



Assurance Statement: 2024

Introduction

In accordance with the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), I the undersigned provide the following statement in respect of assurance and compliance for Osprey Housing Limited.

The Board of Directors of Osprey Housing confirm that based on review and assessment of a comprehensive assurance framework, evidence available to us and scrutinised throughout the year we are assured Osprey Housing complies with all relevant standards and outcomes in the Charter; all relevant legislative duties; and the Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

This Assurance Statement is provided on behalf of the Board of Osprey Housing. The sources and level of assurance in relation to compliance is clear to the Board and, members are directly involved in the ongoing development, monitoring and scrutiny of the evidence base. This process has been further enhanced this year by the introduction of an ongoing working group and continual improvement action plan.

We recognise that we are required to notify the SHR of any changes in our compliance during the course of the year and are assured that we have effective arrangements in place to enable us to do so.

Continual Improvement Culture

Osprey Housing remains a robust and consistently high performing organisation despite the challenges of the ongoing cost of living crisis and the uncertain political environment faced by the sector. We are proactive in identifying and dealing with risks and their potential impacts particularly on our financial resilience through what has been a volatile economic period. The Board are assured we have identified and reviewed the range of new risks that have/will impact short and longer term for both the organisation and our tenants/customers.

In living our core values and delivering our organisational vision we remain focussed on opportunities to improve how we embed good practise to remain adaptable, flexible, compassionate and responsive as we look forward and plan ahead. Following the completion of transfer of engagements within the Group during 2021 and the subsequent sale of our Midmarket stock we have continued to be able to maximise the financial efficiencies of operating as a single entity with a clear focus on social housing. This has enabled our ability to sustain a Development Programme whilst continuing to deliver improved services to our existing tenants.

We value our people, both staff and Board, and their ongoing wellbeing and development remains a priority to ensure our team are equipped with the knowledge, skills and motivation they need to deliver good outcomes for our tenants, both strategically and operationally. During 2023 this was formally recognised as we retained our Gold level IIP accreditation.

Our culture embeds high performance and outcomes for our tenants. This process includes identifying continual improvement and embracing the evolution of service delivery to meet tenant expectations. We remain satisfied that all planned enhancements are designed to deliver effective improvement and that they complement our current compliance with the Framework.



Strategic Planning and delivering our Vision

Our Strategic Plan was developed and agreed by the Board in May 2022 and has been reviewed annually to monitor and measure delivery against our four key Strategic ambitions. Part of this process is an annual SWOT review, ensuring we remain aware and vigilant around our internal strengths and weaknesses alongside the changing external environment we operate within. Our tenant first approach to service delivery is re-emphasised in the Plan, with a clear commitment to tenancy support and sustainment embedded, reflecting this in our organisational structure.

Our current deliverable activities and actions throughout the year;

- **Financial Business Planning** – We have fully refreshed our business plan to take into account the requirements to meet net zero targets in the future for our stock portfolio. We continue to conduct financial business planning alongside our commitment to affordability for our tenants with the rent strategy and decision making taking all factors into account. This is supported by an external financial consultant who meet directly with the Board.
- **Cyber Security** – We continue to be accredited to Cyber Essentials Plus, renewing our certification status in 2024. We have introduced an extensive staff and board training portal and awareness programme in relation to cyber security.
- **Digital** – Following implementation of a new housing management software system in October 2022 we have continued to maximise the capabilities of the system to enhance internal efficiency and effectiveness to improve tenant service delivery and accessibility.
- **Compliance** – Tenant and resident safety remains a priority, continuing to improve how we report and respond to relevant tenant facing issues including damp and mould. We are compliant in our framework for gas safety, electrical safety, water safety, asbestos, lift and fire safety legislation. We have chosen tenant and resident safety as a subject for internal audit during 2024 to further strengthen our assurance on this subject.
- **Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) commitment** - Embedding an ESG framework via formal adoption of the Social Rented Standard (SRS) with our first ESG report published in October 2023. We are a Carbon Literate organisation having achieved Silver CLO accreditation during 2023.
- **Equalities and Human Rights** – We have appropriate systems in place for the collection of equalities data. Data collection has been conducted with staff, board members and tenants' information has been collected. We are assured that we are working towards using this data to take account of equality and human rights issues in our decisions, policy-making and day-to-day service delivery through the introduction of Equality Impact Assessments in our policies and decision making processes.

Governance and Assurance

Continuing our embedded overall approach to assurance, we have further enhanced our existing process by the introduction of an Assurance Working Group who have conducted additional scrutiny supported by an external consultant during 2024. Our evidence sources have been mapped against regulatory requirements and standards. Our approach and framework was reviewed against the SFHA Self-Assessment Guidance and toolkit and the updated Regulatory Standards.



Evidence of those sources of assurance include:

- Informed decision making process through Board report template cross referencing strategic risk, strategic ambition, financial impact, regulatory and legislative requirements, tenant and equality direct impacts for each decision and report presented through the governance cycle.
- External and Internal audit frameworks and reporting process. We appointed a new internal auditor in January 2024.
- Performance monitoring reports aligned with on-going Charter outcomes across the key business areas such as finance, asset management, housing management, health and safety, governance, tenant satisfaction and service delivery.
- Detailed reports and updates from the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team.
- Comprehensive strategy and policy framework. This now includes Equality Impact Assessments being included during reviews to ensure equality is embedded.
- Reports and analysis from external auditors, appointed advisers and specialist consultant advisers all of whom provide external independent evaluation, feedback and validation. The Board have direct access to our external consultants.
- Independent resilience evaluation of the Osprey Financial Business Plan including scenario stress testing supported by external consultant.
- Comprehensive Board Appraisal process with subsequent skills matrix, training plan outcomes and succession planning. This year the appraisal process has been shadowed by an external consultant who has subsequently given a report of findings that positively reinforce that our approach is robust, collaborative and comprehensive.
- Effective sector engagement and benchmarking.
- Consultation and engagement with Osprey Tenants and Residents Association (OTRA) and wider tenant base on relevant subjects and engagement projects undertaken. OTRA have had refreshed scrutiny training to ensure they are fully informed and equipped to undertake these activities.

In reviewing evidence and assessing compliance we have taken account of good practice advice. Our level of compliance remains subject to constant review and scrutiny with a focus on continuous improvement.

As Chair, I was authorised by the Board at a meeting held on 18th September 2024 to sign and submit this Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator and, I confirm that it is being published on our website on the same date that it is submitted.

Brian Watson
Chair