

Aberdeen Soroptimist Housing Society Limited

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Aberdeen Soroptimist Housing Society Limited

Assurance Statement: November 2020

In accordance with the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator, I the undersigned provide the following statement in respect of assurance and compliance for the Aberdeen Soroptimist Housing Society.

Osprey Housing Group (OHG) provides a full management agency service to the Aberdeen Soroptimist Housing Society including governance support and services to tenants.

The Board of Directors confirm that based on comprehensive evidence available to us and scrutinised throughout the year we are assured the Society complies with all relevant standards and outcomes in the Charter; all relevant legislative duties; and the Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

The Board meeting structure is such that the sources and level of assurance in relation to compliance is clear to the Society. Board members are directly involved in the ongoing monitoring of the evidence base that provides us with the level of assurance needed.

COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact

Our 2020 Assurance Statement represents the unprecedented times and circumstances in which the Society and its managing agents are now operating.

The UK and Scottish Governments announcement of full lockdown in late March triggered implementation of our managing agents Major Incident Plan in which the Society's operations are included. The resultant impact and risk assessments enabled a response action plan to be drawn up and applied ensuring continuation of services albeit on a restricted and prioritised basis.

Implementation of the Major Incident Plan and particularly the switch to remote working was smooth and without interruption to core contact and delivery of the restricted service levels. The Board is reassured by the agility of OHG's core infrastructure to ensure business and service continuity.

The Scottish Housing Regulator was advised of the restricted service levels, impact on normal compliance with regulatory standards and emergency measures applied in relation to continuation of Governance and services to tenants. The Board can confirm that it was kept advised and informed at all stages and endorsed the response action plan.

Re-emergence

After the initial response phase while continuing to manage the ongoing impact of COVID-19 our managing agents have planned and gradually implemented a recovery strategy. The Board has been involved in and approved the recovery strategy with ongoing monitoring.

The strategy and associated action plan provide a structure and framework based on OHG's organisational capacity, focus on tenant/staff/governing body welfare, meeting the needs of tenants and key guidance from Government, SHR and other key bodies such as the SFHA.

The Board is assured the strategy has identified the range of new risks that will impact short and longer term for the Society and its tenants. The Board is also aware the strategy has been submitted to the SHR as part of the OHG's update on how the ongoing impact of COVID-19 is being managed.

Key objectives of the managing agents COVID-19 Recovery Strategy are to:

- Identify new risks/issues facing tenants
- Further strengthen resilience
- Focus on any specific areas of the business likely to be affected
- Ensure the capacity to provide an agile response to varying levels of restrictions that affect individual people, businesses and the nature of interactions.
- Evolve a "new normal" business and service delivery model that takes account of potential long term and long-lasting changes.
- Prioritise people, safety and continuous engagement - allocating staff/other resources accordingly.
- Reshape business plan and business continuity strategy
- Ensure increased focus on communications

Overall Assurance

Sources of assurance are mapped against regulatory requirements and standards in a detailed compliance register held by the managing agent.

Evidence of sources of assurance presented to and scrutinised by the Board include:

- Performance monitoring reports on key business areas such as finance, asset management, housing management, service delivery, development and risk management
- Detailed reports and updates from the Chief Executive and Senior Management team of the managing agent
- Audit reports
- Reports and analysis from other external bodies and specialist consultants when required
- Evidence of the managing agents own assurance process including assurance statement and use of self-assurance toolkit
- Outcomes from the Board appraisal process
- Outcomes from tenant engagement

Our level of compliance remains subject to constant review and scrutiny with a view to trying to achieve continuous improvement.

Following the change to submission timetable this Assurance Statement was agreed by the Board at its meeting on Thursday 19th November 2020.

I am authorised to sign the statement on behalf of the Board of Directors.

Signed:

Alison Mitchell
Chairman