

Appendix C

Assured - Green

Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) - Annual Assurance Statement (AAS) Assessment of Compliance

SHR Requirement	Status	Evidence	Action
Prepare an AAS in accordance with published guidance, submit it to the SHR between April and 31st October 2023 and make it available to tenants and other service users.	Assured - Green	Council Report and Appendices approval on 10 October 2023. The ASS is published on the Council website at <a href="http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance">http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance</a> and can be provided in other formats as requested.	The tenants newsletter posted on social media platforms will provide information on and how to access the 2023 AAS. Housing pop up meeting was held on 8th June in Dalkeith Library.
Notify the SHR during the year of any material changes to the assurance on our AAS.	Assured - Green	There are no material changes to report at present.	The Council provides the SHR with regular performance information and updates on areas for improvement identified in the Council's Engagement Plan. Officers also met with SHR in-person on 18th May 2023 to discuss the governance of the Assurance Statement 2023.
Governance of the Assurance Statement	Assured - Green	Executive Director Place has weekly briefing meetings with the Cabinet member for housing and the Chief Officer of Place has regular meetings. Once a year we hold a housing briefing session for elected members. We also participate in the SHN benchmarking and annual presentation.	Regular meetings held with the Housing Cabinet member to ensure compliance with the requirements and standards and space to disclose areas to improve. Quarterly housing reports and monthly performance indicators to governance forums for scrutiny and challenge. Local hub meeting for benchmarking against other landlords. Internal Audit of services. Feedback from our customer complaints/requests. Risk register. Estates Safety and Maintenance group. Building Maintenance Services review. Whistleblowing policy. Scottish Housing Network events.
Have assurance and evidence that we are meeting all our legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety.	Assured - Green	Housing services are delivered in accordance with legislation, regulatory standards and taking account of best practice guidance. The focus of the Housing Service has been ensuring the health and safety of tenants, other service users and Council employees, whilst maintaining core services and providing reassurance and contact for tenants and service users. This has been done in accordance with guidance issued by the Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland and the SHR. Policies and procedures provide clear direction to the Housing Services staff and are reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to be in line with best practice. The Making Performance Matter Appraisal process supports staff to achieve work related objectives linked to service / corporate plans and provide good levels of service to customers. Internal audit reviews are carried out. Audits are reported to Audit Committee and development plans implemented. Housing Services data is reported quarterly to the Council's Cabinet and the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee. The Council is a member of the Scottish Housing Network and benchmarks performance against peer local authorities and regularly engages with best practice networks in a culture of scrutiny connected to performance management.	Currently transferring data sets to a new computer data base Capita Housing ONE system, which will provide access for recording of all data.
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.	Assured - Green	No health and safety matters have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive in the last 12 months. There are no reports from regulatory or statutory authorities relating to safety concerns.	The Scottish Government's SHQS technical guidance sets out the requirement for an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) to be carried out in each property at least every five years to demonstrate compliance with element 45 of the SHQS. We are currently in the procurement process for a contractor to complete this works. This will be an ongoing contract of works working towards completion of all EICR by September/October 2025

Make our Engagement Plan easily available and accessible to our tenants and service users, including online.	Assured - Green	The Council's current Engagement Plan is published on the Council website at <a href="http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance">http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance</a>	The Engagement Plan also features in the tenant newsletter.
Submit an Annual Return on the Charter to the SHR each year in accordance with the SHR published guidance.	Assured - Green	The Annual Return was completed and submitted for 2023.	
Involve tenants, and where relevant, other service users, in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information. We must: agree our approach with tenants; ensure that it is meaningful - that the chosen approach gives tenants a real and demonstrable say in the assessment of performance; publicise 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.	Assured - Green	The Tenant Participation and Customer Engagement Strategy 2020-23 sets out the framework for tenant scrutiny opportunities and is available on the Council's website at <a href="https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200277/tenancy/224/tenant_participation">https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200277/tenancy/224/tenant_participation</a> . Funding is provided to support tenant participation and engagement. Feedback from homeless service users has shaped the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan in respect of further transforming services.	
Report our performance in achieving and progressing towards the Charter outcomes and standards to our tenants and other service users. We 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.	Assured - Green	The annual performance report is provided to tenants and is available on the Council's website at <a href="http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance">http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance</a> There are a range of ways tenants can engage with the Housing Service to discuss performance and influence the format and design of the annual performance report.	Tenant Participation officer
When reporting our performance to tenants and other service users we must: provide them with an assessment of performance in delivering each of the Charter outcomes and standards which are relevant to the Council; include relevant comparisons - these should include comparisons with previous years, with other landlords and with national performance; set out how and when we intend 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.	Assured - Green	In addition to published quarterly performance data reported to the Council's Cabinet and also the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee, the annual performance report provides a comparison with other councils based on the Scottish Housing Network's peer group system. The report compares the Council's performance with the Scottish average and if performance has improved or deteriorated over the previous year. A narrative is provided highlighting key points and identifies areas for improvement.	ARC data, SHN benchmarking data, Homelessness statistics.
Make the SHR report on our performance easily available to our tenants, including online.	Assured - Green	The current SHR report is available on the Council's website at <a href="http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance">http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance</a>	The tenant newsletter provides information on how to access the SHR reports, and this will also be published on the Council's website.
Have effective arrangements and a policy for whistleblowing by staff and elected members, which it makes easily available and which we promote.	Assured - Green	The Council's current Whistleblowing Policy is subject to review at present by the Integrity Group. Details are available for staff on the Council's intranet site. Policies in respect of fraud, corruption and bribery are available to members of the public on the Council's website and staff undertake mandatory eLearning training. Concerns can be reported by telephone and email. <a href="https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/forms/form/57/en/report_a_possible_crime_fraud_or_similar_concern">https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/forms/form/57/en/report_a_possible_crime_fraud_or_similar_concern</a>	

<p>Make information on reporting significant performance failures, including the SHR leaflet, available to tenants.</p>	<p>Assured - Green</p>	<p>A link to the SHR website is available on the Council's website at <a href="http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance">http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/917/housing/323/housing_strategy_and_performance</a></p>	<p>The tenant newsletter provides annual reminder information on reporting significant performance failures.</p>
<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 our service standards, in accordance with guidance from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).</p>	<p>Assured - Green</p>	<p>The complaints handling process is available on the Council's website (and link provided on the front page of the website) at <a href="https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/670/have_your_say/132/complaints_procedure">https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/670/have_your_say/132/complaints_procedure</a>. Leaflets are available in Council buildings used by members of the public and referred to in written and verbal communications as appropriate with customers. The complaints process is highlighted at the new tenant settling-in visit undertaken within the first 4-6 weeks of tenancy start date.</p>	<p>The tenant newsletter will provide annual reminder information on the complaints handling procedure. The tenants handbook also provides details. Information on how to contact the SHR if dissatisfied with services is available on housing pages on the Council Website</p>
<p>Ensure we have effective arrangements to learn from complaints and from other tenant and service user feedback, in accordance with SPSO guidance.</p>	<p>Assured - Green</p>	<p>Complaints performance data is considered at the Housing Services monthly performance review meeting attended by senior officers. This includes details of complaints received, outcomes and lessons learned where service failures are identified, and remedial action is taken to improve service. Housing Services complaints data is reported to the Council's Cabinet and also the Performance, Review and Scrutiny Committee. Mandatory eLearning training on Customer First and Complaints handling is undertaken by all staff to ensure they have the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence.</p>	<p>New Council wide complaints system platform was implemented April 2023. Complaints and opportunities to learn from failures in the services are discussed at team meeting and as part of individual performance monitoring as necessary.</p>
<p>Have assurance and evidence that we consider equality and human rights issues properly when making all of our decisions, in the design and review of internal and external policies, and in day to day service delivery.</p>	<p>Assured - Green</p>	<p>The Council's Equality Plan commits services to meeting the requirements of equalities legislation and promoting an equal opportunities culture. The Equality Mainstreaming Outcome Progress report sets out how the Council integrates equality across activities and functions when delivering services. These reports are published on the Council's website at <a href="https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200286/equality_and_diversity/136/equality_and_diversity_-_our_commitment">https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200286/equality_and_diversity/136/equality_and_diversity_-_our_commitment</a>. The Council's Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) tool is used to ensure the consideration of equality and human rights issues and the impact of decisions on those with protected characteristics. All new and existing housing policies and procedures are considered as part of a wider scope in the IIA, including socio-economic inequality, health inequality, human rights, environmental and sustainability matters. The Council's Equality/Diversity Officer is consulted when new policies, plans, strategies are being reviewed, renewed or developed through the IIA process. This helps to ensure that the needs of all our customers are met. The Council meets its legal requirements in respect of the corporate reporting. Equalities considerations are a standing item for consideration in all Council Reports being considered by Elected Members and the Corporate Management Team. The Council's Equality / Diversity Officer delivers appropriate training to the staff teams regarding equality and diversity awareness and IIA toolkit and guidance.</p>	<p>Undertake discussions with the Council's Engagement Officer and Midlothian Peoples Equality Group, which is a group of that represent all the protected characteristics, to establish arrangements to encourage feedback on future policies, plans, strategies.</p>
<p>To comply with these duties, we must collect data relating to each of the protected characteristics of our existing tenants, new tenants, people on waiting lists, governing body members and staff. We must also collect data on protected characteristics for people who apply to us as homeless and those who live on our Gypsy / Traveller site.</p>	<p>Assured - Green</p>	<p>Midlothian Council collects data relating to protected characteristics for the specified groups.</p>	<p>Housing application and Homelessness applications.</p>