

Appendix 1

Our Annual Assurance Statement



Midlothian Council complies with the regulatory requirements set out in the Regulatory Framework set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator. This includes that Midlothian Council:

- Achieves all the standards and outcomes set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter for tenants, people who are homeless and other service users.
- Complies with our legal obligations relating to housing and homelessness, equality and human rights, and the safety of tenants and residents.

The Annual Assurance Statement will be considered at the meeting of our Council on 12 November 2019. Elected Members have been provided with evidence which demonstrates that Midlothian Council is compliant with the Regulatory Framework.

I sign this statement on behalf of Midlothian Council.

Councillor Stephen Curran
Portfolio folder for Customer Services and Housing

Appendix 2

Assurance Required	Evidence
Prepare an Annual Assurance Statement in accordance with published guidance from the Scottish Housing Regulator.	Committee Report and Appendices and there is a link on the housing pages at https://www.midlothian.gov.uk
Make the Annual Assurance Statement available to tenants and other service users.	Link on housing pages at https://www.midlothian.gov.uk
Notify the Scottish Housing Regulator during the year of any material changes to the assurance in its Annual Assurance Statement.	There are no material changes to report at present.
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>There is a range of evidence to support this, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporate Policies and Procedures - Policies relating to Housing Services, Building and Maintenance Services and Construction and Design - Performance Reporting Data - Stock condition survey data - Housing Law and Equality and Diversity Training - Staff Training

Assurance Required	Evidence
<p>Notify the Scottish Housing Regulator of safety matters which have been reported to or investigated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) or reports from other regulatory or statutory authorities or insurance providers, relating to safety concerns.</p>	<p>A team within Midlothian Council provide provides guidance on all aspects of health and safety as required. The Scottish Housing Regulator would be advised of Health and Safety matters.</p> <p>There are specific policies covering issues such as asbestos and lone working arrangements.</p>
<p>Make the Scottish Housing Regulator's Engagement Plan with Midlothian Council available and accessible to tenants and service users.</p>	<p>Link provided via https://www.midlothian.gov.uk</p>
<p>Submit Annual Return of the Charter to the Scottish Housing Regulator in accordance with published guidance.</p>	<p>Submitted prior to 31st May 2019</p>

Assurance Required	Evidence
<p>Involve tenants, and where relevant, service users in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree the approach with tenants and ensure that it is meaningful and gives tenants a real say in the assessment of performance - Publicise the approach to tenants - Ensure the approach to involving tenants and other service users can be verified - Involve other service users in an appropriate way 	<p>Midlothian Tenant Panel and other tenant groups have been involved in scrutiny activity in order to determine what information was most important for tenants and service users.</p> <p>Following the initial publication of Midlothian Council's Annual Return all tenants were Surveyed asking for their feedback on the layout of the report and feedback on their thoughts on how well Midlothian Council was performing. Information is provided in the tenant newsletter in terms of how to provide feedback on the performance information. This exercise will be repeated again in the next tenant newsletter.</p>
<p>Report performance to tenants and other service users no later than October each year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree format of performance reporting with tenants and ensure accessible with plain and jargon free language - Provide assessment of performance in delivering Charter outcomes which are relevant to Midlothian Council - Include relevant comparison including previous years, other landlords and with national performance; - Set out how we intend to address areas for improvement; - Give tenants and service users a way to feedback views on style and form of reporting. 	<p>Performance information is provided via the annual newsletter and via the Midlothian Council website. A range of further performance measures are published quarterly and statistical information is also provided to the Scottish Government regarding statistics such as homelessness and new build starts and completions.</p> <p>The Report provides a comparison with a smaller peer group of Councils which are similar in size and geographical circumstances to Midlothian. It also compares the Councils performance with the national average and notes if performance has improved or deteriorated since the previous year. A narrative is also provided.</p> <p>For tenants interested in understanding performance information in greater depth, Midlothian Council works with the Scottish Housing Network who provide an assessment of performance and consider key areas of performance and areas to address. An annual benchmarking event is held which all members of Midlothian Tenant Panel are invited and are encouraged to provide feedback via a range of methods.</p>

Assurance Required	Evidence
<p>Make Scottish Housing Regulator report on our performance easily available to tenants including online</p>	<p>Link provided within the Newsletter and online at https://www.midlothian.gov.uk</p>
<p>Ensure effective arrangements and a policy for whistleblowing for staff and Elected Members.</p>	<p>Whistleblowing Policy is in place.</p>
<p>Make Whistleblowing policy easily available and promote its existence.</p>	<p>The Whistleblowing Policy for staff and elected members is published on Midlothian Councils intranet.</p> <p>There are also policies accessible to members of the public in relation to whistleblowing, fraud and corruption, and anti-bribery. These policies are all available at https://www.midlothian.gov.uk. Concerns can be reported anonymously via the website.</p>
<p>Make information on reporting any significant performance failures available to our tenants</p>	<p>Leaflets on reporting significant performance failures are available in Buccleuch House reception and also via a link on the Council website.</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>Complaint reporting is included in Midlothian Council's Annual Charter Return. Information on complaints is also reported and published on a quarterly basis.</p>

Assurance Required	Evidence
<p>Each landlord must ensure it has effective arrangements to learn from complaints and from other tenant and service user feedback, in accordance with SPSO guidance.</p>	<p>Complaints data is considered at the Monthly Managers Meeting for the Customer Services and Housing Section.</p> <p>In addition feedback on a wide range of policies and procedures are undertaken and information on complaints that have been upheld have led to revisions to policy and procedures in order that they are appropriate and fair to tenants and service users.</p>
<p>Have assurance and evidence the Housing Service considers equality and human rights issues properly when making decisions, in the design and review of internal and external policies, and in our day to day service delivery.</p>	<p>All new policies and procedures that are being reviewed need to take account of equalities issues. These will be considered as part of an Equality Impact Assessment. In addition equalities considerations are a standing item for consideration in all Reports being considered by Elected Members and the Corporate Management Team.</p> <p>There is a wide range of equalities data and Midlothian Council's Equality Plan available at https://www.midlothian.gov.uk</p>
<p>To comply with these duties, landlords must collect data relating to each of the protected characteristics for their existing tenants, new tenants, housing applicants, homeless households, gypsy/travelers, Elected Members and staff.</p>	<p>Midlothian Council collects data relating to protected characteristics for the specified groups.</p>