
Report To:	Environment & Regeneration Committee	Date:	27 October 2022
Report By:	Interim Director, Environment & Regeneration	Report No:	ENV037/22/MM
Contact Officer:	Martin McNab	Contact No:	01475 714246
Subject:	Annual Assurance Statement		

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 For Decision For Information/Noting
- 1.2 To seek the Committee's approval for Inverclyde Council's Annual Assurance Statement.
- 1.3 The Annual Assurance Statement must be approved and returned to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31st October 2022. The Assurance Statement covers homelessness services and the condition of Council housing stock which in Inverclyde amounts to the former tied houses following stock transfer. The Annual Assurance Statement for 2022/23 is attached at Appendix 1.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Committee approves the Annual Assurance Statement for 2022/23.

Stuart Jamieson
Interim Director, Environment & Regeneration

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council is required to make two returns to the Scottish Housing Regulator every year. These are the Annual Return on Charter (ARC) and the Annual Assurance Statement. As and when the Council finally transfers the tied houses to a suitable RSL both the Arc and the part of the Annual Assurance Statement relating to stock will no longer be required. This will leave simply the homelessness section of the Annual Assurance Statement to be completed.
- 3.2 Homelessness continues to have some issues around compliance with the Unsuitable Accommodation Order however over the last year the majority of these can be related to issues arising from the pandemic. Members will also note from the statement that homelessness services are currently undergoing a major transformation aimed at configuring services better and separating elements of support services from the core role of reducing and avoiding homelessness.
- 3.3 Members will also note that negotiations are currently underway with Sanctuary Housing Association on the possible transfer of the former tied houses. This follows on from negotiations with RCH.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO	N/A
Financial		X	
Legal/Risk		X	
Human Resources		X	
Strategic (LOIP/Corporate Plan)		X	
Equalities & Fairer Scotland Duty		X	
Children & Young People's Rights & Wellbeing		X	
Environmental & Sustainability		X	
Data Protection		X	

4.2 Finance

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (if Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

4.3 Legal/Risk

The Council is required to return the Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing regulator.

4.4 Human Resources

None.

4.5 Strategic

None.

4.6 Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty

None.

(a) Equalities

This report has been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process with the following outcome:

	YES – Assessed as relevant and an EqIA is required.
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, assessed as not relevant and no EqIA is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant under the Fairer Scotland Duty.

4.7 Children and Young People

Has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – Assessed as relevant and a CRWIA is required.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve a new policy, function or strategy or recommends a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy which will have an impact on children's rights.

4.8 Environmental/Sustainability

Summarise any environmental / climate change impacts which relate to this report.

Has a Strategic Environmental Assessment been carried out?

	YES – assessed as relevant and a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required.
X	NO – This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy or document which is like to have significant environmental effects, if implemented.

4.9 Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO – Assessed as not relevant as this report does not involve data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Head of Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Recovery and Homelessness Services and the Interim Head of Property Services have been consulted on this report.

6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 None.

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 in a period of recovery from the pandemic and continues to work with all statutory agencies and within guidelines to ensure the needs of people threatened with or in a homeless situation have their needs assessed and met. This includes a number of focused areas of improvement and increased levels of partnership working with local RSL's, Third sector providers and HSCP partners. This includes a refreshed internal performance monitoring framework and team plan, linked to the Inverclyde RRTP, housing contribution statement and HSCP Strategic plan.

In line with our RRTP, different streams of prevention of homelessness activities are being reinforced. These includes prison liberations, hospital discharge, Section 11 referrals and tenancy abandonment interventions. We continue to meet our duty to provide temporary accommodation for households where homelessness cannot be prevented making sure homelessness assessments are carried out within stipulated timeframe and sourcing permanent housing through local housing providers.

We also continued to complete Housing Support assessment and provide support when required. To enhance this duty, a new in house support team tagged 'Rapid Rehousing Support Team' with eight (8) support workers and a Coordinator has been created. This will support delivery of Housing Support duties and Housing First model.

In the year covered by this Annual Assurance Statement there were 57 breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. The vast majority of these (over 70%) are related to the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and hotels arising from the ongoing impact of the Covid pandemic. It is likely that the pandemic was also a factor in a significant proportion of the remaining breaches.

Housing Stock

All of Inverclyde Council's housing stock had condition surveys carried out in March 2022 by external agents Brown & Wallace Building Surveyors. The Council has 13 houses, 3 of which do not fall within the scope of the Scottish Housing Regulator as one is vacant pending sale and the other two are not on Scottish Secure tenancies, as such this report focuses on the remaining ten houses.

There are 55 criteria contained within 5 annexes of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), the surveys and subsequent advice confirm that eight of the Council's ten houses fail the SHQS under one criteria, the other two houses pass the standard. Seven of the eight houses failing under one criteria do so because they have not yet had either cavity wall or loft insulation installed, once this has been carried out these houses will pass. It should be noted that one house cannot have the insulation installed until approval from the adjacent private house has been obtained. The remaining house which fails under one criteria does so because it requires additional kitchen storage, this however should be rectified this year as this house is due to have a new kitchen installed.

The survey report also incorporates an assessment in relation to the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) and those houses meeting this standard. It is reported that four houses meet current ESSH requirements, six do not. If cavity wall insulation is installed in these houses then they will all pass this standard.

Inverclyde Council is now engaged with Sanctuary Housing Association regarding a potential transfer of its housing stock to the RSL, as River Clyde Homes have now pulled out of all discussions. Any transfer will require arriving at agreed terms and conditions before engaging with the tenants. Sanctuary has been provided with all necessary information required to carry out an appraisal of the council's portfolio which will allow them to arrive at suitable terms and conditions and negotiations are currently ongoing. Any transfer will require to take account of the works required to bring the houses up to current SHQS and ESSH standards and will include life cycle costings to ensure these standards are maintained and improved to meet future standards.

Once agreed terms of transfer has been achieved and committee authority obtained, all affected tenants will be contacted to advise of the Council's proposals. The council will also provide for the tenants to be given access to the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) who will give support to the tenants and advise them of their rights. Finally assuming agreement is reached with Sanctuary then a consultation and ballot will be carried out and if a majority of tenants agree to the transfer then it will go ahead.

The Council has three houses which are located within parks, two of which are not on Scottish Secure Tenancies and are therefore not affected by the legislation. The third park house will be included in any proposed transfer.

It is noted that a number of tenants have expressed an interest in acquiring their house. Legal advice has been sought and council has been advised that there is no reason not to sell to the sitting tenant should this be considered acceptable to both parties. Sanctuary have been advised that the Council may sell part of its stock to those tenants wishing to do so and this will be incorporated into any appraisal. The tenant consultation cannot commence until such time as agreed terms and conditions of transfer between the Council and Sanctuary has been completed.

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 27th October 2022.

Cllr Michael McCormick
Convenor
Environment & Regeneration Committee
Inverclyde Council