

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE - 31 OCTOBER 2011

REPORT ON: RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT TO
CONSULTATION ON THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL
HOUSING CHARTER

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 474-2011

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1. The report contains the Council's response to the Scottish Government's most recent consultation paper issued in August on the Scottish Social Housing Charter

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Committee approve the response to the consultation, set out at Appendix 1, for submission to the Scottish Government.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. None.

4. **MAIN TEXT**

- 4.1. The Scottish Government proposes to introduce a Scottish Social Housing Charter which will come into effect from April 2012.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter will set the outcomes and standards that social landlords should achieve for all their customers: their tenants; homeless people; and others who use their services.

The Scottish Government is in the process of developing the Charter having already consulted tenants, landlords and others in the autumn of 2010.

The Consultation paper 'The Scottish Social Housing Charter - A consultation' includes the a draft Charter that sets out the outcomes that the Scottish Government thinks a good landlord should deliver for everyone that uses its services.

The Scottish Government will consider responses to the consultation paper and will revise and finalise the draft Charter before it is introduced to the Scottish Parliament in early 2012.

Full details of the Scottish Social Housing Charter are available on line at <http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk> .

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

6. CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1. The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Finance and all other Chief Officers have been consulted in the preparation of this report. No concerns were expressed.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1. None

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

OCTOBER 2011

APPENDIX 1

DUNDEE CITY COUONCIL RESPONSE TO 'THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER - A CONSULTATION' OCTOBER 2011

General comments

It is essential that social landlords provide services which meet customer expectations and provide value for money. Landlords should strive excellence and ensure continuous improvement. Tenants must be at the heart of agreeing customer service standards and be involved in monitoring outcomes and implementing improvements understanding these in the context of local circumstances.

The Social Housing Charter along with a new form of regulatory engagement by the Scottish Housing Regulator will assist in achieving these aims.

Service standards, new duties such as those to be placed on landlords to assess and provide support for tenants and the costs of meeting SHQS by 2015 as well as further potentially increasing energy efficiency standards, must be part of the consideration in reconciling the cost of service provision and standards.

The Charter should encompass a balance between rights and responsibilities. For example landlords should let houses in a good condition and tenants should hand houses back on termination of tenancy in good condition. Landlords should ensure that common areas and the environment are well kept and tenants should contribute to maintaining them in that condition in accordance with the tenancy agreement.

The Charter should focus on issues which are priorities to tenants and service users.

Answers to Consultation questions

We listened to what you told us at the roadshow events, on our website, and in your responses to the discussion paper, and we think we have identified the important areas the Charter should cover.

1 Have we missed any other areas the Charter should cover ? If so please tell us.

No.

Customer/Landlord Relationship

We want the outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of the customer/landlord relationship. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft Charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.

2a Do you agree with the participation outcome ?

Yes.

2b Is the participation outcome clear and understandable ?

Yes.

3a Do you agree with the communication and customer services outcome ?

Yes.

3b Is the communication and customer services outcome clear and understandable ?

Yes.

Quality of housing and the environment

We want the outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of the quality of housing and the environment. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft Charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.;

4a Do you agree with the housing quality outcome ?

Yes.

4b Is the housing quality outcome clear and understandable ?

Yes.

5a Do you agree with the repairs, maintenance and improvements outcome ?

Yes.

5b Is the repairs, maintenance and improvements outcome clear and understandable ?

Yes.

6a Do you agree with the estate management outcome ?

One of the issues throughout is measuring progress against outcomes and providing satisfactory evidence for the Scottish Housing Regulator. In relation to outcome 'tenants and residents take pride in where they live' may be inappropriate.

6b Is the estate management outcome clear and understandable ?

Otherwise yes.

Access to housing and support

We want the outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of access to housing and support. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft Charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.

7a Do you agree with the housing options outcome ?

Yes.

7b Is the housing options outcome clear and understandable ?

Yes.

8a Do you agree with the access to social housing outcome ?

In relation to 'people are satisfied that landlords make best use of the housing available' it would be difficult to assess this outcome.

8b Is the access to housing outcome clear and understandable ?

Otherwise yes.

9a Do you agree with the homeless outcome ?

This highlights the provision of housing support that meets needs of tenants, in the light of increasing pressure on resources and new responsibilities placed on landlords this will be an increasing challenge.

How would homeless people make an assessment of - 'homeless people are satisfied that landlords are working in partnership with other agencies to provide range of support' ?

9b Is the homeless people outcome clear and understandable ?

Otherwise yes.

10a Do you agree with the tenancy sustainment outcome ?

How would tenants make an assessment of 'tenants are satisfied that landlords, in partnership with other organisations, provide a range of support services to enable them to remain in their home' ?

10b Is the tenancy sustainment outcome clear and understandable ?

Otherwise yes.

11a Do you agree with the anti social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes outcome ?

Given processes involved in complex cases tenants may not be 'satisfied that disputes are dealt with quickly and effectively'.

How would tenants make an assessment of 'tenants are satisfied that landlords are working in partnership with other agencies and the local community to tackle anti social behaviour' ?

11b Is the anti social behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes outcome clear and understandable ?

Otherwise yes.

Getting good value from rents and service charges

We want outcomes in this section to cover the important aspects of getting good value from rents and service charges. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft Charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable.

12a Do you agree with the value for money outcome ?

We disagree with the phraseology 'tenants should benefit from continually increasing services while rents are kept as low as possible'. This could be replaced by 'Landlords should strive for continuous improvement and value for money'.

12b Is the value for money outcome clear and understandable ?

Otherwise yes.

13a Do you agree with the rents and service charges outcome ?

Yes.

13b Is the rents and service charges outcome clear and understandable ?

Yes.

14a Do you agree with the transparency outcome ?

In relation to 'information about individual items of expenditure above agreed thresholds' realistic limits would have to be set or this could be unduly cumbersome. Council's find that a lot of time is taken up by spurious Freedom of Information requests.

14b Is the transparency outcome clear and understandable ?

Yes.

Other customers

We want the outcome in this section to cover important aspects of other customers. We would like to know if you agree with the outcomes in the draft Charter, and if the wording is clear and understandable ?

15a Do you agree with the services for Gypsies/Travellers outcome ?

Yes.

15b is the services for Gypsies/Travellers outcome clear and understandable ?

Yes.

16a Do you agree with the other customers outcomes ?

Yes.

16b Is the other customers outcomes clear and understandable ?

Yes.

In conclusion

17 Do you think that a good landlord should achieve these outcomes ?

Yes.

18 Do you wish to add anything that is not covered by the questions ?

Issues on measurement of specific outcomes have been highlighted above.

The aims are all very worthy however it would be very easy for individual tenants, tenants' groups and other representatives to interpret aims and outcomes very differently.

Effective and easy measurement of the outcomes would appear to be difficult since these seem to have a fair degree of subjectivity surrounding them.

For the purposes of Regulatory engagement there requires to be an effective, concise reporting and measurement framework which provides clarity.