

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Review Committee

MEETING DATE: 24 November 2015

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Partnerships and Community Services)

SUBJECT: Landlord Performance Report 2014/15

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the Council's progress in meeting the Social Housing Charter outcomes.
- 1.2 To update the Committee in regard to performance on key measures as per the 2014/15 Landlord Performance Report

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That PPRC note the contents of this report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter was introduced in 2012 as part of the Housing (Scotland) 2010 Act. The Charter sets out a number of outcomes that all social landlords (local authorities and housing associations) must work towards achieving.
- 3.2 Social landlords are required to submit an Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) by 31st May each year to the Scottish Housing Regulator. This return captures a range of performance and contextual information across 69 indicators.
- 3.3 There are additional requirements placed on each social landlord, each of whom must:
 - Carry out a comprehensive tenant customer satisfaction survey at least once every three years
 - Provide a landlord performance report to tenants each year by the 31st October. In producing this landlord report, there is a requirement that tenants will be involved in its development.

- Give tenants meaningful opportunities to scrutinise and assess a landlord's performance
- 3.4 East Lothian Council has a strong tradition of tenant participation and is seen as an exemplar of good practice. The Charter created a requirement for all social landlords to deepen tenant participation by involving tenants and other service users through scrutinising and assessing a landlord's performance.
- 3.5 The Council has worked in partnership with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel to create a scrutiny framework through a project group involving tenants and staff. As well as building on and improving existing scrutiny and participation structures, tenants have been involved in a mystery shopping exercise focused on communication (outcome 2 of the Charter) and a desk top audit of allocations information (outcome 10 of the Charter).
- 3.6 Further development work in this area continues and has extended to the co-production of the Landlord Performance Report 2014/15 (and last year's) with tenants involved in all aspects of what information was to be incorporated, its layout and presentation and consultation with other tenants.

Performance commentary on key measures

- 3.7 Tenant satisfaction across six of eight measures compares very favourably across the Council's peer group and nationally (overall satisfaction, keeping tenants informed, participation, quality of home, neighbourhood management and value for money).
- 3.8 Two satisfaction measures are lower than the peer and national group average (satisfaction with home when moving in and repairs). Both of these areas are the subject of ongoing improvement work (PPRC report dated 29 September 2015 details the repairs improvement work).
- 3.9 81.6% of East Lothian Council's stock met the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 31st March 2015, with 7.4% failing. Exemptions account for 6.1% and abeyances 4.9%. Exemptions generally occur where the work cannot be done for technical, disproportionate cost or legal reasons. Abeyances generally occur for social reasons i.e. where owners refuse to pay their share. The Council is on track to have no fails by the end of 2015/16 and is re-visiting all exemptions and abeyances.
- 3.10 The Council is also working hard to meet the new Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by 2020, which aims to improve the energy efficiency of all social housing in Scotland through a range of measures including boiler replacements, insulation, new technology etc. It will help to reduce energy consumption, fuel poverty and emission of greenhouse gases. The Council will be undertaking further survey work to meet this target.

- 3.11 The Council's new build activity has resulted in 6% of the overall stock being designated as new build as against the national average of 2% for local authorities. The new build programme continues with another 132 new council houses to be delivered over 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- 3.12 Day to day repairs performance, although at the lower end of the peer group and nationally, continues to improve. Committee has had a separate update on repairs performance (PPRC report dated 29 September 2015).
- 3.13 Given that East Lothian remains a severely pressured housing area with high demand, together with high tenancy sustainment levels (ELC is a high performer in its peer group and nationally), turnover of Council stock is below the peer group and national average.
- 3.14 Council housing offer refusal rates have moved from around the national average of 45% to 30%, principally as a result of recent changes in the allocations policy (which placed restrictions on the number of offers, which can be refused to help get people re-housed more quickly).
- 3.15 Lets to homeless applicants are lower than the national and peer group averages but again the Council has taken action to address this (Allocations Target Cabinet Report dated 20 October 2015).
- 3.16 East Lothian Council's rents continue to be the second lowest in the country amongst local authorities although the Council's recent percentage rent increases have been higher than its peers and nationally.
- 3.17 Rent collection performance has improved by 1.3% and is now sitting above the national average. Current rent arrears have also reduced and continue to do so as the Council undertakes improvement work in this area (see PPRC report dated 25 November 2014).
- 3.18 Although re-let times have increased by four days (from 16 to 20), the Council continues to be one of the best performers in the country with current year performance operating at similar levels. Work is ongoing to improve the condition of properties when new tenants move in e.g. more decoration.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The delivery of the report meets the Council's regulatory requirements. Performance as stated in the report is generally good and supports the Council's strategic objectives as outlined in the Council Plan and Single Outcome Agreement. Improvement work is underway to tackle areas where performance needs to be better.

5 COMBINED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 A Combined Impact Assessment is not applicable for this report.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – None.
- 6.2 Personnel – None.
- 6.3 Other – None.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 PPRC Report – Rent Arrears – November 2014
- 7.2 PPRC Report – Council Housing Repairs Update – September 2015
- 7.3 Cabinet Report – Council House Allocations Targets for 2015/16 – October 2015
- 7.4 Members Library Report – 2014/15 Landlord Performance Report to Tenants – November 2015

AUTHOR'S NAME	Tom Shearer
DESIGNATION	Head of Communities and Partnerships
CONTACT INFO	James Coutts x7483
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