

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Housing and Communities Committee

15 May 2019

Service User Review and Evaluation Team – Scrutinising Housing Services Tenement Management Scheme

Report by Executive Director (Housing and Environment) (Report No. 19/144)

This report provides an overview of the scrutiny activities undertaken by the Service User Review and Evaluation (SURE) Team in relation to landlord services delivered by Housing. It also provides details of their findings and recommendations in relation to their recent scrutiny of the Tenement Management Scheme and recommends that the Committee endorses the improvement plan.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Perth and Kinross Council have been working in partnership with tenants to scrutinise the standard and delivery of housing services since 2012.
- 1.2 To strengthen the approach, the Service User Review and Evaluation (SURE) Team was established in 2014. The team consists of tenants and service users and is supported by an Independent Advisor.
- 1.3 The SURE Team's role is to:
 - take an independent view of Perth & Kinross Council housing performance
 - prioritise and oversee service user review and evaluation activities
 - collect and examine evidence to enable housing services to be reviewed and evaluated
 - monitor and review agreed annual action plans
 - approve and validate the annual performance report on the charter.
- 1.4 Since 2014, the SURE Team has undertaken six different scrutiny activities, covering a range of areas from complaints to anti-social behaviour. Scrutiny of tenant participation activities led to the SURE Team developing and producing the Tenant and Resident Participation (TRP) Strategy for 2018-21. This was approved at Housing and Communities Committee on 24 January 2018 (Report No. 18/18 refers).

- 1.5 The Perth and Kinross approach to tenant led scrutiny, particularly through the work undertaken by the SURE Team, is regarded as sector leading. This was endorsed in feedback from Education Scotland following the recent inspection of Community Learning and Development.

They were impressed with the process and rationale, commenting:

“I have graded this Very Good, because there is a strong sense of Place, with representative’s knowledge of their communities being excellent and therefore they are able to represent their localities very well, in an inclusive way. The SURE team demonstrated productive relationships with services and council staff, which in turn influenced and made real changes for policy and best practice. I am really impressed with the TRP Strategy and Implementation Plan”

2. SCRUTINY IN PRACTICE

- 2.1 Areas for scrutiny are determined jointly through discussion between the Housing Management Team (HMT) and the SURE team. They are often influenced by performance, customer feedback or where a need for improvement has been identified.
- 2.2 Once an area for scrutiny has been agreed key activities within each scrutiny exercise are as follows:
- presentation by the Service Manager/Lead Officer to the SURE Team, providing an overview of the area of service delivery
 - the SURE Team meet to discuss the area for scrutiny, and agree the scope
 - undertake a series of interviews with Lead Officers and key frontline staff within Housing and other relevant partners (Legal Services, Safer Communities etc.)
 - analysis of background documentation, performance and other relevant documentation
 - SURE Team meeting to discuss findings, initial conclusions and recommendations
 - presentation to Housing Management Team (HMT) of the scrutiny report, findings and recommendations
- 2.3 HMT then meet with the SURE Team within 6 – 8 weeks, to provide feedback on the report and the recommendations, as well as present an action plan and timescales for implementation. On a regular basis, the SURE Team request updates on progress.

- 2.4 Since its introduction in 2014, the SURE Team have scrutinised the following areas of service delivery:

Scrutiny	Date	No. of Recommendations
Complaints Handling	March 2015	22
Communication around Responsive Repairs	November 2015	24
Preventing and Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour	June 2016	20
Tenant and Resident Participation	February 2017	24
Estate Based Initiatives	March 2018	16

3. Scrutiny on Tenement Management Scheme (TMS)

- 3.1 Over a seven month period during 2018, the SURE Team conducted their sixth scrutiny activity, on the Tenement Management Scheme (TMS), presenting a final report (Appendix 1) and recommendations to HMT on 26 November 2018 (Appendix 1).
- 3.2 Our total Council stock across Perth and Kinross is 7,635. Prior to the Right to Buy, the Council owned approximately 17,000 properties. As a result, all of our estates are now mixed tenure, comprising of Council, private rented and owner occupied. Overall 800 blocks are multi tenure with a significant number where we own only one property. All properties were sold with an equal share of responsibility for the repairs and maintenance of common parts i.e. roof and roof space, rhones, downpipes, external walls door entry and stairwells.
- 3.3 Over the last 5 years, as with all Local Authorities, our priority through the capital programme has been to bring our properties up to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). We have continually performed well in this area with over 96% of our stock meeting this standard against a national average of 93%. As a result, many properties that look tired and in poor condition are often privately rented or owned.
- 3.4 The multi tenure nature of our estates presents us with many challenges in maintaining and improving our properties. Although we can undertake work on behalf of owners, through the TMS, we must secure their agreement and they are required to pay for their share of the costs. It is not always possible for us to carry out improvements that we would like to, as owners and private landlords are often reluctant or unable to pay for their share. We have, however, been successful in securing significant funding to undertake external insulation to both council and private properties.
- 3.5 The Housing team established a focus group in March 2018 to review the management and monitoring of the TMS. As a result of improved arrangements, the average number of current TMS cases was reduced from 800 to 300 and the annual accrual for TMS has reduced from £46,000 at 31 March 2018 to £9,000 at 31 March 2019.

- 3.6 Secure door entry systems within multi-tenure blocks are a key component of the SHQS. This is an area where we have had difficulty in obtaining agreement for works from private owners. During the last year, more owners have seen the benefits of the enhanced security and have agreed to the installation of door entry systems. This has contributed to a recent increase in our SHQS performance of approximately 0.5%.
- 3.7 Given the complexity of the TMS and the challenges in its administration, it was agreed that this would be an area of scrutiny for the SURE team. This complements improvements already delivered and enables a more detailed scrutiny of our approach to identify further improvements.
- 3.8 The SURE team undertook a professional and detailed scrutiny of the TMS scheme, our approach and the legislative framework. The report by the SURE Team recognised that TMS is subject to detailed legislative requirements which, at face value, give little scope for, or flexibility in, the interpretation of its provisions.
- 3.9 The SURE team's report is contained in Appendix 1. It outlines 19 recommendations to improve our approach which include:
- supporting existing proposals identified by the service to streamline the TMS procedure
 - providing pre-tenancy information for new tenants in our Welcome Pack
 - reviewing the annual fee for the Factoring Service
- 3.10 Lead Officers met with the SURE Team and have agreed all 19 recommendations, detailed within an action plan which will be progressed over the course of next 24 months.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 4.1 The SURE team to continue to play an important role in influencing and supporting improvements to the services we provide to tenants. Their recent scrutiny of the TMS has been of significant value in identifying a range of improvements that will ultimately benefit tenants.

It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) acknowledges the key role played by the volunteers on the SURE Team in supporting the delivery of improved services and the report on the Tenant Participation Scheme (Appendix 1).
- (ii) endorses the Action Plan agreed in partnership with the SURE Team (Appendix 2).
- (iii) requests the Executive Director (Housing & Environment) to submit a further update to Committee in August 2019 on progress around all scrutiny activities within the Tenant and Resident Participation Strategy Annual Update.

Author(s)

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Barbara Renton	Executive Director – Housing and Environment	18 April 2019

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan	None
Corporate Plan	None
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	None
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan

- 1.1 This proposals within the report help the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) *Giving every child the best start in life*
- (ii) *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens*
- (iii) *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy*
- (iv) *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives*
- (v) *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations*

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 This proposals within the report help the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Corporate Plan in terms of the following priorities:

- (i) *Giving every child the best start in life;*
- (ii) *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;*
- (iii) *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;*
- (iv) *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and*
- (v) *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.*

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications as a result of this report.

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no asset management implications as a result of this report

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

- (i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of EqIA

Legal and Governance

- 3.2 The Head of Legal and Governance was involved in the scrutiny activity contained within the appendices to support this report.
- 3.3 There are no key risks identified as a result of this report.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The Head of Legal and Governance and the Head of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.
- 4.2 The Tenant Committee Report Panel were consulted on this report. They commented that this is a very good report, good to work with the managers involved and excellent how quickly they have dealt with the recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

No papers were relied on in preparing this report.

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – SURE Team Scrutiny Report Overview and Recommendations
Appendix 2 – Housing Service Scrutiny Action Plan