

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Housing and Health Committee – 6 June 2012

SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER

Report by Executive Director (Housing and Community Care)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to inform the Housing and Health Committee about the Scottish Social Housing Charter and update them with the activities planned in preparation for its implementation in 2013/14.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- 1.1 Note the preparations that are being made for the implementation of the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2013/14 as outlined in Section 5 of the report.
- 1.2 Approve the Scottish Social Housing Charter Implementation Plan as outlined in Section 5 of the report.
- 1.3 Note the continuing leadership role for elected members in supporting tenants and residents to be part of the agreement and scrutiny of local performance measures and participating in new self evaluation processes.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Housing Bill received Royal Assent in December 2010, and is now the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. The Act includes powers to modernise the regulation of social housing and has created an independent Scottish Housing Regulator (The Regulator) to look after the interests of tenants, homeless people and others who use the services that social landlords provide.
- 2.2 The Act also asked Ministers to consult on and then set the outcomes that social landlords should achieve. This has been developed into The Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter), which was approved by the Scottish Parliament in March 2012. (www.housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk)
- 2.3 The Regulator will use the Charter as the starting point for assessing a landlord's performance. It will publish performance reports, and will be able to set performance improvement targets.
- 2.4 The Charter replaces the performance standards set out in the guidance that Scottish Ministers issued under section 79 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 in November 2006. It does not replace any of the legal duties that apply to social landlords, but in several cases the outcomes describe the results social landlords should achieve in meeting their legal duties.

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE CHARTER

- 3.1 The Charter will help to improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide, and supports the Scottish Government's long-term aim of creating a safer and stronger Scotland. It will do so by:
- stating clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords, and helping them to hold landlords to account
 - focusing the efforts of social landlords on achieving outcomes that matter to their customers
 - establishing a basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to assess and report on how well landlords are performing. This assessment will enable the Regulator, social landlords, tenants and other customers to identify areas of strong performance and areas needing improvement.
- 3.2 The Regulator's reports will also help the Scottish Government ensure that public investment in new social housing goes only to landlords assessed as performing well.

4 Scope and content of the Charter

- 4.1 The Charter has seven sections covering:

- equalities
- the customer/landlord relationship
- housing quality and maintenance
- neighbourhood and community
- access to housing and support
- getting good value from rents and service charges
- and other customers

It contains a total of 16 outcomes and standards that social landlords should aim to achieve. The outcomes and standards apply to all social landlords, except that number 12 applies only to local councils in relation to their homelessness duties; and number 16 applies only to councils and registered social landlords that manage sites for Gypsies/Travellers.

- 4.2 Each section is accompanied by a short narrative that describes the context of the outcome or standard, including the areas of activity to which it applies and any relevant legal duties connected with it. The narrative is not part of the outcome that social landlords should achieve, and does not tell them how to achieve it. That is a matter for each landlord to decide in consultation with its tenants and other customers.
- 4.3 The preparation and implementation of the Charter will involve elected members having a greater leadership role with tenants and residents living in their wards, supporting them to be part of the agreement and scrutiny of local performance measures. It is envisaged that they will have greater role in supporting local involvement in this process and communication with local people. This will also include being part of the new self-evaluation process as they will have a leading role with tenants and residents to contribute to reports and challenge un-validated statements.

- 4.4 Unless stakeholders raise urgent and significant concerns about how the Charter is working in practice; the Charter will apply for five years from 1 April 2012. In consultation with stakeholders, Scottish Ministers will review its effect on the quality and value of social landlords' services, and its value to tenants and other customers, social landlords and the Scottish Housing Regulator. The review will start within two years of the Charter coming into force, so that Scottish Ministers can take the review's findings into account in preparing a revised Charter, which will take effect from 1 April 2017.

5 Preparation for Implementation

- 5.1 A Charter Implementation Group made up of Housing Service Managers and relevant support services is developing a detailed Charter Implementation Action Plan and progress will be reported back on a regular basis to the Head of Housing and Strategic Commissioning and to the Housing and Community Care Senior Management Team.
- 5.2 The key milestones and high level actions identified from the Charter Implementation Action Plan are as follows:

High Level Actions / Milestones Phase 1 2012/13	Time
Identify Charter Implementation Group	April 2012
Gap analysis of existing historical data against the Charter outcomes	May 2012
Develop actions with the Tenant Participation Strategy to engage tenants in the implementation of the Charter	June 2012
Charter Implementation Action Plan SMT Approval	June 2012
Progress Report to Housing and Health Committee	June 2012
Staff briefing and workshops for all Housing and Support Staff	June 2012
Development of Housing self evaluation framework (Based On Good is Our Council)	July 2012
SHR publish draft indicators for Annual Return on the Charter for consultation	Sept 2012
Pilot self evaluation framework	Oct 2012
Final Charter indicators published by SHR	Oct 2012
Produce Self Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan	Nov 2012
Progress Report to Housing and Health Committee	Feb/Mar 2013
High Level Actions / Milestones Phase 1 2013/14	Time
Audit Scotland stop collecting SPI data from Councils	April 2013
PKC to produce 'mock' Annual Return on the Charter	May 2013
Undertake Self Evaluation Activities	Sept 2013
Produce Self Evaluation Report and updated Improvement Plan	Nov 2013
Progress Report to Housing and Health Committee	Feb/Mar 2014

High Level Actions / Milestones Phase 1 2014/15	Time
PKC completes and submits Annual Return on the Charter for 2013/14	May 2014
SHR publishes Reports on Landlords via SHR website	Aug2014
Deadline for PKC to publish and report on its performance	Oct 2014
SHR will contribute to Assurance and Improvement Plans	Mar 2015
SHR publish report on the analysis of the sector's performance in achieving Charter	Mar 2015
Progress Report to Housing and Health Committee	Feb/Mar 2015

6. CONSULTATION

The Perth and Kinross Tenants' & Residents' Federation and its members have been consulted on the contents of this report, as well as Housing Service Managers.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The costs of the activities outlined in the Charter Implementation Plan will be contained within the Housing & Community Care budgets for the year 2012/13. This will be reviewed in subsequent years.

8. COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012

- 8.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. The following are relevant to this report:-

- (i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
- (ii) Healthy, Caring Communities
- (iii) A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy
- (iv) Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens
- (v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

- 7.1 The Council's Corporate Equalities Assessment Framework requires an equality impact assessment of functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.
- 7.2 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

Assessed as relevant and the following positive outcomes expected following implementation:

- Promotion of equality of opportunities for minority groups.
- Meeting the needs of our service users who may be members of a minority group.

8. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS). The plan, programme or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the determination was made that the items summarised in this report are unlikely to have any significant effect on any of the areas defined in the SEA guidance.

9. CONCLUSION

This report informs the Housing and Health Committee about the Scottish Social Housing Charter and updates them with the phased activities planned in preparation for its implementation. It also asks the Committee to note the growing leadership role for elected members to support tenants and residents to be part of the agreement and scrutiny of local performance measures and participating in new self evaluation processes.

DAVID BURKE
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Note: Declaration regarding background papers

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

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