

WILLIAMSBURGH HOUSING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT TO THE SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR 2022

The Management Committee of Williamsburgh Housing Association has now completed the annual assessment of compliance with the Regulatory Framework and the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

In carrying out our assessment, we are satisfied that we have seen and considered sufficient appropriate and reliable evidence to confirm our level of assurance that, to the best of our knowledge and understanding, Williamsburgh Housing Association complies with the following:

- The regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework;
- The standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Relevant legislative duties; and
- The standards of governance and financial management for RSLs.

The assurance process that has evolved and been adopted at Williamsburgh Housing Association is based on the good practice advice that is provided in the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's tool kit, along with our own internal reporting considerations.

The Management Committee receives regular "Annual Assurance Statement" reports, and we conduct an annual self-assessment review prior to submission. These processes identify compliance evidence throughout the year. They also identify any potential areas of non-compliance and areas for improvement, which are taken forward as new business objectives. This process also informs whether (or not) any notification of change to our compliance status should be made to the Scottish Housing Regulator during the year.

Our 2022 assessment is based on a combination of Committee reports, internal audit reports, operational information that is held within our systems and records to support the reports and is readily available to the Management Committee collectively, individually and/or by our auditors as requested. This is supported by training for Management Committee to enable informed scrutiny in key compliance areas, for example Health and Safety. This combined approach, of evidence and informed scrutiny, contributes to our assurance on compliance and contributes to the overall control and governance of our Association.

Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

The Management Committee continued to receive monthly updates on the Coronavirus response to ensure compliance with changes to legislation, and to follow national requirements and advice from the Scottish Government and the Social Housing Resilience Group (SHRG). The easing of restrictions enabled the recovery process to start, however, we recognise that there has been major service disruption and it will take time for all services to return to pre-pandemic performance levels.

Service Performance

We continue to perform above the Scottish average in our key performance measures. Improvements in service performance in areas that had been impacted by the pandemic included increased rent recovery and reduced time taken to relet our homes.

Rent Affordability

We determined that rents would be frozen in 2021/22 to support our customers through the pandemic and then had a below inflation increase for the current year. Our average rent charge remains lower than 75% of the social housing sector in 2021/22.

We have worked hard to manage costs and recognise severe challenges are ahead in the inflationary environment of a cost-of-living crisis and new uncertainty on rent controls directed by the Scottish Government. We recognise that a balance needs to be found to support vital housing investment whilst keeping rents affordable. Planning is underway to identify actions required to respond to these challenges, including adapting our rent consultation process.

Tenant Safety

Ensuring the continued safety of our customers remains our top priority. Performance in gas safety returned to our pre-pandemic levels of 100% compliance. Tenant safety polices were reviewed and training was completed. An independent audit on health and safety compliance was also delivered.

The programme of Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) inspections was delayed following the refusal of some customers to provide access. Procedures have been changed, following legal advice, and all delayed inspections are programmed to be complete by March 2023. The programme of interlinked smoke detector upgrades will also complete by March 2023, following refusal of a small number of customers to provide access.

Asset Management

The planned maintenance programme was significantly impacted by pandemic access restrictions, supply chain shortages and cost increases. The delayed programmes are being re-scheduled and will be delivered through 2022-2024.

Our homes are subject to a new stock condition survey in 2022, which will inform a new asset management plan and our investment options, including for the Scottish Government's review of ESSH2 and expected focus on a carbon emissions net zero regulated housing standard.

Customer Engagement & Tenant Satisfaction

We have developed a new customer engagement strategy to recognise the need to refresh our customer feedback and involvement opportunities post-pandemic. We have also completed our large-scale customer satisfaction survey, following delays due to the pandemic. This produced good and encouraging results on tenant satisfaction overall. However, we are not complacent and will continue to identify improvements to our services.

Equalities and Human Rights

We completed two data gathering exercises to support compliance with information collection obligations and to improve our evidence base. This will be used to support the development of an equalities and human rights approach, seeking to enhance our commitment to equality and inclusivity.

New Homes

Our development programme continued to deliver new homes in 2022, with our Albert Road development expected to be fully let by December. The challenging context, of inflationary cost rises and uncertainty over future rent levels, has meant we are keeping our plans for new homes under continuous review.

Approval

The Management Committee of Williamsburgh Housing Association approved this Annual Assurance Statement at their meeting held on 26 October 2022 and authorised that it be signed on their behalf, by the Chairperson, Susan James, and subsequently submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

This statement will be made available to our tenants and other stakeholders by publishing it on our website.

We will notify the SHR of any changes in our compliance during the year ahead and confirm that we have effective arrangements in place to enable us to do so.

Susan James

**Chairperson
Williamsburgh Housing Association
26 October 2022**