

August 2024

West Dunbartonshire Council Annual Assurance Statement

As Convener of the Housing and Communities Committee I confirm that we have seen appropriate evidence to give us assurance that:

- We comply with all the relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework.
- We are achieving all the relevant standards and outcomes outlined in the Scottish Social Housing Charter, and
- We are compliant with all relevant legislative duties associated with housing and homelessness services, tenant and resident safety and equality and human rights.

Revised guidance that was published in February 2024 following the review of the Regulatory Framework, explains that landlords may be asked to provide specific assurance on a particular issue in their Annual Assurance Statement. A letter from the Scottish Housing Regulator received in March 2024 stated that for this year, there is a request that landlords provide specific assurance on their compliance with relevant obligations in relation to tenant and resident safety.

Tenant and resident safety:

Our obligations around tenant and resident safety are a key priority for our Maintenance, Repair and Asset Improvement Services managed by Building Services and are monitored closely. This includes areas such as gas safety, electrical safety, fire safety, lift safety, asbestos safety, water safety and damp and mould. Relevant assurance around tenant and resident safety is provided to the Housing and Communities Committee, including data for a suite of performance indicators.

Whilst there are currently no cases being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) relating to the safety of our tenants and residents, the HSE did carry out an unannounced site visit at a structural refurbishment site of 6 flats at 14 Bedford Avenue in February 2024. A material breach relating to respiratory sensitizers was identified, full cooperation was provided, and an improvement plan developed and accepted by the HSE. This was an operational issue that did not have any impact on tenant safety; all tenants were decanted from the block prior to work commencing.

We are therefore assured that we comply with all the relevant safety requirements and duties in relation to tenant and resident safety.

Areas of non-compliance

We comply with all the above requirements except for the areas set out below:

Compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard

Tenant safety within the Councils' housing stock is one of our main priorities and a key concern remains in terms of our rate of compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. The key driver for this is the number of properties that still require a valid Electrical Installation Condition Report.

We continue to make progress in this area, an EICR is completed in every property that becomes vacant, in properties that have any major electrical works completed and we are also targeting properties where any capital improvement works are being carried out. An additional contractor was also engaged in January 2024 to further increase capacity.

At the end of July 2024, 6734 or 64.5% of our properties had a valid EICR in place and our current projection is the programme will be up to date between May and December 2025.

Compliance with our homelessness duties due to breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order

Whilst we continue to meet our statutory responsibility of offering temporary accommodation to those that need it, we continue to report breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. Following the 21 breaches reported in 2022/23, we have seen a further 68 breaches reported during 2023/24.

Pressures around the homelessness system was one of the key contributing factors to us declaring a Housing Emergency within West Dunbartonshire in May 2024. Challenges remain in terms of the time being taken to move households experiencing homelessness into settled accommodation and the subsequent pressures which exist in terms of providing suitable temporary accommodation.

This remains a key area focus and alongside existing actions within our Road Rehousing Transition Plan, we have approved a Housing Emergency action plan which aims to ensure that we are doing all that we can to minimise any future breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order.

Our Annual Assurance Statement was considered at a meeting of the Housing and Communities Committee on 21 August 2024 and was formally approved and subsequently signed by me as Convener.

**Councillor Gurpreet Singh Johal,
Convener, Housing and Communities Committee**

21st August 2024