

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 1 OCTOBER 2024

HOUSING SERVICES PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT UPDATE AND ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT

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

1. ABSTRACT

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

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

2.1 Caring for our people

- Reduce inequalities in all our communities.
- Provide the best start in life for children.
- Create more opportunities for people to live well and achieve their personal goals.
- Improve physical, mental health and wellbeing.

2.2 Caring for our place

- Protect and enhance our natural and built environment.
- Enable inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe communities across Angus.

3. RECOMMENDATION

3.1 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 with the exceptions noted at paragraph 6.2;
- (iii) approves the draft Annual Assurance Statement, attached as Appendix 1;
- (iv) notes the Scottish Social Housing Charter Return results, detailed in Appendix 2; and
- (v) notes the progress made in delivery of the Housing Service Improvement Plan, detailed in Appendix 3.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 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).
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 The Housing Service Improvement Plan 2024/25, approved by Angus Council Committee on 20 June 2024 (Report No 203/24), was developed and implemented from April 2024 in response to

challenges and concerns around several critical service areas. A number of improvement actions were identified across three service improvement priority areas for 2024/25: Customer Excellence, Housing Quality and Place; and Prevention and Homelessness. Embedding a programme of continuous improvement and the development of a Digital Strategy were identified as enablers for the delivery of the improvements.

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), the SHR assesses the level of risk associated with the activities carried out by all social landlords. In March of each year, the SHR publish an annual engagement plan which outlines why they are working with each landlord, what the landlord needs to do and what it needs to provide. This year, Angus Council's engagement plan identified us as a medium risk landlord based on a number of areas including services for people who are homeless, service quality, stock quality and tenant and resident safety. We are providing regular updates to the Regulator on how we are addressing these concerns. The engagement plan is published [here](#).
- 5.2 While the current engagement plan is based on performance reported for the year 2022/23, it should be noted that although performance has improved against some indicators in 2023/24 (the period covered by this Annual Assurance Statement), there are others where it has declined. Satisfaction rates have reduced across several satisfaction indicators compared to the previous tenant satisfaction survey results in 2020 – which saw the highest ever levels of tenant satisfaction recorded for Angus. The percentage of rent collected has declined, and there were high levels of former tenant rent arrears written off at the year end. Percentage of lets to homeless households has reduced and continues to sit below the Scottish Local Authority average. This is resulting in a significant increase in the number of homeless waiting list applicants and causing increased pressures on temporary accommodation provision. Performance against the ARC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is outlined in Appendix 2.
- 5.3 The implementation of the Housing Service Improvement Plan in April 2024 takes forward several key programmes of work to refocus and improve service delivery, increase tenant satisfaction, improve performance and ensure regulatory and legislative compliance. The progress made on our Service Improvement Plan over the past five months demonstrates our commitment to improvement and delivering high-quality, customer focussed services. Whilst we have achieved significant milestones and have started to see improvements in performance against some of our KPIs, we recognise that continuous improvement is essential to meeting the needs of our tenants and other service users and improving performance. We also continue to experience significant challenges due to the ongoing housing crisis, rising housing costs, an insufficient supply of affordable housing and increasing homelessness.
- 5.4 The following evidence is or has been provided in accordance with Report No 175/19:
- Charter Return Results (Appendix 2): this appendix summarises how the Council is performing against the ARC Key Performance Indicators. All indicators used to compile the ARC return, are defined in the [Technical Guidance](#) issued and regularly reviewed by the Regulator.
 - Housing capital and revenue budget performance – Report No 29/24 was agreed by Communities Committee (special) in February 2024. 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 30/24 was agreed by Communities Committee (special) in February 2024. It set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget strategy for the period of 2024/25 to 2027/28 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.
 - Housing Service Improvement Plan Progress Report (Appendix 3): this appendix provides the first progress report for the Housing Service Improvement Plan, covering the period 1 April 2024 – 31 August 2024. The report highlights the progress made by each of the Service Delivery Groups, potential risks to delivery of improvements and impact against performance to date.

6. PROPOSALS

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 In light of the information provided to members, it is proposed 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, with some exceptions noted: compliance with Electrical Installations and Smoke and Heat Alarms elements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and instances where we have breached the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, caused by an increased use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for people who are homeless.
- 6.3 The agreed assurance statement must be published so that tenants and other service users are aware of the Council's position, and, as such, we propose to publish the finalised statement via the Housing Blog and Tenants Newsletter.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No additional financial implications will arise as a result of this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Failure to deliver the improvement actions identified in the Housing Service Improvement Plan will result in the Council failing to comply with our legal obligations relating to housing and homelessness and tenant and resident safety.

Risk and risk mitigation forms part of each priority of the Improvement Plan: additional resources have been recruited to the Housing Asset team to ensure robust management of electrical and fire safety contracts and measures introduced to address access issues to properties.

Regular review meetings are being held with the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership to monitor the current position in relation to resource issues in the Homelessness Prevention and Solutions Teams and a budget bid is being prepared for additional funding. A review of the supply of temporary accommodation is underway, a temporary accommodation taskforce is to be established to review households in temporary accommodation and a review of the Common Allocation Policy will increase allocations to homelessness to ensure we meet our statutory duties in relation to homelessness.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

10. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

- 10.1 A screening assessment has been undertaken and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required for the following reasons:
- The report is reflective on the previous year's performance and progress against the Service Improvement Plan 2024/25.
 - An Equality Impact Assessment has already been carried out and published for the Housing Service Improvement Plan.

11. CHILDRENS RIGHTS AND WELLBEING IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 A Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment was carried out within the EIA completed for the Housing Service Improvement Plan.

12. CONSULTATION

- 12.1 The Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Legal, Governance and Change have been consulted in the preparing of this report.

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
- Report No 203/24 – Housing Service Improvement Plan 2024/25

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Draft Annual Assurance Statement

Appendix 2 - Scottish Social Housing Charter Return: Results

Appendix 3 - Housing Service Improvement Plan Progress Report (August 2024)