

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

4 February 2021

Report by Director of Environment

HOUSING SERVICES ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2019/20  
(SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER)

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is:
  - To advise the Cabinet of East Renfrewshire Council's performance for 2019/20 against the Annual Return (ARC) on the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC), as required by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).
  - To seek approval for the Annual Assurance Statement which considers Housing Services' performance over the year 2019/20 and our ongoing self-evaluation, and details areas for improvement in compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) and our statutory obligations.
  - To provide background on the impact of Covid-19 on the Housing Service so far in 2020/21, to note any impact on statutory obligations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
  - a) Note Housing Services' performance for 2019/20 as outlined in the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), and to be published via Housing Services Annual Performance Report detailed at Appendix 1; and
  - b) Approve the Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21 (Appendix 2) for submission to the SHR - which details the areas for improvement moving forward in our compliance with the SSHC standards and our statutory obligations.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The SSHC has been in place since 2013/14 and requires all social landlords to provide the SHR with details of performance against a large range of key indicators at each year end. This is called the Annual Return on the Charter or ARC. The SHR uses this information to produce a summary Landlord Report for every social landlord in Scotland and to compare landlords' performance.
4. Each social landlord must also publish a detailed report on their performance against the Charter each year for tenants and customers. This report is called the Annual Landlord Performance Report and is contained at Appendix 1 of this Cabinet report.

5. A new requirement introduced by SHR last year was for every social landlord to produce an annual Assurance Statement confirming compliance with the Charter standards and with our statutory obligations. This should be evidenced using the previous year's performance and our ongoing self-evaluation looking at the quality of the services we provide. This statement should be accompanied by an appropriate action plan for improvement where necessary. This report is contained at Appendix 2 and requires approval by Cabinet.

6. The Annual Landlord Performance Report and Assurance Statement both account for our position at the end of 2019/20. When both are submitted, the SHR use all of this information to make a risk assessment of landlords' services and to prepare an Engagement Plan for each landlord detailing areas they wish to scrutinise further.

7. This year the SHR has also requested that social landlords report on the impact that COVID has had on Housing Services.

## **REPORT**

### COVID Response and Impact on Statutory Obligations

8. In common with other landlords COVID has presented huge challenges in ensuring full compliance with gas safety standards, with 24 annual gas safety inspections having to be held off beyond their anniversary date, because of tenants shielding or unable to offer access to the property. We have been successful in turning this position around ensuring all gas safety certificates are now up to date. This has been a major achievement.

9. Despite lockdown we have also carried out 4354 repairs in the period from April-September. We have refocused our workforce to ensure we provide as productive and responsive a repairs service as possible for our tenants, while adhering to restrictions. We have also dealt with nearly 2000 tenants during lockdown to assist with rent payments and related difficulties.

10. In terms of those residents facing homelessness we have ensured that temporary accommodation has always been available for emergency situations over the course of the COVID restrictions. We have prioritised this matter to ensure we fulfil our statutory obligations to a rising number of people in temporary accommodation, while we safely prepared empty homes for allocation. Nobody has been denied temporary accommodation during this period.

11. A negative impact of COVID has been an ability to repair and subsequently allocate empty houses. This has resulted in an increased void rent loss which will be reflected in next year's report.

### Annual Landlord Performance Report 2019/20

12. ARC performance data allows the SHR to assess all landlords' ability to meet the outcomes set in the Charter. The Scottish average refers to performance of all social landlords in Scotland including Councils and Housing Associations. The Scottish Council average refers to performance of Scottish Councils only. Given that there are multiple indicators, and landlords work within a range of different contexts, it is not prudent to form a view as to performance of a landlord based upon one indicator alone.

13. The Annual Performance Report (Appendix 1) details the Council's comparative performance across key indicators. In 2019/20 East Renfrewshire performed above average for Scottish Councils in approximately 70% of key indicators. Performance was also above the Scottish average in key areas including reactive repairs, medical adaptations and satisfaction with opportunities for tenants to participate in our decisions.

14. In summary:

- Rent Levels: Rent levels still remain around £2 per week lower than the average rent for all landlords, but £2 per week higher than the Scottish Local Authority average.
- Rent Arrears. Our tenant rent arrears levels have increased primarily due to the ongoing impact of Universal Credit, and increases are reflected across the board in Scotland. Rent arrears still remain below the average for Scottish Local Authorities.
- Tenant Satisfaction. Satisfaction remains above the Council average in most key measures. We do though continue to improve and adapt our approach to tenant and customer engagement, and will be strengthening customer feedback in our Homeseeker service this year.
- Quality and Maintenance of Homes. We continue to perform well above the Scottish average for compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) at 97.9%. At the end of March 2020 79.9% of homes met the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH). This is now 90% of homes. The remainder are classed as abeyances where work requires the consent of associated owners, or the cost of works are prohibitive.
- Housing Maintenance. Housing Services performance for carrying out both emergency and non-emergency repairs remains strong, and significantly quicker than Scottish councils and averages for all landlords.
- Neighbourhoods. East Renfrewshire Council is performing on par with other landlords in relation to the percentage of new tenants remaining in their tenancies successfully for more than a year. We also perform around or above average for satisfaction with our neighbourhood management as a landlord, and in resolving anti-social behaviour cases reported to us.
- Access to Housing. Despite a high demand for housing the average length of time taken to re-let properties remains significantly above the Scottish average. Our average re-let times have increased in the last year to 58.29 days, compared to 42.87 days in 2018/19, and void rent loss has also increased further as a result to a loss of 1.78% of rent due. Void management will remain a key area of focus for improvement in the coming year, as illustrated in our Assurance Statement.

#### Assurance Statement

15. The annual Assurance Statement (Appendix 2) outlines the Council's evidence based evaluation of the quality of our housing service against the Charter and our legal obligations. It highlights the key areas for improvement identified through our evaluation, and an action plan which will be delivered going forward. Self-evaluation is a continuous process and therefore areas for improvement are added as identified and removed as completed. The Assurance Statement provides that snapshot each year, and the action plan reflects the necessary time required to make those improvements.

16. To deliver on our vision to be “a modern, ambitious council creating a fairer future with all”, we pledge to focus on key improvements in our Assurance Statement:

- Ensuring we implement the improvements identified through our ongoing review of void property management, ensuring processes are more efficient; that we deliver better Value for Money; and customers are clearer on the lettable standards to expect in our homes. A key feature of this will be the digitization of our voids proves via a new software system
- Improving efficiency in rent arrears management by using the resources we have better and targeting support at those in most need; whilst also ensuring we are as proactive as possible in agreeing suitable arrangements to pay with our tenants. As above the new software system will play a key role

17. Housing Services’ evaluation reinforces that the quality of our service is good, that we are responsive to customers’ needs and are committed to continuous improvement. Despite this there will be associated challenges in post COVID recovery, largely at this stage identified in income recovery through rent arrears and rent lost on empty homes.

18. Our previous Assurance Statement approved in 2019/20 - and the resulting action plan for the past year - made a commitment to improving our management of void properties and delivering better value for money in this area. We also committed to ensuring that we always had temporary accommodation available to respond to emergency situations.

19. Our progress has assured us that we are delivering on our commitment in relation to temporary accommodation provision, and it no longer features as an improvement action. As part of our current Homelessness Service Design project, temporary accommodation remains in the spotlight as we seek to further improve the service. This was the subject of a previous report to Cabinet.

20. As noted above in relation to the management of void properties a key issue identified is the inefficiency faced by a largely paper based system – and development of our new NPS housing management system into 2021 will allow us to monitor the repair and allocation work streams for voids much more effectively. One of the reasons for the high void rent loss is that East Renfrewshire Council undertake a significant amount of capital works whilst the property is empty. Whilst this is advantageous for the incoming tenant it does result in a higher void rent loss.

21. We still have progress to make to reduce the number of void properties, and progress has been substantially impacted by COVID restrictions limiting the number of tradesmen in properties at one time, and impacting the signup of new tenants. A number of empty homes have had to be reassigned as temporary accommodation to allow us to meet the statutory obligations mentioned above. Therefore this matter is reflected again in this year’s Assurance Statement improvement action plan, with work ongoing to make the improvements to void management we feel are necessary to ensure we provide value for money and a responsive service.

22. Rent Arrears management has also featured in our Assurance Statement as an improvement action due to the continued rise of rent arrears in 2019/20 and the proportion of our tenants moving on to some element of Universal Credit. Maximising income to the service and supporting tenants to remain successfully within their tenancy are critical elements of delivering a good quality landlord service. The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 now also protects tenants in Scotland from any recovery action for up to 6 months, limiting the enforcement activity that can be taken in respect of rent arrears. Therefore our focus in tackling rent arrears will be to prioritise support to our tenants through clear housing and

income maximisation advice; and to work with tenants to develop realistic arrangements to recover lost rent.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

23. Housing Services must demonstrate annually that the service it provides meets the needs of its customers and provides value for money. Ongoing monitoring of the HRA Business Plan will inform the level of COVID-19 business recovery required going forward and influence any alterations to our plans. There is ongoing concern nationally regarding rents remaining affordable for recovery plans, and the situation will remain in our focus.

24. The improvements identified in relation to the annual Assurance Statement will also contribute towards improving the efficiency of the service and reinforce that tenants' rents are both collected effectively and spent wisely.

## **CONSULTATION**

25. In line with SHR national requirements, the detail of our performance will be distributed to each tenant through our tenant's newsletter as well as making the full report available online and on request to other customers.

26. The details of the annual Assurance Statement and action plan will also be considered by our Registered Tenants Forum as part of their performance scrutiny and made available more widely with the annual Performance Report.

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

27. Many of the services provided by Housing Services are provided in partnership with internal and external bodies. Services continue to work together to demonstrate that the outcomes of the Charter are met. The outputs from these partnerships form a key part of our evaluation of service performance and quality. Key partners include East Renfrewshire's Health & Social Care Partnership; and our Corporate & Community Services Department.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

28. There are no implications associated with this report in terms of staffing, finance, property, legal, IT, equalities and sustainability.

29. The forthcoming implementation of our new NPS housing management system, with the first phase due to go live in July 2021, will support improvements in the areas identified in the Assurance Statement and will assist us in greatly improving the efficiency of core parts of our service.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

30. In approximately 70% of the performance indicators measured by the Scottish Social Housing Charter East Renfrewshire performs above the Scottish Council average. Performance was also above the Scottish average in key areas including reactive repairs, medical adaptations and satisfaction with opportunities for tenants to participate in our decisions.

31. East Renfrewshire's Annual Assurance Statement addresses the areas required for improvement in our housing services. The priority is focused on void property management, as well as appropriate support to tenants to assist in rent collection and arrears management.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

32. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) Note Housing Services' performance for 2019/20 as outlined in the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), and to be published via Housing Services Annual Performance Report detailed at Appendix 1; and
- b) Approve the Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21 (Appendix 2) for submission to the SHR - which details the areas for improvement in our compliance with the SSHC standards and our statutory obligations.

Director of Environment

Further details can be obtained from Phil Daws Head of Environment (Strategic Services) on 0141 577 3186.

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December 2020

## Housing Services Annual Performance Review 2019/2020

This report highlights East Renfrewshire Council Housing Services performance over 2019/20, highlighting key strengths and areas in need of improvement. As our customer, it is important we keep you up to date about how we are performing and how we plan to improve the services we provide.

This report considers our performance against key performance indicators and measures.

Our **Annual Assurance Statement** also sets out the key improvements we will make in the next year, based on a detailed evaluation of our service undertaken recently.

### How do we assess performance?

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is the independent regulator of Council and Housing Associations across Scotland. We must measure our performance against the SHR's Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) standards each year - the standards of performance that all social landlords should aim to achieve and the outcomes that should be expected by tenants and customers. These standards are set for the range of housing services we provide.

We must also judge our performance against our key legal obligations – for example ensuring gas safety in our homes, allocating our homes in line with legislation and having a clear focus on equalities.

### Annual Assurance Statement

Last year a new requirement was placed on all Councils and Housing Associations to produce an annual Assurance Statement. Each landlord is responsible for delivering good outcomes and services for its tenants and service users. Landlords need to be self-aware, analytical, open and honest about their performance, and identify and drive improvement.

By preparing and publishing an Annual Assurance Statement, landlords can confirm to their tenants and to SHR that they are meeting regulatory requirements for local authorities and RSLs, or on areas for improvement.

### About this Report

The detail of this report shows how East Renfrewshire Council's Housing Services performs on average for 2019/2020, against all social landlords in Scotland, both Councils and Housing Associations, and specifically against other Scottish Councils. We also show a comparison with how we performed in the previous year.

Each section also sets out where we are doing well and where we need to improve, in line with our Annual Assurance Statement and more generally our Business Improvement Plan.

## Rents, Voids and Value for Money

### Housing Stock

At 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2020, East Renfrewshire Council own and manage a stock of 2995 homes across the area including 244 sheltered properties, and a number of temporary and supported properties.

In 2019/2020, we completed the construction of **24 new homes in Barrhead**.

We also **purchased 14 second hand properties** across East Renfrewshire to add to the supply of homes we have.

We **let 273 properties** to homeless households; people on the council's waiting list; and existing tenants transferring home.

### Rents

Average Weekly Rent	2019/2020 East Renfrewshire Council	2019/2020 Scottish Council Average	2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average
<b>All properties</b>	£76.50	£74.60	£78.23

East Renfrewshire Council average rent has increased due to the agreed annual rent increase. Our average rent remains lower than the average rent for all Scottish landlords.

Consultation will take place shortly with you on rents for 21/22 onwards and will balance the need to continue to invest in our homes with keeping rents affordable for tenants.

### Value for Money

The services we provide to you as your landlord are funded by the rent you pay. As a service we must ensure that we spend this money wisely and fairly.

Indicator	2018/2019 ERC Performance	2019/2020 ERC Performance	2019/2020 Scottish Council Average	2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average
Gross rent arrears as a percentage of total rent due	5.83%	6.47%	7.01%	6.07%
Percentage satisfied that rent represents value for money	87.04%	87.04%	83.4%	83.6%

— Rent arrears have continued to increase this year by a further 0.7% with changes to Universal Credit contributing to this. While rent arrears remain below the Scottish Council average, this upward trend is a challenge faced across the country, and addressing it is a priority for us as a landlord.

We continue to engage with tenants at the earliest opportunity if they are experiencing difficulties paying their rent, to ensure issues are resolved as quickly as possible. Our current redesign of service delivery will strengthen our approach to rent collection and support for tenants.



## Void Properties

Indicator	2018/2019 ERC Performance	2019/2020 ERC Performance	2019/2020 Scottish Council Average	2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average
Average length of time to re-let properties	42.87 days	58.29 days	35.30 days	32.65 days
Percentage of rent due lost through empty properties	1.35%	1.78%	1.25%	1.11%

— Our average time to re-let empty properties has increased to 58.29 days; and as a result our relet times remain significantly higher than other landlords across Scotland.

In turn this impacts the amount of rent due which is lost through empty properties also remaining above the average for other Councils and Housing Associations. We recognise the work that's to be done to greatly improve this part of the service.

One of the reasons for the high void rent loss is that East Renfrewshire Council undertake a significant amount of capital works whilst the property is empty. Whilst this is advantageous for incoming tenants it does result in a higher void rent loss.

Void standards will be clearer for customers so that they know what work they should expect to be done when offered a property, before they move in and once they have moved in.

## Repairs and Maintenance

We must work to ensure tenants' homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required, and tenants given reasonable choices about when work is done.

Indicator	2018/2019 ERC Performance	2019/2020 ERC Performance	2019/2020 Scottish Council Average	2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average
Average length of time taken to complete <b>emergency</b> repairs	2.3 hours	2.52 hours	4.1 hours	3.8 hours
Average length of time taken to complete <b>non-emergency</b> repairs	5.2 days	5.39 days	7.1 days	6.5 days
Percentage of reactive repairs completed 'Right First Time'	98.4%	99.41%	92.4%	93.1%
Percentage satisfied with repairs service	85.5%	87.61%	91.1%	91.3%

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Our repairs performance for carrying out both emergency and non-emergency jobs remains strong, and significantly quicker than the Scottish council and overall average.

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The number of repairs completed Right First Time is also above average, indicating that in most cases we are identifying repairs correctly and responding appropriately to reports by tenants.

■ Tenants' satisfaction with the repairs service has also increased slightly but remains lower than both the Council and overall average for Scottish Landlords. We continue to gather feedback from our tenants and other customers to ensure we can improve in the areas highlighted to us as needing improvement.

### Maintenance and Improvement works

Housing Services undertake a range of work to improve and invest in our homes, to ensure that they remain in good condition for now and into the future.

Targets set by the Scottish Government drive our investment decisions, alongside the priorities identified with our tenants. These targets are to achieve and maintain compliance with:

- *The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015 and beyond; and*

- *The Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing first milestone (EESH) by 2020*

Indicator	2018/2019 ERC Performance	2019/2020 ERC Performance	2019/2020 Scottish Council Average	2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average
Percentage of existing tenants satisfied with quality of home	86.5%	86.5%	81.8%	87.2%
% Properties meeting the SHQS – (housing quality target)	97.4%	97.9%	95.4%	93.9%
% Properties meeting the EESH – (energy efficiency target)	74.4%	79%	84%	87%
Indicator		2019/20 Performance	2019/2020 Total for all Councils	2019/2020 Total for all Scottish Landlords
<i>No of properties that failed to have a gas safety check and record completed by the anniversary date.*</i>	-	<i>0 properties</i>	<i>288 properties</i>	<i>496 properties</i>

*\*This is a new way of measuring this indicator this year.*

✚ Good progress has been made to meet the SHQS and maintain compliance with this standard each year since. Our performance remains above average for landlords across Scotland. We continue to work with tenants and owners of the small number of properties where achieving full SHQS standard is more challenging, to consider remedies to this.

The safety of our tenants also remains paramount, ensuring that annual gas safety checks are carried out when required. We have ensured all properties using gas have a safety check and certificate in place by the year's anniversary of the previous certificate.

■ Our biggest challenge for the year ahead is in progressing EESSH compliance by 2020 - aimed at improving energy efficiency in all Council and housing associations homes.

A proportion of properties will be unable to meet the standard and considered exemptions because owners in mixed tenure blocks do not wish to pay for the works or they do not present good value for money for tenants. Our progress to date still remains below the average for other landlords across Scotland in the proportion of our stock meeting EESSH.

### Estates and Tenancies

Contributing to safe and well managed neighbourhoods, as well as making sure support is available to customers to live well within our neighbourhoods is of great importance to us in the services we provide to tenants.

Indicator	2018/2019 ERC Performance	2019/2020 ERC Performance	2019/2020 Scottish Council Average	2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average
Percentage of all new tenants housed who were still in their tenancy 12 months later	94.4%	90.2%	89.3%	90.6%
Average time taken to complete medical adaptations	21.9 days	25.7 days	35.6 days	43.3 days
Percentage satisfied with landlords neighbourhood management	88.9%	87%	84.3%	88%
Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases resolved*	99.3%	96.3%	89.6%	94%

*\*This indicator has changed from last year*



We remain substantially quicker than average for other landlords in our time taken to complete medical adaptations to properties. This ensures we can meet tenants' needs to remain living as independently as possible.

The proportion of anti-social behaviour cases reported to us which we resolved, also remains higher than the Scottish average though dropping slightly.

Satisfaction with landlords' neighbourhood management also remains above the Scottish Council average, and broadly in line with average for all landlords. It is important to note that satisfaction with matters not in a landlords control in neighbourhood management, may have an influence on the responses given.


■ Tenancy sustainment has decreased since last year with 90.2% of people housed in the previous year remaining in their tenancy beyond 12 months. Our performance is still in line with the Scottish landlord average, but we are focused on ensuring we can offer the right

support to tenants who need it, when they need it. This is being reflected in the current redesign of our service.


### **Housing Options and Access to Housing**

We work to ensure people looking for housing find it easy to apply for available housing and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes, and other options available to them to suit their needs.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>2018/2019 ERC Performance</b>	<b>2019/2020 ERC Performance</b>	<b>2019/2020 Scottish Council Average</b>	<b>2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average</b>
Percentage of lettable houses that became vacant in the year	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>
Percentage of tenancy offers refused	<b>51.4%</b>	<b>38.3%</b>	<b>36.3%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>

 Our **Homeseeker** Choice Based Lettings service was introduced in February 2019 to provide more choice to applicants waiting on rehousing by showing the homes available through our weekly adverts. As a result we have seen a clear reduction in the number of tenancy offers refused. This still remains just above the Council average, but is significant in ensuring the offers we make match customers' preferences as closely as possible.

We have delivered another 26 new council homes in Barrhead in 2019/20 – and acquired a further 14 homes from the market across East Renfrewshire – to increase the number and range of homes we have in our stock.


 The number of properties becoming vacant each year is above the Council average; but now sits below the Scottish average.


An increase in applications has taken our waiting list to over 4,000 applicants. The visibility of the properties we have available allows more households seeking rehousing to see what options are available, and reduces the properties we have which may be considered harder to let. However, this has shown us there are more households in need of support for rehousing than previously estimated. Customer feedback on our Housing Advice and **Homeseeker** service this year will ensure we understand more about the needs of households approaching the service, to help us plan effectively to meet some of those needs.

### **Homelessness**

The homeless indicators captured within the Charter have changed since last year, with more reliance now on the quarterly and annual statistics already gathered by Scottish Government. These are also being reviewed to ensure that the information gathered from Councils shines light on delivery of effective homelessness services which meet targets set out in Rapid Rehousing Transition plans set by Council's in response to national requirements.

Indicator	2018/2019 ERC Performance	2019/2020 ERC Performance	2019/2020 Scottish Council Average	2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average
Average length of stay in temporary accommodation	131 days	149 days	184 days	NA
Repeat homelessness presentations	3.7%	2.8%	4.8%	NA

 Repeat homeless presentations have fallen in East Renfrewshire as a proportion of applications – referring to those households who become homeless again within 12 months of first presenting as homeless. This decrease is reflected across local authorities, but our performance on this is well below average. We work hard to provide support to those in temporary accommodation and entering a new tenancy to ensure they can successfully manage their tenancy.

 The average length of stay in temporary accommodation is increasing for households who are assessed as homeless in East Renfrewshire. This increase is reflected across Scotland, but has been a larger increase locally. In many cases households are in temporary accommodation longer than we would like, because our empty homes are not ready for new tenants to move in quickly enough. In other cases, we do not have enough turnover of stock of the right size, type and in the places people need.

### **Overall Satisfaction and Engagement**

We must measure satisfaction of tenants and customers with the services we provide, and how we keep tenants informed. This also means allowing an opportunity to influence how our services are delivered.

We must also make sure tenants and other customers find it easy to participate and influence decisions about our landlord service.

We usually undertake a large scale satisfaction survey every 2 years (more often than the charter guidance requires) with further supplementary surveys carried out locally across our service, giving tenants the opportunity to tell us what they think. *The tenants survey was due to take place in 20/21 but has been postponed till next year given current restrictions.*

Our last biennial tenant satisfaction survey was completed in summer 2018 and provided us with the most recent results on customer satisfaction.

Indicator	2018/2019 ERC Performance	2019/2020 ERC Performance	2019/2020 Scottish Council Average	2019/2020 Overall Scottish Average
Percentage satisfied with overall service	84.8%	84.8%	82.6%	89.2%
Percentage satisfied with keeping tenants informed	88.2%	88.2%	86.4%	92%
Percentage satisfied with opportunities to participate	91.1%	91.1%	81.5%	87.2%



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In providing opportunities to participate for tenants and customers we continue to sit above average for other Councils and all landlords across Scotland.

We work hard to build on tenant representatives' feedback about the quality of our engagement with them, and to look at new ways of involving a wider group of interested tenants.

We remain higher than the Scottish council average for keeping tenants informed, though slightly below Scottish average. A similar picture also for tenants overall satisfaction with our service.

We will continue to push for improvements across the business deliver an increased level of satisfaction across our Landlord service.

## East Renfrewshire Council (Housing Services)



### Annual Assurance Report 2020

#### Our Annual Assurance Statement

✓ We comply with our legal obligations as a landlord.

As part of our COVID response we have now recovered any initial fails arising due to “no access” to properties to carry out work. We saw a small number of gas servicing fails in the initial lockdown period of 2020, while tenants were shielding, and monitored closely to complete work as soon as it was safe to do so.

✓ We comply with the regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator’s Framework.

Our COVID response has shifted our focus directly to supporting tenants and customers to avoid crisis by prioritising housing options advice and income maximisation. As part of our recovery we are focused on preparing and letting vacant properties, and to supporting tenants to make suitable arrangements to meet their rent payments. The biggest challenge for the Council in its recovery plans at this stage is identified as reducing income lost to the service through void properties and rent arrears.

Our annual assurance evaluation for 2020 indicates that work is required in the areas set out below, however, to ensure a more satisfactory level of performance.

#### We:

➤ Pledge to address the following, in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter standards for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services:

Void Management & Maintenance

- *Continue to improve the efficiency of our void management; deliver better Value for Money on voids; and set out clearer letting standards for our homes.*

Rent & Arrears Management

- *Making better use of the resources we have to maximise support to tenants struggling to pay their rent, and deliver better Value for Money in rent collection.*

We have seen and considered sufficient evidence to give us this assurance.

As such, this statement has been approved at the meeting of our Cabinet on 26th November 2020.

Signed: (Convenor)





### Assurance Statement 2020 – Improvement Plan

Compliance Issue	Service Area	What we need to address	When will we do it?	Who is responsible?
Meeting Charter Standards	Void Management	<p>We need to continue to improve our void management process is as efficient and customer focused as possible and delivers better Value for Money.</p> <p><b>We will do this by embedding improvements identified in our void process review carried out in the last year, and modernise our approach via implementation of our new core Housing Management System, which is currently being developed.</b></p>	By August 2021	Senior Housing Manager
Meeting Charter Standards	Rent Collection and Arrears Management	<p>We need to reconfigure the resources we have to support tenants as effectively as possible in meeting their rent payments, and deliver better Value for Money in rent collection.</p> <p><b>We will do this by redesigning our service delivery team and our key processes in relation to rent collection and arrears management, and make better use of the data we have to target those in most need of assistance.</b></p>	By August 2021	Senior Housing Manager



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