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**REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 17 OCTOBER 2017**

**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 (G) (15) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to performance management for the Communities Services.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 **It is recommended that the Communities Committee reviews the Council's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2016/17.**

**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. The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that tenants can expect from their landlords, including the quality of and value for money of services, the standard of homes and the opportunities they have for participating in their landlord's decision-making processes. Using a range of performance indicators, the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) monitors and assesses landlords' performance against the Charter.

3.2 Each year, social landlords must submit an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the SHR. On 22 August 2017, this Committee was informed that the Council's ARC was submitted in May 2017 and that results for all social landlords would be published on 31 August 2017 (paragraph 9 of the Minute refers).

**4. LANDLORD REPORT**

4.1 On 31 August 2017, the SHR published the landlord reports for 2016/17. 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 should be noted 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 2016/17 performance is summarised below under 6 themes:

#### **Overall Satisfaction**

4.4 At 80%, satisfaction with the overall service was slightly lower than the Scottish average (89.7%) and the local authority average (83.4%). However, this was drawn from the 2015 tenant survey and therefore does not account for the improvements implemented since. The next major satisfaction survey is programmed for late 2018.

#### **The Customer/Landlord Relationship**

4.5 The 2015 tenant survey found that 77.7% of tenants felt that the Council was good at keeping them informed about services and decisions. This was lower than the Scottish average (91.1%) and the local authority average (80.1%). Tenants are kept informed about services and decisions through a range of methods including a six-monthly newsletter, a comprehensive tenant handbook, an extensive range of leaflets, through the Council's website and social media.

4.6 The Council responded to 96.5% of 1<sup>st</sup> stage complaints within the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) timescale of 5 working days which compares well with the Scottish average of 85.4% and is within the upper quartile for local authorities. The Council responded to 85.4% of 2<sup>nd</sup> stage complaints within the SPSO timescale of 20 working days which was better than the Scottish average of 83.3%. A similar proportion of 1<sup>st</sup> stage complaints were upheld (Moray 56.5%, Scottish average 57.8%) and a lower proportion of 2<sup>nd</sup> stage complaints were upheld (Moray 33.3%, Scottish average 43.1%). There were no complaints relating to equalities issues received in 2016/17.

4.7 The 2015 tenant survey identified that 60.3% of tenants were satisfied with the options to participate in their landlord's decision making processes. A third of respondents were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' and therefore performance was below the Scottish average (83.8%) and the local authority average (71.3%). The Council's tenant participation strategy was reviewed in 2016/17 and officers have been working closely with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) to deliver the key outcomes. The Tenants' Voice newsletter regularly contains information on tenant participation opportunities and updates on how tenant feedback has been used to improve services.

#### **Housing Quality and Maintenance**

4.8 96% of the Council's housing stock meets the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). The remainder are exempt because they are either 'hard to treat' or classed as an abeyance (where work cannot be done for 'social'

reasons such as the tenant refusing remedial works). Performance in this area was above the Scottish average (93.6%).

- 4.9 All social landlords must meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by 2020. At 31 March 2017, the Council's stock was at 52.7% compliance which is below both the Scottish average (74.2%) and the local authority average (70.8%). During 2016/17, the Council was below its own target of 66% for EESH compliance. This was because the cloned data used to estimate its baseline stock compliance was overstated. To address this, the Housing Service has taken steps to re-prioritise some areas of the housing investment programme to ensure where possible EESH compliance is achieved by the 2020 deadline. This 100% target remains challenging and a report will be presented to this Committee in December 2017 setting out all of the current issues.
- 4.10 Tenants satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in (78.3%) was below the Scottish average (90%) and the local authority average (88.2%). Of the 116 surveys returned in 2016/17, only 16 tenants expressed dissatisfaction with the standard of their home.
- 4.11 Another indicator taken from the 2015 tenant survey is satisfaction with the quality of homes. The Council's result (86%) was similar to the Scottish average (86.9%) but better than the local authority average (82.7%).
- 4.12 Good performance continued for the average time to complete reactive repairs. In 2016/17, the average time to complete emergency repairs was 2.4 hours (Scottish average 4.7 hours, local authority average 5.5 hours) and non-emergency repairs were completed on average within 6.4 working days (Scottish average 7.1 working days, local authority average 8.7 working days). These results place the Council within the upper quartile for local authorities for responding to both emergency and non-emergency repairs.
- 4.13 The Council's performance for reactive repairs completed right first time was 85.9%. The national average was 92.4% and for local authorities was 92.1%. The Scottish Housing Regulator is reviewing the statutory performance indicators following the implementation of the revised Scottish Social Housing Charter on 1 April 2017. This is one of several indicators likely to be changed following complaints from landlords that it is particularly difficult to measure and in some cases unreliable, since the current calculation method understates the Council's performance.
- 4.14 The Council kept 92.4% of non-emergency repairs appointments. This was a similar result to the Scottish average (95.7%) and local authority average (95.2%). An upgrade to the Council's repairs appointments system and a new reporting tool aims to improve future performance.
- 4.15 Gas performance improved since the previous reporting year with 99.9% of services being carried out by the anniversary date. This was in line with both the Scottish average (99.9%) and the local authority average (99.9%).

- 4.16 Satisfaction with the repairs service (79.4%) was lower than the national average (90.6%) and the local authority average (92.3%). The low level of returns from repairs receipts meant that the service had to rely on 2015 survey data. Building Services are considering options to improve collection methods including the possibility of sending email surveys or the ability to use handheld PDAs to gather feedback from tenants. More recent data may show an improvement in performance.

### **Neighbourhood and Community**

- 4.17 The 2015 tenant survey found that satisfaction with the management of the neighbourhood at 76% was below the Scottish average (87.1%) but closer to the local authority average (81.9%).
- 4.18 The percentage of antisocial behaviour cases resolved within local target timescales (77.5%) was below the Scottish average (87.2%) and local authority average (87.2%). On 1 April 2017, the timescales for resolving antisocial behaviour complaints were extended for Category B and C complaints to make them more realistic for the multi-agency approach. The timescales for the most serious Category A complaints will remain the same.
- 4.19 The percentage of tenancy offers refused (33.1%) was better than the Scottish average (37.3%) and places Moray just within the upper quartile for local authorities. A low refusal rate plays an important role in minimising void periods and rent loss.

### **Access to Housing and Support**

- 4.20 Tenancy sustainment, where tenancies lasted for more than 12 months, was higher in Moray (92.7%) than the Scottish average (89%).
- 4.21 The Council's turnover of properties (6.4%) was lower than the average for all social landlords (8.4%) and for local authorities only (8.2%). This demonstrates the acute pressures on the supply of affordable housing in Moray.
- 4.22 The Council approved 73.7% of medical adaptations and completed these within an average of 42.6 days. This compares nationally at 86.2% and 51.8 days respectively. The governance arrangements for adaptations have now transferred to the Integration Joint Board which has established a governance group to drive improvements in the delivery of adaptations. The Housing service is represented in this group.
- 4.23 The proportion of court actions resulting in eviction in Moray (11.4%) was lower than the Scottish average (16.9%) and for local authorities (14.1%). All of the Council's court actions in 2016/17 were for rent arrears. The Housing Service only uses eviction as a last resort where all efforts to engage with the tenant have been unsuccessful.
- 4.24 The average stay in temporary accommodation (77.2 days) was shorter than the national average (97 days) and places the Council within the upper quartile. The Council made an offer of temporary accommodation to all homeless households who required it. There has been progress on

temporary accommodation refusal rates (2016/17 11.1%, 2015/16 14.3%) but refusal rates in Moray remained slightly higher than the local authority average (8.5%). This was mainly due to households refusing offers due to location (33.7%) and no shows (27.9%).

- 4.25 Although response rates for surveys were low, the feedback on the quality of temporary accommodation shows that 89.8% were satisfied with the quality of temporary accommodation provided. This was above the national average of 85.9%.

#### **Getting Good Value from Rents and Service Charges**

- 4.26 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 (£55.06) remains significantly lower than both the Scottish average (£74.44) and the local authority average (£70.40). Moray has the second lowest overall average weekly rent of all local authorities and housing associations.
- 4.27 The 2015 survey found that 84% of tenants feel their rent is good value for money which was better than the Scottish average of 81.9%.
- 4.28 The rent lost through properties being vacant in Moray was 0.5%, which is almost half the Scottish average of 0.9%, and places the Council within the upper quartile for local authorities. The time to re-let empty properties in Moray (30.8 days) was also better than the Scottish average (31.5 days) and the average for local authorities (36 days).
- 4.29 The Council collected 99.5% of the total rent due which was similar to the previous financial year (99.8%) and the Scottish average (99.6%).
- 4.30 The Council had the lowest rent arrears (2.5%) of all local authorities. The Scottish average was 5.3% and the local authority average is 6.5%. It is expected that the full rollout of Universal Credit from April 2018 will present challenges to social landlords when dealing with rent arrears.

### **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 Comments from tenants who returned their feedback form from the 2015/16 performance report and the Moray Tenants Forum have helped to shape the content and design theme of the 2016/17 performance report. 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.

5.3 Due to the challenging timescales involved in producing the report to tenants and other customers, it was not possible to submit the draft report to Committee for approval. However, the Convenor, Council Leader, Chair and Vice Chair of Communities Committee were invited to comment on the draft prior to printing.

## 6. **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 (Caroline Howie), the Legal Services Manager (Property and Contracts), the Principal Accountant (Deborah O'Shea) whose comments have been incorporated in this report.

**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.**

Author of Report: Daska Murray, Senior Housing Officer (Information)  
Background Papers: With author  
Ref: