



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 8 NOVEMBER 2016

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 the Annual Performance Report to tenants and other customers.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (15) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to performance management for housing functions.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Communities Committee reviews the Council's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2015/16**

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. Each year, social landlords must submit a return on the charter (ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).
- 3.2 On 21 June 2016, the Communities Committee was informed that the Council submitted its ARC on 20 May 2016 and that the national data would be published on 31 August 2016 (paragraph 13 of the Minute refers).

4. LANDLORD REPORT

- 4.1 On 31 August 2016, the SHR published the landlord reports for 2015/16. The Council's landlord report can be found in **APPENDIX I**.
- 4.2 The landlord report compares the Council's performance on the Charter with the Scottish average on the key performance indicators. 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 2015/16 performance is summarised below under 6 themes:

Overall Satisfaction

- 4.4 Satisfaction with the overall service was 80%. This is lower than the Scottish average (89%) but close to the local authority average (82.2%). The comments received were analysed and were not only about housing services but also related to other Council services such as condition of roads, paths, play areas, communal grass areas and dog fouling. This information was shared with the respective Head of Service but may be difficult to resolve given the Council's current budget position.

The Customer/Landlord Relationship

- 4.5 The 2015 survey found that 77.7% of tenants feel that the Council is good at keeping them informed about services and decisions. This is below the Scottish average (90.6%) but is similar to the local authority average (79.0%). The Housing Service makes use of a number of tools to ensure tenants are kept informed about services and decisions including a six-monthly newsletter, a tenant handbook, a range of leaflets, through the Council's website and social media.
- 4.6 The Council responded to 94.4% of 1st stage complaints within the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) timescale of 5 days (Scottish average 87.3%). The Council responded to 57.4% of 2nd stage complaints within 20 days (Scottish average 81.8%). The level of complaints upheld is higher for 1st stage complaints (Moray 62%, Scottish average 55.7%) and lower for 2nd stage complaints (Moray 27.9%, Scottish average 50.5%). The Housing and Property Service did not receive any complaints relating to equalities issues during 2015/16. The decline in performance can be attributed to the absence of key staff within Building Services and it is expected that performance will improve in 2016/17.
- 4.7 The 2015 survey found that 60.3% of Council tenants are satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in decision making. However, a third of tenants were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This is below the Scottish average (81.3%) and the local authority average (68.5%). A review of the Tenant Participation Strategy will consider whether there are other areas that can be developed to give tenants further opportunities to be involved in decision making.

Housing Quality and Maintenance

- 4.8 95.9% of the Council's housing stock now meets the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) compared with 92.8% for all social landlords. 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).
- 4.9 For the first time, the ARC measured progress achieved towards the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH). At 31 March 2016, 49.8% of

the Council's properties met the EESSH compared with 68.6% for all social landlords. The Council has until 2020 to meet the standard.

- 4.10 Satisfaction with the quality of homes in Moray (86%) is slightly lower than the Scottish average (86.5%). This may reflect the differences in the age profile of the housing stock since the national average includes housing association properties which are likely to be newer homes built to a modern standard. The result for Moray is above the local authority average (81.7%).
- 4.11 The average time to complete emergency repairs in Moray was 2.5 hours which compares favourably with the Scottish average of 5.1 hours and the local authority average of 6 hours. Non-emergency repairs in Moray were completed in 6.2 days which compares well with the Scottish average of 7.5 days and the local authority average of 9.4 days. Moray was ranked second for emergency repairs and fifth for non-emergency repairs out of all local authorities.
- 4.12 The Council's performance for reactive repairs completed right first time was 85%. The national average was 91.3% and the result for local authorities was 88.7%. It has been recognised nationally that this indicator is particularly difficult to measure and the current calculation method understates the Council's performance in this area.
- 4.13 The Council kept 94% of reactive repair appointments. This is the same as the Scottish average (94.4%) and slightly better than the local authority average (93%).
- 4.14 Gas performance has improved since the previous reporting year with 99.98% of services carried out by the anniversary date, which is above the Scottish average (99.8%). The Council had a single servicing failure due to human error. The mistake was picked up quickly but resulted in the property being serviced 5 days after the anniversary date. Corrective measures were implemented to prevent reoccurrence.
- 4.15 Satisfaction with the repairs service (79.4%) is lower than the national average (89.9%) and the local authority average (90.2%).

Neighbourhood and Community

- 4.16 Satisfaction with the management of the neighbourhood (76%) is below the Scottish average (86%) and close to the local authority average (79%).
- 4.17 The percentage of antisocial behaviour cases resolved within local target timescales (85.8%) is similar to the national average (86.6%). The 2015/16 performance is the same as the local authority average. A review of the timescales for dealing with antisocial behaviour complaints in 2016/17 will consider whether these are appropriate for the multi-agency approach following the transfer of antisocial behaviour to the Community Safety Team.
- 4.18 The percentage of tenancy offers refused (29.5%) was better than the Scottish average (37.8%) and places Moray within the upper quartile for local

authorities. A lower refusal rate is important because of the influence this has over void periods and rent loss.

Access to Housing and Support

- 4.19 Tenancy sustainment, where tenancies lasted for more than 12 months, was higher in Moray (91.6%) than the Scottish average (88.4%).
- 4.20 Moray still has a low turnover of properties with fewer becoming available for re-let (6.6%) when compared with the average for all social landlords (8.6%) and for local authorities only (8.4%). This demonstrates the acute pressures on the supply of affordable housing in Moray.
- 4.21 The Council approved 75.9% of medical adaptations and completed these within an average of 36.4 days. This compares well nationally at 83.3% and 49.9 days respectively.
- 4.22 The proportion of court actions resulting in eviction in Moray (11.8%) was lower than the Scottish average (15.5%) and for local authorities (13.5%). The majority of court actions initiated in Moray were for rent arrears, with 11% of those resulting in an eviction. The Housing Service only uses eviction as a last resort, particularly in rent arrears cases where all efforts to engage with the tenant have been unsuccessful.
- 4.23 The average stay in temporary accommodation in Moray (77.1 days) is shorter than the national average (91.4 days). The Council made an offer of temporary accommodation to all homeless households who required it, but 14.3% of offers were refused. This is an improvement on 2014/15 performance (18.5%) but refusal rates in Moray remain higher than the local authority average (7.0%). This is mainly due to no shows (36%) followed by applicants refusing due to location (22.8%).
- 4.24 Although response rates for surveys are low, the feedback on the quality of temporary accommodation shows 94.4% were satisfied with the quality of temporary accommodation provided which is above the national average of 86.9%.

Getting good value from rents and service charges

- 4.25 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 (£52.38) remains significantly lower than both the Scottish average (£72.90) and the local authority average (£67.57). Moray has the lowest overall average weekly rent of all local authorities and housing associations.
- 4.26 The 2015 tenant survey found that 84% feel their rent is good value for money which is better than the Scottish average of 79%.
- 4.27 The rent lost through properties being vacant in Moray was 0.6% which is almost half the Scottish average of 1%. The time to re-let empty properties in Moray (29.4 days) was also better than the Scottish average (35.4 days) and the average for local authorities (41.5 days). The performance achieved for

both of these indicators positions the Council within the upper quartile for local authorities.

- 4.28 The Council collected 99.8% of the total rent due which is similar to the previous financial year (99.5%) and the Scottish average (99.5%).

5. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5.1 The SHR requires social landlords to produce an annual report on their performance against the Charter and make it available for tenants and other customers by no later than 31 October. The Annual Performance Report is attached as **APPENDIX II**. 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 Due to the challenging timescales involved in producing the Annual Performance Report to tenants and other customers, it was not feasible to submit the report to Committee for approval. Comments from tenants who returned their feedback form from the 2014/15 performance report and the Moray Tenants Forum have helped to shape the content and design theme of the 2015/16 performance report to tenants and other customers.
- 5.3 The report mirrors 8 of the 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 A copy of the report is available on the Council's website and this was publicised on social media. Tenants received a copy of the report which was also made available to homeless households through the supported accommodation team. There is an option to complete a short survey to gather views on the content and format of the report. All feedback received will assist in the development of the 2016/17 report.

6. REVIEW OF THE CHARTER

- 6.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 requires ministers to review the standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter on a regular basis.
- 6.2 In mid-2016, the Scottish Government invited tenants and their landlords to attend a series of consultation events to review the outcomes and standards set out in the Charter. Following the end of the formal consultation period on

24 August 2016, the Scottish Parliament will be asked to consider the changes in a revised Charter and approve its implementation from 1 April 2017. This may result in changes to the accompanying list of Charter performance indicators.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Moray 2026: A Plan for the Future and Moray Corporate Plan 2015 - 2017

Moray 2026 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.

(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 and other customers. Costs have yet to be finalised but will be in the region of £6k. 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 the Head of Housing and Property, senior managers within Housing and Property, the Committee Services Officer (Lissa Rowan), Senior Solicitor (Paul Nevin), the Principal Accountant (Deborah O'Shea) whose comments have been incorporated in this report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 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 author
Ref:

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