South Ayrshire Council

Report by Depute Chief Executive and Director
of Housing, Operations and Development
to Cabinet
of 26 September 2023

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 2023 and its publication for tenants and other customers; and

   2.1.4   notes the requirements of the Regulatory Framework and ongoing work outlined to achieve full compliance in the areas of Equalities and Human Rights as outlined in paragraph 4.1.1

3.   Background

3.1   The last Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) was submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) on 4 October 2022 following approval by Cabinet on 27 September 2022.

3.2   In February 2019, the SHR published the Regulatory Framework entitled 'Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland' and Annual Assurance Statutory Guidance. 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. A summary of the key points from the Regulatory Framework is included at Appendix 4.

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 July 2023, SHR wrote to all Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords about what should be considered when completing and submitting their AAS. This included ongoing reference to assurances around an effective approach to collection of equalities information and considerations on how a human rights approach can be adopted into our work. In addition, SHR are also looking for 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 2022 AAS, the Council reported full compliance with all requirements and outcomes, with the exception of full compliance with certification of electrical safety and also noted that work had started to review the published equalities guidance and future processes for collection of equalities information.

3.6 In the published 2022/23 Engagement Plan for South Ayrshire Council, SHR confirmed that engagement would take place with the Council about its services for people who are homeless. On 22 November 2022, Officers met with SHR representatives to discuss aspects of homelessness services and to respond to questions from the Regulator. Information and responses were provided at this meeting and to a follow up information request from SHR in January 2023 as part of their Homeless Risk Assessment process. This was acknowledged by SHR who confirmed it would feed into the homelessness risk assessment process. No further engagement was undertaken by SHR. SHR published the 2023/24 Engagement Plans for all landlords on 31 March 2023. In the 2023/24 published plan for South Ayrshire Council, SHR has stated that it will again engage with the Council about its' services for people who are homeless. The Council will be required to meet SHR's request for any information and make SHR aware of any emerging issues preventing it from fulfilling its statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation when it should and comply with the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. The website link to the 2023/24 Engagement Plan is included in the background papers section of this report.

3.7 South Ayrshire Council's 2022/23 ARC was submitted to SHR on 30 May 2023. 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 26 May 2023 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 2021/22. For reference by Members, a website link to the 2022/23 SHR Landlord Report for South Ayrshire

Council, which was published on 31 August 2023, 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. Prior to the submission of the 2019/20 ARC, Internal Audit conducted an audit of selected housing indicators and concluded that reasonable assurance could be taken from the controls in place and the supporting evidence available. As part of the 2021/22 Audit Plan, Internal Audit conducted an audit of the AAS and their report in July 2021 concluded that the findings from the audit demonstrated *'Substantial Assurance - A sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.'* There were no recommendations from that audit. Future audits will be included in the annual risk based internal audit plan, 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 2023), each of the regulatory requirements have been considered. It has been determined that the Council is complying with relevant obligations in relation to tenant and resident safety and 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.

4.1.1 ***Equalities and Human Rights*** - processes remain 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 currently gathered and there are established processes and demonstrable good practice in place to support the Council's current approach to equalities and human rights. However, the collection of equalities data is being further developed as part of 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 update equalities data. The scope of data collection, the most effective ways to gather this information and the controls needed have been considered. This will be introduced as part of the implementation of 'Housing Online' module, and the approach will take account of all relevant advice and support from Information Governance and Housing Policy & Strategy.

In terms of the Council's approach to Human Rights, work already takes place 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, 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. In addition, the Council has established a Trauma Informed Approach and work is taking place on an ongoing basis to raise awareness across services. SHR are again asking 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.

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 2023, 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   The proposals in this report have been assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment Scoping process. There are no significant potential positive or negative equality impacts of agreeing the recommendations and therefore an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. A copy of the Equalities Scoping Assessment is attached as Appendix 5.

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 13 September 2023. The results from the 2022/23 SHR Landlord Report published on 31 August 2023, were discussed.

13.2   Updates were provided on current service delivery and the operational challenges being faced by the Housing Service. An update was also provided on the progress to date to develop 'Housing Online' which will allow tenants and housing applicants to update their own records, which will include equalities data.

13.3   Tenants were also briefed on the content of the draft Assurance Action Plan, the Overview of Service Delivery and the latest performance information.

13.4   Tenants acknowledged the levels of performance, and the comparisons in relation to the Scottish average. Specific reference was made to the high levels of performance in rent arrears management, which was regarded by tenants as a challenging area of activity, taking account of the current cost of living pressures.

Tenants also noted that although the Council's average relet time was slightly longer than the Scottish average, they felt it was worthy to note that the Council completes repair work in empty properties to the recognised and approved relet standard, with less reliance on ingoing tenant repairs after new tenancies have started. Overall tenant feedback was positive, acknowledging the high levels of reported satisfaction received from the last comprehensive tenants survey. Tenants felt this was testament to the service provided by the Council as landlord. In conclusion, tenants commented on the level of regulation and scrutiny in the housing sector and noted the range and volume of work undertaken to the deliver the housing service and meet the regulatory reporting requirements.

13.5   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 Depute Chief Executive and 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:

Implementation	*Due date*	*Managed by*
Submit the Annual Assurance Statement to Scottish Housing Regulator	31 October 2023	Service Lead – Housing Services
Publish the approved Annual Assurance Statement on Council website for tenants and other customers	31 October 2023	Service Lead – Housing Services

Background Papers   **Report to Cabinet of 27 September 2022 – Annual Assurance Statement – Housing**

Scottish Housing Regulator – Engagement Plan from 31 March 2023 to 31 March 2024

2022/23 Landlord Report – Scottish Housing Regulator – published 31 August 2023 - South Ayrshire Council | Scottish Housing Regulator

Scottish Housing Regulator – Regulatory Framework

Scottish Housing Regulator - Annual Assurance Statement

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

Person to Contact   **Michael Alexander, Service Lead – Housing Services**
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Date: 14 September 2023

Appendix 1 – Assurance Action Plan

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
Assurance and Notification					
AN1	Prepare an Annual Assurance Statement in accordance with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) published guidance.	Service Lead – Housing Services	31 October 2023	Ongoing	Report and Annual Assurance Statement to be considered by Cabinet on 26 September 2023.
	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 2023		Report and Annual Assurance Statement to be considered by Cabinet on 26 September 2023.
	Make the Annual Assurance Statement available to tenants and other service users.	Service Lead – Housing Services Policy Officer - (Tenant Participation)	31 October 2023		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 13 September 2023. 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 2022/23 Landlord Report published by SHR on 31 August 2023 was also provided. Comments and feedback from 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.

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
Assurance and Notification					
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 2022/23 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.	Service Lead – Housing Services Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy	Ongoing	Evidence is collated on an ongoing basis	Assurance and evidence includes:- • Housing Management Policies and Procedures • Homelessness Procedures • Scottish Government National Homelessness Statistics • Annual Return on the Charter to SHR and supporting evidence • 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. • Benchmarking Data and Reports • Comprehensive Tenants Survey was undertaken during January/February 2023 • Customer Satisfaction Tracker Surveys • Evidence of consultation with tenants on rent setting process • Management Sample Checking and Case Audits • Staff Supervision and Performance Development Reviews (PDR's)

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
Assurance and Notification					
					- Internal Audit Reports - Internal Audit Report on AAS and compliance with Regulatory Framework – July 2021 - External Audit Reports - Care Inspectorate Reports - Reports to Council, Cabinet, Audit and Governance Panel and Service and Performance Panel - Minutes of Performance Accountability Meetings - Tenant Newsletters - Health & Safety Policies and Procedures - Cyclical Health and Safety Audits and Fire Risk Assessments for designated properties - Compliance Records for Gas Safety - Fire and Carbon Monoxide Detector Compliance Certification - Fixed Electrical Testing Compliance Certification
AN4	Notify SHR of any tenant and resident safety matters which have been reported to, or are being investigated by the Health and Safety Executive, or reports from regulatory or statutory authorities, or insurance providers, relating to safety concerns.	Service Lead – Housing Services Service Lead – Risk & Safety			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. Corporate Health and Safety Policies are in place and are published and accessible to all staff via the CORE - Council's Intranet system.

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Assurance and Notification					
					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, Hostels and Office accommodation. A Departmental Risk Register is maintained and updated to track management action, mitigations and progress of actions for any identified risks. An established programme is in operation for annual gas safety checks for all housing stock with gas appliances. 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 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 2023	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

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Assurance and Notification					
					to the new Regulatory Framework and the Engagement Plan.

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance					
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 2023	Completed	The Annual Return on the Charter for 2022/23 was submitted to Scottish Housing Regulator on 30 May 2023 to meet deadline date of 31 May 2023 as set out in the Regulatory Framework. Local Government Benchmark Indicators and Key Performance indicators are reported to the Council's Service and Partnerships Performance Panel.
CH2	Each landlord must involve tenants, and where relevant, other service users, in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information. It must: • agree its approach with tenants • ensure that it is effective and meaningful – that the chosen approach gives tenants a real and demonstrable say in the assessment of performance • publicise the approach to tenants • ensure that it can be verified and be able to show the agreed approach to involving tenants has happened • involve other service users in an appropriate way, having asked and	Service Lead – Housing Services	31 October 2022	Completed	Prior to submitting the Annual Return on the Charter for 2022/23, 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 26 May 2023. 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. Following publication of the 2021/22 ARC Results and SHR Landlord Report, work was undertaken in consultation with tenant representatives on the production of the 2021/22 Annual Performance

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Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance					
	had regard to their needs and wishes.				Report. This was published in October 2022. Work is underway to work with tenant representatives on the production of the 2022/23 Performance Report and this will be published in October 2023. 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.
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 2023	Ongoing	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 2022/23 Performance Report. Any feedback received from tenants is considered and used to inform future editions of the performance report. The approach used is outlined in the annual performance report published annually. A copy of the Annual Performance Report is issued to all tenants who

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance					
					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. Copies of the Annual Performance Report are also available on request and are available from Housing Teams and Libraries.
CH4	When reporting its performance to tenants and other service users each landlord must: • provide them with an assessment of performance in delivering each of the Charter outcomes and standards which are relevant to the landlord • include relevant comparisons – these should include comparisons with previous years, with other landlords and with national performance • set out how and when the landlord intends to address areas for improvement	Service Lead – Housing Services Policy Officer - (Tenant Participation)	31 October 2023	Ongoing	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. 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. The Annual Performance Report outlines the key priorities for the coming year and provides an update on achievements.

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Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance					
	• give tenants and other service users a way to feed back their views on the style and form of the reporting.				In agreement with tenant representatives, a section *'You Said/We Did'* 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.

Tenants are given opportunities to make comments and suggestions for improvement and feedback is invited from tenants. |
| 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 2023 | Ongoing | The Annual Performance Report includes details of SHR and includes website links to access further information.

The website link to the SHR Landlord Report is published on the Council's website and Housing Services Facebook. |

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
Tenant and Service User Redress					
TS1	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.
TS2	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 *'Listening to You'*. 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.
TS3	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,

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Tenant and Service User Redress					
					and record if this has led to changes in policy, practice or procedure. This is part of the process when closing a complaint. Complaint Management performance is also reported to and scrutinised by the Council's Service and Partnerships Performance Panel.

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Whistleblowing					
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 Advisor		Complete	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.

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Equality and Human Rights					
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 policies, and in its day-to-day service delivery.	Service Lead – Housing Services Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy		Complete	All Housing Strategies and Policies include a section on Equalities and have been impact assessed. All reports to Council, Cabinet and other Panels include a requirement for 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. Arrangements are in place to ensure that translation services are accessed where required for tenants and other customers. Applications, correspondence, tenancy agreements

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Equality and Human Rights					
					etc. are made available in other languages or formats for minority groups or on request.

Loop systems are available in council offices to assist hearing impaired customers.

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 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 | Service Lead – Housing Services

Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy | June 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. |

Task Ref	Requirement	Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale	Status	Comments/Evidence
Equality and Human Rights					
	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.				Tenant Participation events and meetings are always held in accessible venues and locations to ensure that no barriers exist for tenants and other customers.
	Action:- Collection of Equalities Data Work is continuing to develop 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. Progress on implementation has been delayed due to a requirement for a wider software upgrade, however, the scope of data collection, the most effective ways to gather this information and the controls needed have been considered and will be embedded in this system when introduced. In taking forward the approach, advice and support will be provided from Information Governance and Housing Policy & Strategy.	Service Lead – Housing Services Co-ordinator – Housing Policy & Strategy Co-ordinator (Housing) Co-ordinator (Registration, Records and Information)	June 2024	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.

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Equality and Human Rights					
	Action:- Human Rights 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 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, 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 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 to make them more accessible for households with disabilities. In addition, the Council has established a Trauma Informed Approach and work is taking place on an ongoing basis to raise awareness across services. SHR are again asking landlords to confirm that they are considering how to adopt a human rights approach into their work. Work will continue over the

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Equality and Human Rights					
					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.

Consideration will be given to any changes to existing policies, procedures or practice. Consultation will take place with tenant representatives on proposed changes |

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 at Scrutiny and Performance Groups;
- 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
- Cyclical Internal Audit Report on the Scottish Housing Regulator – Annual Assurance Statement Regulatory Framework – last audited July 2021. 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 Hostels/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 Certification
- Cyclical Health and Safety Audits and Fire Risk Assessments for sheltered housing units and hostels/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 and Performance meetings 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 completing '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.

Overview of Operational Service Delivery – Key Activities

There are no material issues relating to compliance for operational service delivery or relevant obligations relating to tenant and resident safety.   This overview provides narrative relating to key operational activities, outlining any relevant performance information, satisfaction levels and details of any current operational challenges.

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 2022/23, this has remained a challenging activity, 99.5% of rental income was collected by the Council compared to the Scottish average of 99.0% and gross rent arrears stood at 4.32% of rent due, up from 3.92% in 201/22. Historically, the Council has performed well in this area. From recent 2022/23 benchmarking information published by Scotland's Housing Network, the Council was the best performing Local Authority in terms of overall arrears at 4.32% of rent due for the reporting year.

There were no evictions carried out by the Council in 2022/23 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 being 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 2022/23 92.2% of the Council's housing stock met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) compared to the Scottish average of 79.0%. This was an improvement on the compliance rate of 86.5% in 2021/22. 5.5% 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 2.3% 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 2023/24 and will continue to contribute to meeting SHQS.

1.3.   ***Average relet times for empty houses*** – in 2022/23 a total of 692 properties were relet and the average relet time was 58 days, this was up on the 540 properties relet and the average relet time of 41.9 days in 2021/22.   The Scottish average in 2022/23 was 55.6 days.

On reviewing voids performance, the Council has had to deal with an increased number of tenancy terminations in the 2022/23 reporting year and the associated void processes have placed increased pressures on the housing management teams and the Property Maintenance Service.   Contributing factors to the increased 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, and the time taken to prepare and set up properties for households being assisted and accommodated by the Council through the Ukrainian Support Scheme.   In 2022/23, the Council let 42 properties to Ukrainian households.

Although the Council's average relet time has increased in 2022/23, the Council has successfully relet 20 longer-term void properties in the reporting year.

In addition to the 692 properties relet by the Council, there was an additional 86 new lets (new build and buy back) properties let by the Council, taking the overall number of lets to 778.

Revised operating arrangements have been reintroduced with Property Maintenance 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 2023/24 (1 April – 30 June 2023), the Council relet 194 properties and the average relet time was 51.2 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*** – 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. To ensure that the Council fulfils its duty to accommodate people who are homeless, 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 the 2022/23 reporting year, 874 homeless applications were made to the Council and 414 (53.2%) of the overall 778 lets were made to homeless households.

In the first reporting quarter of 2023/24 (1 April – 30 June 2023), 257 homeless applications were made to the Council. As at the end of June 2023, the Housing Options Team were dealing with 466 open homeless cases. In this reporting quarter, a total of 205 lets were made by the Council, 96 (46.8%) 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 2022/23, 491 cases of anti-social behaviour were reported, this was an increase on the 318 cases reported in 2021/22.   Despite the increase in the number of cases, 438 of the 491 cases were resolved in the 2022/23 reporting year – equating to 89.2%, compared to the Scottish average of 94.2%. Although the percentage of cases resolved in the reporting year is down on the 94.6% in 2021/22, the 53 cases which were open as at 31 March 2023, were active cases under investigation or being monitored, and all were within the timescales of locally agreed targets.

In the first quarter of 2023/24 (1 April – 30 June 2023), 143 cases of anti-social behaviour were reported to the Council. 90 cases were closed in this period and all cases closed were within locally agreed targets.

1.6. **Responsive Repairs** - In the 2022/23 reporting year:-

- 15,312 emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 2.6 hours, compared to the Scottish average of 4.2 hours. Although there was an increase in the overall number of repairs in 2022/23, this was an improvement on the 2021/22 performance when 13,510 emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 2.7 hours.

- 15,748 non-emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 7.1 working days, compared to the Scottish average of 8.7 days. Again, although there was an increase in the overall number of repairs in 2022/23, this was an improvement on the 2021/22 performance when 14,744 non-emergency repairs were completed, and the average time taken was 8.06 working days.

In the first reporting quarter (1 April – 30 June 2023), 3055 emergency repairs were completed and the average time taken was 2.51 hours. 3389 non-emergency repairs were completed and the average time taken was 6.73 working days.

2. Tenant and Resident Safety

In SHR's letter dated 3 July 2023 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 (2022/23), the Council achieved full compliance with its statutory duty to complete gas safety checks in properties with gas appliances.

For the first reporting quarter of 2023/23 (1 April – 30 June 2023), 2065 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 2022/23 the Council achieved a compliance rate of 99.2%, and appropriate follow up action was being progressed to manage outstanding cases.

In 2023/24, 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 2023, of the Council's lettable housing stock of 8068 properties, 7998 (99.1%) of properties have a valid EICR in place and are compliant with the standard. Established procedures and processes are in place to manage instances of no access and Officers are continuing to contact households. 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 2022/23, 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 2023, 99.7% of the Council's housing stock is meeting the fire and carbon monoxide detector standard. The 26 properties not recorded as meeting the standard were 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

During January /February 2023, a comprehensive tenants survey was undertaken on the Council's behalf by Research Resource. 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 86.7%.

- ***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 89.7%.

- ***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 85.9%.

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 2023), each of the regulatory requirements have been considered. It has been determined that the Council is complying with relevant obligations in relation to tenant and resident safety and 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.

Equalities and Human Rights - processes remain 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 currently gathered and there are established processes and demonstrable good practice in place to support the Council's current approach to equalities and human rights. However, the collection of equalities data is being further developed as part of 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 update equalities data. The scope of data collection, the most effective ways to gather this information and the controls needed have been considered. This will be introduced as part of the implementation of 'Housing Online' module, and the approach will take account of all relevant advice and support from Information Governance and Housing Policy & Strategy.

In terms of the Council's approach to Human Rights, work already takes place 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, 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. In addition, the Council has established a Trauma Informed Approach and work is taking place on an ongoing basis 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 outline the Council's approach in relation to human rights.

The Cabinet of 26 September 2023 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

Summary of Key Information Relating to the Scottish Housing Regulator Regulatory Framework

The Regulatory Framework entitled 'Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland', is SHR's statement on Performance of Functions setting out how they will regulate both Registered Social Landlords (RSL) and the housing and homelessness services provided by local authorities.

For both local authorities and RSLs, Scottish Housing Regulator (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.

Within the Framework, SHR state that their regulation is proportionate, consistent, accountable, transparent and targeted only where needed.

SHR's approach to regulation includes the following:

1. **Landlord Self-Assurance** – The landlord is responsible for delivering good outcomes for tenants and other customers. Landlords need to be self-aware, open and honest regarding performance and be committed to making improvements. SHR expect landlords to assure themselves that they are meeting the regulatory requirements and all landlords must prepare and publish an Annual Assurance Statement confirming to tenants and SHR that regulatory requirements are being met. SHR requires that the assurance statement for local authorities is approved by the appropriate committee (in this case, Cabinet), and signed by the Chair before submission.

2. **Empowering Tenants, People who are Homeless and Other Service Users** – As a landlord it is important that tenants and other service users are involved in the scrutiny of performance and discussions around how rents are set and how rental income is used.

3. **Risk-Based Regulation** – SHR assess risk in landlords to determine what assurances they need and what landlords may need to do to improve. The main risks considered by SHR are: - poor outcomes for tenants, people who are homeless and other service users and poor quality of tenant's homes and investment failures. As part of the new Regulatory Framework, SHR publishes an Engagement Plan for each landlord, this outlines the information they require from the landlord, what the landlord needs to do and how and why SHR will engage with the landlord. For local authorities, SHR work through the risk assessment process with their partner scrutiny bodies to consider the full range of scrutiny activity for each local authority.

4. **SHR's Work** –there are 4 broad ways in which SHR carries out their work with local authorities, these are:

    (i) gathering and publishing data in ways that tenants and others can use;

(ii) getting assurance from landlords;

(iii) taking action where they need to; and

(iv) carrying out thematic work to look in depth at specific areas of landlords' work.

5. **Equality and Human Rights** – SHR promote equality and human rights. All landlords must ensure that they fully comply with their responsibilities under equalities and human rights legislation. SHR monitor, assess and report on landlords work in this area. New Guidance for Social Landlords was published in August 2021 and revised in June 2022. The Chartered Institute of Housing have also published a report entitled 'Walking the Talk' and a document entitled 'Housing and Human Rights Framework' providing a summary of the right to adequate housing and human rights issues for landlords in Scotland.

walking-the-talk-report.pdf (cih.org)

housing-and-human-rights-framework.pdf (cih.org)

6. **Annual Assurance Statement -** Within this AAS, Landlords are being asked to clearly identify any non-compliance with regulatory requirements.

When considering each of the Charter outcomes, a landlord may decide that improvement action is required to meet an outcome and must consider the materiality of the issue. The factors to consider when determining materiality are:

- whether the issue seriously affects the interests and safety of service users;
- whether the issue threatens the stability, efficient running or viability of service delivery arrangements; and
- whether the issue could bring the landlord into disrepute, or raise public or stakeholder concern about the organisation or the social housing sector.

Where the failure is determined to be minor and does not affect a significant number of service users, it can be considered not to be material, and does not need to be acknowledged and referenced in the Assurance Statement. However, where a failure is considered to be material, the landlord is required to acknowledge this specifically, listing the outcomes it is failing to achieve, and providing details of action being taken to address the problem. Website links to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and statutory guidance published by SHR on the Regulatory Framework and Annual Assurance Statements are included in the background papers section of the report for reference by Members.

The Regulator will use the approved Assurance Statement, along with the Annual Return on the Charter to consider and determine its engagement with landlords. This will be confirmed through in the Engagement Plan published by SHR.

Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework outlines the Regulatory Requirements that must be met by all Landlords. These include:

- Assurance and Notification;
- Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance;
- Tenant and Service Users Redress;

- Whistleblowing; and
- Equality and Human Rights.

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) developed a Self-Assurance Toolkit in conjunction with the SHR, the Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF) and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO). This toolkit was updated in June 2023 and is intended to support landlords' approach to self-assurance. It focusses on the question's organisations should be asking themselves to gain a level of assurance that compliance is being achieved.

Updated August 2023

**South Ayrshire Council
Equality Impact Assessment
Scoping Template**

Equality Impact Assessment is a legal requirement under the Public Sector Duty to promote equality of the Equality Act 2010. Separate guidance has been developed on Equality Impact Assessment's which will guide you through the process and is available to view here: https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/equalities/impact-assessment.aspx

Further guidance is available here: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/assessing-impact-and-public-sector-equality-duty-guide-public-authorities/

The Fairer Scotland Duty ('the Duty'), Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in Scotland from 1 April 2018. It places a legal responsibility on Councils to actively consider ('pay due regard to') how we can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. FSD Guidance for Public Bodies in respect of the Duty, was published by the Scottish Government in March 2018 and revised in October 2021. See information here: https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty-guidance-public-bodies/

1. Policy details

Policy Title	**Annual Assurance Statement - Housing**
Lead Officer (Name/Position/Email)	**Michael Alexander - Service Lead – Housing Services michael.alexander@south-ayrshire.gov.uk**

2. Which communities, groups of people, employees or thematic groups do you think will be, or potentially could be, impacted upon by the implementation of this policy? Please indicate whether these would be positive or negative impacts

Community or Groups of People	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Age – men and women, girls & boys	-	-
Disability	-	-
Gender Reassignment (Trans/Transgender Identity)	-	-
Marriage or Civil Partnership	-	-
Pregnancy and Maternity	-	-
Race – people from different racial groups, (BME) ethnic minorities and Gypsy/Travellers	-	-
Religion or Belief (including lack of belief)	-	-

Sex – (issues specific to women & men or girls & boys)	-	-
Sexual Orientation – person's sexual orientation i.e. LGBT+, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, heterosexual/straight	-	-
Thematic Groups: Health, Human Rights & Children's Rights	-	-

3. What likely impact will this policy have on people experiencing different kinds of social disadvantage i.e. The Fairer Scotland Duty (This section to be completed for any Strategic Decisions). Consideration must be given particularly to children and families.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage	Negative Impacts	Positive impacts
Low Income/Income Poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing	-	-
Low and/or no wealth – 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	-	-
Material Deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure/hobbies	-	-
Area Deprivation – where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of transport)	-	-
Socio-economic Background – social class i.e. parent's education, employment and income	-	-

4. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that the policy will support the Council to:

General Duty and other Equality Themes Consider the 'Three Key Needs' of the Equality Duty	Level of Negative and/or Positive Impact (High, Medium or Low)
Eliminate unlawful discrimination, **harassment and victimisation**	Low
Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not	Low

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. (Does it tackle prejudice and promote a better understanding of equality issues?)	Low
Increase participation of particular communities or groups in public life	Low
Improve the health and wellbeing of particular communities or groups	Low
Promote the human rights of particular communities or groups	Low
Tackle deprivation faced by particular communities or groups	Low

5. Summary Assessment

Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? (A full Equality Impact Assessment must be carried out if impacts identified as **Medium and/or High**)	~~**YES**~~ ☐ **NO** ☐
Rationale for decision: **An Equality Impact Assessment is not required on this occasion. This report is seeking Cabinet approval to authorise the submission of the Annual Assurance Statement to Scottish Housing Regulator, taking account of the assurances outlined against each of the requirements outlined in the Assurance Action Plan.**
Signed : ……Michael Alexander……………………...**Service Lead – Housing Services**   **Date:** …………September 2023…………………………………………...