



## **Fife Council Annual Assurance Statement 2020**

Fife Council's Community and Housing Services Sub-Committee on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020 sought appropriate assurance that Council housing services comply with all relevant requirements of the Scottish housing regulatory framework; all relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter; and all relevant legislative duties. Evidence has been considered through a regular cycle of performance reporting and liaison with tenant organisations to support the required level of assurance.

On review of the evidence provided principally through the Annual Return on the Charter 2019-20, it can be confirmed that Fife 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 will be a focus for performance improvement throughout 2020-21.

### **Areas of Material Non-Compliance**

#### **• Gas Safety**

The Scottish Housing Regulator previously highlighted concerns to Fife Council around its failure to carry out annual gas safety in 100% of homes. The Council recognises there was non-compliance in **35** cases in 2019-20 when gas safety checks were not carried out within timescale, thus breaching the statutory duty.

The improvement actions identified for delivery in 2020-21 are to:

- Frequently monitor the IT systems and dashboard supporting gas safety.
- Cross-check addresses for compliance / non-compliance / non-access prior to the expiry of the anniversary date.
- Use broader methods for contacting tenants to remind of appointments e.g. texting, telephoning, support by area staff, etc.
- Provide enhanced input and support to tenants at an earlier stage in the process to help address issues of non-access due to lifestyle issues or other concerns e.g. health issues during Covid-19.

#### **• Homelessness**

The Scottish Housing Regulator has previously highlighted concerns in how people access homelessness services, in the assessment of homelessness applications, offers of temporary or emergency accommodation and the provision of satisfactory outcomes for people who are homeless. Fife Council recognises it has not met the statutory responsibility to accommodate 100% of homeless customers in 2019-20, failing on **4** occasions to offer temporary accommodation.

The improvement actions identified for delivery in 2020-21 are to:

- Continue to provide enhanced monitoring, reporting and escalation arrangements for temporary accommodation allocations to ensure 100% compliance.
- Recognise the threat of possible increases in homelessness presentations due to Covid-19 and put in place specific mitigation measures for that eventuality, ensuring a Prevention First approach is prioritised.
- Increase the range of temporary accommodation provisions and ensuring protocols are in place to comply with the extension of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order to all customer groups from 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- Continue to develop the housing advice framework to focus on housing options and homelessness prevention to reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation.
- Deliver the 2020-21 RRTP commitments by;
  - Further developing the concept and funding model for emergency temporary accommodation for people with complex needs.
  - Implementing a test of change to provide Housing First tenancies with the Health and Social Care Partnership and explore all Partnership opportunities to advance delivery
  - Working with the Public Social Partnership to implement the recommendations of the formal, independent review of commissioned services.
  - Continuing to work with the area housing teams and Fife Housing Register partners to increase statutory homelessness allocations in line with the Housing Allocations Recovery Plan.
  - Carrying out a review of Fife's Housing Options and Prevention approach to minimise pressure on temporary accommodation resources and implementing agreed improvement actions arising from this review by October 2020.
  - Continuing to develop and roll out additional supported accommodation options for those that require more intensive support.

## **Future Risk Areas**

The Committee also considered future risk areas for 2020-21, specifically arising through the Covid-19 emergency.

### **• Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish Social Housing (EESH)**

Performance for 2019-20 highlights that 79.03% of the Council's housing stock currently meets EESH standards, presenting a significant risk to the Council's ability to deliver EESH by December 2020.

The improvement actions identified for delivery in 2020-21 are to:

- Frequently monitor and update the Promaster stock data system.
- Conduct additional surveys.
- Improve access to properties with area staff with localised knowledge contacting tenants to confirm appointments e.g. texting, telephoning, etc.
- Continue to programme work with a focus on EESH compliance.
- Target investment to maximise EESH compliance rates, as agreed by the Council's Policy & Co-ordination Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

- **Internal Recharging to the HRA**

There is potential for a significant proportion of Building Services' employee costs during lockdown to be attributed to the HRA, subject to advice by the Scottish Housing Regulator and Audit Scotland.

The improvement actions identified for delivery in 2020-21 are to:

- Continue to work with Finance Services to agree the final HRA financial contribution.
- Seek advice from the Scottish Housing Regulator and Audit Scotland on any charging proposals.
- Consult with tenants and obtaining their views on any charging proposals.
- Report to Committee on any charging proposals informed by feedback from tenants.

**Community and Housing Services Sub-Committee Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020**