
Report To:	Environment and Regeneration Committee	Date: 31 October 2019
Report By:	Louise Long Corporate Director, (Chief Officer) Inverclyde Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)	Report No: ENV052/19/LL/AH
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Subject:	SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR	

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise of the Scottish Housing Regulator's new requirement for the Council to produce an Annual Assurance Statement and submit to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 In March 2019 the Scottish Housing Regulator published its new Regulatory Framework and guidance following a period of consultation. As part of this process all landlords are required to publish an Annual Assurance Statement. For local authorities, the process includes ensuring that statutory duties in respect of homelessness and rented residential accommodation are being met.
- 2.2 Within Inverclyde, the Regulatory Framework covers the current homelessness service (31 flats within the Inverclyde centre and 27 temporary accommodation flats) and a small number of janitors and park keepers' houses which are occupied by council and ex council employees.
- 2.3 This Annual Assurance Statement advises that the Council is currently meeting the majority of requirements/standards contained within the guidance, however acknowledges that progress requires to be made in three key areas of: tenant feedback; unsuitable accommodation breaches; and provision of temporary accommodation. These will be areas of focus for both Property Services the and Homelessness Service.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Environment and Regeneration Committee is asked to note that the Scottish Housing Regulator has published a new Regulatory Framework and guidance.
- 3.2 The Environment and Regeneration Committee is asked to note the 2019/20 Annual Assurance Statement covering the relevant information and approve submission to Scottish Housing Regulator on 31 October 2019.

**Louise Long
Corporate Director (Chief Officer)
Inverclyde HSCP**

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator exists to protect the interests of tenants, homeless people and others who use social landlords' services. Their main function is to monitor, assess, report and intervene (as appropriate) in relation to social landlords' performance of housing activities and RSLs' financial well-being and standards of governance. In relation to Inverclyde Council this covers services to tenants and people who are homeless. In other areas this will also cover Gypsy/Travellers who use official sites provided by landlords and factored owners.
- 4.2 In March 2019 the Scottish Housing Regulator published its new Regulatory Framework and guidance following a period of consultation. As part of this process all landlords are required to publish an Annual Assurance Statement, to confirm to their tenants and to the Scottish Housing Regulator that they are meeting their regulatory requirements in respect of their role as a landlord. The Annual Assurance Statement must be submitted annually between April and October. In the event that a landlord does not fully comply with the Regulatory Framework it must stipulate this in the Annual Assurance Statement and advise how it will make the necessary improvements to ensure compliance.
- 4.3 Alongside the annual Assurance Statement, local authorities require to submit an Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter (ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The Regulator uses this information to report on performance and to produce an Engagement Plan. For homelessness additional information includes quarterly completion and submission of data on homelessness to the Scottish Government.

4.4 INVERCLYDE CONTEXT

As Inverclyde is a stock transfer authority the Scottish Housing Regulatory Framework applies to a small number of properties and the Homelessness Service. The Council currently has 13 janitors' and park keepers' houses which are occupied by Council and ex council staff. The Homelessness Service has 31 units within the Inverclyde Centre and currently 27 temporary accommodation flats across Inverclyde. Demand over recent months has been high and there are times where bed and breakfast accommodation has to be utilised.

- 4.5 The Council is currently meeting the majority of requirements/standards contained within the guidance, however, progress is required in three key areas: (1) make the information and feedback received from tenants and the Regulator more easily accessible. This will take the form of regular reporting to Committee on the outcome of the ARC and then circulated to tenants along with the engagement plan and the annual assurance statement. (2) On two occasions the Unsuitable Accommodation Order has not been met by using Bed and Breakfast accommodation for longer than 14 days whilst appropriate accommodation is secured. (3) On occasion there has been a shortage of availability of temporary accommodation. Through the development and implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, and successful implementation of Housing First, it is anticipated that the requirement for temporary housing will decrease.

4.6 INVERCLYDE ASSURANCE PLAN

Staff from Legal and Property Services and Homelessness met with the Scottish Housing Regulator in July 2019 to discuss the Engagement Plan and the regulatory requirements. As this is the first year of the new framework it is expected that the submitted Assurance Statement will be short, concise and focus on the areas where we do not comply and actions we intend to take to improve. It is expected that following this statement submission, an inspection timetable will be produced by the Regulator.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

5.1 Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

Legal

- 5.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 both established the creation of the Scottish Housing Regulator and introduced its function as a regulatory body accordingly. It also sets the Scottish Housing Regulator's statutory objective, functions, duties and powers.

Human Resources

- 5.3 There are no human resources issues within this report.

Equalities

- 5.4 There are no equality issues within this report.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES (see attached appendix)
√	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 None.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

Annual Assurance Statement: Inverclyde Council - October 2019

The purpose of this Assurance Statement is to reassure the Scottish Housing Regulator and our tenants and other service users that Inverclyde Council complies, in the main, with our regulatory and statutory obligations as set out in section 3 of the regulatory requirements. In areas where there is no (or part) material compliance we have indicated below how we are planning to improve in those areas and the timeframe for improvement.

As a local authority we can confirm that we meet our statutory duties to prevent and alleviate homelessness, together with our duties regarding our legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness, equality and human rights and tenant and resident safety. As the council only has a limited housing stock, most of which are on secure tenancies, with our tenants having a direct relationship with officers, its customer/landlord relationship must be considered within that context.

We can confirm that Inverclyde Council achieve all but the following standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services.

1. On two occasions this calendar year (2019), our authority has breached the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. Inverclyde Council utilises Bed and Breakfast accommodation only after any opportunity for all other suitable temporary accommodation is exhausted and where no other accommodation is immediately available, to prevent rough sleeping and ensure that families can stay together. This allows our authority time to find homeless households more suitable longer term temporary or permanent accommodation.

2. There are significant pressures on our homelessness accommodation service and on occasion we have been unable to meet our statutory duty to provide Temporary Accommodation. In these instances, we have sought to find alternative accommodation, including liaison with family members and friends, who have been able, on all occasions, to accommodate people whilst we actively seek to secure suitable temporary accommodation in the short term. As above, we are fully committed to a reform of our plans to utilise Temporary Accommodation and in order to ensure that we work to meet our statutory duties we have increased the number of temporary flats by 7; working to turn void properties around as quickly as possible; working with local RSL's to secure appropriate tenancies; and are currently developing a portfolio of all alternative accommodation across the west of Scotland where our service users can be accommodated at short notice

The council has submitted a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to the Scottish Government which sets out the five-year transition to securing settled housing for all homeless households as quickly as possible. Through the development and implementation of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, and successful implementation of Housing First, it is anticipated that the requirement for

temporary housing will decrease and we will meet our statutory responsibilities.

3. All our housing stock currently meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) however, there are 4 houses which do not meet the requirements of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH). These houses require external wall insulation. An action plan regarding rectifying this issue is currently being implemented. All houses also require having an Energy Performance Assessment carried out.

4. A report to Committee on the outcome of the Annual Return on Charter was not completed this year (2019) however, it is recognised that this must be completed every year and this report must be made available to our tenants together with the Engagement Plan and the Annual Assurance Statement.

We confirm that we have utilised and considered appropriate evidence to give us this assurance. We approved our Assurance Statement at the Council's Environment and Regeneration Committee on the 31st October.