

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET13 October 2022Report by Director of EnvironmentHOUSING SERVICES ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT & ASSURANCE STATEMENT
2021/22 (SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER)**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Note our performance report against Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) indicators and measures and how the Housing Service compares against 2020-21 and the average for the housing sector. This is listed in appendix 1;
 - b) Note the Action Plan (Appendix 2) to further strengthen our compliance against the Regulatory Framework and SSHC; and
 - c) Approve the AAS 2022 (appendix 3), which has been prepared taking into account the outcomes of Housing Services self- evaluation of our performance, compliance with the Regulatory Framework, SSHC, as detailed at Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND

3. The Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) requires each landlord to provide the SHR with details of performance against 37 performance indicators and information for 32 contextual indicators by 31st May each year. This is known as the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). This detail has been submitted to Cabinet each year since its introduction in 2013/14.

4. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will undertake the following based on the ARC submission. They will produce:

- a summary Landlord Report for every social landlord in Scotland and they publish this on their website. East Renfrewshire's performance information from 2021/22 can be viewed at:
<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords/east-renfrewshire-council>
- an Engagement Plan for each landlord, which outlines the areas of scrutiny they will focus on, based on the prior year's reported performance.

5. The SHR's Regulatory Framework also requires all social landlords to produce an AAS confirming compliance with the Regulatory Framework, SSHC standards and with statutory obligations, and on approval by committee/board, to submit this to SHR for consideration annually by 31st October.

6. The AAS:

- requires a self-evaluation to be undertaken by each landlord looking at performance and the quality of services provided.
- should be accompanied by an appropriate action plan, where any areas of non-compliance with standards are identified.

7. A self-assessment of our performance and quality of services has been undertaken and there is a good level of compliance against the Regulatory Framework. An action plan (Appendix 2) has been developed to further strengthen our compliance against the Framework going forward, also to attend to areas for improvement in our performance against the SSHC.

8. Where any failures in compliance with legal or safety standards have been identified, these will also have been notified directly to the SHR and any other relevant bodies.

9. The SHR will use the information from the ARC as well as the Annual Assurance Statement to inform the Engagement Plan for the following year, and to determine the key areas of risk identified in the Local Scrutiny Plan for each Local Authority.

REPORT

10. The performance report against the SSHC (Appendix 1) demonstrates that Housing Services is performing well in key areas in comparison to last year and the average for the housing sector in Scotland. The highlights in our performance are set out below.

11. Social landlords across Scotland also continue to face a number of challenges in recovering performance affected by the pandemic, and in light of current economic challenges. The areas we have identified for improvement are also set out below, and reflected in our Action Plan (Appendix 2).

Areas of Good Performance

Repairs

12. Our repairs service is delivered through the Housing Maintenance Team supported by external contractors for specialist works. The performance is excellent illustrated in our response timescales for emergency repairs in particular at 2.66 hours. In addition, the performance of non-emergency repairs at 8.35 days is also excellent as 2021/22 began with a four month backlog of works as the result of COVID 19 restrictions. The quality of repair work is clearly evident through a top quartile performance for jobs completed right first time (98.97%).

Maintenance

13. There has been progress in our maintenance and improvement of our tenants' homes, with good recovery of our capital works programme halted during the pandemic. We are also meeting the Scottish Government's requirements for gas safety (with 100% of checks completed on time) and have a good standard of performance EESSH1 (Energy Efficiency

Standards for Social Housing 1), with 98.3% of stock meeting the standard.

Empty Homes

14. Last year's AAS commitment to improving our approach to repairing and letting empty homes, has reduced the rent lost from 1.8% to 1.4% of rent due (in line with the Scottish average), and we continue a drive for ongoing reduction. Though days to relet appear high in 2021/22, this has been as a result of bringing a number of very long term empty homes back into use and increasing the homes available to meet significant waiting list demand.

Areas for Improvement

Programme of EICR Renewals

15. The Housing Service is undertaking a targeted programme of electrical surveys to increase compliance with Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs) which are now required 5-yearly, previously every 10 years. The challenge in switchover timescale and programming internal surveys through the pandemic, has meant a significant volume of our properties do not have EICR's within timescale – currently just over 50%. A noticeable drop in compliance is noted for other landlords with Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) due to this issue. We have a challenging target of 600+ surveys per year 2022-2024 to bring surveys up to date.

Rent Arrears

16. Through COVID there was a significant increase in arrears of rent for current tenants, and although this has slowed and stabilised in 2021/22. East Renfrewshire Council arrears levels are higher than the national average due to significant key staff absences. However new post holders are now in place.

17. Implementation of a fresh Arrears Recovery Strategy, for both current and former tenancy arrears, is being underpinned by our service redesign which is now set in place. This will focus on engaging and supporting tenants more intensively to meet their rent payments and reduce arrears.

Customers & Engagement

18. In common with other landlords who have carried out a large scale Tenants Satisfaction Survey since 2020, satisfaction levels have dropped significantly.

19. Landlords are required to undertake large scale surveys at least once every three years but can supplement this data. The data submitted by landlords in May 2022 used data from surveys undertaken as far back as 2018. Analysis of this data has shown that satisfaction levels have dropped across the country for landlords who have undertaken surveys in 2021 & 2022. Housing Services completed a large scale survey ~~was undertaken~~ in summer 2021 whilst the service was still facing significant restrictions as a result of the pandemic. A further smaller survey was undertaken early 2022 to supplement the data and has shown customer satisfaction improving as service levels returned.

20. The impact of the pandemic, i.e. more time at home and reductions in "Business as usual" service provision through the pandemic have undoubtedly affected satisfaction. However we are not complacent. Our service redesign vision places our customers at the centre of what we do, including improving communication, clarifying the standards they should expect and providing modern routes to participate and influence service improvements. We are refreshing our Customer Engagement plan to deliver on this vision, in partnership with our customers.

21. The AAS 2022 (appendix 3) will be published to our tenants, as well as submitted to the SHR by 31 October 2022 detailing our compliance with the Regulator Framework and performance against the SSHC. The draft AAS outlines there is good compliance and performance, although we have identified the following areas for increased focus and improvement:

- EICR Renewals
- Income Maximisation through Rent Arrears Recovery
- Customer Engagement and Communication

22. For 2022/23 the focus of the SHR Engagement Plan for East Renfrewshire is in relation to services for People who are Homeless, and this engagement will take place with all Councils where it features due to its risk and profile nationally.

23. Housing Services continue the redesign of homeless service provision in East Renfrewshire and a drive to ensure a corporate approach to the prevention of homelessness. Cabinet approval was given on 24 September 2020, for a service design approach to permit service users to inform how services are provided, as well as staff and partners delivering connected services. The results of our service user engagement, facilitated by Homeless Network Scotland, are being assessed will be discussed with partners. The commitments will be reflected in our forthcoming Local Housing Strategy.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

24. Housing Services must demonstrate annually that the service it provides meets the need of its customers and provides value for money. Ongoing monitoring of the HRA Business Plan will continue to inform any alterations to our business plan to ensure we can invest in new and existing homes, whilst keeping rents as affordable as possible.

25. East Renfrewshire Council rents although higher than the Scottish Council Average in 2021/22, are lower than the average for all social landlords and considerably lower than other social or private landlords in the East Renfrewshire area. Our rent setting consultation process will commence in November 2022, with a view to agreeing an increase which will see rents remain affordable but will support vital investment in existing and new homes for tenants. The impact of a freeze on rent increases for 2021/22 and moratorium on evictions nationally for all rented homes until March 2023, and the impact of cost of living rises over winter, will be evaluated as part of this process.

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

CONSULTATION

27. In line with the national publication of Charter results, East Renfrewshire Council is required to publish an annual performance report to tenants each year by October. The detail of our performance and assurance improvement plan will be distributed to each tenant through our Annual Housing Report as well as making the full report available online and on request to other customers.

28. The details of the AAS 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 Housing Report 2022.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

29. Many of the services provided by East Renfrewshire Council's 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
- Other RSL's operating locally

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

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

CONCLUSIONS

31. Over the past 2.5 years Housing Services have been implementing a service redesign to improve services for customers. The progress of this has been significantly delayed due to the impact of COVID and the subsequent recovery work. The redesign includes the implementation of a new IT system which will permit customers to access their housing applications, rent accounts and repair information. In addition roles and process are being reviewed. These changes will permit Housing Services to deliver an efficient but most importantly customer focused service.

32. East Renfrewshire's AAS addresses the areas required for improvement in our housing services. The key areas of priority are listed in section 12 of the report and they include rent arrears recovery and customer engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

33. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) Note our performance report against Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) indicators and measures and how the Housing Service compares against 2020-21 and the average for the housing sector. This is listed in appendix 1;
- b) Note the Action Plan (Appendix 2) to further strengthen our compliance against the Regulatory Framework and SSHC; and
- c) Approve the AAS 2022 (appendix 3), which has been prepared taking into account the outcomes of Housing Services self- evaluation of our performance, compliance with the Regulatory Framework, SSHC, as detailed at Appendix 1.

Director of Environment

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

Convener contact details

Councillor Danny Devlin
(Convener for Environment and Housing)

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September 2022

Appendix 1
Scottish Social Housing Charter
Housing Services Annual Performance Review 2021-22

This report provides East Renfrewshire Council Housing Services' performance in key areas of our work and services in 2021-22.

This performance report will assess our achievement against set indicators and measures in the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) and inform our Annual Assurance Statement 2022. We will also compare our performance in previous years and against the average of all local authorities in Scotland, and with all Scottish social landlords. This will highlight where we are performing well and areas in need of improvement through a traffic light system:



= Performance is good and is above the average of other local authorities or the sector in Scotland;






= Performance is improving or in line with or the benchmarking averages of other local authorities or the sector in Scotland.



= Performance needs improved and is below the average of local authorities or the sector in Scotland.

Service Delivery (Customer)

Estates & Tenancies

Indicator	ERC Housing 2021-22	ERC Housing 2020-21	Local Authority Average 2021-22	Housing Sector 2021-22	Position
% of new tenants housed who were still in their tenancy 12 months later	89.36%	94.14%	90.99%	90.75%	
Average time to complete medical adaptations	23.51 days	18.56 days	53.60 days	54.35 days	
% of anti-social behaviour cases resolved	96.49%	95.4%	93.25%	94.67%	

Our performance in dealing with anti-social behaviour and estates issues remains high. There has been a small number of tenancies which have not sustained for those housed through the waiting list, and we are reviewing the contact with and support offered to tenants in the community and before they begin a tenancy. Our refreshed Neighbourhood Housing Officer team will allow us to work more closely with tenants in our estates to live there successfully.



Our performance in completing vital medical adaptations for our tenants remains high also, ensuring people can live as independently as possible at home.

Property Services, Assets and Capital Programme

East Renfrewshire Council Housing Services own 3033 homes including 244 sheltered homes and a number of temporary and supported properties. We built 39 new homes in 2021/22 through our Council House Build Programme.

The energy efficiency of our homes is very good against current EESSH1 standards, but with significant investment required to meet the national programme of increasing standards in coming years. This is a challenge faced by landlords across the sector.

Performance in ensuring gas safety certificates are renewed each year is 100%, with other landlords still trying to recover this because of no access during the pandemic. We had very few fails in 2020/21 and worked exceptionally hard to keep track and then resolve those fails quickly.

Indicator	ERC Housing 2021-22	ERC Housing 2020-21	Local Authority Average 2021-22	Housing Sector 2021-22	Position
% of tenants' homes meeting EESSH1**	98.3%	93.2%	84.59%	87.56%	
No of properties that failed to have a gas safety check by anniversary date	0	25	78	488	

* - *Scottish Housing Quality Standard – National property standards set for all social landlords in Scotland*

** - *Energy Efficiency Standards in Social Housing 1– Energy standards set for all social landlords in Scotland*




The condition of our homes against SHQS (Scottish Housing Quality Standard) has been consistently good at 91.42% in 2020/21. Our focus for improvement is on updating our Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's), the cycle for which has moved from 10 to 5 yearly, with a programme of 600+ surveys to be carried out over the next two years. A reduction in our compliance with SHQS on this element solely means about 89% properties meet the 10 year safety check but with the changes, about 48.5% are compliant.

There has been a reduction in compliance for many other landlords on this element. At the time the change was introduced, there was constraint on manpower to accelerate these checks; an external contractor has now been procured to provide this service. Between now and March 2023, about 600 properties will be tested and from there on, a programme will be rolled out to meet statutory compliance.

Housing Repairs

Our repairs service is delivered through the Housing Maintenance Team supported by external contractors for specialist works. The performance is excellent illustrated in our response timescales for emergency repairs in particular at 2.66 hours. The quality of repair work is clearly evident through a top quartile performance for jobs completed right first time (98.97%).

Our improvement focus is on communicating more clearly with customers on what to expect for certain types of repairs, in terms of inspections and timescales for completion. And to increase satisfaction with the repairs service.

Indicator	ERC Housing 2021-22	ERC Housing 2020-21	Local Authority Average 2021-22	Housing Sector 2021- 22	Position
Average time to complete emergency repairs	2.66 Hours	2.4 hours	4.77 hours	4.16 hours	
Average time to complete non-emergency repairs	8.35 days	6.2 days	9.87 days	8.87 days	
% of day to day repairs completed 'Right First Time'.	98.97%	99.5%	78.79%	88.27%	


Rents, Empty Homes and Value for Money

East Renfrewshire Council rents although higher than the Scottish Council Average in 2021/22, are lower than the average for all social landlords and considerably lower than other social or private landlords in the East Renfrewshire area. Through rent setting consultation we will seek an increase which will see rents remain affordable but will support vital investment in existing and new homes for tenants.

Rents

Average Weekly Rent	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2021-22	Housing Sector Average 2021-22
All Properties	£83.20	£79.71	£85.36
1 Apartment	£70.23	£65.90	£75.95
2 Apartment (One bedroom)	£74.39	£74.24	£81.32
3 Apartment (Two bedroom)	£85.04	£79.37	£84.18
4 apartment (Three bedroom)	£96.07	£85.37	£91.48
5 Apartment (Four bedroom)	£97.64	£92.11	£100.74




Value for Money

Indicator	ERC Housing 2021-22	ERC Housing 2020-21	Local Authority Average 2021-22	Housing Sector 2021-22	Position
Gross rent arrears as % of total rent due	9.95%	9.51%	8.67%	6.34%	

Gross rent arrears takes into account arrears owed by current and former tenants combined. Through COVID there was a significant increase in arrears of rent for current tenants, and although this has slowed and stabilised in 2021/22.

Implementation of a fresh Arrears Recovery Strategy, for both current and former tenancy arrears, is being underpinned by our service redesign which is now set in place. This will focus on engaging and supporting tenants more intensively to meet their rent payments and reduce arrears.

Housing Options & Access to Housing

Indicator	ERC Housing 2021-22	ERC Housing 2020-21	Local Authority Average 2021-22	Housing Sector 2021-22	Position
Average length of time to re-let properties.	99.59 days*	72.7 days	59.42 days	51.57 days	
% of rent due lost through empty homes	1.41%	1.8%	1.63%	1.43%	
% of tenancy offers refused	51.17%	40.64%	40.11%	32.93%	

**A number of long term empty homes were brought back into use, so while raising the average days to relet to an exceptional level in 2021/22, this figure is already reduced YTD and is expected to fall significantly in 2022/23.*

We had a turnover of 8.78% of properties and we made 312 lets in the year to our tenants and applicants who are homeless or were waiting on a home through our Choice Based Letting system. A further 33 households were housed through nomination to other local social landlords.

However, we face significant waiting list demand at around 4,700 applicants, with 1600 of these joining the list in 21.22. Homeless approaches remain consistently high at around 380 applications per year. 45% of our lets were to households facing homelessness.

Although we are building new homes, additional pressure to move large numbers through temporary accommodation and to support refugee resettlement means adds to demand hugely outstripping supply.

Despite a choice based letting process in place, refusal levels remain high. This is due to the lack of suitable accommodation resulting in offers of accommodation for homeless households who have not successfully bid for a property within a three month period. As well as continuing to turnaround empty homes more quickly, we have reviewed CBL and lettings over the last 3 years and will propose revisions to our allocations policy and processes to reduce tenancy offers refused or withdrawn.

Customer Engagement & Satisfaction

In common with other landlords who have carried out a large scale Tenants Satisfaction Survey since mid-2021, satisfaction levels have dropped significantly. The impact of the pandemic, i.e. more time at home and reductions in “Business as usual” service provision through the pandemic have undoubtedly affected satisfaction. Analysis of national data has shown that across the country satisfaction levels have dropped consistently since 2019.

We have continued surveying our tenants through 2021/22 and as outlined levels of satisfaction are moving back upwards, as we have recovered our frontline service delivery (see results below). However we are not complacent. A further survey will be undertaken in early 2023 to ensure the service remains responsive to customer needs.

Our service redesign vision places our customers at the centre of what we do, including improving communication, clarifying the standards they should expect and providing modern routes to participate and influence service improvements. We are refreshing our Customer Engagement plan to deliver on this vision, in partnership with our customers.

Indicator	Satisfied 2020/21 (ARC)	Tenants Satisfaction Survey (East Ren) 2021 (large scale)	ERC Service Surveys 2022	Satisfied 2021/22 (ARC) – combined results
% Satisfied with landlord contribution to management of neighbourhood	88.47%	65.68%	77%	68.47%
% Satisfaction with keeping informed about services & decisions	88.15%	74.22%	81%	75.76%
% Satisfied rent is good value for money	87.04%	66.84%	81%	70.15%
% Satisfied with repairs service	86.43%	72.64%	66%	70.29%
% Satisfied with quality of home	86.48%	67.07%	83%	70.99%
% Satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making	91.11%	64.93%	70%	66.18%
% Overall Satisfaction with Landlord	84.81%	68.22%	85%	72.24%

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Appendix 2

Assurance Statement 2022 – Improvement Plan

Compliance Issue	Service Area	What we need to address	When will we do it?	Who is responsible?
Statutory Obligations	Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs)	<p>Programme of EICR Renewals</p> <p>Address the need to renew EICR's for each home every 5 years -previously every 10 years – with a targeted programme of “catch up” electrical surveys which maximises compliance.</p>	<p>600 minimum per year</p> <p>2022 + 2023</p>	Senior Housing Manager
Meeting Charter Standards	Rent Collection and Arrears Management	<p>Arrears Recovery Strategy</p> <p>Implementation of a fresh Arrears Recovery Strategy centred on building capacity in local neighbourhoods to achieve improved rent collection, closer engagement with and support to tenants.</p>	March 2023	Senior Housing Manager
Meeting Charter Standards	Customers and Engagement	<p>Customer Engagement and Communication Plan</p> <p>Development of a refreshed plan for working and communicating with our customers, centred on improving satisfaction, and an agreed vision of opportunities to influence service design and standards.</p>	March 2023	Senior Housing Manager

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**East Renfrewshire Council
(Housing Services)**

Annual Assurance Report 2022



East Renfrewshire Council gives assurance that:

- ✓ We comply with the regulatory requirements set out in section 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework document.
- ✓ We achieve all the standards and outcomes in the Social Housing Charter for tenants and other customers who use our service.
- ✓ We comply with our legal obligations as a landlord, specifically in relation to housing, homeless, equality and human rights and tenant safety, with the exception of:

Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs)

With recent changes to the timeframe for renewal of EICR's for each property from every 10 years to every 5 years; the number of certificates then expiring; and with constraint on manpower to accelerate these checks, we are not fully compliant at October 2022.

Through our self-assessment to inform our Assurance Statement we know we need to improve in the following areas to strengthen our compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

❖ **Income Maximisation**

We have faced a sharp rise in current tenant arrears in recent years, but with slowing of this trend in 2021/22. We are progressing an arrears recovery strategy, providing closer engagement with tenants through increased capacity and smaller neighbourhood patches with the aim to maximise rent collection and support tenants struggling financially.

❖ **Customers and Engagement**

We are refreshing our approach to working with customers, agreeing improvements in how we communicate with them about the services on offer and the standards of service they should expect. Additionally the opportunities they have to influence planned service improvements and design to increase customer satisfaction.

The Assurance Statement was approved at the Cabinet meeting on 13 October 2022 and I sign this statement on their behalf.

Signed: (Convenor): Councillor Danny Devlin



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