

## **Fife Council Annual Assurance Statement 2025**

The People & Communities Scrutiny Committee at a meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 sought appropriate assurance that Fife Council Housing Service comply with all relevant requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulatory Framework; relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter; and relevant legislative duties. Evidence has been considered through regular performance reporting and liaison with the tenant forum to support the required level of assurance.

On review of the evidence provided, it can be confirmed the Council recognises material non-compliance in the following standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and other service users. These areas are a focal point for improvement throughout 2025-26.

### **Areas of Non-Compliance:**

#### **Homelessness**

During 2024-25, a slight reduction in new homeless presentations is evident. Pressure on temporary accommodation remains significant with demand and supply constraints resulting in households staying longer in temporary accommodation. Despite this, a reduction in the use of hotels and B&B accommodation is evident, with plans developing to reduce the use of hostel accommodation in 2025-26. Live homeless cases reduced from 1,938 to 1,678 in year as a result of increased allocations, a focus on prevention and enhanced case management. The Service continues to focus on homelessness pressures and meeting statutory duties, as part of a core strand of the Housing Emergency response. The improvement actions currently under implementation are to:

- Boost rapid rehousing and minimise customer transitions by increasing scatter flat flipping from 100 to 200 annually.
- Enhance the number of property acquisitions to meet the needs of homeless households and those from resettlement / humanitarian schemes.
- Develop a temporary and supported accommodation strategy which will outline plans to decommission or reprovise unsuitable accommodation.
- Review frontline services linking to Fife Council No Wrong Door transformational change programme.
- Proactively redevelop the housing advice, options and prevention framework to promote informed housing choices and pathways.
- Implement the Voids Service Improvement Plan to reduce relet times to 25 days and reduce void rent loss while promoting a transfer led approach to housing allocations.
- Review the Housing Allocation Policy to promote a simplified, partnership focus on housing need and promote prevention through managed pathways for those most at risk of homelessness.

Resources permitting, additional actions which are being considered for 2025/26 (some of which link to the Housing Emergency Strategic Statement) are:

- Enhance community-based temporary accommodation, create a Private Sector Leasing scheme and explore other private sector interventions to help achieve statutory duty compliance.
- Implement objectives in temporary and supported accommodation strategy to enable plans to decommission or reprovise unsuitable accommodation.
- Enhance a revised frontline housing options service as part of a Whole Systems and Wider Task Force approach, to prepare for a Homelessness Prevention Duty.
- Seek cross organisational support to upscale Housing First tenancies from 115 to 200 and continue to diversify the programme.
- Build on learning from Health & Social Care Partnership tests of change to redevelop commissioned services, focusing on housing and accommodation-based support.

## **Tenant and Resident Safety:**

With regards to tenant and resident safety, compliance is recorded against water safety, lift safety and asbestos. A robust programme of work is in place to address the following tenant and resident safety requirements where Fife Council are not fully compliant. These areas are closely monitored to ensure compliance moving forward.

### **Gas Safety**

The Council recognise non-compliance in six cases where gas safety checks were not carried out within timescale, thus breaching a statutory duty. All failures were linked to procedural failures where a change to gas reporting systems resulted in a temporary issue with anniversary dates. To fully rectify this and prevent any future failures, the improvement actions in place for 2025-26 are to:

- Implement an improved procedure and liaise with area team colleagues to ensure a second gas safety check is conducted prior to keys being handed over to new tenants.
- Continue close monitoring of properties, processes and procedures through the gas governance group.

### **Electrical Safety**

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, 3,358 properties did not have a valid electrical safety certificate. This is the outcome of denied access by tenants, resulting in a backlog of properties without a valid certificate.

To ensure compliance moving forward, the improvement actions identified for 2025-26 are to:

- Conduct face-to-face communication with tenants denying access to explain the importance of electrical safety inspections and the benefits for both tenants and properties.
- Implement an enforced access procedure where access is denied on two previous occasions. This will mirror the process progressed for no access gas safety cases.
- Conduct in excess of 6,000 electrical safety tests per annum to ensure the backlog is cleared.
- Implement a new Housing Asset Management System to allow closer monitoring of component replacement programmes.

### **Fire Safety**

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, 890 properties recorded non-compliance with fire and smoke alarm requirements. This is the result of denied property access preventing the installation of interlinked smoke alarms and the checking of anniversary dates. Duplication is recorded between the non-compliant fire safety properties and non-compliant EICR properties impacted by denied access.

To ensure compliance moving forward, the improvement actions identified for 2025-26 are to:

- Implement an enforced access procedure where access is denied on two previous occasions. This will mirror the process progressed for no access gas safety cases.
- Implement a new Housing Asset Management System to allow closer monitoring of component replacement programmes and improved accuracy of recording and reporting.

A programme of work is on-going in two high rise blocks in Fife to improve fire safety. The £7 million large scale works include the replacement of External Wall Insulation, an upgraded heating system, internal fire safety works including a fire alarm evacuation system and the replacement of older kitchens and bathrooms. Work is well underway with the completion anticipated by December 2025.

On 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025, Cabinet Committee agreed to a series of actions to further enhance fire safety in high-rise and medium-rise flats, sheltered housing and homeless hostels as a result of the Scottish Government response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2. Over a 5-10-year period, a 4-stage process will be implemented to conduct improvements and minimise current and future risk. A costed work programme, through the HRA Capital Plan, will be drawn up over coming months.

### **Damp & Mould**

Fife Council recognise the legal, health and reputational risks of failing to effectively tackle damp and mould in Council housing. During 2024-25, 2,353 referrals were received and dealt with through a proactive approach

established for tackling dampness, condensation and black mould. The approach involves a dedicated team resourced to offer specialist advice, a Building Services team and external specialists who undertake dampness mitigation work and fuel poverty support and advice where this is identified as a contributing factor. Damp, mould and condensation routine referrals continue to be received and dealt with in a timeously manner.

### **Pressures:**

The Committee considered pressures for 2025-26 and the mitigation measures to support these.

#### **Housing Emergency**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024, Fife Council declared a housing emergency due to the unprecedented pressures on housing and homelessness services. During June 2025, Cabinet Committee approved a Housing Emergency Strategic Statement and 24 high impact and priority actions for further consultation and development. The actions follow the themes of; maintaining the supply of affordable housing, making best use of existing properties and enhancing housing access and prevention of homelessness as outlined as the structure of the High-Level Action Plan in June 2024.

The approach will be developed and refined through the governance structure and continued engagement with the Scottish Government Housing Emergency Unit, peer local authorities and national bodies such as ALACHO, CIH Scotland and Shelter Scotland.

#### **Average time to relet properties**

In 2024-25, the average time to relet reduced to 36.74 days which is just outside local authority top quartile performance. The Voids Governance Group continues to implement change and react to a recent Tenant and Resident Scrutiny Panel report with the intention to achieve below 25 days by the end of 2025-26. A technical team has been established to oversee voids from pre-termination to final clean. Arrangements are ongoing to re-provision and improve the Clean and Clear contract. There are ongoing issues with utilities partnerships following the unexpected departure of delivery partner Utilita. The Governance Group are confident a new partnership will be in place soon.

#### **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Plan Viability**

Following a series of below inflation rent increases and cost of borrowing pressures on the financial viability of the HRA, the 30-year HRA Business Plan and Capital Plan is placed under increased risk. This restricts the Council's borrowing ability to fund affordable housing programmes, stock improvements to meet SHQS (including non-traditional housing stock), Social Housing Net Zero Standards and improved fire safety measures as a result of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2. To ensure future viability, a robust business plan review process is in place, alongside reviewing service efficiencies and consideration of service delivery deferrals in non-statutory areas.

### **Equalities and Human Rights:**

Fife Council recognises it has responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. It is committed to promoting equality, addressing discrimination and providing housing as a human right, despite the challenges faced through the housing emergency. Some examples of how this is achieved are:

- Collecting equalities data on our staff, tenants, homeless customers, Gypsy/Travellers and service users to help understand needs and being clear on how data is used.
- Completing equality impact assessments and carrying out consultation on all new strategies, policies, regulation, programmes and decisions, prior to approval through Committee.
- Safeguarding people with protected characteristics through the provision of Gypsy/Traveller sites, temporary accommodation, older persons and specific needs housing, and refuge provision.
- Implementing a 3-year capital improvement programme of work to Gypsy/Traveller sites in Fife to install chalets and energy efficiency improvements, following consultation with site tenants.
- Eliminating discrimination and promoting diversity through extensive staff training, including equality and diversity, equality in recruitment, mental health and gender equality.

## **People & Communities Scrutiny Committee Date: 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

**Councillor Judy Hamilton**  
**Spokesperson Housing and Building Services**

**Cllr Gary Holt**  
**Convenor People & Communities Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

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