

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Communities and Housing Committee

approval noting

Ref SL/DWS/REG19

Date 22/05/2019

Scottish Housing Regulator: Amended Governance

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update committee on changes to the way in which the Scottish Housing Regulator will regulate Social Landlords in Scotland from 1st April 2019.

The Regulator has recently completed a full review of how they will now regulate Social Housing in Scotland. The main headline change being that every landlord in Scotland now has a statutory annual obligation by 31st October in each year to produce an Annual Assurance Statement relating to the previous financial year. This Assurance Statement requires to be presented to and signed off by Committee prior to submission.

Recommendations

Committee note the changes to practice from the Scottish Housing Regulator and agree that a copy of the North Lanarkshire 2019 Assurance Statement be presented for approval at the next Committee cycle.

Supporting Documents

Council Business plan to 2020 Improve relationships with communities and the third sector

- Increase levels of community participation, engagement, and volunteering.
- Enhance reputation and working relationships by how we engage within our communities
- Develop and deliver services with communities and individuals

1. Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator was empowered and created by the Housing Scotland Act 2010, and since 1st April 2013 has possessed statutory powers to monitor, assess, report and intervene (as appropriate) based on the performance of any Social Landlord in Scotland since that time.
 - 1.2 The Regulator has recently completed a full review of the manner in which they will now conduct their business, with the main changes recently being formally published. These being a variety of amendments to the annual indicators requested and the submission each year of a Self-Assurance Statement. It is also a formal requirement outwith the submission of this Annual Assurance Statement to formally report at any point in time if there are any material changes to the level of Assurance which had been signed off in the previous year.
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2. Report

- 2.1 At the end of each reporting year every landlord in Scotland must complete an Annual Return of the Charter (ARC return). This return collates a variety of performance indicators and contextual information as formally requested by the Regulator. The regulator reviews these completed returns, and will then engage with landlords when appropriate for further information or clarification on any points which they feel merit further review.
- 2.2 This position has not changed and this annual return still requires to be completed and submitted. However as part of the review, there have been changes made by the Regulator to amend/delete and add to the existing indicators submitted. This takes effect for the information to be collected and collated for financial year 2019/20 for submission by 31st May 2020.
- 2.3 In addition the Regulator has advised that by 31st October 2019 all landlords must now submit a Self-Assurance Statement signed off by Committee relating to their most recent ARC return. They have advised that they will publish these statements and have also stated that landlords must make these readily available to tenants.
- 2.4 The Housing Regulator has stated that for Local Authorities this statement must confirm compliance with the following main criterion that;
 - North Lanarkshire meets all relevant standards and outcomes relating to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and;
 - Fulfils all relevant statutory and legislative duties.

In addition it must state;

- Any areas of material non-compliance, and give brief detail of any improvement plans and timeframes to resolve such matters if any exist;
 - Confirm that there is appropriate evidence to confirm the reported levels of assurance signed off;
 - Detail the committee date at which the Assurance Statement was agreed and signed off.
- 2.5 There is no standard template design for these Assurance statements and the advice given by the Regulator is that they should be “short and succinct” and they

have advised that if the level of Assurance varies outwith this annual submission period there is no requirement to amend the statement already submitted. However, in addition they have stated that a separate notification of any material change requires to be made to the Regulator directly.

- 2.6 The Service is currently in the final stages of completion and submission of the 2019 ARC return, which is due for submission by the statutory deadline of 31st May 2019. Once this been completed it is the intention to present the first required Assurance Statement to the next committee cycle for agreement and sign off, prior to submission to the Housing Regulator by the final deadline of 31st October 2019.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland

There is no specific impacts on Fairer Scotland

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

There are no specific equality impact assessments to note.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

There are no financial implications

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

There no HR/Policy/ Legislative implications

4.3 Environmental Impact

There are no environmental implications

4.4 Risk Impact

The completion of both the annual ARC return and Self-Assurance statement are statutory requirements and failure to submit on time is a risk and as such these are incorporated in to the Services overall Risk Management register.

5. Measures of success

- 5.1 Submission on an annual basis of an approved Self Assurance statement within the required timescales will be classed as a measure of success.
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Stephen Lewellyn
Head of Housing Solutions