
ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2019/20 TO THE SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR

Report by Service Director Customer and Communities

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 October 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report proposes that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee considers and approves an Annual Assurance Statement 2019/20 of the Service Director Customer and Communities in respect of landlord services provided by the Council for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.**
- 1.2 In 2019, the Scottish Housing Regulator (“the Regulator”) revised its Regulatory Framework. This placed a new requirement on all Social Landlords to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the Regulator by the end of October each year.
- 1.3 Part of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee’s remit (Audit function) is to assess the effectiveness of internal controls, risk management, and governance arrangements in place at the Council to achieve its objectives.
- 1.4 The Section 8 of the Annual Assurance Statement 2019/20 of the Service Director Customer and Communities, at Appendix 1, is designed to meet this requirement of the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- 1.5 It is the opinion of the Service Director Customer and Communities that, although there are a few areas of work to be completed for full compliance with the revised Regulatory Framework, the overall arrangements in respect of landlord services provided by the Council are operating satisfactorily.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 I recommend that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Considers the details of the Annual Assurance Statement 2019/20 of the Service Director Customer and Communities in respect of landlord services provided by the Council (Appendix 1), and acknowledges the actions identified by Management to improve arrangements; and**
- b) Approves that it be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2019, the Scottish Housing Regulator (“the Regulator”) revised its Regulatory Framework. This placed a new requirement on all Social Landlords to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the Regulator by the end of October each year. This statement must either confirm that the Governing Body or appropriate Committee is assured that the Landlord is complying with all relevant regulatory requirements and standards, or highlight any material areas of non-compliance and how the Landlord will address these.
- 3.2 As Scottish Borders Council is a housing stock transfer local authority, it is subject to submitting a Statement that is considerably less involved than an asset-owning authority. However, the Council is responsible for Homelessness Services provision in the Scottish Borders and must give assurance in this area.
- 3.3 There is no prescribed format, wording or length for the Statement, which allows some flexibility in its preparation, and materiality of any perceived non-compliance identified in this process should form the basis of an internal action plan for improvement.
- 3.5 Part of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee’s remit (Audit function) is to assess the effectiveness of internal controls, risk management, and governance arrangements in place. This includes to ‘Be satisfied that the authority’s assurance statements, including the Annual Governance Statement, properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it, and demonstrate how governance supports the achievements of the authority’s objectives’¹.

4 ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2019/20 IN RESPECT OF LANDLORD SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL

- 4.1 Section 8 of the Service Director Customer and Communities’ Annual Assurance Statement 2019/20, at Appendix 1, has been added to the standard template for Service Directors Annual Assurance Statement to meet this requirement of the Scottish Housing Regulator. It confirms the Council’s level of compliance with all of the relevant requirements set out at Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework, to include:
 - a) all relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter in respect of any tenants, homeless persons, and other person who are in receipt of housing services; and
 - b) legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.
- 4.2 Section 8 of the Service Director Customer and Communities’ Annual Assurance Statement 2019/20 is informed by the self-assessment of compliance against the Regulatory Framework by the Homelessness Services Manager, and the work of Audit and Inspection bodies.
- 4.3 It is the opinion of the Service Director Customer and Communities that, although there are a few areas of work to be completed for full compliance with the revised Regulatory Framework, the overall arrangements in respect of landlord services provided by the Council are operating satisfactorily.
- 4.4 For 2020/21 onwards the intention is to present the assurance statement required by the Scottish Housing Regulator’s revised Regulatory Framework

¹ CIPFA guidance note for local authorities ‘Audit Committees’ (2018)
Audit and Scrutiny Committee 22 October 2020

to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee at the same meeting as the Chief Executive's Annual Governance Statement.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The Annual Assurance Statement 2019/20 in respect of landlord services provided by the Council details areas where additional work would further enhance the arrangements to meet the Regulatory Framework.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

This is a routine good governance report for assurance purposes, not a new or revised policy or strategy for decision and, as a result, completion of an integrated impact assessment is not an applicable consideration.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no direct economic, social or environmental issues with this report.

5.5 Carbon Management

There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of this report.

5.6 Rural Proofing

This report does not relate to a new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation are required as a result of this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Executive Director Finance & Regulatory, Chief Legal Officer (and Monitoring Officer), Service Director HR & Communications, Clerk to the Council, and Communications team have been consulted on this report and any comments received have been incorporated.

Approved by

Jenni Craig

Service Director Customer and Communities

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jill Stacey	Chief Officer Audit & Risk Tel: 01835 825036
David Kemp	Homelessness Services Manager Tel: 01896 661387

Background Papers: Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework

Previous Minute Reference: Audit and Scrutiny Committee 25 November 2019

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by using the contact details below. Information on other language translations can also be given as well as provision of additional copies.

Contact us at dkemp@scotborders.gov.uk