



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 13 OCTOBER 2015

SUBJECT: SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER COMPLIANCE

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides details of the Council's landlord report from the Scottish Housing Regulator and seeks the Committee's approval to make the Annual Charter Performance Report available to tenants and other customers.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (14) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to performance management for housing functions.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) considers the Council's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2014/15;**
- (ii) considers and approves the draft Annual Charter Performance Report in APPENDIX III; and**
- (iii) agrees that the draft Annual Charter Performance Report will be made available to tenants and other customers by 31 October 2015;**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into force on 1 April 2012. The aim of the Charter is to improve the quality and value of the services provided by social landlords. All social landlords must submit an annual return on the charter (ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).
- 3.2 On 26 May 2015, the Communities Committee agreed that the Council would submit its ARC by 30 May 2015 and that a further report would be presented in October 2015 presenting details of our submission along with a draft of the annual report to tenants and other customers for approval (paragraph 11 of the Minute refers).

4. LANDLORD REPORT

- 4.1 On 31 August 2015, the SHR published the landlord reports for 2014/15. The SHR's landlord report for the Moray Council can be found in **APPENDIX I**.
- 4.2 **APPENDIX II** compares the Council's performance on the Charter with the Scottish average. It is important to note that the average performance for local authorities tends to be below the Scottish average which includes all social landlords (local authorities, housing associations and housing co-operatives). Where appropriate, both are included in this report to provide further context.
- 4.3 The comparative results for most of the satisfaction indicators are drawn from the 2012 tenants' survey. Comparisons made in relation to the 2014/15 Scottish average for satisfaction levels must be viewed in this context.
- 4.4 The 2014/15 performance is summarised below under 6 themes:
- 4.5 Overall Satisfaction
- 4.5.1 Satisfaction with the overall service was 88.6%, higher than both the Scottish average (88.1%) and the local authority average (83.4%). This places Moray within the upper quartile for local authorities.
- 4.6 The Customer/Landlord Relationship
- 4.6.1 The 2012 survey found that 86.1% of tenants feel that the Council is good at keeping them informed about services and decisions. This is slightly below the Scottish average (89.3%) but it is higher than the local authority average (80.6%) and places Moray in the upper quartile for local authorities.
- 4.6.2 The Council performs well in responding to complaints within the timescales set by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) for both 1st stage complaints within 5 days (Moray 96.8%, Scottish average 81.8%) and 2nd stage complaints within 20 days (Moray 86.1%, Scottish average 74.6%). The level of complaints upheld is lower for both 1st stage complaints (Moray 32.3%, Scottish average 57.3%) and 2nd stage complaints (Moray 32.1%, Scottish average 45.8%). The Housing and Property Service did not receive any complaints relating to equalities issues during 2014/15.
- 4.6.3 The 2012 survey found that 73.2% of Council tenants are satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in decision making. This is below the Scottish average (79.6%) but remains above the local authority average (69.7%).
- 4.7 Housing Quality and Maintenance
- 4.7.1 94.7% of the Council's housing stock now meets the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) compared with 91% for all social landlords. This result placed Moray in the upper quartile for local authorities. The remaining Council properties that did not meet the SHQS were exemptions (for example because properties are 'hard to treat') and abeyances (where work cannot be done for 'social' reasons such as the tenant refusing remedial works).

- 4.7.2 Satisfaction with the quality of homes in Moray (79.6%) is slightly below the Scottish average (85.8%). It is possible that this may be due to differences in the age profile of the housing stock. The national average includes housing association properties which are more likely to be newer homes built to a modern standard. The result for Moray is close to the local authority average (82.9%).
- 4.7.3 The average time to complete emergency repairs in Moray was 2.4 hours which compares favourably with the Scottish average of 5.9 hours and the local authority average of 6.3 hours. Non-emergency repairs in Moray were completed in 6.7 days which compares well with the Scottish average of 7.9 days and the local authority average of 9.5 days. Moray was ranked second for emergency repairs and fourth for non-emergency repairs out of all local authorities.
- 4.7.4 The Council's performance for reactive repairs completed right first time was disappointing at 80.1%. The average for all social landlords was 90.2% and for local authorities was 86.9%. It has been recognised nationally that this indicator is particularly difficult to measure. On the advice of the Scottish Housing Best Value Network, the Council changed its calculation method which in turn has reduced performance. This is an area identified for improvement.
- 4.7.5 The Council kept 91.8% of reactive repair appointments. This was slightly below the Scottish average (92.4%) but better than the local authority average (86.9%).
- 4.7.6 Gas performance remains similar to the previous year with 99.2% of services carried out by the anniversary date, however this is still below the Scottish and local authority averages (99.5%). The main reason for failure continues to be non-access. Changes have already been made to our gas safety procedures from April 2015 which seeks to bring forward the timescale for servicing where there have been previous problems with non-access. Thus far in 2015/16, there has been no gas servicing failures.
- 4.7.7 Satisfaction with the repairs service (82%) is lower than the national average (89.3%) and the local authority average (87%). Further changes proposed within Building Services (DLO) during 2015/16 are focused on improving our repairs and maintenance performance.
- 4.8 Neighbourhood and Community
- 4.8.1 The Council compared well in the 2012 survey for satisfaction with the management of the neighbourhood (Moray 86.9%, Scottish average 84.9%).
- 4.8.2 The Council continues to perform well in dealing with antisocial behaviour with the percentage of antisocial behaviour cases resolved within local targets higher than the national average (Moray 88.8%, Scottish average 83.2%).

4.8.3 The percentage of tenancy offers refused (29.7%) was much better than the Scottish average (42%). A lower refusal rate is important because of the influence this has over void periods and rent loss.

4.9 Access to Housing and Support

4.9.1 Tenancy sustainment, where tenancies lasted for more than 12 months, was higher in Moray (92.2%) than the Scottish average (88.8%).

4.9.2 Moray still has a low turnover of properties with fewer becoming available for re-let (6.7%) than the average for all social landlords (8.9%) and for local authorities only (8.6%). This indicates the acute pressures on the supply of affordable housing in Moray.

4.9.3 The Council approved 87.3% of medical adaptations and completed approved applications within an average of 40.9 days. This compares well nationally at 84.3% and 54.8 days respectively. The results for local authorities were 85% and 41.7 days.

4.9.4 While there was an increase in the proportion of court actions resulting in eviction in Moray (12%), this was a similar rate to the Scottish average (14.7%) and for local authorities (13.2%). The majority of evictions carried out in Moray were due to rent arrears (11%). The Housing Service will only use eviction as a last resort, particularly in rent arrears cases where all efforts to engage with the tenant have been unsuccessful.

4.9.5 The average stay in temporary accommodation in Moray (83.3 days) is shorter than the national average (90.2 days). The Council made an offer of temporary accommodation to all persons who required it but 18.5% of offers were refused. This is higher than the local authority average (6.8%). The main reasons for refusal were related to cost, location and type of accommodation offered. The Council continues to review of its temporary accommodation requirements. A new charging policy was introduced in April 2015 and the reconfiguration of temporary accommodation continues. These changes are intended to make the experience of temporary accommodation better for service users and in turn, it is anticipated that refusal rates will reduce.

4.9.6 Although response rates for surveys are low, the feedback on the quality of temporary accommodation shows 94.3% were satisfied with the quality of temporary accommodation provided which is above the national average of 84.8%.

4.10 Getting good value from rents and service charges

4.10.1 Despite the increase in rents in recent years to support investment in the new build programme, the overall average weekly rent for a Council home in Moray is £57.23 and remains significantly lower than the Scottish average of £71.00. Moray now has the fourth lowest average weekly rent for local authorities and this is lower than the average rent for the closest comparators of a similar size.

- 4.10.2 Tenants who feel their rent is good value for money is 78.1% and this continues to remain higher than the Scottish average of 76.8%. A better comparison will be available once the 2015 tenant survey is published.
- 4.10.3 The rent lost through properties being vacant in Moray was 0.6% which is almost half the Scottish average of 1.1% and positions the Council within the upper quartile for local authorities. The time to re-let empty properties in Moray (35.4 days) was also better than the Scottish average (36.9 days) and the average for local authorities (38.6 days).
- 4.10.4 The Council collected 99.5% of the total rent due which is exactly the same as the previous financial year and the Scottish average. The result was slightly better than the average for local authorities (99.2%).

5. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5.1 The SHR requires social landlords to produce an annual report on their performance against the Charter for tenants and other customers by no later than 31 October. The report must:
- assess performance in delivering each of the Charter outcomes;
 - include relevant comparisons with previous years, other landlords and with national performance; and
 - identify how and when the landlord intends to address areas for improvement.
- 5.2 This year, the Council invited tenants to assist in the development of the 2014/15 annual report. Suggestions from the Moray Tenants Forum have helped to shape the content and design theme. The feedback gathered from the Forum was that they were pleased with last years' report and wanted the content for this year to be broadly similar. The tenant representatives also recommended that a full picture of the results (current, historical and Scottish average) be included for the key indicators identified in the SHR landlord report. Some minor amendments to the design were made in line with feedback from tenants.
- 5.3 The report mirrors the 8 key themes set out in the Charter which are:
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour;
 - Collecting rent;
 - Rent levels and value for money;
 - Housing quality, maintenance and repairs;
 - Access to housing, homelessness and support;
 - Tenancy sustainment;
 - Customer satisfaction; and
 - Tenant participation.
- 5.4 The proposed Annual Charter Performance Report to tenants and other customers is attached in **APPENDIX III**. Subject to the Committee's approval the report will be sent out to tenants before the 31 October 2015 deadline. Copies will also be available to homeless households through the temporary accommodation team.

- 5.5 The report will be available on the Council's website where a short survey can be completed to give views on the content and format of the report. All feedback gathered will be used to assist in the development of the next report in 2015/16.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Moray 2023: A Plan for the Future/Service Plan/Health and Social Care Integration

Moray 2023 and the Service Plan (Priority 4) identify the need to involve tenants in improving service quality. Good quality services for social housing tenants will help promote healthier citizens and adults living healthier, sustainable independent lives safeguarded from harm. This will contribute towards the aims of the integration of Health and Social Care.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

(c) Financial implications

There is a cost associated with the producing and sending out the Annual Charter Performance Report to tenants. Costs have yet to be finalised but will be in the region of £7k. Budget has been made available for the annual report within the Tenant Participation budget.

(d) Risk Implications

The Scottish Housing Regulator requires that tenants are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the management of their homes and decision making processes. Failure to develop and appropriate tenant involvement structure presents a regulatory risk along with a failure to provide a customer focussed service.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications associated with this report.

(f) Property

There is no property implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities

Equalities issues have been considered as part of the development of the ARC and the annual performance report to tenants and other customers.

(h) Consultations

Consultation on this report has taken place with managers from within Housing and Property, Committee Services Officer (Lissa Rowan), the Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services, who agree with the sections of the report relating to their areas of responsibility.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The report provides the Committee with an update on the Council's progress with the compliance of the Scottish Social Housing Charter.**

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Background Papers: With authors
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