

South Ayrshire Council

Report by Director of Housing, Operations and Development  
to Cabinet  
of 25 September 2024

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**Subject: Annual Assurance Statement – Housing**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Regulatory Framework for Housing and to seek Cabinet approval to submit the Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator and publish the statement for tenants and other customers.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:**

- 2.1.1 **notes the content of the Assurance Action Plan outlined at ([Appendix 1](#)) and the overview of operational service delivery outlined at ([Appendix 2](#)) and;**
- 2.1.2 **considers and approves the Annual Assurance Statement at ([Appendix 3](#));**
- 2.1.3 **approves the submission of the Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 October 2024 and its publication for tenants and other customers; and**
- 2.1.4 **notes the requirements of the Regulatory Framework and ongoing work outlined in section 4.1 to achieve full compliance in the areas of Equalities and Human Rights and tenant and resident safety and the position in relation to homelessness services.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The last Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) was submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) on 29 September 2023 following approval by Cabinet on 26 September 2023.
- 3.2 In February 2024, the SHR published updated guidance relating to the Regulatory Framework and Annual Assurance Statements. The Framework is SHR's statement on Performance of Functions setting out how they will regulate both Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) and the housing and homelessness services provided by Local Authorities. The website links to both guidance documents are included in the background papers section of this report.

- 3.3 SHR monitor, assess, report and intervene (as appropriate) in matters relating to performance of housing activities, and how services are delivered to tenants, people who are homeless, Gypsy/Travellers who use official sites provided by landlords and factored owners for both local authorities and Registered Social Landlords. In March 2024, SHR wrote to all Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to provide advice on preparation of the AAS due to be submitted to SHR by 31 October 2024. This included continued reference to assurances around a clear statement in the AAS on the Council's compliance with relevant obligations in relation to tenant and resident safety, in particular, compliance with relevant safety requirements across the areas of gas safety, electrical safety, water safety, fire safety, asbestos, damp and mould and lift safety.
- 3.4 When considering each of the Charter outcomes, landlords may decide that improvement action is required to meet an outcome and must consider the materiality of the issue. Website links to the Scottish Social Housing Charter, the Regulatory Framework and Annual Assurance Statement statutory guidance are included in the background papers section of the report.
- 3.5 The Regulator uses the approved Assurance Statement, along with the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to consider and determine its' level of engagement with landlords. Within the 2023 AAS, the Council reported full compliance with all requirements and outcomes, apart from for full compliance in the areas of collection of equalities information and the adoption of a human rights approach in our work.
- 3.6 In the published 2024/25 Engagement Plan for South Ayrshire Council, SHR confirmed that engagement will take place with the Council about its services for people who are homeless. Since Cabinet approved the last AAS on 26 September 2023, Officers from Housing Services have met with SHR representatives on two separate occasions (19 December 2023 and 17 July 2024). At the meeting on 19 December 2023, services to homeless people and aspects of landlord compliance obligations were discussed. At the meeting on 17 July 2024, the discussion focussed on services to homeless people. Information and responses were provided at this meeting to SHR as part of their Homeless Risk Assessment process. This was acknowledged by SHR who confirmed it would feed into the homelessness risk assessment process. The Council will be required to meet SHR's request for any further information and the requirement to make SHR aware of any emerging issues preventing the Council from fulfilling its statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation when it should and comply with the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. The website link to the 2024/25 Engagement Plan is included in the background papers section of this report.
- 3.7 South Ayrshire Council's 2023/24 ARC was submitted to SHR on 30 May 2024. The return provided details of the Council's performance across the range of indicators within the 16 Charter Outcomes. Prior to submission of the ARC, a Microsoft Teams Meeting was held on 29 May 2024 which was open to all Elected Members, tenant representatives and interested tenants. At this session each of the indicators were discussed, information was provided on levels of performance and explanations were given for any variances in performance compared to 2022/23. SHR published the 2023/24 Landlord Reports for South Ayrshire Council on 30 August 2024. For reference by Members, a website link to the is also included in the background papers section of this report.
- 3.8 As outlined in previous reports, within the Council's governance arrangements and in the Housing Service, there are existing measures and processes to manage,

scrutinise and report performance. These provide assurances and evidence that the Council is complying with the charter outcomes. The measures and arrangements outlined in the Assurance Action Plan at [Appendix 1](#) support the Council's approach to scrutiny and offer evidence and assurance on compliance with the charter outcomes and regulatory requirements.

- 3.9 Prior to the submission of the 2023/24 ARC, Internal Audit sampled 9 (22%) of the 41 indicators for review. The review of the indicators covered reconciling the methodology used by the service for calculating the indicators to the official guidance supplied by the SHR, matching the "raw" data extracted from the Northgate Housing System to the data used by the service to calculate the indicators and interrogating the data to ensure it only contain entries that were relevant to the indicator. Internal Audit concluded that '*Substantial Assurance*' - a sound system of governance, risk management and control exist, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.
- 3.10 As part of the approved Internal Audit Plan, Internal Audit are conducting an audit of the proposed AAS outlined in this report. At the time of preparing this report for Cabinet the audit was ongoing and it has been confirmed that the final audit report will be available after the AAS has been submitted to SHR. Feedback received from internal audit has confirmed that audit testing has been substantially completed without any significant issues arising. Future audits of the AAS will be undertaken on a three yearly basis from 2024/25.

#### 4. Proposals

- 4.1 Using available guidance and taking account of the guidance entitled 'Collecting Equality Information: National Guidance for Scottish Social Landlords' (revised June 2022) and the Self Assurance Toolkit (updated June 2024), each of the regulatory requirements have been considered. It has been determined that the Council is complying with all regulatory requirements and outcomes, apart from full compliance in the areas of collection of equalities information and the adoption of a human rights approach in our work, and although high levels of compliance are being achieved with relevant obligations in relation to tenant and resident safety, full compliance is not being achieved in relation to electrical safety checks. The Council is continuing to liaise with tenants to achieve access to properties for all necessary safety checks to be completed.

- 4.1.1 ***Equalities and Human Rights*** - processes continue to be in place to implement an effective approach to the collection of equalities information and to consider how a human rights approach can be adopted. Elements of equalities data are gathered and there are established processes and demonstrable good practice in place to support the Council's current approach to equalities and human rights. Equality Impact Assessments are considered and included where required as part of any reports to Council.

Opportunities to extend the collection of equalities data in relation to protected characteristics is being included in the introduction of 'Housing Online' within our NEC Housing software system. This online functionality will allow housing applicants, homeless people, tenants, and other customers to register for a self-service account and they will be able to update equalities data.

The scope of data collection, the most effective ways to gather this information and the controls needed will be introduced as part of the implementation of the 'Housing Online' module, which is scheduled for completion by March 2025. This revised timescale is taking account of required software version upgrades needed to the NEC Housing system. The approach will also take account of all relevant advice and support from Information Governance and Housing Policy & Strategy.

In terms of the Council's continued approach to Human Rights, positive work already takes place and this is embedded across a range of activities including:

- ensuring that accommodation is provided to homeless households when needed,
- joint work takes place with Health and Social Care to ensure that care experienced young people are appropriately accommodated and supported,
- participation in national resettlement schemes to provide accommodation and support to displaced households,
- standards of council owned accommodation are maintained and the Council is working to the standards outlined in the Scottish Housing Quality Standard,
- housing support services are provided to homeless households and council tenants to help sustain tenancies,
- there is a dedicated travelling persons site to meet the needs of Gypsy/Travellers in the council area and
- the Council delivers adaptations to properties to make them more accessible for households with disabilities and consideration is given to bespoke design requirements for households as part of new build housing developments.

In addition, the Council has established a Trauma Informed Approach and work continues to raise awareness across services.

4.1.2 **Tenant and Resident Safety** – The Council has a strong track record in maintaining standards to meet tenant and resident safety, with compliance rates exceeding 99%. Full details of compliance performance are outlined in Section 2 of [Appendix 2](#).

In the area of Electrical Safety - Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's), full compliance is not being achieved. As at 30 June 2024, of the Council's lettable housing stock of 8140 properties, 8103 (99.5%) of properties have a valid EICR in place and are compliant with the standard. Of the 37 remaining properties, 14 are vacant and EICR's will be in place before the properties relet, 20 are 'hard no access or cases where social issues have prevented the EICR being undertaken, and 3 properties were awaiting work to be undertaken by the Utility Provider before the EICR can be completed. Operational procedures are in place to manage and track the affected properties, however, a low level of safety checks that have expired does exist at any given time. On this basis the Council are not fully complying with the standard.

- 4.1.3 **Services to Homeless People** - The Council continues to fulfil its' legal duties to homeless households, dealing with homeless presentations and providing temporary accommodation where required. However, there continues to be sustained pressure on available temporary accommodation. Hotel accommodation is deemed to be 'unsuitable accommodation' and in accordance with the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, households should not occupy this type of accommodation for a period exceeding 7 days.

Since October 2022 to date, there has been an ongoing regular reliance on the use of hotel accommodation for short term periods, until other accommodation options become available within the Council's pool of temporary accommodation. In 2023/24, there were three instances where the unsuitable accommodation order was breached, two of these related to an accumulative period exceeding 7 days, because of more than one accommodation placement during the life of the household's homeless application. Arrangements are in place to track this in the future, to prevent a recurrence where possible. There have been no breaches of the order so far in 2024/25. Taking all factors into consideration, this has not been deemed to be a material issue.

Although it has been determined that overall, the Council is complying with its legislative duties to homeless people, Members are asked to note the position in relation to homelessness services. Further information relating to homelessness is included in Section 1.4 of [Appendix 2](#).

- 4.2 The Assurance Action Plan outlined in [Appendix 1](#), includes details of assurance and evidence available. There are no material issues identified relating to compliance in other areas of activity. All housing activities are being managed in accordance with relevant legislation and arrangements are in place to monitor service delivery and track performance. An overview of operational service delivery, details relating to key activities including levels of performance and an update on activities relating to tenant and resident safety are outlined at [Appendix 2](#). Should any issues emerge which are deemed material and notifiable to SHR, these will be brought to Cabinet's attention.
- 4.3 Members are asked to consider the Assurance Action Plan outlined in [Appendix 1](#) and the Overview of Operational Service Delivery outlined at [Appendix 2](#) and approve the submission of the Annual Assurance Statement contained at [Appendix 3](#) to the Scottish Housing Regulator and agree to publish this statement to tenants and other customers.

## 5. Legal and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

## 6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Not applicable.

## 7. Human Resources Implications

- 7.1 Not applicable.

## **8. Risk**

### **8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations***

- 8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations. The operational activities and activities relating to tenant and resident safety outlined in [Appendix 2](#), continue to be managed effectively within the service.
- 8.1.2 Risks relating to the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, gas safety, fire safety and electrical safety are included and monitored within the Housing, Operations and Development Directorate Risk Register.

### **8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations***

- 8.2.1 The risks associated with rejecting the recommendations are that the Council would fail to submit the Annual Assurance Statement to Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 October 2024, and it would fail to meet its' requirements in terms of the Regulatory Framework.
- 8.2.2 Rejecting the recommendations would impact on the reputation of the Council.

## **9. Equalities**

- 9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA), (including the Fairer Scotland Duty in respect of any Strategic decision), has been carried out on the proposals contained in this report, which identifies potential positive and negative equality impacts and any required mitigating actions. The EQIA is attached as [Appendix 4](#).

## **10. Sustainable Development Implications**

- 10.1 ***Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme, strategy, or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy, or strategy.

## **11. Options Appraisal**

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

## **12. Link to Council Plan**

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priority 2 of the Council Plan: Live, Work, Learn.

## **13. Results of Consultation**

- 13.1 There has been consultation with tenant representatives and interested tenants, this took place via a Microsoft Teams Meeting on 3 September 2024.

- 13.2 Tenants were consulted on the content of the draft Assurance Action Plan and the proposed Assurance Statement. Updates were provided on current service delivery and the operational challenges being faced by the Housing Service, along with details of the results from the 2023/24 SHR Landlord Report published on 30 August 2024.
- 13.3 Tenants acknowledged the progress and levels of reported performance and how the Council compared with the Scottish average across the published indicators. From the discussions at the session, tenants requested the opportunity to have further conversations over this coming year around general complaints and outcomes, the challenges relating to the management of anti-social behaviour, the Council's housing contribution to resettlement programmes and the relet of empty properties.
- 13.4 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Martin Kilbride, Portfolio Holder for Buildings, Housing and Environment, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

#### 14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

- 14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director of Housing, Operations and Development will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Cabinet in the 'Council and Cabinet Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Managed by</i>
Submit the Annual Assurance Statement to Scottish Housing Regulator	31 October 2024	Service Lead – Housing Services
Publish the approved Annual Assurance Statement on Council website for tenants and other customers	31 October 2024	Service Lead – Housing Services

**Background Papers** [Report to Cabinet of 26 September 2023 – Annual Assurance Statement - Housing](#)

[Scottish Housing Regulator – 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 - Engagement plan from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

[2023/24 Landlord Report – Scottish Housing Regulator – published 30 August 2024 - South Ayrshire Council | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

[Regulatory Framework | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

[Annual Assurance Statement | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

**Scottish Social Housing Charter - November 2022**

**[The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations – Social Landlord Self -Assurance – Updated June 2023](#)**

**The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations Limited National Guidance on Collecting Equality Data (revised June 2022 - Update to Equalities Guidance and FAQs**

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**Date: 17 September 2024**



## Appendix 1 – Assurance Action Plan

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Assurance and Notification</b>					
AN1	Prepare an Annual Assurance Statement in accordance with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) published guidance.	Service Lead – Housing Services	31 October 2024	Ongoing	<p>The 2023/24 Annual Assurance Statement was previously approved by Cabinet on 26 September 2023 and was submitted to SHR on 29 September 2023.</p> <p>The 2024/25 Report and Annual Assurance Statement to be considered by Cabinet on 25 September 2024.</p>
	Submit approved Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator between April and the end of October each year	Service Lead – Housing Services	31 October 2024		<p>The 2023/24 Annual Assurance Statement was previously approved by Cabinet on 26 September 2023 and was submitted to SHR on 29 September 2023.</p> <p>The 2024/25 Report and Annual Assurance Statement to be considered by Cabinet on 25 September 2024.</p>
	Make the Annual Assurance Statement available to tenants and other service users.	<p>Service Lead – Housing Services</p> <p>Policy Officer - (Tenant Participation)</p>	31 October 2024		<p>Consultation on the Assurance Action Plan and draft Annual Assurance Statement was undertaken with Tenant Representatives and Interested Tenants via a Microsoft Teams meeting held on 3 September 2024. Tenant Representatives and Interested Tenants reviewed the information, along with the details provided by the Service Lead – Housing Services, on current service delivery, operational challenges and performance in key operational activities. An overview of the performance position as reported in the 2023/24 Landlord Report published by SHR on 30 August 2024 was also provided. Comments and feedback from</p>

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Assurance and Notification</b>					
					tenants has been outlined in the covering report. Once approved, the Annual Assurance Statement will be published on the Council website and Housing Services Facebook.
AN2	Notify SHR during the year of any material changes to the assurance in its Annual Assurance Statement.	Service Lead – Housing Services			There were no required notifications to SHR during the 2023/24 reporting year.  Notifications will be made to Scottish Housing Regulator as and when required
AN3	Each landlord must have assurance and evidence that it is meeting all of its legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.  <b>Action:-</b> As at 30 June 2024, of the Council's lettable housing stock of 8140 properties, 8103 (99.5%) of properties have a valid EICR in place and are compliant with the standard. Of the 37 remaining properties, 14 are vacant and EICR's will be in place before the properties relet, 20 are 'hard no access or cases where social issues have prevented the EICR being undertaken, and 3 properties were awaiting work to be undertaken by the Utility Provider before the EICR can be completed.	Service Lead – Housing Services  Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy	Ongoing	Evidence is collated on an ongoing basis	Assurance and evidence includes:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Management Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Homelessness Procedures</li> <li>• Scottish Government National Homelessness Statistics</li> <li>• Annual Return on the Charter to SHR and supporting evidence.</li> <li>• Internal Housing Performance Reports on a range of housing activities and indicators i.e. rent arrears management, void management, repairs, anti- social behaviour complaints, tenant and resident safety compliance, etc.</li> <li>• Benchmarking Data and Reports</li> <li>• Comprehensive Tenants Survey was undertaken during January/February 2023</li> <li>• Customer Satisfaction Tracker Surveys</li> </ul>

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Assurance and Notification</b>					
	Established procedures and processes are in place to track and manage instances of no access and Officers are continuing to work with households to achieve access. This is an ongoing rolling activity and where required consideration will be given to using the provisions of the tenancy agreement to gain entry to properties to complete this essential work.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of consultation with tenants on rent setting process</li> <li>• Management Sample Checking and Case Audits</li> <li>• Staff Supervision and Performance Development Reviews (PDR's)</li> <li>• Internal Audit Reports</li> <li>• Internal Audit Report on Charter Indicators (May 2024) and the AAS and compliance with Regulatory Framework (September 2024)</li> <li>• External Audit Reports</li> <li>• Care Inspectorate Reports</li> <li>• Reports to Council, Cabinet, Audit and Governance Panel and Service and Performance Panel</li> <li>• Minutes of Performance Accountability Meetings</li> <li>• Tenant Newsletters</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Cyclical Health and Safety Audits and Fire Risk Assessments for designated properties</li> <li>• Compliance Records for Gas Safety</li> <li>• Fire and Carbon Monoxide Detector Compliance Certification</li> <li>• Fixed Electrical Testing Compliance Certification</li> </ul>
AN4	Notify SHR of any tenant and resident safety matters which have been reported to, or are being	Service Lead – Housing Services			Compliance Records relating to Tenants and Resident Safety

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Assurance and Notification</b>					
	investigated by the Health and Safety Executive, or reports from regulatory or statutory authorities, or insurance providers, relating to safety concerns.	Service Lead – Risk & Safety			<p>The Council's Risk and Safety Team provide advice and guidance on health and safety related issues and link directly with the Health and Safety Executive on any relevant matters.</p> <p>Corporate Health and Safety Policies are in place and are published and accessible to all staff via the CORE - Council's Intranet system.</p> <p>A cyclical inspection process is in place for conducting Health and Safety Audits and Fire Risk Assessments on Council owned assets, including:- Sheltered Housing Units, Supported Accommodation Units and Office accommodation.</p> <p>A Departmental Risk Register is maintained and updated to track management action, mitigations and progress of actions for any identified risks.</p> <p>An established programme is in operation for annual gas safety checks for all housing stock with gas appliances.</p> <p>An established programme of safety and compliance checks are in place for Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's), and Fire and Carbon Monoxide Detector Standards. Other programmes of work and measured term contracts exist to manage aspects of tenants</p>

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<b>Assurance and Notification</b>					
					residents safety including water safety, lift safety, asbestos management and damp and mould.
AN5	Each landlord must make its Engagement Plan easily available and accessible to its tenants and service users, including online.	Service Lead – Housing Services	April 2024	Completed	The last published Engagement Plan is available on the SAC website within the Housing Performance section. An article is also included in the Annual Performance Report providing background to the new Regulatory Framework and signposting to the Engagement Plan.

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance</b>					
CH1	Submit an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to SHR each year in accordance with our published guidance.	Service Lead – Housing Services	31 May 2024	Completed	<p>The Annual Return on the Charter for 2023/24 was submitted to Scottish Housing Regulator on 30 May 2024 to meet deadline date of 31 May 2024 as set out in the Regulatory Framework.</p> <p>Local Government Benchmark Indicators and Key Performance indicators are reported to the Council's Service and Partnerships Performance Panel.</p>
CH2	<p>Each landlord must involve tenants, and where relevant, other service users, in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information. It must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agree its approach with tenants</li> <li>• ensure that it is effective and meaningful – that the chosen approach gives tenants a real and demonstrable say in the assessment of performance</li> <li>• publicise the approach to tenants</li> <li>• ensure that it can be verified and be able to show the agreed approach to involving tenants has happened</li> <li>• involve other service users in an appropriate way, having asked and</li> </ul>	Service Lead – Housing Services	31 October 2023	Completed	<p>Prior to submitting the Annual Return on the Charter for 2023/24, the content of the proposed submission to SHR was presented and shared with Tenant Representatives, Interested Tenants and Elected Members via a Microsoft Teams meeting held on 29 May 2024. Data from the previous year is included in the presentation to show comparisons, variances in performance are discussed and explanations are provided by Officers to Tenant Representatives and Elected Members.</p> <p>Following publication of the 2022/23 ARC Results and SHR Landlord Report, work was undertaken in consultation with tenant representatives on the production of the 2022/23 Annual Performance</p>

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<b>Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance</b>					
	had regard to their needs and wishes.				<p>Report. This was published in October 2023. Work is underway to work with tenant representatives on the production of the 2023/24 Performance Report and this will be published in October 2024.</p> <p>The inclusion of the 'You Said/We Did' section in the Annual Performance report, includes feedback from tenants which has influenced changes to practice, procedure or led to service delivery enhancements.</p>
CH3	Each landlord must report its performance in achieving or progressing towards the Charter outcomes and standards to its tenants and other service users no later than 31 October each year. It must agree the format of performance reporting with tenants, ensuring that it is accessible for tenants and other service users, with plain and jargon-free language.	Service Lead – Housing Services	31 October 2024	Ongoing	<p>Each year Council Officers work with a group of interested tenants to agree the design, content and format of the annual performance report. Work is underway to work with Tenant Representatives and Interested tenants to develop the 2023/24 Performance Report.</p> <p>Any feedback received from tenants is considered and used to inform future editions of the performance report.</p> <p>The approach used is outlined in the annual performance report published annually.</p> <p>A copy of the Annual Performance Report is issued to all tenants who</p>

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<b>Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance</b>					
					<p>have registered to receive a copy. This is promoted through the tracker surveys that are issued to encourage take up from interested tenants. In addition, a copy of the report is made available on the Council's website and Housing Services Facebook.</p> <p>Copies of the Annual Performance Report are also available on request and are available from Housing Teams and Libraries.</p>
CH4	<p>When reporting its performance to tenants and other service users each landlord must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide them with an assessment of performance in delivering each of the Charter outcomes and standards which are relevant to the landlord</li> <li>• include relevant comparisons – these should include comparisons with previous years, with other landlords and with national performance</li> <li>• set out how and when the landlord intends to address areas for improvement</li> </ul>	<p>Service Lead – Housing Services</p> <p>Policy Officer - (Tenant Participation)</p>	31 October 2024	Ongoing	<p>The content of the Annual Performance Report is agreed with tenant representatives. Tenant Representatives/Interested Tenants provide their own Foreword to the report each year.</p> <p>The report contains key performance information relating to the Charter Outcomes. The Council's performance in the year is outlined and comparisons with the previous year and the Scottish average are included.</p> <p>The Annual Performance Report outlines the key priorities for the coming year and provides an update on achievements.</p>



Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance</b>					
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• give tenants and other service users a way to feed back their views on the style and form of the reporting.</li> </ul>				<p>In agreement with tenant representatives, a section '<i>You Said/We Did</i>' is included in the Annual Performance Report. This includes details of feedback received which has led to changes in practice or procedures to improve service delivery.</p> <p>Tenants are given opportunities to make comments and suggestions for improvement and feedback is invited from tenants.</p>
CH5	Each landlord must make the SHR report on its performance easily available to its tenants, including online.	Service Lead – Housing Services  Policy Officer - (Tenant Participation)	31 October 2024	Ongoing	<p>The Annual Performance Report includes details of SHR and includes website links to access further information.</p> <p>The website link to the SHR Landlord Report is published on the Council's website and Housing Services Facebook.</p>

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Listening and responding to tenants and service users</b>					
LR1	Each landlord must provide tenants, residents and service users with easy and effective ways to provide feedback and raise concerns and ensure that it considers such information and provides a quick response	Service Lead – Housing Services		Complete	<p>The Council offers the facility for tenants and other customers to make a housing request or provide feedback regarding the housing service.</p> <p>All service requests are managed by operational housing teams and any feedback is reviewed and an appropriate response is provided to the tenant or other customer.</p> <p>Tenants and other customers can also communicate with the service via Social Media Platforms, any contacts received are received acknowledged by our Tenant Participation Team.</p> <p>The Council's Customer Service Team handle telephone contacts, any feedback provided by tenants and other customers will be recorded on the Council's feedback system and passed to the relevant operational team.</p> <p>The corporate complaints handling procedure '<i>Listening to You</i>', can also be used by tenants and other customers to make a service request, provide feedback or make comments regarding the service provided by the Council.</p>

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Listening and responding to tenants and service users</b>					
LR2	Each landlord must make information on reporting significant performance failures, including SHR leaflet, available to its tenants.	Service Lead – Housing Services Policy Officer - (Tenant Participation)		Complete	Information on reporting significant performance failures has been included in Tenants Newsletters, the Annual Performance Report, SAC Website and Housing Services Facebook page. Leaflets are available from Housing Teams.
LR3	Provide tenants and other service users with the information they need to exercise their right to complain and seek redress, and respond to tenants within the timescales outlined in its service standards, in accordance with guidance from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).	Service Lead – Housing Services		Complete	The Council operates a corporate complaints handling procedure ' <i>Listening to You</i> '. This procedure operates in accordance with the guidance and timescales from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).  The procedure is widely publicised via the Council website. Leaflets and Posters are also available across all Council establishments.
LR4	Each landlord must ensure it has effective arrangements to learn from complaints and from other tenant and service user feedback, in accordance with SPSO guidance	Service Lead – Housing Services		Ongoing action – complaint outcomes are reviewed on an ongoing basis.	Complaint handling is monitored and discussed at quarterly performance accountability meetings held by the Service Lead – Housing Services. Complaints are reviewed, outcomes are considered and any learning identified is discussed.  As part of the Complaint Management process, Investigating Officers must identify any learning from complaints, and record if this has led to changes in policy, practice or procedure. This is

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<b>Listening and responding to tenants and service users</b>					
					<p>part of the process when closing a complaint.</p> <p>Complaint Management performance is also reported to and scrutinised by the Council's Service and Partnerships Performance Panel.</p>

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Whistleblowing</b>					
WB1	Each landlord must have effective arrangements and a policy for whistleblowing by staff which it makes easily available and which it promotes.	Chief HR Officer		Complete	<p>A corporate 'Whistleblowing – Policy and Procedure for Reporting Concerns at Work' is in place. This is available to access by all staff via the Council's intranet.</p> <p>The Council's approved Code of Conduct for Employees also includes details relating to 'Whistleblowing' and includes a web link for employees to access the policy.</p> <p>Council wide communications have been issued to employees to raise awareness of the Code of Conduct. In addition, the Service Lead – Housing Services has issued an email to all Housing Co-ordinators and Team Leaders to cascade information and raise awareness within their respective teams.</p>

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Equalities and Human Rights</b>					
EH1	Each landlord must have assurance and evidence that it considers equality and human rights issues properly when making all of its decisions, in the design and review of internal and external	<p>Service Lead – Housing Services</p> <p>Co-ordinator – Housing Policy &amp; Strategy</p>		Complete	<p>All Housing Strategies and Policies include a section on Equalities and have been impact assessed.</p> <p>All reports to Council, Cabinet and other Panels include a requirement for</p>

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Equalities and Human Rights</b>					
	policies, and in its day-to-day service delivery.				<p>Equalities implications to be considered and outlined in the report. An Equalities Impact Scoping Assessment is carried out, and where required, an Equalities Impact Assessment will be included as part of the report.</p> <p>Arrangements are in place to ensure that translation services are accessed where required for tenants and other customers. Applications, correspondence, tenancy agreements etc. are made available in other languages or formats for minority groups or on request.</p> <p>Loop systems are available in council offices to assist hearing impaired customers.</p> <p>The Council continues to be actively involved in supporting Resettlement Schemes and works closely with CoSLA and the Home Office. To date the Council has been involved in the Afghan Relocation Scheme, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme and the Super Sponsor Scheme and Homes for Ukraine. Housing Support Services, Translation Services, and multi-agency working have been delivered to meet the needs</p>

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Equalities and Human Rights</b>					
					of households resettling and to support their integration in communities across South Ayrshire. All returns have been completed and submitted in accordance with the requirements of the schemes.
EH2	To comply with these duties, landlords must collect data relating to each of the protected characteristics for their existing tenants, new tenants, people on waiting lists, Local authorities must also collect data on protected characteristics for people who apply to them as homeless. Landlords who provide gypsy/traveller sites must collect data on protected characteristics for these service users.	Service Lead – Housing Services  Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy	December 2024	Ongoing	Arrangements are in place to collect elements of equalities data, and this is recorded, where provided by tenants, homeless households, gypsy/travellers and other customers.  Tenant Participation events and meetings are always held in accessible venues and locations to ensure that no barriers exist for tenants and other customers.
	<b>Action:- Collection of Equalities Data</b> Work is ongoing to enhance the systems and approaches for the collection of equalities data. This is part of the implementation of the 'Housing Online' module within our NEC Housing software system. This online functionality will allow housing applicants, homeless people, tenants and other customers to update equalities data. The scope of data collection, the most effective ways to	Service Lead – Housing Services  Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy  Co-ordinator (Housing)  Co-ordinator (Registration,	March 2025	Ongoing	A range of existing processes are in place to gather elements of equalities data and there are established processes and demonstrable good practice in place to support the Council's approach to equalities.  Consideration will be given to any changes to existing policies, procedures or practice. Consultation will take place with tenant representatives on any proposed changes.

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Equalities and Human Rights</b>					
	gather this information and the controls needed have been considered and will be introduced as part of the implementation of 'Housing Online' module, which is scheduled to completed by March 2025, taking account of required upgrades needed to the NEC Housing system. The approach will take account of all relevant advice and support from Information Governance and Housing Policy & Strategy.	Records and Information)			
	<b>Action:- Human Rights</b> The Council is continuing to develop its approach in relation to human rights, taking account of available guidance and the 'Housing and Human Rights Framework' published by the Chartered Institute of Housing'	Service Lead – Housing Services Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy  Co-ordinator (Housing)			In terms of the Council's approach to Human Rights, work already takes place and this is embedded across a range of activities including:- ensuring that accommodation is provided to homeless households when needed, joint work takes place with Health and Social Care to ensure that care experienced young people are appropriately accommodated and supported, participation in national resettlement schemes to provide accommodation and support to displaced households, standards of council owned accommodation are maintained and the Council is working to the standards contained within the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, housing support services are provided



Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
<b>Equalities and Human Rights</b>					
					<p>to homeless households and council tenants to help sustain tenancies, there is a dedicated travelling persons site to meet the needs of Gypsy/Travellers within the council area and the Council delivers adaptations to properties and considers bespoke design requirements as part of new build housing developments, to make them more accessible for households with disabilities. In addition, the Council has established a Trauma Informed Approach and work continues to raise awareness across services.</p> <p>SHR expect landlords to confirm that they are considering how to adopt a human rights approach into their work. Work will continue over the next year to further develop the processes and systems to collect equalities information and to outline the Council's approach in relation to human rights.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to any changes to existing policies, procedures or practice. Consultation will take place with tenant representatives on proposed changes</p>

## Summary of Assurances and Evidence that the Council is Complying with the Charter Outcomes

Within the Council's governance arrangements and within the Housing Service, there are a range of measures and processes in place to manage, scrutinise and report performance, providing assurances and evidence that the Council is complying with the Charter outcomes. These include:-

These include:

- Annual Charter Return to SHR – supported by performance management reports and back up evidence for each of the indicators and outcomes;
- Housing Management and Homelessness Policies and Procedures;
- Scottish Government National Homelessness Statistics;
- Internal Housing Performance Reports covering keys housing management activities and ARC indicators;
- Benchmarking Data and Reports provided through the Council's membership of the Scottish Housing Network;
- Comprehensive Tenants Survey which is undertaken every 3 years – last completed January/February 2023;
- Customer Satisfaction Tracker Surveys which are analysed and reported to tenant representatives;
- Evidence of consultation with tenants on previous rent setting;
- Rent Setting Consultation to inform Council decision on Rent Setting and Considerations around setting the Housing Revenue Account – Revenue and Capital Budgets
- Management sample checking and case audits, undertaken within the operational teams;
- Staff Supervision and Performance Development Reviews (PDR's);
- Internal Audit Reports on elements of housing activity
- Internal Audit Report on the Scottish Housing Regulator Charter Indicators – Audit Report May/June 2024 – a selection of indicators will be audited on an annual basis prior to submission of the ARC to SHR.
- Internal Audit Report on Annual Assurance Statement Regulatory Framework - Future audits will be included in the annual risk based internal audit plan, on a three yearly basis from 2024/25.
- External Audit Reports on elements of activity relating to the Housing Revenue Account;
- Care Inspectorate Reports for the Council's registered housing support services - Sheltered Housing and Supported Accommodation units for homeless households;
- Minutes of Quarterly Performance Accountability Meetings conducted by the Service Lead – Housing Services, with each of the operational housing teams, these meetings focus on performance against the charter indicators/outcomes Corporate Health and Safety Policies and Procedures;
- Compliance Records for Gas Safety;
- LD2 Fire Safety Compliance and Fixed Electrical Testing Compliance Certification
- Cyclical Health and Safety Audits and Fire Risk Assessments for sheltered housing units and supported accommodation units; and
- Publicising information and details of performance in Tenants Newsletters, Annual Performance Report, Council website and the Housing Services Facebook.

In addition to the arrangements and processes outlined above, there are arrangements in place for formal reporting of performance to the Council and scrutiny activity is undertaken by Panels. This includes:-

- Reports to the Cabinet on 'Budget Management – Revenue Budgetary Control – outturn statements for the Housing Revenue Account';
- Reports to the Cabinet on the Housing Capital Programme providing updates on progress, performance and levels of expenditure in relation to capital investment from the Housing Revenue Account;
- Reports to Audit and Governance Panel on progress against audit action plans;
- Reports to the Service and Partnerships Performance Panel – Complaints Scrutiny Update; and
- Reports to the Service and Partnerships Performance Panel on Local Government Benchmarking Indicators and other key performance indicators relating to Housing.

Tenant Participation is well established within the Council and is embedded in how we conduct business. Tenant representatives are actively involved in shaping how services are delivered and have a developing and increasing role in undertaking scrutiny activity. This includes:

- Reviewing the Annual return on the Charter prior to it being submitted to SHR;
- Scrutiny discussions with tenants focussing on key housing management activities and homelessness, scrutinising customer feedback and reported levels of satisfaction from trackers surveys;
- Reviewing the Charter data and agreeing the design, content and format of the annual performance report published annually for tenants and other customers;
- Reviewing the 'You Said/We Did' information confirming the areas where customer feedback has influenced changes to practice, procedure or led to enhancements in service delivery;
- Tenant representatives completed previous 'Stepping Up to Scrutiny' training;
- Wider tenant participation activity where tenants are consulted on proposed changes to policies and procedures and the review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. As part of the review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, tenants are consulted on the proposals/options for future rent setting and are given the opportunity to identify their priorities for investment of uncommitted resources. The last HRA Business Plan review was undertaken during 2023 to inform the Rent Setting considerations for 2024/25. Consultation took place with tenant representatives to shape the consultation. The Consultation was undertaken during November/December 2023 and the results and feedback formed part of the rent setting report presented to Elected Members at a meeting of South Ayrshire Council on 17 January 2024.

## Overview of Operational Service Delivery – Key Activities

This overview provides narrative relating to key operational activities, outlining relevant performance information, satisfaction levels and details of any current operational challenges.

In terms of tenant and resident safety, the Council has robust procedures in place to manage and monitor compliance activity and is achieving very high levels of performance. However, at any point in time, the Council is liaising with tenants and managing arrangements to gain access to tenants' homes to fulfil landlord safety obligations and deal with any expired certifications. On this basis and reflecting on conversation with SHR representatives, the Council is not fully compliant in this area. Further details are outlined in Section 2.

All housing activities are being managed in accordance with relevant legislation and arrangements in place to monitor service delivery and track performance.

### 1. Key Housing Management Activities

**1.1. Rent Arrears and Collection of Rental Income** – In 2023/24, this has remained a challenging activity, 99.4% of rental income was collected by the Council compared to the Scottish average of 99.4%. and gross rent arrears stood at 4.63% of rent due, up from 4.32% in 2022/23. The Council has historically performed well in this area. From the published 2023/24 Scotland's Housing Network benchmarking data, the Council was the best performing Scottish Local Authority for rent arrears management for the second year running.

There were 2 evictions carried out by the Council in 2023/24 relating to rent arrears. Although arrears levels have risen, trends continue to follow similar patterns to previous years and the current bad debt provision within the Housing Revenue Account is sufficient. Officers are continuing to make contact and engage with tenants to provide ongoing advice and support to those households who are experiencing hardship. As an alternative to using legal action for recovery, every effort is made to secure repayment arrangements and actively apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA's) for housing costs to be paid direct to the Council from the Department of Works and Pensions for households in receipt of Universal Credit.

**1.2. Scottish Housing Quality Standard** - In 2023/24 92.5% of the Council's housing stock met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) compared to the Scottish average of 84.4%. This was an improvement on the compliance rate of 92.2% in 2022/23. 5% of the stock was classified as being in 'exemption or abeyance,' this consists of properties where work is deemed too costly to meet the standard, properties that earmarked for disposal by the Council or where the Council is unable to undertake the required work due to minority ownership within mixed tenure blocks or where the tenant has refused planned improvement work due to personal or medical reasons, or properties where access has not been provided to carry out required compliance work. The

remaining 2.5% of properties failed SHQS, mainly due to current energy performance standards or elements of disrepair. Compliance works and programmes for other external works including roofing and render upgrades, external wall insulation and window replacement are progressing in 2024/25 and will continue to contribute to meeting SHQS.

- 1.3. Average relet times for empty houses** – in 2023/24 a total of 715 properties were relet and the average relet time was 50 days, compared to the Scottish average of 56.7 days. This was an improvement on the 692 properties relet and the average relet time of 58 days in 2022/23.

On reviewing voids performance, the Council has had to deal with an increased number of tenancy terminations in the 2023/24 reporting year and the associated void processes have continued to place increased pressures on the housing management teams and the Property Maintenance Service. Previously identified contributing factors continue to affect average relet time are:- the poorer condition of properties received following termination and the need for an increased volume of repairs to bring properties up to the agreed relet standard, issues and delays negotiating with utility providers to resolve power supply and meter issues to allow essential safety and compliance work to be completed and to ensure power is restored or available for new tenants before relet, managing the increased number of offers and refusals relating to vacant properties. The Council is continuing to support the Ukrainian Support Scheme by providing accommodation. In 2023/24, the Council let 57 properties to Ukrainian households, this was an increase on the 42 lets made in 2022/23.

In addition to the 715 properties relet by the Council, there was an additional 78 new lets (new build and buy back) properties let by the Council, taking the overall number of lets to 793.

Arrangements with Property Maintenance are continuing to prioritise repairs in empty houses for those that have been accepted by or offered to homeless households. Although this is allowing the Council to prioritise secure permanent accommodation for homeless households to reduce overall pressure on temporary accommodation, it is a factor affecting overall void periods and relet times. In the first quarter of 2024/25 (1 April – 30 June 2024), the Council let a total of 169 properties, (154 were relets, 13 were new build lets and 2 were buy back lets). Of the 154 properties relet, the average relet time was 47.8 days. This continues to be an area of focussed activity with ongoing work underway by Housing Services and Property Maintenance to improve relet times.

- 1.4. Homeless Applications and Provision of Temporary Accommodation** – In the 2023/24 reporting year, 936 homeless applications were made to the Council and 430 (54%) of the overall 793 lets were made to homeless households.

The Council continues to fulfil its' legal duties to homeless households, dealing with homeless presentations and providing temporary accommodation where required. There continues to be sustained pressure on available temporary

accommodation. Since October 2022 to date, there has been an ongoing regular reliance on the use of hotel accommodation for short term periods, until other accommodation options become available within the Council's pool of temporary accommodation.

Unsuitable accommodation was used on 211 occasions in 2023/24 which was up from 8 in 2022/23. There were 3 breaches of the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, 2 breaches related to an accumulative period exceeding 7 days, because of more than one hotel accommodation placement during the life of the household's application. The other case involved a placement in hotel accommodation of more than 7 days, while suitable alternative accommodation was being identified.

So far in 2024/25 (as at 30/06/2024) there has been 26 hotel accommodation placements and there have been no breaches of the unsuitable accommodation order so far in 2024/25.

In the first reporting quarter of 2024/25 (1 April – 30 June 2024), 205 homeless applications were made to the Council, this is down slightly in comparison to the same quarter in 2023/24 when 256 homeless applications were received. As at the end of June 2024, the Housing Options Team were dealing with 505 open homeless cases and around 270 homeless households were in temporary accommodation. In this reporting quarter, of the total 169 lets made by the Council, 93 (55%) of lets were made to homeless households.

Previous engagement has taken place with SHR regarding homeless applications, homeless assessment decisions and outcomes. The information and feedback provided by the Council was used to inform SHR's homeless risk assessment process.

**1.5. Management of Anti-Social Behaviour Complaints** - In 2023/24, 442 cases of anti-social behaviour were reported, this was a decrease on the 491 cases reported in 2022/23. 400 of the 442 cases were resolved in the 2023/24 reporting year – equating to 90.5%, compared to the Scottish average of 94.3%. The 42 cases which were open as of 31 March 2024, were active cases under investigation or being monitored.

In 2023/24, 5 full Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO) were granted and there was 1 eviction carried out by the Council.

In the period from 1 April – 31 August 2024, 145 cases of anti-social behaviour were reported to the Council. 99 cases were closed in this period. 3 full ASBO's were granted and 3 interim ASBO's have been granted in this period.

**1.6. Responsive Repairs** - In the 2023/24 reporting year:-

- 15,019 emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 2.5 hours, compared to the Scottish average of 4.0 hours. This was an

improvement on the 2022/23 performance when 15,312 emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 2.6 hours.

- 14,588 non-emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 6.64 working days, compared to the Scottish average of 9.0 days. This was an improvement on the 2021/22 performance when 14,744 non-emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 7.07 working days.

In the first reporting quarter (1 April – 30 June 2024), 3267 emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 2.42 hours. 4177 non-emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 15.19 working days. The average time taken includes non-emergency repairs completed in the first reporting quarter that were carried forward from 2023/24 and takes account of the reduction in the use of external contractors.

## 2. Tenant and Resident Safety

In SHR's latest letter dated 26 March 2024 to all Social Landlords, they are asking landlords to confirm whether they meet all duties in relation to tenant and resident safety. The following narrative provides an update and current position in relation to each of the following areas:

- 2.1. Gas Safety Compliance** – In the reporting year (2023/24), there were seven occasions when the Council did not meet its statutory duty to complete gas safety checks in properties with gas appliances. Five instances related to communal boilers and the delay in carrying out the safety checks was due to a work scheduling error within our Property Maintenance Team. Procedures have been reviewed and arrangements have been revised to ensure that safeguards are in place to ensure the servicing of communal boilers is programmed in advance of future expiry dates. The other two instances related to individual properties and capping of meters.

For the first reporting quarter of 2024/25 (1 April – 30 June 2024), 2274 gas safety checks have been completed and there have been no instances where the gas safety check has exceeded the anniversary date of the last safety check. The Council has established procedures and processes in place to manage gas safety and this activity is closely managed and reference to the status of mitigations is available through the Housing, Operations and Development Directorate Risk Register.

- 2.2. Electrical Safety - Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's)** – this requirement is for electrical safety inspections and certification to be carried out on a cyclical basis at intervals of no more than 5 years, and it forms part of the assessment criteria within the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

In 2023/24, the Council reported an improved position in relation to successfully completing EICR compliance works. As at 31 March 2024, EICR requirements were met for 8087 (99.5%) of the overall 8126 council owned properties, this was an improvement on the 99.2% reported in 2022/23. In 2024/25, the Council

continues to make excellent progress in this area, an agreed programme of work is established with Property Maintenance and tenants are contacted by the Council to agree arrangements and access for safety checks to be undertaken. As at 30 June 2024, of the Council's lettable housing stock of 8140 properties, 8103 (99.5%) of properties have a valid EICR in place and are compliant with the standard. Of the 37 remaining properties, 14 are vacant and EICR's will be in place before the properties relet, 20 are 'hard no access or cases where social issues have prevented the EICR being undertaken, and 3 properties were awaiting work to be undertaken by the Utility Provider before the EICR can be completed. Established procedures and processes are in place to track and manage instances of no access and Officers are continuing to work with households to achieve access. This is an ongoing rolling activity and where required consideration will be given to using the provisions of the tenancy agreement to gain entry to properties to complete this essential work.

- 2.3. Water Safety** – The Council has an established risk and safety standard on Legionella. Established procedures and processes are in place to undertake regular temperature checks across sheltered housing unit communal areas and the Council's supported accommodation units for homeless households. As part of the void house repairs process, a checklist is in place to record all necessary checks and certification on completion prior to relet. As part of the new tenancy sign up process, new tenants are provided with details on how to minimise the risk of legionella within their home. Guidance is also published periodically to existing tenants via the Tenants Newsletter and Housing Services Facebook.
- 2.4. Fire Safety (Fire and Carbon Monoxide Detector Standard)** – Similarly this element is now part of the assessment criteria within the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. In 2023/24, the Council achieved full compliance with this standard for lettable properties.

The Council continues to achieve excellent progress in this area. As at 30 June 2024, 99.9% of the Council's housing stock is meeting the fire and carbon monoxide detector standard. The 12 properties not recorded as meeting the standard were all empty properties and were undergoing repair work prior to relet. The standard will be met prior to the property being let.

- 2.5. Asbestos Management** – The Council has an established risk and safety standard for managing asbestos. Asbestos survey reports are recorded for properties in the NEC Housing System. Prior to any refurbishment or major repair work being undertaken, asbestos surveys are checked or undertaken to ensure that all necessary safeguards are in place prior to work commencing. If asbestos containing materials are present in a property, the appropriate notification and advice is issued to new and existing tenants to advise that areas must not be disturbed. Property Maintenance staff are fully trained on Asbestos Awareness and safety instruction booklets have been updated with details of asbestos awareness information.



- 2.6. Damp and Mould** – Established procedures and processes are in place for dealing with reports of damp or mould. These procedures were updated to take account of the good practice contained in the published document entitled ‘*Putting Safety First – a briefing note on damp and mould for social housing practitioners*’. All reports of damp and mould received from tenants are surveyed by an Industry Qualified Surveyor and any necessary action is taken in accordance with recommendations made. Information for tenants on identifying and preventing dampness and mould has been publicised in the Tenants Newsletter and Housing Services Facebook.
- 2.7. Lift Safety** – The Council has a contract in place to undertake monthly servicing and maintenance of all through floor passenger lifts within domestic housing developments.

### **3. Tenant Satisfaction**

A comprehensive tenants survey is undertaken every 3 years to measure satisfaction. The last survey was undertaken on the Council’s behalf by Research Resource during January/February 2023. The survey involved 801 face-to-face interviews with an interviewer led questionnaire, spread across each area of the Council’s housing stock to ensure coverage of all stock types.

From the 801 interviews, the survey results for the key reported indicators were as follows:-

- **Overall Service** - 92.1% of tenants said they were very or fairly satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council as their landlord, compared to the Scottish average of 86.5%.
- **Keeping Tenants Informed** - 95.5% of tenants felt the Council, as their landlord, was good at keeping them informed about its services and outcomes, compared to the Scottish average of 90.5%.
- **Opportunities to Participate** - 95.6% of tenants were satisfied with the opportunities to participate in the Council’s decision making, compared to the Scottish average of 87.7%.



## Annual Assurance Statement

Using available guidance and taking account of the guidance entitled 'Collecting Equality Information: National Guidance for Scottish Social Landlords' (revised June 2022) and the Self Assurance Toolkit (updated June 2024), each of the regulatory requirements have been considered.

It has been determined that the Council is complying with the regulatory requirements and outcomes relating to:-

- Assurance and Notification
- Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance
- Listening and responding to tenants and service users
- Whistleblowing

However, work is ongoing by the Council to meet all regulatory requirements and outcomes relating to equalities and human rights and tenant and resident safety (Electrical Safety – Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's).

- **Equalities and Human Rights** - processes continue to be in place to implement an effective approach to the collection of equalities information and to consider how a human rights approach can be adopted. Elements of equalities data are gathered and there are established processes and demonstrable good practice in place to support the Council's current approach to equalities and human rights. Equality Impact Assessments are considered and included where required as part of any reports to Council. Opportunities to extend the collection of equalities data in relation to protected characteristics is being included in the introduction of 'Housing Online' within our NEC Housing software system. This online functionality will allow housing applicants, homeless people, tenants, and other customers to register for a self-service account and they will be able to update equalities data. The scope of data collection, the most effective ways to gather this information and the controls needed have been considered and will be introduced as part of the implementation of 'Housing Online' module, which is scheduled to be completed by March 2025, taking account of required upgrades needed to the NEC Housing system. The approach will take account of all relevant advice and support from Information Governance and Housing Policy & Strategy.

In terms of the Council's continued approach to Human Rights, work already takes place and this is embedded across a range of activities including:- ensuring that accommodation is provided to homeless households when needed, joint work takes place with Health and Social Care to ensure that care experienced young people are appropriately accommodated and supported, participation in national resettlement schemes to provide accommodation and support to displaced households, standards of council owned accommodation are maintained and the Council is working to the standards outlined in the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, housing support services are provided to homeless households and council tenants to help sustain tenancies,

there is a dedicated travelling persons site to meet the needs of Gypsy/Travellers in the council area and the Council delivers adaptations to properties and considers bespoke design requirements as part of new build housing developments, to make properties more accessible for households with disabilities. In addition, the Council has established a Trauma Informed Approach and work continues to raise awareness across services.

Work will continue over the next year to further develop the processes and systems to collect equalities information and to further embed the Council's approach in relation to human rights.

- **Tenant and Resident Safety – Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's)** – The Council has a strong track record in the managing and maintaining standards to meet tenant and resident safety, however, due to difficulties gaining access to tenants homes full compliance is not being achieved.

In 2023/24, the Council reported an improved position in relation to successfully completing EICR compliance works. As at 31 March 2024, EICR requirements were met for 8087 (99.5%) of the overall 8126 council owned properties, this was an improvement on the 99.2% reported in 2022/23. In 2024/25, the Council continues to make excellent progress in this area, an agreed programme of work is established with Property Maintenance and tenants are contacted by the Council to agree arrangements and access for safety checks to be undertaken. As at 30 June 2024, of the Council's lettable housing stock of 8140 properties, 8103 (99.5%) of properties have a valid EICR in place and are compliant with the standard. Of the 37 remaining properties, 14 are vacant and EICR's will be in place before the properties relet, 20 are 'hard no access or cases where social issues have prevented the EICR being undertaken, and 3 properties were awaiting work to be undertaken by a third party i.e. the Utility Provider, before the EICR can be completed. Established procedures and processes are in place to track and manage instances of no access and Officers are continuing to work with households to achieve access. This is an ongoing rolling activity and where required consideration will be given to using the provisions of the tenancy agreement to gain entry to properties to complete this essential work.

The Cabinet of 25 September 2024 has seen and considered the appropriate evidence to support the level of assurance against each of the requirements.

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**Councillor Martin Dowey**  
**Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Strategic**

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**Councillor Martin Kilbride**  
**Portfolio Holder for Buildings, Housing and Environment**

**25 September 2024**

**South Ayrshire Council**  
**Equality Impact Assessment including Fairer Scotland Duty**

**Section One: Policy Details\***

Name of Policy	<b>Annual Assurance Statement – Housing</b>
Lead Officer (Name/Position)	Michael Alexander – Service Lead, Housing Services
Support Team (Names/Positions) including Critical Friend	Susan McCardie – Co-ordinator – Performance & Community Planning Elizabeth Dougall – Senior Policy Officer – Community Planning & Equalities

\*The term Policy is used throughout the assessment to embrace the full range of policies, procedures, strategies, projects, applications for funding or financial decisions.

What are the main <b>aims</b> of the policy?	To provide Members with an update on the Regulatory Framework for Housing and to seek Cabinet approval to submit the Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and publish the statement for tenants and other customers.
What are the intended <b>outcomes</b> of the policy?	In accordance with the SHR's Regulatory Framework, the Council is required to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to SHR by 31 <sup>st</sup> October each year.  This report outlines how the Council is performing against the standards, providing an overview of operational service delivery and an assurance action plan containing information and evidence sources in relation to self-assessment activity. Taking account of this, the report outlines the Council's level of compliance and notes areas of ongoing work.

**Section Two: What are the Likely Impacts of the Policy?**

Will the policy impact upon the whole population of South Ayrshire and/or particular groups within the population? (please specify)	If approved by Cabinet, the decision will have an impact on all council tenants, people who are homeless, gypsy/travellers and other customers accessing housing and homelessness services.  It will have a positive impact as it provides assurance to tenants and other service users that the Council is complying with almost all standards and targeted work is ongoing to fully meet the standard in areas of equalities and human rights and tenant and resident safety.
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	As part of the implementation of the 'Housing On-line' Module within NEC Housing, the opportunity will be given to tenants and other customers to provide a wider range of equalities data.
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**Considering the following Protected Characteristics and themes, what likely impacts or issues does the policy have for the group or community?**

**List any likely positive and/or negative impacts.**

<b>Protected Characteristics</b>	<b>Positive and/or Negative Impacts</b>
<b>Age:</b> Issues relating to different age groups e.g. older people or children and young people	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
<b>Disability:</b> Issues relating to disabled people	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
<b>Gender Reassignment – Trans/Transgender:</b> Issues relating to people who have proposed, started or completed a process to change his or her sex	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership:</b> Issues relating to people who are married or are in a civil partnership	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity:</b> Issues relating to woman who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
<b>Race:</b> Issues relating to people from different racial groups,(BME) ethnic minorities, including Gypsy/Travellers	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
<b>Religion or Belief:</b> Issues relating to a person's religion or belief (including non-belief)	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.
<b>Sex:</b> Issues specific to women and men/or girls and boys	There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.

<p><b>Sexual Orientation:</b> Issues relating to a person's sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, heterosexual/straight</p>	<p>There are no specific impacts relating to this particular characteristic.</p>
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<p><b>Equality and Diversity Themes Relevant to South Ayrshire Council</b></p>	<p><b>Positive and/or Negative Impacts</b></p>
<p><b>Health</b> Issues and impacts affecting people's health</p>	<p>The statement provides assurance that the Council is meeting almost all standards and work is underway to achieve full compliance in the areas of equalities and human rights and tenant and resident safety.</p> <p>The Council has a range of policies in place and has an established housing capital programme and targeted investment to improve council owned properties to meet the Scottish Housing Quality. Work is ongoing to improve energy efficiency standards and increase the supply of affordable housing. Improved housing standards and an increased supply of affordable housing will have a positive impact on health.</p> <p>The Council is fulfilling its' legal duties to homeless households and is providing temporary accommodation where required, this has a positive impact on health.</p>
<p><b>Human Rights:</b> Issues and impacts affecting people's human rights such as being treated with dignity and respect, the right to education, the right to respect for private and family life, and the right to free elections.</p>	<p>In terms of the Council's continued approach to Human Rights, positive work already takes place, and this is embedded across a range of activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring that accommodation is provided to homeless households when needed,</li> <li>• joint work takes place with Health and Social Care to ensure that care experienced young people are appropriately accommodated and supported,</li> <li>• participation in national resettlement schemes to provide accommodation and support to displaced households,</li> <li>• standards of council owned accommodation are maintained, and the Council is working to the standards outlined in the Scottish Housing Quality Standard,</li> <li>• housing support services are provided to homeless households and council tenants to help sustain tenancies,</li> <li>• there is a dedicated travelling persons site to meet the needs of Gypsy/Travellers in the council area, and,</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Council delivers adaptations to properties to make them more accessible for households with disabilities and consideration is given to bespoke design requirements for households as part of new build housing developments.</li> </ul> <p>Although human rights considerations are embedded in operational practice, as part of future policy reviews, an explicit statement on equalities and human rights will be included.</p>
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<b>Socio-Economic Disadvantage</b>	<b>Positive and/or Negative Impacts</b>
<p><b>Low Income/Income Poverty:</b> Issues: cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food and clothing.</p>	<p>Ongoing work to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and programmed capital investment will lead to improved standards within properties and any measures to improve energy efficiency within the housing stock will have a positive impact for those on a low income or living in income poverty.</p> <p>As outlined in the 2023/24 SHR landlord report, South Ayrshire Council's average weekly rent levels across all apartment sizes are below the Scottish average, this has a positive impact for those on a low income or living in income poverty. However, for those households with low income/income poverty, advice, information or signposting to apply for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs is maximised.</p> <p>As part of landlord compliance functions, households in fuel debt are identified, advice, support and signposting are provided by Officers to assist households and investigate ways to improve the impacts for those on a low income or living in income poverty.</p>
<p><b>Low and/or no wealth:</b> Issues: enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future</p>	<p>Ongoing work to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and programmed capital investment will lead to improved standards within properties and any measures to improve energy efficiency within the housing stock will have a positive impact for those in low/or no wealth.</p> <p>As outlined in the 2023/24 SHR landlord report, South Ayrshire Council's average weekly rent levels across all apartment sizes are below the Scottish average, this has a positive impact for those in low/or no wealth. However, for those households with low and/or no wealth, advice, information or signposting to apply for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs is maximised.</p>

	As part of landlord compliance functions, households in fuel debt are identified, advice, support and signposting are provided by Officers to assist households and investigate ways to improve the impacts for those in low/or no wealth.
<b>Material Deprivation:</b> Issues: being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	<p>Ongoing work to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and programmed capital investment will lead to improved standards within properties and any measures to improve energy efficiency within the housing stock will have a positive impact for those experiencing material deprivation.</p> <p>As outlined in the 2023/24 SHR landlord report, South Ayrshire Council's average weekly rent levels across all apartment sizes are below the Scottish average, this has a positive impact for those in low/or no wealth. However, for those households with material deprivation, advice, information or signposting to apply for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing costs is maximised.</p> <p>As part of landlord compliance functions, households in fuel debt are identified, advice, support and signposting are provided by Officers to assist households and investigate ways to improve the impacts for those experiencing material deprivation.</p>
<b>Area Deprivation:</b> Issues: where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	There are no specific impacts relating to this socio-economic factor.

### Section Three: Evidence Used in Developing the Policy

<p><b>Involvement and Consultation</b> In assessing the impact(s) set out above what evidence has been collected from involvement, engagement or consultation? <b>Who</b> did you involve, <b>when</b> and <b>how</b>?</p>	<p>Consultation with members of the Tenants Monitoring Group took place via a Microsoft Teams Meeting on 3 September 2024. Tenants were consulted on the content of the draft Assurance Action Plan and the proposed Assurance Statement. Updates were provided on current service delivery and the operational challenges being faced by the Housing Service, along with details of the results from the 2023/24 SHR Landlord Report published on 30 August 2024.</p> <p>Tenants acknowledged the progress and levels of reported performance and how the Council compared with the Scottish average across the published indicators. From the discussions at the session, tenants requested the opportunity to have further</p>
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	<p>conversations within the Tenants Monitoring Group meetings, over this coming year around general complaints and outcomes, the challenges relating to the management of anti-social behaviour, the Council's housing contribution to resettlement programmes and the relet of empty properties.</p>
<p><b>Data and Research</b>  In assessing the impact set out above what evidence has been collected from research or other data. Please specify <i>what</i> research was carried out or data collected, <i>when</i> and <i>how</i> this was done.</p>	<p>To help develop the Council's proposed Annual Assurance Statement, the following published guidance was considered and details can be sourced via the web links provided:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scottish Housing Regulator – 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 - <a href="#">Engagement plan from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025   Scottish Housing Regulator</a></li> <li>• 2023/24 Landlord Report – Scottish Housing Regulator – published 30<sup>th</sup> August 2024 - <a href="#">South Ayrshire Council   Scottish Housing Regulator</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Regulatory Framework   Scottish Housing Regulator</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Annual Assurance Statement   Scottish Housing Regulator</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Scottish Social Housing Charter - November 2022</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations – Social Landlord Self -Assurance – Updated June 2023</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations Limited National Guidance on Collecting Equality Data (revised June 2022 - Update to Equalities Guidance and FAQs</a></li> </ul> <p>In addition to reviewing the above data sources and guidance documents, the assurance action plan outlined at Appendix 1, is based on the published toolkit and contains narrative and evidence sources from self-assessment activity undertaken. Performance data used for the annual return on the charter was also considered and has been used to provide an overview of operational service delivery for key activities.</p> <p>The findings from Internal Audit have informed the considerations.</p>
<p><b>Partners data and research</b>  In assessing the impact(s) set out in Section 2 what evidence has been provided by partners?   Please specify partners</p>	<p>Information on performance and rent levels is available from data published by the Scottish Housing Regulator and Scotland's Housing Network. This has been used to assess how the Council is performing in relation to national average.</p> <p>Information collated for the Annual Return on the Housing Charter and feedback from the SHR through the risk assessment process is used to inform considerations.</p>

<p><b>Gaps and Uncertainties</b> Have you identified any gaps or uncertainties in your understanding of the issues or impacts that need to be explored further?</p>	<p>There are no specific gaps or uncertainties. Using the guidance and data available, ongoing work has been identified within the areas of equalities and human rights and tenant and residents to achieve full compliance with the standards.</p>
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**Section Four: Detailed Action Plan to address identified gaps in:**

- a) evidence and
- b) to mitigate negative impacts

No	Action	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale
1	Implement the 'Housing On-line' Module within NEC Housing to provide functionality to collect all required equalities data	Service Lead – Housing Services	31 March 2025
2	When undertaking future reviews of policies, an explicit statement will be included relating to equalities and human rights.	Service Lead – Housing Services and Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy	Ongoing
3	Continue to manage landlord compliance functions to maintain standards in relation to tenant and resident safety.	Service Lead – Housing Services and Housing Asset Management Co-ordinator	Ongoing

**Section Five - Performance monitoring and reporting**

Considering the policy as a whole, including its equality and diversity implications:

When is the policy intended to come into effect?	The Annual Assurance Statement must be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2024.
When will the policy be reviewed?	In accordance with SHR's Regulatory Framework, the Assurance Statement must be considered and approved by the Council, as a landlord, on an annual basis. It must be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 <sup>st</sup> October each year.
Which Panel will have oversight of the policy?	Cabinet

**Section 6**

## Summary Equality Impact Assessment Implications & Mitigating Actions

### Name of Policy: Annual Assurance Statement – Housing

This policy will assist or inhibit the Council's ability to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations as follows:

#### Eliminate discrimination

South Ayrshire Council is committed to eliminating discrimination and stigmatisation through the delivery of housing services to all tenants, people who are homeless, gypsy/travellers and other service users accessing housing and homelessness services.

Increasing the opportunities for the collection of equalities data across protected characteristics will improve the Council's ability to evidence good practice.

#### Advance equality of opportunity

The annual assurance statement provides assurance to tenants and others accessing housing and homeless services that the Council is committed to advancing equality of opportunity. The content of this report outlines the service provided by the Council, which is inclusive and ensures equality of opportunity to access housing services by all protected characteristics within the Council's communities.

#### Foster good relations

Tenant representatives and interested tenants are consulted on the annual return on the charter and the content of the proposed annual assurance statement. Details of performance and the overview of service delivery outline the Council's commitment as a landlord to deliver improvements across the housing stock, improving standards for tenants and fulfilling the commitments agreed in consultation with tenants.

#### Consider Socio-Economic Disadvantage (Fairer Scotland Duty)

Tenants are involved in the review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and are consulted on the options for rent setting. Although rent setting decisions may have a financial impact on some households, the Council is committed to ensuring that there is early intervention and contact is made with tenants who fall into rent arrears to ensure that appropriate advice, information, housing support or signposting takes place. Where appropriate advice and support will be provided to maximise the take up of applications for Discretionary Housing Payments to households experiencing financial hardship.

As part of the work undertaken to fulfil landlord compliance obligations in relation to tenant and resident safety, households in financial hardship are identified and support is provided through advice, information and signposting to help households explore any additional assistance or financial support that may be available.

Summary of Key Action to Mitigate Negative Impacts	
Actions	Timescale
See details of actions outlined in Section 4.	

**Signed: Michael Alexander - Service Lead – Housing Services**

**Date: September 2024**