

Glen Oaks Housing Association - Assurance Statement 2022

The Board confirms that we have reviewed and assessed a comprehensive bank of evidence to support this Statement that Glen Oaks Housing Association is, to the best of our knowledge, compliant with:

- All relevant regulatory requirements as set out in Section Three of the Regulatory Framework
- The relevant standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- The Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management
- Our statutory obligations in respect of tenant and resident safety, housing and homelessness and equalities and human rights

The evidence bank comprising, in 2022 of 120 separate items combines reports, policies, advice and information which the Board monitors and oversees on an ongoing basis throughout the year to provide continuous assurance that Glen Oaks Housing Association is compliant. The evidence which supports this Statement includes:

- Reports about performance in key areas including: finance, service delivery, asset management, development and risk
- Internal and External Audit reports
- Advice from external and specialist advisers
- Tenant Scrutiny reports and the outcomes from specific consultation
- Data analysis about our tenants and customers
- Benchmarking
- Reports, advice and information from senior staff

In reviewing the evidence and assessing compliance, we have undertaken a self-assessment process as detailed in the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's self-assurance toolkit. We have obtained extremely thorough external support from our Internal Auditors to provide us with additional assurance that our self-assessment approach and the evidence provided to the Board is effective and robust.

In assessing the evidence, we have adopted an improvement focus which has resulted in the creation of an Action Plan which we have begun to implement and will continue to progress during the course of the year. We have reviewed the identified actions in the improvement action plan and are satisfied that all are intended to deliver effective improvement and that none are material to our current compliance with the Framework. This includes the requirement to meet Equality and Human Rights requirements, where we are continuing to work towards compliance.

2022 has again been dominated by the worldwide Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic. The Association reacted quickly to the pandemic and as far as our governance is concerned, we have ensured that the Board are fully informed and in control. We already used online software for Board papers and our Board have met via online video conference meetings, moving to Hybrid meetings of in person and online format in mid 2022. The Association has followed government advice and taken all relevant steps to keep our tenants, staff and board members safe. Our office is now open on an appointment basis for tenants, with initial contact encouraged via telephone, email, website and portal. Our staff are working in a Hybrid fashion, spending part of the week in the office and part of the week working from home, all the while focussing on delivering excellent customer service. Our tenants have been kept up to date with the changes to our service via text message, our Facebook page, our website and our newsletter. The Board continues to monitor the Impact of Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis on the Association's Business and Financial plans, both for the current year and future years. Our future financial projections have been updated to reflect the changing circumstances and continue to show a strong financial position.

The Association is extremely mindful of the cost of living crisis affecting its tenants. When setting the Association's rent increase for 2022/2023 the Association was concerned to ensure that while we required to meet our business costs we also had to strike a balance between this and ensuring that our rents are affordable for our tenants. The Association gave an informed choice to its tenants on rent increase options and received a high level of feedback from our tenants on these, prior to the Board setting the Association's rent increase.

As regards Health & Safety compliance we continue meet our obligations to tenants. In relation to annual gas servicing our ability to achieve 100% compliance was affected by the Covid pandemic as we could not carry out this task if tenants were suffering symptoms at the time when the service was due. This is not as common now as it was and the Association can now demonstrate 99%+ compliance.

The Association must now have an Electrical Installation Compliance Report in place for all its properties at least once every 5 years. This has now been incorporated into the Tolerable Standard criterion of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and is therefore now part of the Annual Return on the Charter submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator. At the time of writing, the Association is 81% compliant (equating to 1092 out of a total of 1348 properties) and has recently reviewed its Electrical Safety Policy to allow it to force access to properties if necessary, where the property does not have an up to date Electrical Installation Compliance Report. This action is very much a last resort if access has not been given to carry this out within the relevant timescale.

We are assured that Glen Oaks Housing Association has the necessary arrangements in place to identify any risks to compliance in the course of the conduct of our business and governance arrangements and in the event that there are any changes to our compliance the Scottish Housing Regulator would be notified. The Board has been actively involved in the development and assessment of the evidence bank and monitors regulatory and legal compliance on a regular and ongoing basis.

As Chair, I was authorised by the Board at a meeting held on Wednesday 26 October 2022 to sign and submit this Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator. We confirm that this Assurance Statement is being published on our website on the same date that it is submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Simon Gaunt, Chairperson, Glen Oaks Housing Association

26 October 2022