

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

HOUSING SERVICES PERFORMANCE UPDATE - ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ABSTRACT

This report gives an update on the Council's performance in relation to housing services, what action is being taken to improve performance, and provides information to support members to agree the annual assurance statement required by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).

1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) notes the Council's performance in relation to its statutory obligations for housing services;
- (ii) agrees that the evidence provided is sufficient to assure members that the Council is meeting its statutory obligations in relation to housing services; and
- (iii) approves the draft Annual Assurance Statement attached as Appendix 1.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following outcomes contained within the Council Plan 2019 – 2024.

- We want our communities to be strong and resilient and led by citizens; and
- We want Angus Council to be efficient and effective.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 As outlined in detail in Report No 175/19 in May 2019, all Scottish social landlords are required to ensure their governing bodies are assured that they are meeting their statutory obligations in relation to housing. This is demonstrated by the submission of an Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).

3.2 Members agreed the above report which outlined what evidence would be provided to members to ensure they could be assured that the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in relation to housing.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has had an effect on both performance and the carrying out of service improvement activity. This affected performance in 2019/20, but has had an even greater effect in 2020/21, since much of the service's business was curtailed due to Scottish Government restrictions, particularly in relation to repairs and allocations.

4.2 The following evidence is or has been provided in accordance with Report No 175/19:

- Charter Information Report (Appendix 2): this annual report summarises how the Council is performing in relation to each of the areas covered by the Charter and what we are doing to deal with any areas of poor or declining performance.
- Housing capital and revenue budget performance – Report No 21/21 was agreed by Committee in February 2021 and it set out the actual Capital and Revenue spend to 31 December each year together with projected outturns for the full financial year and any required updated capital funding proposals

- HRA Rent setting and budget strategy – Report No 25/21 was agreed by Committee in February 2021 and it set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget strategy for a five year period and sought approval of rent levels and other associated charges for the forthcoming year. It also set out estimated income and expenditure for the following year, capital investment proposals, affordability assessment and recommended a continued programme of investment in new and existing stock.
- Scrutiny Panel: We have been unable to hold Scrutiny Panels in 2020/21 due to the reluctance of tenants to engage with this online, which was the only option available to us due to restrictions and despite advertising this widely through our engagement channels. We hope to resurrect this activity in 2022/23 depending on interest from tenants.
- Housing Improvement Team (HIT) reports: Our HIT activity was put on hold for much of 2020/21 due to pandemic restrictions, and has only recently restarted. Two reports were tabled at Housing Management Team:
 - Income Management (Appendix 3)
 - Tenant Participation (Appendix 4)
 - Maintaining and Improving Homes (Appendix 6)
- Performance Management Framework report (Appendix 5): – Each month, the Performance and Access team provides a detailed performance information sheet to the Housing Management Team. This is accompanied by a summary document of charts and analysis to draw managers' attention to any areas of concern. The attached report is a complete set of indicators for the full year 2020/21.

5. ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT

- 5.1 To comply with the Regulatory Framework, the governing body must decide whether the service is meeting all its statutory obligations. The governing body must provide an annual assurance statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator by October of each year either stating that they are assured the landlord is meeting all its statutory obligations or outlining areas of material non-compliance and steps being taken to rectify them.
- 5.2 In light of the information provided to members, it is recommended that the draft Annual Assurance Statement attached as Appendix 1 is submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator stating that the Council is meeting all its statutory obligations. The agreed statement must also be published so that service users are aware of the Council's position, and, as such, it is intended to publish the finalised statement on the Housing Blog which is issued to service users and promoted through corporate social media channels.
- 5.3 The Regulator has asked all social landlords to make reference to their approach to equalities in this year's statement. New non-statutory guidance on Equalities was recently issued by the Scottish Housing Regulator and this will be considered by the Department in due course.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (IF APPLICABLE)

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Report No 175/19 - New Regulatory Framework for Housing Services and Annual Assurance Statement

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Draft Annual Assurance Statement

Appendix 2 – Information Report for the Period 2020/21: Scottish Social Housing Charter Return: Results

Appendix 3 – Income Management HIT Report

Appendix 4 – Tenant Participation HIT Report

Appendix 5 – Performance Management Framework Report

Appendix 6 – Maintaining and Improving Homes HIT Report