

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

2 October 2014

Report by Director of Environment

HOUSING SERVICES LANDLORD REPORT

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To advise cabinet on East Renfrewshire Council's Landlord report published by the Scottish Housing Regulator and the key areas of risk that may be identified in future Assurance and Improvement Plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet note the content of the landlord report and note the key areas of risk that may be identified in future Assurance and Improvement Plans.

BACKGROUND

3. As required by section 31 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, the Scottish Ministers have set standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) that all social landlords should aim to achieve.

4. The Scottish Social Housing Charter has also changed the information that is available to both elected members and the general public and the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).

5. One of the key responsibilities of each landlord is to provide the SHR with details of performance against 37 performance indicators and information for 32 contextual indicators by 31st May each year.

6. Once in receipt of this information the SHR will produce a Landlord Report for every social landlord in Scotland and publish this on their website by the end of August each year. In the Landlord Report the key performance information will be published and compared with the other 192 social landlords in Scotland including both Local Authority and Housing Associations.

7. The Landlord Report will be available on the SHR website for anyone to view and tenants will also be able to compare their landlord's performance with any other social landlord in Scotland.

8. The remaining responsibility of each social landlord is to publish their performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter by October each year to tenants and customers.

9. The SHR will use the information from the SSHC and other sources to determine the key areas of risk identified in the Assurance and Improvement Plan for each Local Authority.

REPORT

10. The Landlord Report (Appendix 1) provides performance against key indicators and makes them easily understood by all tenants and customers. The report is split into a number of sections:

- Homes & Rents. The report details that East Renfrewshire Council has a lower than average rent charge compared with all landlords. East Renfrewshire Council rents are between 5.5 – 17.8% lower than the Scottish average depending on property size. This is unlikely to be considered an area of risk.
- Tenant Satisfaction. A key requirement of the SSHC is that all Landlords must survey tenants about their satisfaction at least once every three years. East Renfrewshire Council completed a full satisfaction survey in 2012. The result from this survey were provided to the SHR in May. The results published show that satisfaction amongst East Renfrewshire Council tenants is below the Scottish average. This could potentially be raised as an area of risk. However, Housing Services have undertaken key improvements since 2012 such as the Mixed Tenure Scheme therefore this data is not necessarily an accurate reflection of tenant satisfaction. Housing Services undertook a further tenant survey in August and September 2014. The results are being analysed and will be presented to the Cabinet at a later date. The service has also developed a new customer engagement strategy to improve the way in which we engage and communicate with all tenants and customers.
- Quality and Maintenance of Homes. East Renfrewshire Council is making excellent progress against the 2015 Scottish Housing Quality Standard and is performing well above the Scottish average. The response repair service has seen significant improvements in the last year and the service is performing on par or better than the Scottish average for these indicators. This is unlikely to be considered an area of risk.
- Neighbourhoods. East Renfrewshire Council is addressing anti-social behaviour against locally set targets and is performing better than the Scottish average. This is unlikely to be considered an area of risk.
- Value for Money. Housing Services have reduced the percentage of rent lost due to empty homes from 1.8% in 2012/13 to 1.3% in 2013/14. This is just slightly above the Scottish average. The average time to relet properties is above the Scottish average. East Renfrewshire Council has made significant progress to relet some long term low demand properties. This action will increase the rental income collected by East Renfrewshire Council. Although rent lost due to empty homes has reduced significantly, the relet times may still be considered an area of risk. In relation to rent arrears the rent collected as a percentage of total rent is actually 98.44% and not 95.9% as reported. The difference between the two figures is due to the treatment of Housing Benefit and opening and closing balances. The SHR will be contacted in relation to this anomaly. Procedures in relation to the collection of rent have recently been reviewed and approved by the Cabinet on 4th September". Rent arrears are potentially an area of risk.

11. In addition to the key areas outlined above the SHR also has information on other areas of service. The SHR may therefore identify additional areas of risk in the forthcoming Assurance and Improvement plan (AIP).

12. The current AIP identified the following risks:

- Bed & Breakfast Use. The report identified that the use of Bed & Breakfast for homeless households is high. Although the initial placement of people in Bed & Breakfast is high the average time a household spends in Bed & Breakfast is well below the Scottish average. This is likely to be an issue raised again this year. The impact of the welfare reform changes have made it increasingly difficult to house homeless households therefore increasing the reliance on temporary accommodation. Housing Services have a number of actions in place to address this issue such as greater use of the private sector and housing association accommodation. A review of current stock is underway to allow single homeless households to share larger homeless accommodation. Finally there have been a number of elderly homeless applicants. The former visitor flats in sheltered accommodation are being amended to provide temporary accommodation for applicants over 60.
- Tenancy Sustainment. The current AIP noted a reduction in the number of new tenancies sustained for more than one year. The performance for 2013/14 is well above the Scottish average and therefore this is unlikely to be raised as an area of risk.
- Medical Adaptations. For the first time the SHR is collecting performance from all landlords on how quickly they assessed and completed property adaptations for disabled residents. Housing Services performed below the Scottish average and this may be considered an area of risk. The current performance, policy and procedure are under immediate review to address possible concerns.

13. To summarise the information presented above there are a number of risk areas remaining but significant progress has been made in the elimination of many of them. Housing Services is on a journey of improvement following the last full inspection by the Scottish housing regulator in 2010. The condition of neighbourhoods and the maintenance of homes are just some of the indicators where Housing Services have seen significant improvements. Performance around the Scottish Housing Quality Standard continues to be above average. Void rent loss has decreased from 1.9% in 2011/12 to 1.8% in 2012/13 to 1.3% last year. The average time to complete non emergency repairs has decreased from 13.5 days in 2012/13 to 8.5 days in 2013/14.

14. Further progress is planned in order for the service to achieve its vision of being the best Scottish Council in delivering housing and housing services for its customers. Housing Services recognise that customers want homes, not just houses. This requires additional investment in areas that are not SHQS related such as house painting, boundary walls and fence maintenance. This is a significant challenge. Around 70% of Council properties are more than fifty years old and the external envelope and kerb side appeal of many properties require investment to ensure that they meet the needs and aspirations of modern households. This need is highlighted in the lower than average satisfaction rates experienced in 2012. Housing Services are also keen to improve the lettable condition of new homes, to provide more help for vulnerable tenants and to dedicate additional resources for customer care.

15. To a degree the continued low rent levels in East Renfrewshire, for some properties significantly lower than the Scottish average, has reduced the amount of investment available to renew the housing stock. A balance is required in order to ensure that, whilst rents are affordable, the necessary resources need to be available to provide people with homes, not just houses. A revised three year business plan is in preparation to be presented to Members to identify resources to invest in the service in order to meet the expectations and priorities on the service.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

16. The Housing Service will have to demonstrate annually through a variety of methods that the service it provides meets the needs of its customers and provides value for money.

17. For this reason it is essential that the provision of best value is a key driver of change within the Housing Service.

18. A number of Public Service Excellence related projects are underway to deliver mobile working for response repairs and asset management. This is likely to achieve both efficiency savings and also deliver improvements in customer care.

19. A **digital improvement plan** has been developed to ensure continued technological development occurs over the next few years.

CONSULTATION

20. Consultation has not been required in the preparation of this report.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

21. Many of the services provided by East Renfrewshire Council's Housing Services are provided in partnership with internal and external bodies. Services will be required to work together to demonstrate that the outcomes are met. These partnerships will form a key part of the assessment of the services. Partners include:

- East Renfrewshire's Community & Health Care Partnership
- Finance Department
- Property and Technical Services
- East Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

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

CONCLUSIONS

23. The SSCH and the performance indicators have only been collected and published for the first time in 2014. The first annual report demonstrates that Housing Services are performing well in a key number of areas. There have been significant areas of improvement and the areas of risk identified by the SHR are reducing. There are still key challenges for the service in terms of Bed & Breakfast usage, relet times and tenant satisfaction which are all currently being addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

24. It is recommended that the Cabinet note the content of the landlord report and note the key areas of risk that may be identified in future Assurance and Improvement Plans.

Director of Environment

Further details can be obtained from Phil Daws Housing Services Manager on 0141 577 3186.

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KEY WORDS

Scottish Housing Regulator, Scottish Social Housing Charter, Landlord Report

Landlord report

How your landlord told us it performed in 2013/2014

East Renfrewshire Council

Our role is to protect the interests of tenants and other people who use the services of social landlords. The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that landlords should achieve. Each year, we require your landlord to report on its performance against the Charter.

We asked tenants to tell us what matters most when it comes to their landlord's performance. Here is how your landlord performed in those areas in 2013/2014.

Homes and rents

At 31 March 2014 your landlord owned 3,011 homes. The total rent due to your landlord for the year was £9,146,427. Your landlord increased its weekly rent on average by 5.00% from the previous year.

Size of home	Number owned	Average weekly rents		
		Your landlord	Scottish average	Difference
1 apartment	175	£50.89	£59.56	-14.6%
2 apartment	897	£53.55	£65.18	-17.8%
3 apartment	1,316	£61.57	£67.19	-8.4%
4 apartment	535	£69.05	£73.07	-5.5%
5 apartment	88	£71.02	£81.68	-13.1%

Tenant satisfaction

Of the tenants who responded to your landlord's most recent tenant satisfaction survey:

- » **71.2%** said they were satisfied with the **overall service** it provided, compared to the Scottish average of 87.8%.
- » **64.5%** felt that your landlord was good at **keeping them informed** about its services and outcomes compared to the Scottish average of 88.9%.
- » **56.4%** of tenants were satisfied with the **opportunities to participate** in your landlord's decision making, compared to the Scottish average of 78.4%.

Quality and maintenance of homes

- » **92.9%** of your landlord's homes met the **Scottish Housing Quality Standard** compared to the Scottish average of 85.4%.
- » The average time your landlord took to complete **emergency repairs** was **3.6 hours**, compared to the Scottish average of 6.9 hours.
- » The average time your landlord took to complete **non-emergency repairs** was **8.5 days**, compared to the Scottish average of 8.2 days.
- » Your landlord completed **92.7%** of **reactive repairs** 'right first time' compared to the Scottish average of 87.2%.
- » Your landlord does operate a **repairs appointment system**. It kept **90.4%** of **appointments** compared to the Scottish average of 92.9%.
- » **77.4%** of tenants who had repairs or maintenance carried out were **satisfied with the service** they received, compared to the Scottish average of 87.6%

Neighbourhoods

- » For every 100 of your landlord's homes, **2.4 cases** of **anti-social behaviour** were reported in the last year.
- » **94.5%** of these **cases were resolved** within targets agreed locally, compared to the Scottish figure of 75.9%.

Value for money

- » The amount of money your landlord collected for current and past rent was equal to **95.9%** of the **total rent** it was due in the year, compared to the Scottish average of 99.0%.
- » It did not collect **1.3%** of rent due because **homes were empty**, compared to the Scottish average of 1.2%.
- » It took an average of **58.7 days** to **re-let homes**, compared to the Scottish average of 35.7 days.

Want to know more?

If you want to find out more about your landlord's performance, contact your landlord directly. We expect all landlords to make performance information available to tenants and others who use their services.

Our website has lots of further information about your landlord and our work. You can:

- compare your landlord's performance with other landlords;
- see all of the information your landlord reported on the Charter;
- find out more about some of the terms used in this report; and
- find out more about our role and how we work.

Visit our website at www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk