

Annual Assurance Statement: Inverclyde Council

The purpose of this Annual Assurance Statement is to reassure the Scottish Housing Regulator, our tenants and other service users that Inverclyde Council complies with its regulatory and statutory obligations as set out in section 3 of the regulatory requirements. In areas where there is no (or part) material compliance we have indicated how we are planning to improve in those areas and the timeframe for improvement.

Homelessness Services

As a local authority we can confirm that we meet our statutory duties to prevent and alleviate homelessness, together with our duties regarding our legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness, equality and human rights and tenant and resident safety. As Inverclyde Council only has a limited housing stock, most of which are on secure tenancies, our tenants have a direct relationship with officers and the customer/landlord relationship must be considered within that context.

We can confirm that Inverclyde Council achieves all but the following standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services:

The homeless service is undergoing a programme of transformational change, working with all statutory agencies by placing a focus on prevention activity, supporting tenants and improving partnership working with local Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), Third Sector providers and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) partners in ensuring tenancy sustainment.

We continue to meet our duty to assess homelessness within the designated timescales and provide temporary accommodation for households where homelessness cannot be prevented. Where people have complex needs, the rapid rehousing support team is being embedded into practice and regulated by the care inspectorate to ensure the ethos and principles of housing first. A monitoring framework and team plan, linked to the Inverclyde Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP), housing contribution statement and HSCP Strategic plan is in place.

The service has significantly improved its offer of temporary accommodation in the reporting year covered by this Annual Assurance Statement, with no breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

Housing Stock

Last year it was reported that Inverclyde Council had 13 houses, 10 of which fell within the scope of the annual assurance statement, since that time, 4 of these houses have been sold either to the sitting tenants or as they had become vacant. As such it is confirmed that the Council currently has 9 houses, 3 of which do not fall within the scope of the Scottish Housing Regulator as one is vacant and currently on the market and the other two are not on Scottish Secure tenancies. This report focuses on the remaining six houses.

All of Inverclyde Council's housing stock had condition surveys carried out in March 2022 by external agents Brown & Wallace Building Surveyors. The report highlighted a number of repairs and upgrades required to the houses to ensure they met current SHQS and EESSH standards. The council is currently in discussion with Sanctuary Homes regarding transferring their ownership of these 6 houses to Sanctuary and as such only routine maintenance and emergency repairs plus small upgrades to the Whinhill former schoolhouse have been carried out to the houses over the past year. The Council is presently finalising the due diligence required to appoint the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) as the independent tenant advisor during the transfer process. Should the tenants agree to the transfer, then all works confirmed as requiring attention within a 5-year period, as detailed within the condition reports, will be carried out to the houses within the first year of transfer. This will ensure they are all brought up to SHQS and EESSH standard. Should the tenants choose to stay with the council then the council will ensure that all necessary works to ensure compliance will be completed as soon as possible.

Currently 3 of the 6 houses pass both the SHQS and the EESSH, these are St Francis former schoolhouse; Whinhill former schoolhouse; Ardgowan former schoolhouse. In terms of future energy efficiency upgrades St Francis and Whinhill are both timber framed houses which are unsuitable for cavity wall insulation, and Ardgowan former schoolhouse is of solid construction and so has no cavity to insulate. The remaining 3 houses all fail the SHQS as they all require cavity wall insulation, these houses are St Michael's former schoolhouse; Moorfoot former schoolhouse and St Patrick's former schoolhouse. Of the 3 houses failing the SHQS, 2 also fail the EESSH. It is also noted that Moorfoot former schoolhouse would require the permission of an adjacent owner before cavity wall insulation could be considered.

The terms of transfer have almost been agreed and once due diligence has been confirmed, the 6 tenants on Scottish Secure Tenancies will be asked to attend a meeting with council officers and Sanctuary staff, to go over the proposals. The council will also provide for the tenants to be given access to TPAS who will give support to the tenants and advise them of their rights. Following completion of the consultation process, formal Notices and a ballot will be sent to the 6 tenants and, should a majority verdict in favour of the transfer be obtained, the houses will then be transferred to Sanctuary.

The Council has two houses which are located within parks, however, these are not on Scottish Secure Tenancies and are therefore not affected by the legislation. The third park house was sold to the sitting tenant during the past year.

We confirm that we have utilised and considered appropriate evidence to give us this assurance. This Assurance Statement was formally approved by the Council's Environment & Regeneration Committee on 2nd November 2023.

Classification : Official

Cllr Michael McCormick
Convenor
Environment & Regeneration Committee
Inverclyde Council