



ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT 2020/21 TO THE SCOTTISH HOUSING REGULATOR - UPDATE

Report by Director - Resilient Communities

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

22 November 2021

1 SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 **This report outlines progress in the areas set out in Appendix 1 Scottish Borders Council Annual Assurance Statement 2020/2021 to the Scottish Housing Regulator of the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21 and Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21 to the Scottish Housing Regulator which was considered by Audit and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 May 2021.**
- 1.2 In 2019, the Scottish Housing Regulator ("the Regulator") revised its Regulatory Framework. This placed a new requirement on all social landlords to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the Regulator by the end of October each year.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 10 May 2021, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee approved the Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21 in respect of landlord services provided by the Council (Appendix 1) be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator, and requested that an update report be presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee in 6 months' time, outlining progress in the areas set out in the Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- 1.4 This report outlines progress in the areas set out in the Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator as detailed in the updated Summary Statement of Self-Assessment of Compliance against Regulatory Framework (Appendix 2).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee notes the progress in the areas set out in the Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator (Appendix 1) as detailed in the updated Summary Statement of Self-Assessment of Compliance against Regulatory Framework (Appendix 2).**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2019, the Scottish Housing Regulator ("the Regulator") revised its Regulatory Framework. This placed a new requirement on all social landlords to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the Regulator by the end of October each year. This statement must either confirm that the Governing Body or appropriate Committee is assured that the landlord is complying with all relevant regulatory requirements and standards, or highlight any material areas of non-compliance and how the landlord will address these.
- 3.2 As Scottish Borders Council is a housing stock transfer local authority, it is subject to submitting a Statement that is considerably less involved than an asset-owning authority. However, the Council is responsible for Homelessness Services provision in the Scottish Borders and must give assurance in this area.
- 3.3 At its meeting on 10 May 2021, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee approved the Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21 in respect of landlord services provided by the Council (Appendix 1) be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator, and requested that an update report be presented to Audit and Scrutiny Committee in 6 months' time, outlining progress in the areas set out in the Annual Assurance Statement.
- 3.4 The Annual Assurance Statement confirms the Council's level of compliance with all of the relevant requirements set out at Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework to include:
 - All relevant and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter in respect of any tenants, homeless persons and other persons who are in receipt of housing services; and
 - Legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.
- 3.5 The Annual Assurance Statement is informed by the self-assessment of compliance against the Regulatory Framework by the Homelessness Services Manager, and the work of Audit and Inspection bodies. More information is contained in Appendix 2 'Summary Statement of Self-Assessment of Compliance against Regulatory Framework- Update', which outlines progress on the actions described since May.

4. PROGRESS IN THE AREAS SET OUT IN THE ANNUAL ASSURANCE STATEMENT

- 4.1 Appendix 2 'Summary Statement of Self-Assessment of Compliance against Regulatory Framework- Update', outlines progress on the actions described since May.
- 4.2 Officers have reviewed and updated the homelessness 'Self-Assessment and Service Improvement Action Plan' in light of COVID-19 impacts. This has included:

- Strengthening governance arrangements, including with regard to:
 - a) Statutory and regulatory reporting requirements.
 - b) Performance management and reporting.
 - c) Development and implementation of policies and procedures.
 - d) Improvements in relation to customer involvement.
 - e) Developing and commencing an self-assessment programme.
- 4.3 As part of the Council's 'Internal Audit Annual Plan 2019/2020', the Council's Internal Audit team commenced an audit of homelessness services, including examination and evaluation of progress with the self-assessment of the service with the associated Service Improvement Action Plan.
- 4.4 The Council is continuing to engage with Tweedside Caravan Park and with the Scottish Housing Regulator in order to ensure that the Scottish Government's minimum standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites are met.
- 4.5 It should be noted that during Q2 of 2021/2022, we started to experience unprecedented pressure on our temporary accommodation stock. This pressure is also being experienced by other local authorities. We have been taking, and continue to take, measures to mitigate the resultant risk, including working with our RSL partners to take on additional properties for use as temporary accommodation.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The Annual Assurance Statement details areas where additional work would further enhance the arrangements to meet the Regulatory Framework.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

This is a routine good governance report for assurance purposes. This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result an integrated impact assessment is not an applicable consideration.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

Core principle of good governance "C, Defining outcomes of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits" is included within the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (2016). The officer Governance Self-Assessment Working Group considered examples of evidence to demonstrate local compliance with all the Framework's seven core principles of good governance, supporting principles and a range of specific requirements.

5.5 Carbon Management

There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of this report.

5.6 Rural Proofing

This report does not relate to a new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation are required as a result of this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Director (Finance & Corporate Governance), Chief Legal Officer (including as Monitoring Officer), Chief Officer Audit & Risk, Director (People Performance & Change), Director (Resilient Communities), Clerk to the Council, Corporate Communications, Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer, Customer Advice and Support Service Manager will be consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.
- 6.2 The Corporate Management Team have been consulted and any comments received will be incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Jenni Craig

Director – Resilient Communities

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jenni Craig	Director - Resilient Communities
David Kemp	Homelessness and Financial Support Manager

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – Annual Assurance Statement 2020/2021

Appendix 2 –Summary Statement of Self-Assessment of Compliance against Regulatory Framework- Update

Previous Minute Reference: [Agenda for Audit and Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 10th May, 2021, 10.15 am - Scottish Borders Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Shona Smith can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose TD6 0SA.

