Appendix 1

Scottish Borders Council Annual Assurance Statement 2025/2026 to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Homelessness Service

Scottish Borders Council's Homelessness Service is responsible for the delivery of housing options, homelessness advice, and assistance to individuals and households across the Scottish Borders. As a stock transfer authority, the Council does not retain its own housing stock. Consequently, it has established and maintains strong strategic partnerships with the four principal Registered Social Landlords operating within the area. These arrangements ensure the Council can effectively meet its statutory duties, including the provision of permanent accommodation to households assessed as homeless.

A trauma-informed, person-centred approach underpins our service delivery, ensuring compliance with the legislative requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework. The Service submits quarterly statutory returns to the Scottish Government and completes the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator each year.

The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) sets out the Council's strategic approach to preventing and addressing homelessness across the Scottish Borders. Delivery of the RRTP is overseen by the Borders Homelessness and Health Strategic Partnership (BHHSP), which provides governance and strategic leadership. Actions arising from the RRTP have been aligned with and incorporated into the Council's Housing Emergency Action Plan for 2026/27.

We continue to meet the statutory obligation to provide temporary accommodation in mainstream furnished properties across a range of communities within the Scottish Borders.

- Over the past year, the Service has experienced increased demand for temporary accommodation, with 403 placements representing a significant rise compared to the previous year. This has resulted in greater reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation and an increase in breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. In response, Scottish Borders Council is expanding its temporary accommodation portfolio to 157 properties, an increase from 144 last year. In addition, the Council is collaborating closely with Registered Social Landlord partners to improve throughput from temporary accommodation, increasing availability aiming to reduce the length of time households spend in temporary accommodation.

- As part of our homelessness prevention activity, and in response to required new duties set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2025, the Service work collaboratively with Registered Social Landlords, private sector landlords, and partner organisations to identify and support households at risk of losing their home. We are strengthening service resilience and early intervention capacity through the development of a Homelessness Prevention Panel to realign staff roles to support earlier intervention and enhance prevention pathways.

- To support effective reporting our internal health and safety compliance group has continued to work to provide assurance on compliance to standards of tenant and resident safety. We have gained assurance from our Registered Social Landlord partners of compliance in respect of duties relating to gas, electrical, fire, and water safety and obligations relating to asbestos, damp, and mould for our temporary accommodation properties. In reviewing our compliance with the

Regulatory Framework, we are satisfied that we meet all our duties in relation to homelessness services, equality and human rights and tenant and resident safety.

- As a stock transfer authority, Scottish Borders Council, has robust maintenance processes are in place, and recording arrangements are in works to strengthen and ensure compliance with requirements for accurate and up-to-date information on the construction, components, and condition of homes managed by the Council and owned by local Registered Social Landlord partners.

Gypsy Travellers

Gypsy/Traveller Site Provision – The Council's designated Gypsy/Traveller site at Tweedside Caravan Park, Innerleithen continues to meet the Scottish Government's minimum standards. Arrangements are in place to collect relevant data on protected characteristics for site users through a feedback survey, providing all households who stay on the site with the opportunity to share their experiences and inform service improvements.

The Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer maintains regular engagement with the site operator through routine visits, supporting the development of positive and constructive working relationships. The Council's Property Services teams ensure that high standards of repair and maintenance are maintained, supported by regular inspections from the locality Property Officer.

Ongoing engagement also takes place with Gypsy/Travellers at unauthorised encampments, supported by the implementation of a Good Neighbourhood Code. Welfare checks are undertaken to identify any education, health, or wider support needs, ensuring that timely and appropriate referrals are made.

We confirm that, in respect of landlord services provided by the Council, we are assured that the Council complies with the regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework, including:

- All relevant standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter in relation to tenants, people experiencing homelessness, and others in receipt of housing services.
- All legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.
- The Scottish Borders Council Annual Assurance Statement for 2025/26 to the Scottish Housing Regulator is reported under Section 8 of the 2025/26 Director – Resilient Communities Assurance Statement on Internal Control and Governance. This, in turn, informs the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 by the Chief Executive, which was considered by the Council's Audit Committee at its meeting on 22nd June 2026.

Signed: Jenni Craig, Director – Resilient Communities

Signed: Councillor Elaine Thornton-Nicol, Chair of Audit Committee