

Scottish Borders Council Annual Assurance Statement 2021/2022 to the Scottish Housing Regulator
Summary Statement of Self-Assessment of Compliance against Regulatory Framework

<u>Annual Assurance Statement Statutory Guidance Requirement</u>	<u>Self-Assessment of Compliance</u>
Assurance & Notification	
<p>Prepare an Annual Assurance Statement in accordance with SHR published guidance, submit it to SHR between April and the end of October each year, and make it available to tenants and other service users.</p>	<p>The Scottish Borders Council Annual Governance Statement (AGS), forms a section of the SBC Annual Report and Statement of Accounts which is considered annually by the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The 'Scottish Borders Council Annual Assurance Statement 2021/2022 to the Scottish Housing Regulator' is reported under section 8 of the 2021/2022 'Director – Social Work & Practice Assurance Statement on Internal Control and Governance', which informs the Annual Governance Statement 2021/2022 by the Chief Executive which is being considered by the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 27 June 2022.</p> <p>This Summary Statement of Self-Assessment of Compliance against Regulatory Framework supplements the 2021/2022 'Director – Social Work & Practice Assurance Statement on Internal Control and Governance'.</p> <p>The 'Annual Assurance Statement 2020/21 to the Scottish Housing Regulator' by the Service Director Customer and Communities' was considered and approved by Scottish Borders Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 May 2021 and subsequently submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator as required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Governance Statement 2020-21 and Annual Assurance Statement 2020-21 to SHR.pdf (moderngov.co.uk) • Appendix 2 Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator.pdf (moderngov.co.uk)
<p>Notify the SHR during the year of any material changes to the assurance in our Annual Assurance Statement.</p>	<p>SBC will notify the SHR during the year of any material changes as soon as possible.</p>

<u>Annual Assurance Statement Statutory Guidance Requirement</u>	<u>Self-Assessment of Compliance</u>
<p>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.</p>	<p>The Council is responsible for homelessness services provision in the Scottish Borders. As at 31 March 2022, this included the ownership and management of 18 properties, and the management of 92 properties leased from RSLs, for use as temporary accommodation for homeless people. In addition, the Council works together with an independent private business, Tweedside Caravan Park, to provide 9 pitches and related amenities for use by Gypsy/Travellers at Tweedside Caravan Park in Innerleithen.</p> <p>The overall arrangements in respect of the Council's legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety, appear to be operating satisfactorily and to be materially compliant with the revised Regulatory Framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gypsy/Traveller site – The Council's designated site for Gypsy/Travellers within Scottish Borders at Tweedside Caravan Park, Innerleithen now meets the Scottish Government's minimum standards for Gypsy/Traveller sites. This follows the Council and Tweedside Caravan Park reaching agreement during 2021/2022 on the form of a new occupancy agreement for use on the site. • Homelessness Services – The Council's Internal Audit conducted an audit of homelessness services during 2021/2012, including examination and evaluation of progress with the self-assessment of the service with the associated Service Improvement Action Plan. Internal Audit were able to provide substantial assurance, finding that largely satisfactory risk, control, and governance systems are in place, and that management improvement actions are underway: Item No. 10 - Internal Audit Work to October 2021.pdf (moderngov.co.uk) A further audit on Homelessness will be included within the Internal Audit plan for 2022/23 as an opportunity to continue to review progress with these service developments.
<p>Notify the 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.</p>	<p>Following review of fire safety requirements the capacity the designated site for Gypsy/Travellers at Tweedside Caravan Park, Innerleithen has been reduced from 10 pitches to 9 pitches.</p> <p>A Health and Safety Compliance Group has been formed to review health and safety requirements for all Council domestic properties, including temporary accommodation for homeless people, and to ensure that all necessary measures are in place on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>There are no other tenant or 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.</p>

<u>Annual Assurance Statement Statutory Guidance Requirement</u>	<u>Self-Assessment of Compliance</u>
Make our Engagement Plan easily available and accessible to its tenants and service users, including online.	The SHR's Engagement Plan with SBC is located on the Council's website at Scottish Social Housing Charter Scottish Borders Council (scotborders.gov.uk) and Charter performance Gypsy/Travellers - rights and responsibilities Scottish Borders Council (scotborders.gov.uk)
Scottish Social Housing Charter Performance	
Submit an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) to the SHR by 31 May each year in accordance with the SHR's published guidance.	The Council submitted its ARC for 2021/2022 to the SHR on 20 May 2022 in accordance with the SHR's Technical Guidance.
<p>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"> • Agree its approach with tenants. • Ensure it is effective and meaningful – that the chosen approach gives tenants a real and demonstrable say in the assessment of performance • Publicises the approach to tenants • Ensure that it can be verified and be able to show that the agreed approach to involving tenants has happened • Involve other service users in an appropriate way, having asked and had regard to their needs and wishes. 	<p>Work continues to improve the involvement of tenants and other service users in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information, and to agree the format of performance reporting with tenants and other service users, ensuring that it is accessible for them, and to give them a way to feed back their views on the style and form of the reporting. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment of 'customer engagement' has been included as a priority in the homelessness self-assessment programme within the reviewed and updated homelessness 'Self-Assessment and Service Improvement Action Plan'. • During 2021/2022 officers developed and launched a new homelessness services customer feedback survey which is intended to give all homelessness service users the opportunity to give their views on their experience of the service and to make suggestions for how the service can be improved. The default survey medium is online but every service user who does not have digital access is provided with a paper version of the survey. • A survey on Health and Wellbeing during Covid-19 has been carried out with clients of the homelessness Housing Support service.

<u>Annual Assurance Statement Statutory Guidance Requirement</u>	<u>Self-Assessment of Compliance</u>
<p>Report its performance in achieving or progressing towards the Charter outcomes and standards to its tenants and other service users (no later than 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.</p> <p>When reporting its performance to tenants and other service users it must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Give tenants and other service users a way to feed back their views on the style and form of the reporting. 	<p>Work continues to improve the involvement of tenants and other service users in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information, and to agree the format of performance reporting with tenants and other service users, ensuring that it is accessible for them, and to give them a way to feed back their views on the style and form of the reporting. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment of ‘customer engagement’ has been included as a priority in the homelessness self-assessment programme within the reviewed and updated homelessness ‘Self-Assessment and Service Improvement Action Plan’. • During 2021/2022 officers developed and launched a new homelessness services customer feedback survey which is intended to give all homelessness service users the opportunity to give their views on their experience of the service and to make suggestions for how the service can be improved. The default survey medium is online but every service user who does not have digital access is provided with a paper version of the survey. • A survey on Health and Wellbeing during Covid-19 has been carried out with clients of the homelessness Housing Support service.
<p>Make the SHR’s report on the landlord’s performance easily available to its tenants, including online.</p>	<p>The SHR’s information about SBC, including information about performance, can be found at Scottish Social Housing Charter Scottish Borders Council (scotborders.gov.uk)</p>
<p>Tenants and Service Users Redress</p>	
<p>Make information on reporting significant performance failures, including the SHR’s leaflet, available to its tenants.</p>	<p>The SHR’s leaflet is available on the Council’s website at: https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20048/homeless/229/how_to_appeal_or_complain</p>

<u>Annual Assurance Statement Statutory Guidance Requirement</u>	<u>Self-Assessment of Compliance</u>
<p>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).</p> <p>Ensure it has effective arrangements to learn from complaints and from other tenant and service user feedback, in accordance with SPSO guidance.</p>	<p>Information on how to make a complaint, in accordance with SPSO guidance, and complaints performance reports are available on SBC's website at: https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20016/have_your_say/155/make_a_complaint</p> <p>Supporting procedures are on SBC's intranet at: http://intranet.scotborders.gov.uk/yourjob/Pages/complaints-procedure.aspx</p>
Whistleblowing	
<p>Have effective arrangements and a policy for whistleblowing by staff and governing body/elected members which it makes easily available and which it promotes.</p>	<p>The Council's 'Procedure on the Disclosure of Unlawful or Improper Actions – otherwise known as "Whistle Blowing"' is Appendix 2 in the Council's 'Code of Conduct for Employees of Scottish Borders Council' which is located at http://intranet.scotborders.gov.uk/yourjob/Pages/human-resources/policy-procedures-guidelines.aspx</p>
Equality and Human Rights	
<p>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.</p>	<p>The Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Process enables the development or review of projects, policies, strategies, functions & services that meet the demands of Equality legislation and do not discriminate. The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Process and Supporting Guidance is located at http://intranet.scotborders.gov.uk/yourjob/Pages/equality-impact-assessments.aspx</p>
<p>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, governing body members and staff. 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.</p>	<p>Relevant data on protected characteristics is collected on homelessness applications in accordance with the Scottish Government's HL1, HL3 and Prevent1 case management database frameworks.</p> <p>Provision for the collection of relevant data on protected characteristics for service users who use the Gypsy/Traveller site at Tweedside Caravan Park is being built into a new feedback survey form for use during 2022/2023 which is intended to give all Gypsy/Traveller households who stay on the site the opportunity to give their views on their experience of the service and to make suggestions for how the service can be improved.</p>