

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

12 October 2023

Report by Director of Environment

HOUSING SERVICES ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 & ASSURANCE
STATEMENT (SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) 2023. This outlines Housing Services' compliance with the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) Regulatory Framework, Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) standards and our statutory obligations. It also takes account of our engagement plan with the SHR. The AAS is an annual submission required of all Social Landlords by the SHR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Note our performance for 2022/23 against SSHC indicators and measures, and comparisons to the previous year and wider housing sector. (Appendix 1);
 - b) Note the Action Plan to continue to strengthen our compliance against the Regulatory Framework and SSHC. (Appendix 2); and
 - c) Approve the 2023 Annual Assurance Statement of our compliance with the Regulatory Framework & SSHC standards and its submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 October 2023 (Appendix 3).

BACKGROUND

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

4. The SHR will based on the ARC submission publish:

- A summary Landlord Report for every social landlord in Scotland. East Renfrewshire's performance information from 2022/23 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 landlord's reported performance and areas of national priority. The current year's engagement plan can be viewed at: <https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/landlord-performance/landlords/east-renfrewshire-council/engagement-plan-form-31-march-2023-to-31-march-2024>

5. The Regulatory Framework also requires all social landlords to produce an Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) confirming compliance with the Regulatory Framework, SSHC standards and with our statutory obligations. On approval by the Cabinet. This requires to be submitted to SHR for consideration by 31st October 2023.

6. The AAS:

- Requires a self-evaluation to be undertaken by each landlord looking at performance and the evidence they have of 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 performance and quality of services has been undertaken. Members can be assured there is a good level of compliance with the Regulatory Framework. An action plan (Appendix 2) has been developed to further strengthen our compliance against the Framework and to attend to areas for improvement in our performance against the SSHC.

8. 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, which sets out the key areas of risk identified for each Local Authority.

REPORT

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

10. Social landlords across Scotland continue to face a range of pressures in service delivery given current economic challenges. The areas identified for improvement are also set out below and reflected in our Action Plan (Appendix 2).

Areas of Good Performance

11. Housing Services performed better than the Scottish local authority for the majority indicators in the performance report :

Repairs

12. The repairs service is delivered by the Housing Maintenance Team supported by external contractors for specialist work. The performance is excellent, illustrated in response timescales for emergency, non-emergency repairs and right first time.

Maintenance

13. Housing Services are also meeting the Scottish Government's requirements for gas safety (with 100% of annual gas servicing checks completed on time) and have a good standard of performance for EESSH1 (Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing 1), with 99.7% of stock meeting the standard.

Empty Homes

14. Ongoing investment on the repair and letting of empty council homes, has reduced rent lost for a second year from a high of 1.8% in 2020/21 to 0.95% of rent due in 2022/23. Housing Services continues to drive for excellent performance.

Rent Arrears

15. Housing Services have reduced gross rent arrears to 7.36% through an Arrears Recovery Action Plan. To sustain this will be challenging and intensive engagement with and support to tenants will continue to collect rent and reduce arrears where possible. As such, despite being an area of good performance, rent arrears has been identified as key issue in the action plan (Appendix 2)

Areas for Improvement

16. The following areas have been identified for improvement. All of these areas have already seen improvement in the last 12 months.

Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) Renewals

17. Housing Services are undertaking a targeted programme of electrical surveys to ensure that homes have a renewed Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) every 5 years. This was a change from the previous requirement of every 10 years. The challenging timescales to procure fresh surveys meant a dip in compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) solely due to this issue. At the end of 2021/22, Housing Services had 48.5% EICR compliance from 91.42% in 2020/21. 64% of council homes now achieve SHQS due to our EICR renewal programme and we expect to achieve 100% compliance on this issue by March 2024.

Customers & Engagement

18. A review of customer engagement and participation is currently underway. The service recognises the need to continue improving communication and raising customer satisfaction levels. Satisfaction has improved in 2022/23 from a post pandemic dip. A biennial large-scale tenant satisfaction survey is underway and will refresh survey results for 2023/24. This will be supplemented by focus groups to provide a detailed understanding of areas for improved performance.

19. The AAS 2022 (Appendix 3) will be published to tenants, as well as submitted to the SHR by 31 October 2023 detailing compliance with the Regulatory Framework and performance against the SSHC. The draft AAS outlines good compliance and performance, although identified the following areas for increased focus and improvement: EICR Renewals; Rental Income Maximisation; and Customers and Engagement.

Homeless Performance Issues

20. For 2023/24 the focus of the SHR Engagement Plan for East Renfrewshire is on "Services for People who are Homeless", and the provision of suitable temporary accommodation where required. This engagement will take place with all Councils due to the significant pressures faced nationally from increasing homelessness and demand for temporary and settled accommodation.

21. Homelessness in East Renfrewshire and across Scotland has increased significantly in the last 3 years reaching its highest level in 2022/23. In order to meet this growing need, particularly the need for temporary accommodation, Housing Services have had to rely on hotel accommodation out with East Renfrewshire. Placement of any household in unsuitable accommodation such as a hotel for more than 7 days, is a breach of The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 (UAO).

22. Housing Services are seeking to further increase the current stock of temporary accommodation and utilise more local Registered Social Landlord (RSL) and private sector accommodation to meet this growing need. However the wider service is under review to identify options to reduce homelessness occurring.

23. During the first 6 months of 2023 this review has involved a full review of homeless procedures, documentation and updated staffing training. New processes have been put in place to focus on improved housing options to assist with homeless prevention. However as homeless numbers continue to increase more work is required to support homeless prevention, housing support services and increase the provision of temporary accommodation. This work is expected to be undertaken throughout the remainder of 2023/24.

24. The engagement plan will also focus on the plan to achieve electrical safety compliance and our work to improve service quality performance in relation to rent arrears and tenant satisfaction, as noted in our improvement plan.

25. In May 2023, the service participated in a “thematic” study on assurance with SHR to discuss our assurance process and self-evaluation of performance. This was to share good practice and identify areas for development for the sector. Positive feedback was received on the work of Housing Services Business Improvement Team to support service improvement and performance awareness and on the Convenor’s support of scrutiny and Cabinet reporting.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

26. 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 continue to inform any alterations to our plans to ensure the Council can invest in new and existing homes, whilst keeping rents as affordable as possible.

27. The annual rent setting consultation process will commence in November 2023, 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. National guidance on fair rental increases and the ongoing impact of cost-of-living pressures will be evaluated as part of this process.

28. 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

29. East Renfrewshire Council is required to publish an annual performance report to tenants each year by October. The details of performance and assurance improvement plan will be distributed through our Annual Housing Report to tenants as well as making the full report available online and on request to other customers.

30. The details will also be considered by the Registered Tenants Forum as part of their performance scrutiny and made available more widely with the Annual Housing Report 2023. Housing Services will consult on the format and content of the annual report to ensure it is accessible and understandable to tenants and other customers.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

31. Many of the services provided by the Council's Housing Service are 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 other RSL's operating locally.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

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

CONCLUSIONS

33. The Housing Service is performing well against the majority of the indicators and measures are in place to improve performance in other areas. East Renfrewshire's AAS addresses the areas required for improvement for Housing Services. The key areas of priority are listed in section 12 of this report, and they include rent arrears recovery and customer engagement.

34. 2022/23 saw performance begin to return to post pandemic levels and East Renfrewshire Council perform better than most Scottish local authorities in a number of areas. Key areas of improvement have been identified and Housing Services are actively working to improve services in these areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

35. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- (a) Note our performance for 2022/23 against SSHC indicators and measures, and comparisons to the previous year and wider housing sector. (Appendix 1);
- (b) Note the Action Plan to continue to strengthen our compliance against the Regulatory Framework and SSHC. (Appendix 2); and
- (c) Approve the 2023 Annual Assurance Statement of our compliance with the Regulatory Framework & SSHC standards and its submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 October 2023 (Appendix 3)

Director of Environment

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

October 2023

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Appendix 1
Scottish Social Housing Charter
Housing Services Annual Performance Review 2022-23

This report provides East Renfrewshire Council Housing Services' performance in key areas of our work and services in 2022-23.

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 2023. 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 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
% of new tenants housed who were still in their tenancy 12 months later	94.43%	89.36%	91.4%	91.2%	
Average time to complete medical adaptations	30.69 days	23.51 days	46.9 days	46.8 days	
% of anti-social behaviour cases resolved	93.88%	96.49%	91.4%	94.2%	

Our performance in dealing with anti-social behaviour and estates issues remains strong. There has been a small number of tenancies which have not sustained for those housed mainly through our general waiting list, and we are reviewing the contact with and support we offer to those beginning a tenancy. Our refreshed Neighbourhood Housing Officer team also allows us to work more closely with all tenants in our estates and support them to live there sustainably.




Our performance in completing vital medical adaptations for our tenants remains high also, despite taking slightly longer to complete in 2022/23. This provides critical support so that people with disability, mobility or cognitive issues can live as independently as possible at home.

Property Services, Assets and Capital Programme

East Renfrewshire Council Housing Services own 3126 homes including 244 sheltered homes. We also own and lease a number of temporary and supported properties to support the most vulnerable. Through our Council House Build programme, we added a further 94 new council homes to our stock in 2022/23.

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.

We have 100% compliance in ensuring gas safety certificates are renewed each year by their anniversary, ensuring we keep tenant safety at the forefront of our efforts.

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
% of properties meeting SHQS at year end	59.21%	49.52%	70.9%	79.0%	
% of tenants' homes meeting EESSH1**	99.71%	98.3%	87.96%	91.01%	
No of properties that failed to have a gas safety check by anniversary date	0	0	454	1032	

* - *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 largely affected by our compliance with renewal of Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's). This dipped in 2021/22 when the renewal period for EICR's dropped from 10 to 5 years, meaning a dip in SHQS compliance solely relating to this element with just under half of homes meeting standard. Many other landlords have faced similar dips and are challenged to get these certificates in place and bring the pass rate for SHQS back to previous levels.

Our focus in 22.23 has been on renewal of EICR's to maximise the number of homes with a valid certificate. By the end of 22/23 64% of our homes now had a valid EICR, achieved through commissioned survey work. We have a target for 100% compliance with EICR requirements by the end of 2023-24. Considering other reasons why properties may not meet SHQS (e.g. abeyances or exemptions) we expect our SHQS compliance to be above 90% at the end of 2023-24.

Housing Repairs

Our repairs service is delivered by the Housing Maintenance Team supported by external contractors for specialist work. The performance is excellent, illustrated in our response timescales for emergency repairs at 2.77 hours, and a reduction in time to complete non-emergency repairs since last year. The quality of repair work is also evident through a top quartile performance for jobs completed right first time (98.38%).

Challenges remain in sourcing materials and retaining and attracting skilled tradespersons. Continuing improvement is focused on communicating more clearly with customers on what to expect for certain types of repairs, and to continue to increase satisfaction with the repairs service.

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
Average time to complete emergency repairs	2.77 hours	2.66 hours	4.70 hours	4.2 hours	
Average time to complete non-emergency repairs	7.09 days	8.35 days	9.7 days	8.7 days	
% of day to day repairs completed 'Right First Time'.	98.38%	98.97%	88.2%	87.8%	


Rents, Empty Homes and Value for Money

East Renfrewshire Council rents although higher than the Scottish Council Average in 2022/23, are broadly in line with the average for all social landlords but notably lower than other social landlords operating in the East Renfrewshire area. We agreed a rent increase for 2023/24 (5% with a limit of £5 per week), which would support ongoing investment in our homes but acknowledged the challenges tenants face through cost-of-living pressures and national guidance requiring modest sector-wide increases for this reason. Our rent setting consultation later in 2023 will again seek an increase which will support vital investment in existing and new homes, but also see rents remain affordable.

Rents

Average Weekly Rent	ERC Housing 2022-23	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23
All Properties	£88.15	£81.02	£87.59
1 Apartment	£75.63	£66.46	£78.26
2 Apartment (One bedroom)	£77.46	£75.21	£83.46
3 Apartment (Two bedroom)	£89.58	£80.60	£86.28
4 apartment (Three bedroom)	£103.28	£87.15	£93.96
5 Apartment (Four bedroom)	£105.74	£94.23	£103.72




Value for Money

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
Gross rent arrears as % of total rent due	7.36%	9.95%	9.6%	6.9%	

Gross rent arrears are those owed by both current and former tenants combined and are the value of rent and related charges that remain unpaid. Post-pandemic a significant increase in rent arrears across the country, given the financial challenges households face, has made it challenging for landlords to reverse this trend and reduce arrears.

Our implementation of a fresh Arrears Recovery Plan, for both current and former tenancy arrears, has allowed us to focus on engaging more directly and providing additional support to our tenants to help meet their rent payments and reduce arrears. This has resulted in a notable reduction in outstanding rent in 2022/23, with a reduction of £125,000 in the value of rent arrears owed by current tenants. It will prove challenging to continue to reduce rent arrears at the same rate in future years, but we will continue working closely with our tenants to tackle this.

Housing Options & Access to Housing

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
Average length of time to re-let properties.	62.94 days	99.84 days	66.9 days	55.6 days	
% of rent due lost through empty homes	0.95%	1.41%	1.7%	1.4%	
% of tenancy offers refused	47.1%	51.17%	38.5%	30.9%	

We re-let 281 existing homes in 2022/23, a reduction on previous years in part reflective of the improvements we have made in eliminating long term empty properties and turning

properties around more quickly for re-let. The timescale to turn empty homes around is also reducing and now in line with the local authority average. These improvements are also shown through the reduction in rent lost through properties being empty.

We also built 94 new council homes last year and a further 25 households on our queue were nominated by us and accepted an offer from a local housing association. Despite this an ongoing increase in pressure is building from waiting lists, with demand outstripping the rate at which we can provide more homes.

The Council's waiting list now sits at an all-time high of around 6400 with 1640 of these joining the list in the last year or so. Homeless approaches also remain the highest we have seen at around 440 applications in the year 2022/23 reflecting the limited alternative housing options people have to find an affordable home in East Renfrewshire. Last year, 70% of all lets were to households facing homelessness.

We saw a reduction in tenancy offers refused last year but would wish to reduce refusals further. Although Choice Based Letting is used and we have improved choice for homeless households, the homes which do become available for letting do not always reflect the types and locations of homes that people might need. This year we will put forward revisions to our allocations policy and processes to support choice and balance the needs of those who are homeless, with those on our other waiting lists in urgent need of rehousing.








Customer Engagement & Satisfaction

We have continued surveying our tenants on a range of issues throughout 2022/23 and continue to see improvements in levels of satisfaction from a previous pandemic dip as we have recovered our frontline service delivery. Although on some matters we still have headway to make on getting satisfaction to the same levels as other landlords in some areas, very visible improvements have been achieved across the board in our customers views about us.

We are also underway with a large-scale tenants' and factored owners survey over the autumn, being carried out independently on our behalf by Knowledge Partnership. This will allow us to gather a broader range of views and get a clearer picture of where our services are viewed positively, and where we can do better. This will allow us to remain responsive to customers' needs.

We are also currently working with our staff and customers to strengthen the voice they have in making service improvements happen, through scrutiny and influencing practical improvements via our neighbourhood inspections and housing surgeries. This places customers at the centre of what we do, including improving communication, clarifying the standards they should expect and offering proactive routes for tenants and customers to get involved.

We ensure we consider the needs of our tenants and customers, and the equalities and human rights matters that may affect them, when we are reviewing or planning services. This includes ensuring impact assessments are carried out thoroughly. We also understand the need to have good data about the protected and other characteristics of our customers and gather this through our key service functions. However, there can be challenges in ensuring this information is kept up to date on an ongoing basis, and the implementation of our new housing management system and customer self-serve portal will be used as a key tool in allowing tenants and other customers to provide us with important information about them.

Indicator	ERC Housing 2022-23	ERC Housing 2021-22	Local Authority Average 2022-23	Housing Sector Average 2022-23	Position
% Overall Satisfaction with Landlord	82.05%	72.24%	83.2%	86.7%	
% Satisfied with quality of home	82.91%	70.99%	81.8%	84.2%	
% Satisfied rent is good value for money	80.10%	70.15%	81.9%	81.8%	
% Satisfied with landlord contribution to management of neighbourhood	78.33%	68.47%	82.5%	84.3%	
% Satisfaction with keeping informed about services & decisions	77.84%	75.76%	81.1%	89.7%	
% Satisfied with repairs service	81.40%	70.29%	89.4%	88.0%	
% Satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making	68.06%	66.18%	76.5%	85.9%	

Appendix 2

Housing Services Landlord Assurance Statement 2023

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)	Complete renewal of EICR's for each home that we own to achieve full compliance with the statutory 5-year renewal cycle. This will continue with a targeted programme of "catch up" electrical surveys to maximise compliance.	100% of stock has a valid EICR certificate by March 2024	Senior Housing Manager
Statutory Obligations	Provision of temporary accommodation	Increase the supply of suitable accommodation within East Renfrewshire Council to reduce and eradicate breaching of The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 (UAO).	September 2024	Senior Housing Manager
Meeting Charter Standards	Rent Collection and Arrears Management	<p>Arrears Recovery Plan</p> <p>We will move through the next phase of implementing our Arrears Recovery Plan, focusing our Neighbourhood Officers efforts on close contact with tenants. This will allow us to support those in most need of assistance and will help drive sustained rent collection performance, while reducing arrears where possible.</p>	March 2024	Senior Housing Manager

Appendix 2

Meeting Charter Standards	Customers and Engagement	<p>Customer Engagement and Satisfaction</p> <p>We will build on our refreshed strategy which has taken account of customers' views on better engagement and will provide a range of mechanisms for fuller involvement in shaping our services. Work to complete our biennial large scale tenants' survey will be used to provide fresh insight and analysis to support this strategy.</p>	March 2024	Senior Housing Manager
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Housing Services

Annual Landlord Assurance Report 2023



East Renfrewshire Council has reviewed the services we provide and available evidence, and gives assurance that:

- ✓ We comply with the regulatory requirements set out in section 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework document.
- ✓ We comply with our legal obligations as a landlord, specifically in relation to:
 - ❖ housing,
 - ❖ homelessness,
 - ❖ equality and human rights, and
 - ❖ tenant safety (including • Gas safety • Electrical safety • Water safety • Fire safety • Asbestos • Dealing with Damp and Mould • Lift safety)

except for:

Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs)

We reported last year that we were not fully compliant in transitioning our renewal of EICR's for all our homes to the shorter time frame of every 5 years. We have made significant progress in the last year to reduce the instances where we are not compliant. Compliance increased from just under 50% to 64% at March 2023, and work continues through 2023/24 to achieve full compliance.

The Homeless Persons (Unsuitable Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 2020 (UAO)

We are currently reviewing our supply of temporary accommodation and with the support of partners, we aim to reduce significantly and eradicate any breaches of the UOA

Through ongoing self-evaluation and evidence gathering we are also assured that:

- ✓ We achieve the standards and outcomes in the Social Housing Charter for tenants and other customers who use our service.

However, we recognise improvements in the following areas will strengthen our compliance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

- ❖ **Income Maximisation** - Through our arrears' recovery plan, tenant rent arrears reduced last year. But with tenants struggling financially, our Neighbourhood Housing Officers will continue engaging closely with tenants in their patch to support them to pay rent and reduce arrears where possible. We will also focus on maximising income due to us via our range of services, to ensure our rent payers get Value for Money.
- ❖ **Customers and Engagement** - We have refreshed our customer engagement strategy and seen some improvements in satisfaction levels in the last year. However, we will work with customers to support fuller involvement, better communication and improved satisfaction with our services. We will complete a fresh large-scale survey of our tenants and factored owners.



Appendix 3

The Assurance Statement was approved at the Cabinet meeting on 12 October 2023, and I sign this statement on their behalf.



Signed: (Convenor): Councillor Danny Devlin



October 2022