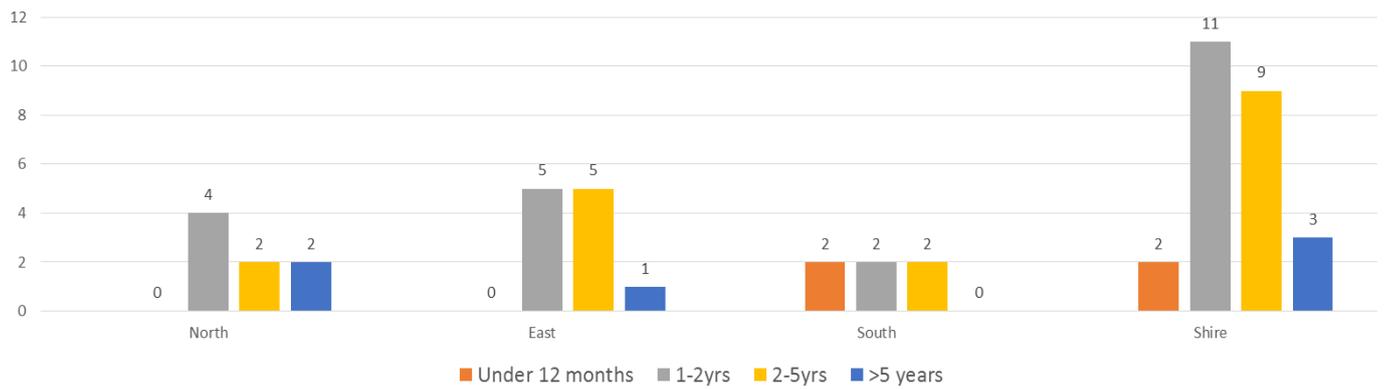
3.1 There are no staffing or financial implications arising from this report.

3.2 As this report is for information only, no EIA is required

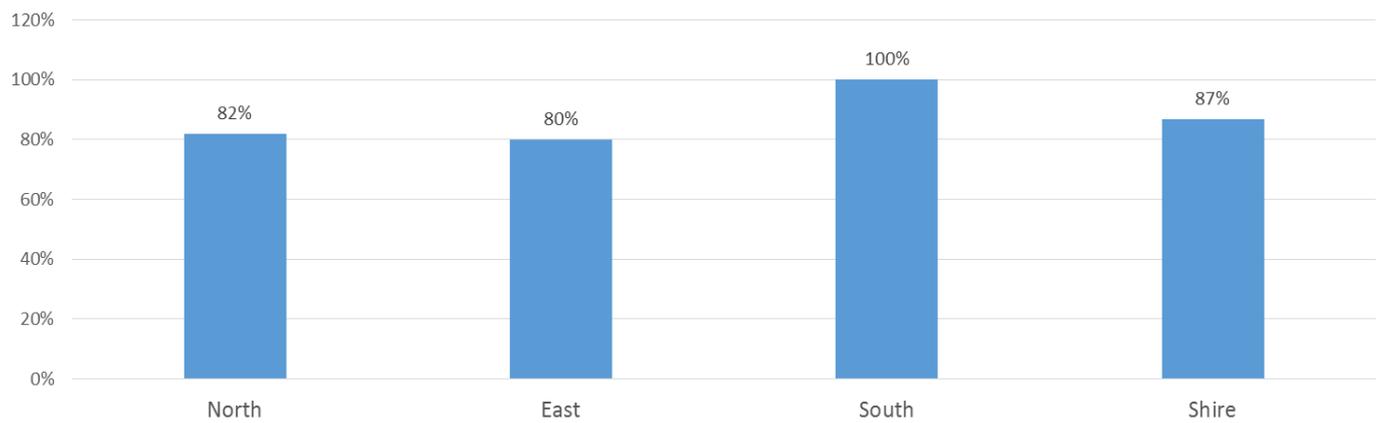
Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by: Brian Watson, Acting Head of Housing
Date: March 2016

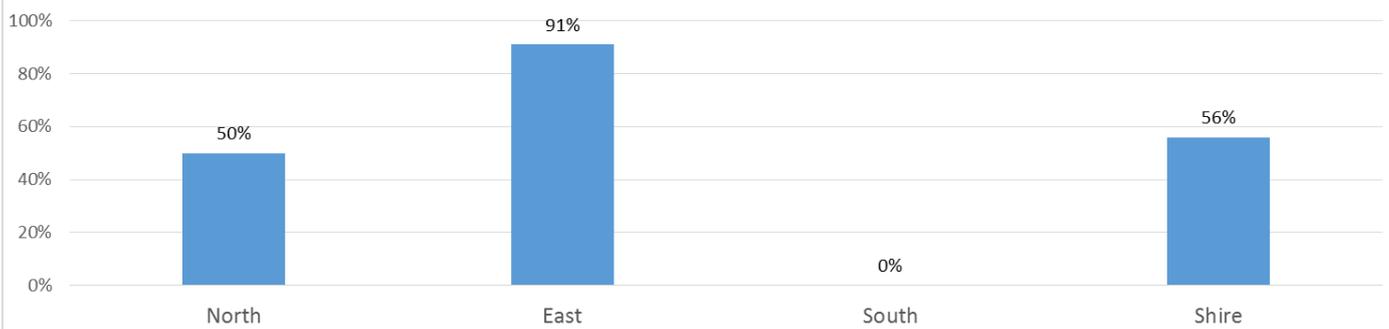
Evictions 2014/15 - By Length of Tenancy (Years)



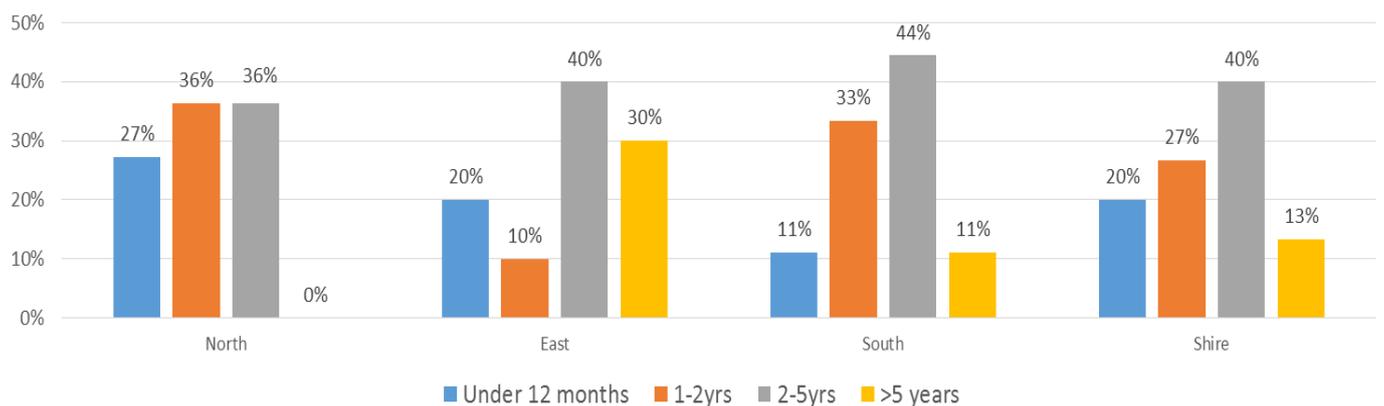
Evictions 2013/14 - Source Homelessness %



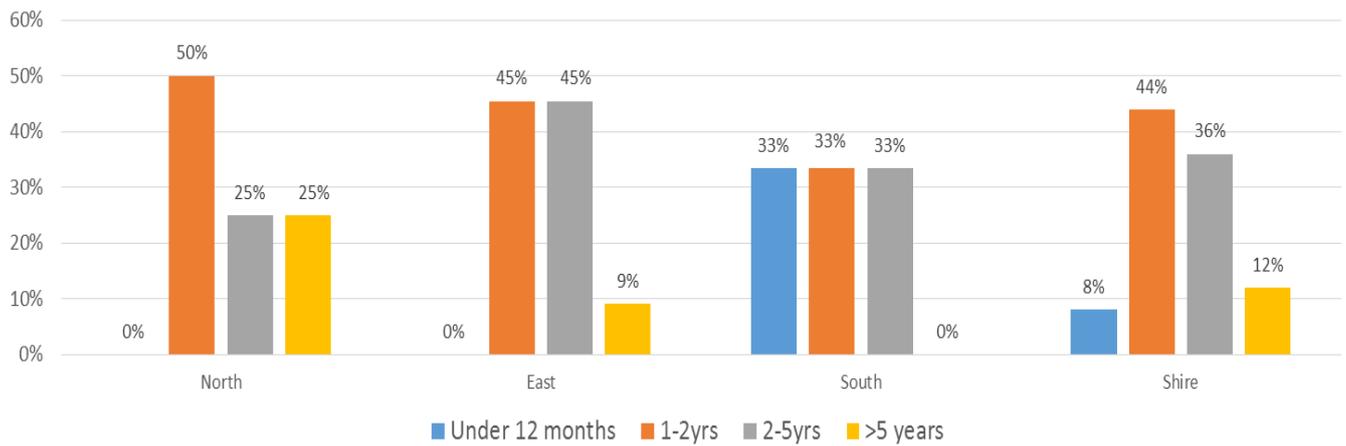
Evictions 2014/15 - Source Homelessness %



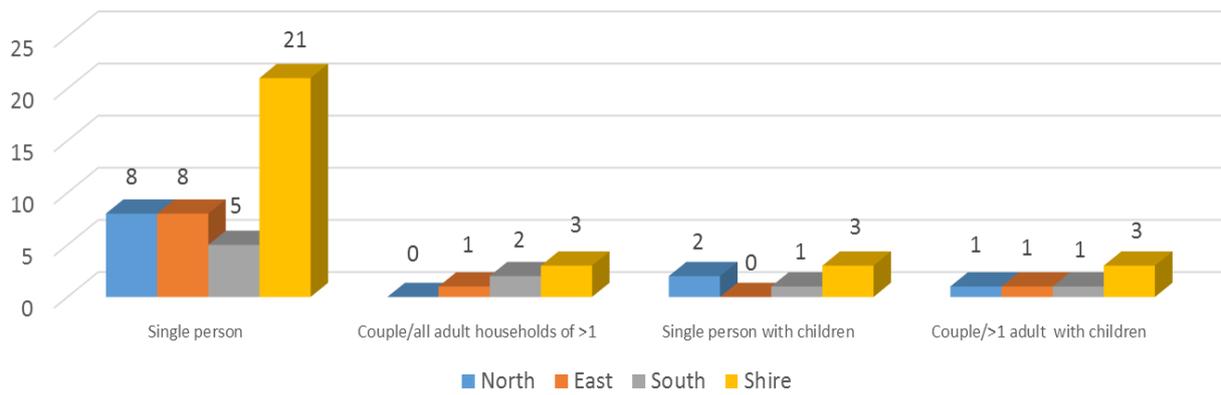
Evictions 2013/14 - Tenancy Sustainment %



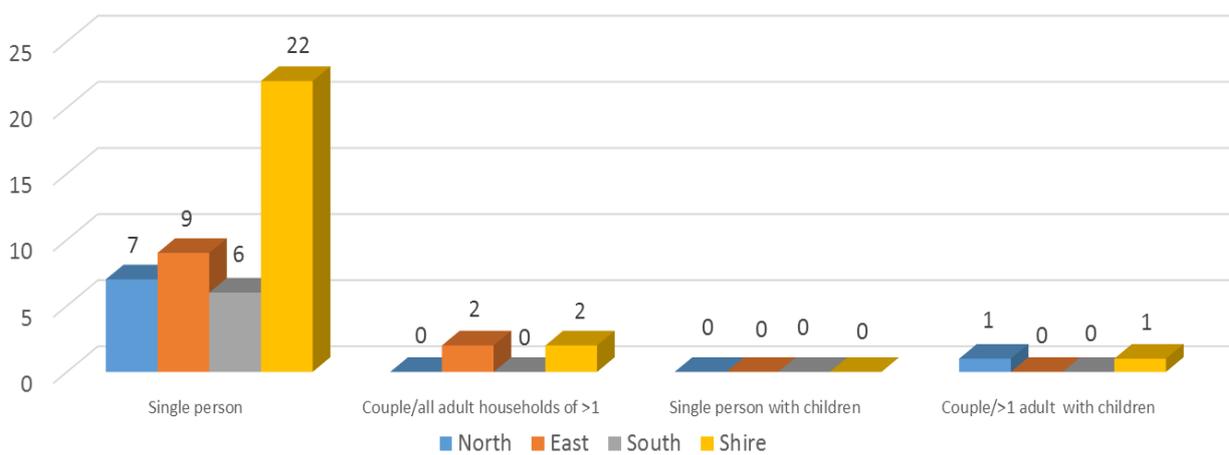
Evictions 2014/15 - Tenancy Sustainment %



Evictions 2013/14 - Tenancy Sustainment by Household (Number)



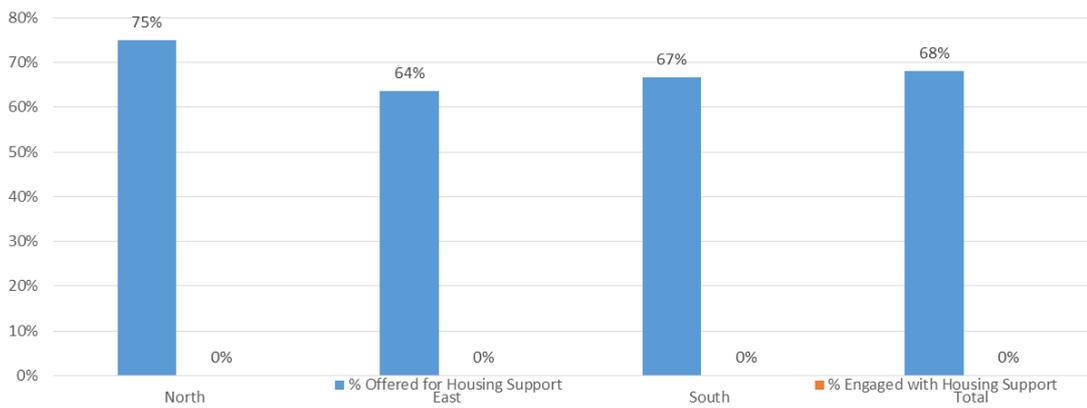
Evictions 2014/15 Tenancy Sustainment by Household (Number)



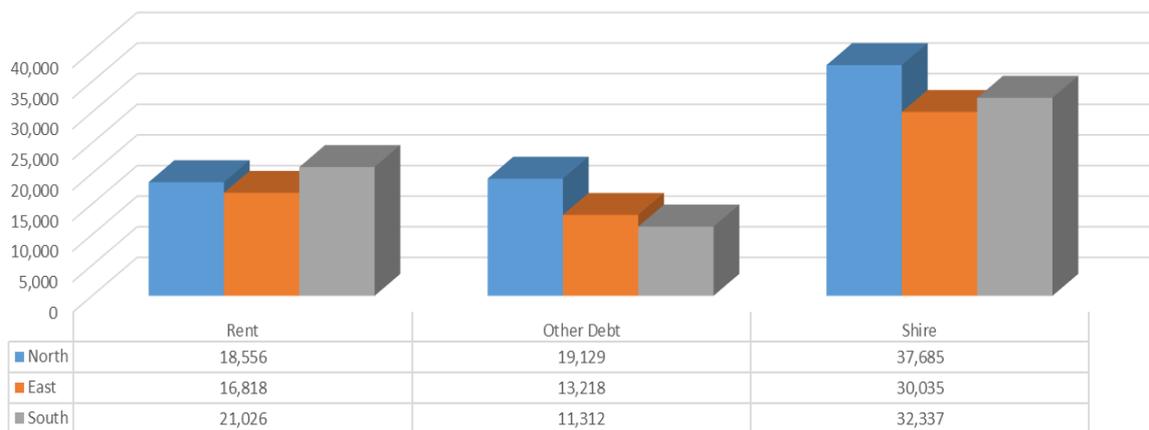
Housing Support 2013-14



Housing Support 2014-15



Evictions 2013/14 - Debt Outstanding at Eviction



Evictions 2014/15 - Debt Outstanding at Eviction

