

# **PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**

## **Housing & Social Wellbeing Committee**

**7 September 2022**

### **ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2021/2022 – SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR**

**Report by Executive Director (Communities)**  
(Report No 22/202)

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To comply with the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework, the Council must approve and submit an Annual Assurance Statement, giving assurance that it is meeting legislative and regulatory standards for social housing in Scotland. This report provides a brief overview of the Framework and appends the Annual Assurance Statement 2021/22 for approval by Committee.

<b>2. RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:  (i) notes the requirement to submit an Annual Assurance Statement (ii) approves the Annual Assurance Statement as detailed in Appendix 2



#### **3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT**

- 3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:
- Section 4: Background
  - Section 5: Annual Assurance Statement Overview
  - Section 6: Evidence to Support the Annual Assurance Statement
  - Section 7: Tenant Assurance
  - Section 8: Self- Assessment
  - Section 9: Conclusion
  - Appendices

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 All social housing landlords are required to publish an Annual Assurance Statement in line with guidance within the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) published Regulatory Framework. The Framework details the SHR's statement on performance of functions, and sets out how they regulate Registered Social Landlords, as well as housing and homelessness services delivered by Local Authorities.

- 4.2 Within the Framework, the SHR carry out their work in the following broad ways:
- gathering and publishing data in ways that tenants and other stakeholders can use;
  - seeking assurance from landlords and acting where they need to;
  - undertaking thematic activity and scrutiny on specific areas of work and performance.
- 4.3 Central to their approach is landlords assuring themselves, their tenants and the SHR through landlord self-assurance.
- 4.4 Every Registered Social Landlord and Local Authority is responsible for delivering good outcomes and services for their tenants and service users. The SHR is clear that landlords must be self-aware, analytical, open and honest about their performance and identify and drive improvement activities.
- 4.5 When considering whether to engage with landlords, the SHR will initially consider what they have done to assure themselves that they are meeting regulatory requirements. In line with this requirement, all landlords must prepare an Annual Assurance Statement to confirm to their tenants and the SHR that they are meeting regulatory requirements.

## **5. ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT OVERVIEW**

- 5.1 Since April 2019, there has been a requirement for all Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to submit an Annual Assurance Statement which must be agreed by the relevant Local Authority Committee. Statements should confirm the landlord's level of compliance with the requirements detailed within the Framework, including:
- all relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter;
  - all relevant legislative duties;
  - details of any areas of material non-compliance, briefly describing plans and a timeframe to improve.
  - confirmation that the relevant Local Authority Committee have seen and considered appropriate evidence to support the level of assurance.
- 5.2 A signed and unsigned copy of the Annual Assurance Statement must then be provided to the SHR, who will then make the unsigned version publicly available. There is also a requirement for landlords to ensure the Statement is easily, and readily, available for tenants.

5.3 During 2021/22, Perth and Kinross Housing Service complied with all but one regulatory requirement, as set out in Chapter 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Framework. This confirms that we:

- achieved all the standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services;
- complied with our legal obligations relating to housing and homelessness, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.

5.4 As a result of the ongoing impact of Covid-19, the Council did not materially comply with gas safety regulations, as the Housing Service missed 15 services (failures) during the reporting year – a challenge faced by many social landlords. These failures represent 0.2% of the 6,583 domestic gas services carried out in 2021/22 by the Service.

5.5 The 15 failures resulted from the Covid-19 restrictions and our need to effectively balance the health (covid) and safety (gas servicing) issues for our tenants. All but one failure was due to tenants shielding or self-isolating. One failure was due to our Gas contractor not attending a pre-arranged appointment. The appointment was scheduled for a weekend to suit the needs of our tenant. However, there was a miscommunication which resulted in the contractor not attending. This was addressed directly with the contractor and improvement actions put in place.

5.6 All 15 failures were completed within 14 days of the missed service, with most completed within 2 to 5 days.

5.7 To help minimise failures and provide reassurance to our tenants, we issued communications encouraging tenants to allow engineers access. We also provided information about the robust safety measures and risk assessments in place to protect both tenants and engineers.

5.8 In line with Health and Safety Executive guidance, the repair history of the boiler was analysed for all failures, to ensure there was no immediate danger to our tenants.

5.9 As restrictions have eased, good progress has been made, and through tenants' confidence in our arrangements and robust safety measures, this has meant that there are currently no outstanding gas services.

## **6. Evidence to Support Assurance 2021/22**

6.1 Our management and democratic structures, along with our processes are all designed to facilitate effective decision making, and the proper scrutiny of decisions and their impact, in terms of performance and the achievement of outcomes.

- 6.2 This is supported by a range of planning processes, ensuring we meet the needs of customers, and that targets for quality improvements are set and monitored. Individual Business Management & Improvement Plans set out detailed actions and outcomes for each Service and include performance indicators. This is underpinned by the statutory requirement on local authorities to produce a Local Housing Strategy and provide regular progress updates. This sets out our priorities and plans for the delivery of Scottish Housing Regulator Outcomes.
- 6.3 Service performance is reported regularly to the Housing Management Team, Communities Senior Management Team and Executive Leadership Team, as well as publicly through the Council's themed Committees and the Scrutiny and Performance Committee. Financial performance is publicly reported through the Finance and Resources Committee.
- 6.4 The evidence required by the SHR forms part of the self-assessment process, which informs in part, the Council's Annual Governance Statement. Appendix 1 details an overview of information that supports the Annual Assurance Statement.
- 6.5 On 1 April 2022, the SHR published its plans for engagement with all social landlords based on 2020/21 performance, including all 32 Local Authorities, across Scotland. Due to the impacts of Covid on households facing or experiencing homelessness, the SHR are again engaging with all Local Authorities this year to seek reassurance on their delivery of services for people facing homelessness. The SHR have noted that nationally Covid continues to have a significant impact on services provided by social landlords in 2022 and will continue to influence how services are provided in 2022/23. Therefore, the SHR will continue to monitor and assess how Local Authorities respond to these challenges.

## **7. Tenant Assurance**

- 7.1 The SHR has indicated that it is the responsibility of Committee to consider and approve the Annual Assurance Statement. There is no requirement for this to be approved by tenants. However, our tenants panel were consulted on this report and the Statement.
- 7.2 We held several digital interactive sessions with the Service User Review and Evaluation (SURE) Team, where the Housing Management Team presented an overview of the Service's performance for 2021/22 to enable them to assess the Service's performance and provide feedback on potential areas for improvement. This feedback will be used to support our Annual Landlord Performance Report and the Annual Assurance Statement.
- 7.3 In 2022, we commissioned independent market research company, Knowledge Partnership, to complete a tenant satisfaction survey on our behalf. The Knowledge Partnership carried out a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews with a selected sample of tenants.

- 7.4 The survey was carried out between 14 February 2022 and 1 April 2022 and 1,000 tenants were interviewed. Tenants were asked how satisfied they were with housing services against several national key indicators set by the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- 7.5 The survey results were largely positive, and a significant majority of our tenants (82.2%) are satisfied with the overall service they receive from Perth & Kinross Council as their landlord. The latest Scottish Council average for overall satisfaction is 76.8%.
- 7.6 This, together with our external scrutiny by the SURE Team, provides the required level of assurance from the tenants who receive and experience the services we deliver.

## **8. Self-Assessment**

- 8.1 During early 2022, the Service carried out a self-assessment, using the framework “How Good is our Service” to assess service delivery against the outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. This assessment forms the basis of the Annual Assurance Statement, which is attached as Appendix 2.
- 8.2 The Scottish Housing Network also carried out a desktop review of our Annual Return Charter (ARC) performance prior to submission to the SHR. The feedback received was very positive. The findings of both assessments have been included within the overall Action Plan for the Service. In addition, on 29 July 2022, the SHR wrote to all 32 local authorities asking them to place a particular focus on reviewing practices regarding the collection of equalities information to ensure a human rights approach is adopted within the services they provide. We have included this focus within our Action Plan.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The Council's Housing Service continues to deliver high levels of service, with strong performance across all areas and ongoing high levels of tenant satisfaction, despite the ongoing impact and challenges faced by Covid. This has also been achieved in the context of maintaining our rents at affordable levels by having the fifth lowest local authority rents in Scotland, demonstrating our commitment to delivering a value for money service for our tenants. Throughout the year, Committee has received several key reports providing assurance that we are delivering and exceeding the standards required by the SHR (Appendix 1).

**Author**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Contact Details</b>
Elaine Ritchie	Senior Service Manager	(01738) 475000 <a href="mailto:ComCommitteeReports@pkc.gov.uk">ComCommitteeReports@pkc.gov.uk</a>

**Approved**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Date</b>
Barbara Renton	Executive Director (Communities)	25 August 2022

**APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 – Overview of information that supports the Annual Assurance Statement.
- Appendix 2 - Annual Assurance Statement.

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	<b>Yes</b>
Corporate Plan	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	<b>No</b>
Workforce	<b>No</b>
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	<b>No</b>
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	<b>No</b>
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<b>No</b>
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	<b>No</b>
Legal and Governance	<b>Yes</b>
Risk	<b>No</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	<b>Yes</b>
External	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications Plan	<b>Yes</b>

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 This report supports the delivery of the Strategic Objectives within Perth and Kinross Community Plan/ (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan) 2017-2027 and Corporate Plan 2018-2022. Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:

### 2. Resource Implications

#### Financial

- 2.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### Workforce

- 2.2 There are no workforce implications arising from this report.

#### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 There are no asset management implications arising from this report.

### 3. Assessments

#### Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

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

#### Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals. No further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

#### Sustainability

- 3.3 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 the Council also has a duty relating to climate change and, in exercising its functions must act:
- in the way best calculated to delivery of the Act's emissions reduction targets;
  - in the way best calculated to deliver any statutory adaptation programmes; and
  - in a way that it considers most sustainable.
- 3.4 The information contained within this report has been considered under the Act. However, no action is required as the act does not apply to the matters presented in this report.

#### Legal and Governance

- 3.5 Not applicable.

#### Risk

- 3.6 Not applicable.

### 4. Consultation

#### Internal

- 4.1 Heads of Service and senior managers from Communities have been consulted on the content of this report.



## External

- 4.2 Tenant Reports Panel noted that given the situation dealing with Covid, a failure of only 0.2% with regard to domestic gas services was really well done and show dedications from the whole team.

## **5. Communication**

- 5.1 The Annual Assurance Statement will be made publicly available.

## **2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 2.1 No background papers were relied upon during the preparation of this report.