

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2021

INFORMATION REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 2020/2021

SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER RETURN: RESULTS

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

ABSTRACT

This report provides information to members with regard to services in the Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth Directorate, albeit that a decision is not required in terms of the current Scheme of Delegation to Officers and the Order of Reference of Committees.

1. BACKGROUND

The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into force in April 2012, and since then our performance has been reported through the set of indicators in the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC). The purpose of this annual return is to monitor performance to ensure quality and value for money for tenants and customers for the services they receive. The results are published annually for all Local Authorities (LAs) and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Scotland which helps us to compare our performance and make improvements within our own services by adopting good practice of other landlords.

Our Housing Improvement Teams (HITs) have been set up to identify areas for improvement and put in place plans to deliver these improvements. There are five HITs, each made up of a core group of Council staff and subgroups where required. For each HIT the core group agrees an action plan, based on current understanding of performance in each area as well as any legislative changes and good practice guidance. Housing Improvement Teams have been set up with an aim to make improvements in service and performance through staff and customer involvement, and to tackle legislative, regulatory and audit requirements.

The five HITs are:

1. Income Management
2. Maintaining & Improving Homes
3. Housing Options
4. Homes & Communities
5. Tenant Participation

These HITs correspond with the Charter outcomes and the indicators which form the ARC. An important section of the Charter includes satisfaction indicators which show how housing service customers view the services provided to them.

To produce the number of returns desired to give a good indication of customer views, an external service provider was contracted – Research Resource. 1,003 telephone interviews were carried out in the summer of 2020, which represents approximately 15% of all tenants.

2. DETAIL

Income Management

The remit of the Income Management HIT consists of achieving good value from rents and service charges, including arrears and voids.

| | Angus 2019/20 | Scottish Average 2019/20 | Angus 2020/21 | Scottish Average 2020/21 |
|---|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| All Arrears as a % of Gross Rent | 8.88% | 7.00% | 8.49% | 7.76% |
| % Rent Loss due to Empty Properties | 2.32% | 0.99% | 4.43% | 1.30% |
| % Rent Collected in the Year* | 100.15% | 99.14% | 106.76% | 98.68% |
| Average Time (Days) Taken to Re-let all Properties | 47.15 days | 35.30 days | 51.46 days | 57.11 days |
| % of Tenants Satisfied that our Rent Represents Value for Money | 80.67% | 84% | 86.04% | 82.32% |

(*Note – this indicator is defined as:

The total amount of rent collected over the year from both current and former tenants for the current and past years (this includes rent arrears collected) and housing costs received directly by the landlord.)

The service redesign and new escalation policy have now been in place for four years. The gross rent arrears have successfully been reduced this year.

Unfortunately there has been a spike in the average days taken to re-let properties, and the rent lost due to empty properties has significantly deteriorated this year. However, this is due to the allocation of properties being restricted during lockdown.

Maintaining & Improving Homes

The Maintaining & Improving Homes HIT ensures that properties are well-maintained, that any repairs are completed to a high standard, and that tenants are kept informed about when repairs will be carried out.

| | Angus 2019/20 | Scottish Average 2019/20 | Angus 2020/21 | Scottish Average 2020/21 |
|--|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| % of Repairs Completed First Time | 84.44% | 92.38% | 70.56% | 92.99% |
| Total % of Stock Meeting SHQS | 93.94% | 94.90% | 94.24% | 90.41% |
| Total % of Stock Meeting EESSH | 74.69% | 84.10% | 78.95% | 86.30% |
| % Satisfaction with the Repair Service | 85.47% | 91.14% | 81.71% | 90.23% |

Over the last few years there have been significant improvements in the repair indicators, although the percentage of repairs completed First Time have dropped. The stock meeting SHQS and EESSH have improved slightly.

Housing Options

The Housing Options HIT aims to ensure that there is a consistent approach in the delivery of the Housing Options Service in line with current legislation, policies and procedures. The service provides advice to anyone who needs it to help them find, keep and maintain their home.

| | Angus 2019/20 | Scottish Average 2019/20 | Angus 2020/21 | Scottish Average 2020/21 |
|---|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| % of Tenancies Sustained more than 1 year | 88.58% | 89.30% | 88.49% | 91.13% |

Tenancy Sustainment has been maintained this year, however sometimes the ending of a tenancy is not for negative reasons.

Several of the Housing Options indicators in the ARC which monitored prevention of homelessness and temporary accommodation have been removed, however these are monitored through other returns submitted to Scottish Government.

Homes & Communities

The Homes & Communities HIT encompasses tenancy management, estate management, gypsy travellers and anti-social behaviour (ASB). The main indicators for this HIT look at the level of tenant satisfaction with the management of their home, and the number of ASB cases reported and resolved.

| | Angus 2019/20 | Scottish Average 2019/20 | Angus 2020/21 | Scottish Average 2020/21 |
|--|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| % of Anti-Social Behaviour cases reported in the last year which were resolved | 100% | 94.10% | 100% | 93.96% |
| % Satisfaction with landlord's contribution to management of neighbourhood | N/A | 84.92% | 91.72% | 83.47% |

(Note – the Technical Guidance issued by the Scottish Housing Regulator defines a resolved case as one:

- where the landlord has taken appropriate measures, as set out in its ASB policies and procedures, to address the cause of the anti-social behaviour complaint and has advised the complainant of the outcome; or
- where the landlord does not have the authority or powers to resolve and it has provided a full explanation of the landlord's position to the complainant.)

We have successfully maintained our resolution of ASB cases this year. The Council resolves ASB in a number of ways, and follows a well-structured set of guidelines, and we will continue to develop methods of dealing with cases.

Tenant Participation

The main indicators for the Tenant Participation HIT include the satisfaction with opportunities to participate, and with being kept informed.

| | Angus 2019/20 | Scottish Average 2019/20 | Angus 2020/21 | Scottish Average 2020/21 |
|--|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| % Satisfaction with overall service provided by their landlord | 80.77% | 82.33% | 88.04% | 84.94% |
| % Satisfaction with being Kept Informed about services and decisions | 78.69% | 86.02% | 94.02% | 86.38% |
| % Satisfaction with Opportunities to Participate | 59.27% | 79.46% | 93.02% | 80.62% |

There have been improvements across all of the above satisfaction indicators compared to the results from the previous survey, and these indicators are now performing better than the Scottish average.

We will continue to develop our communication methods which will ensure tenants are well-informed and equipped to participate, influence housing policies and make informed choices.

3. CONCLUSIONS

This year there have been both positive and negative changes in the performance levels. There has been significant work to maintain and improve performance under the extenuating circumstances of the pandemic. We expect that social landlords across Scotland will have experienced similar challenges.

4. REPORT AUTHOR

This report and associated schedules has been compiled by John Morrow, Service Leader (Housing) who can be contacted by emailing Communities@angus.gov.uk.