

The Highland Council

Annual Assurance Statement 2019

Legislative compliance

We can confirm that Highland Council achieves all the following standards and outcomes for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services:-

- All relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework;
- All relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter;
- Return on the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing
- All relevant legislative duties.

Further to this, we can confirm that there were no health & safety breaches in 2018-19 resulting in intervention by the Health & Safety Executive. Our compliance with the annual gas servicing requirements specified in the Framework was 100% for 2018-19.

Committee Reporting

We can confirm the following reporting structure within the Council:-

- Each of the 8 Area Committees receives quarterly or bi-annual housing performance reports and also reports on request of the Area Chair/Members;
- The Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee receives quarterly performance reports on key performance indicators and monitoring reports on other housing policy issues;
- Quarterly financial reports on spend against the Housing Revenue Account and non-Housing Revenue Account housing expenditure are submitted to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee;
- Reports are submitted annually (or on request of Members) to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee on the subjects of the Highland Housing Register; the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan; and an update on Tenant Participation;
- Reports are submitted on a quarterly basis to the strategic Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee on financial spend and progress against the Council's Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme;
- Reports relating to housing services will also be subject to full Council and the Council's Audit & Scrutiny Committee as appropriate; and
- Council Members and tenant representatives will also meet as a Policy Development Group 2-3 times a year to identify policy review issues as appropriate.

The Area and Strategic Committee reporting is based almost exclusively on the performance indicators as established by the Scottish Housing Regulator in its Charter and by the Scottish Government in its Quarterly Homelessness Return.

From October 2018 there have been tenant-nominated tenant representatives at Care, Learning and Housing Committee and also at the associated Policy Development Groups.

Annual Customer Report for Tenants

The annual report for tenants will be provided to tenants by 31 October 2019 as required by the Scottish Housing Regulator. This will include key information which is of interest to tenants.

As part of this annual process the Council asks the views of the tenant groups / fora ahead of publication and their views will be taken into account in producing the final document.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Council is required to undertake a wholesale tenants' satisfaction survey every 3 years.

A range of other customer satisfaction surveys are in place across the Service in order to assess the quality of the service on an ongoing basis. These include:-

- New tenants' survey regarding the quality of home and service;
- Repairs Satisfaction survey;
- Capital Improvements satisfaction survey; and
- Homelessness service questionnaire

In addition, information is used from complaints and general feedback as encouraged by footnotes on all correspondence. The information is used to inform the Council of any potential service improvements.

Other forms of tenant feedback include but are not limited to the following:-

- Homelessness client group
- Young tenants focus group
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Tenant involvement in the Trades Redesign
- Gypsy/Traveller client group
- Rate your Estate inspections.

The Council has been participating in the Scottish Government's Next Steps Programme and tenants have been actively involved in drafting a Tenant Participation Action Plan which will be made available to Members later this calendar year. The Tenant Participation Advisory Service has commended Highland staff and tenants for their ability to work together to identify how tenant participation can be progressed in Highland.

Scottish Housing Regulator's Engagement Plan

The Scottish Housing Regulator's Engagement Plan in April 2019 highlighted key indicators, relating to service quality, where they indicated they wished to engage with the Council. These are: -

- monitoring compliance with the Council's statutory duties in relation to offers of temporary accommodation and the unsuitable accommodation order;
- reviewing engagement with the Council following submission of its Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan;
- monitor delivery of the minimum standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites;
 - review Charter performance in regard to the following indicators:
 - overall satisfaction;
 - satisfaction with the Council keeping tenants informed about services and decisions;
 - satisfaction with opportunities to participate;
 - satisfaction with the quality of home;
 - complaints' management; and
 - factored owners' satisfaction with the factoring service.

Updated information relating to these indicators was provided to the Regulator in May and June 2019.

The Regulator provided an updated Engagement Plan in August 2019. In response Highland detailed the recent progress made in terms of mitigating homelessness in Highland, including confirmation that Highland has had no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order to date in 2019-2020.