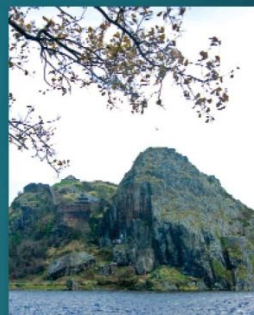


# Scottish Housing Regulator Inquiry

## Staff Briefing

March 2012



## Introduction

Welcome to the latest in a series of regular briefings prepared by the Housing Strategy team on the big issues concerning housing. These briefings will be shared with staff, tenants and elected members and keep everyone up to date with regards the ever changing policy context that we are operating within.

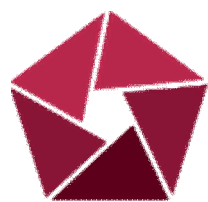
This briefing looks at the forthcoming Scottish Housing Regulator Inquiry and gives some background to the purpose of the Inquiry.

The Housing Strategy section is responsible for:-

- Supporting the development of a culture of continuous improvement in Housing services and to facilitate opportunities to excel;
- Developing and implementing effective strategies for Housing and Community Safety Services within West Dunbartonshire;
- Developing the Council's housing strategy to ensure that it supports the delivery of our strategic priorities;
- Performance management within Housing and Community Safety services; and
- Promoting effective management and the involvement of tenants across all aspects of Housing Services.

For further information on Housing Strategy please telephone 01389 737889 or e-mail: [housing.strategy@west-dunbarton.gov.uk](mailto:housing.strategy@west-dunbarton.gov.uk)

## Background



# Scottish Housing Regulator

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) was created by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 (“the Act”). The Act sets out their statutory objective, functions, powers and duties. It established from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 the Scottish Housing Regulator as an independent regulator directly accountable to the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Housing Regulator publication, [Regulation of Social Housing ; Our Framework](#) sets out further details on their approach to regulation and the powers and duties of the Regulator.

The Act sets out the Scottish Housing Regulator’s statutory objective to safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants, homeless people and other people who use services provided by social landlords. The SHR regulate to protect the interests of these groups. To do this, the SHR focus on securing good outcomes for tenants and other service users, helping them hold their landlords to account and driving improvement in the provision of social housing in Scotland.

The Act gives the Scottish Housing Regulator powers to obtain information and carry out inquiries. These powers are set out in Part 4 of the Act. These powers allow the SHR to get the information that they will collect routinely from social landlords to help them to carry out their regulatory assessments and their broader analysis of the social landlords’ composition and performance;

- get more information and a higher level of assurance from landlords, following the shared risk assessment of local authorities;
- assess an issue or concern with a landlord; and
- scrutinise or investigate one or more landlord’s performance in greater depth.

## Key Points

### ***West Dunbartonshire Council's Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP)***

West Dunbartonshire Council's 2012/15 Assurance and Improvement Plan (AIP) Update based on Audit Scotland's shared risk assessment identified 'housing maintenance and assets' as a 'significant scrutiny risk' for the Council in 2012/13.

### ***Inquiry Focus***

As a result, The Scottish Housing Regulator notified the Council of their intention to carry out an Inquiry under their powers as outlined in page 2 of this briefing. The Inquiry will be led by the Scottish Housing Regulator but will also involve Audit Scotland who will bring an additional corporate governance and financial management aspect to the scrutiny.

The main focus of the Inquiry will be targeted mainly to asset management and our approach to achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by the ministerial target of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. However it will also look at the following:

- New Homes
- Investment in Home Safety
- Empty Homes
- How we are organised for improvement
- Efficiency and Value for Money
- Procurement of capital works: and
- Customer Focus

### ***Self- assessment submission***

The Council was notified of the Inquiry in late 2012, and in early January we were invited to submit a self assessment submission. This submission was an opportunity for the Council to :

- Provide the SHR with performance and contextual information that would influence what the SHR would seek to gain further assurances from during the on-site period :
- Demonstrate our achievements to date;
- Show that where there are recognised weaknesses in our performance, we are both aware of these and have plans in place which address these; and
- show how we achieve continuous improvement throughout the service area

A copy of the submission is available from your Line Manager or from the Housing Strategy Team. In addition an Executive Summary will be available and distributed to all relevant staff

week beginning 4<sup>th</sup> March.

### **Scottish Housing Regulator**

At a briefing session with West Dunbartonshire Council on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013, the Scottish Housing Regulator outlined their objectives from the Inquiry as:-

- To provide assurance that the interests of service users are being protected.
- To help drive improvement where this is necessary.
- To recognise self-awareness, improvement and good performance.

The way in which they will assess was also outlined, the major assessment exercise will be the validation of our own self assessment submission, however they will also use the following for the basis of their assessment:-

- Feedback from third parties – *The SHR has already written to all tenants' groups and housing associations operating in West Dunbartonshire, as well as the Scottish Government*
- Case Reviews
- Interviews and Discussions
- Observation/shadowing/estate visits
- Speaking to service Users

### **Timetable for the Inquiry**

<b>Stages</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>Preparation</b>	Initial meeting with WDC/SHR	31 October 2012
	SHR issues formal notice and self-assessment submission to WDC	11 January 2013
	WDC returns completed submission	15 February 2013
	Inquiry briefing for staff	27 February 2013
	Stock tour	12 <sup>th</sup> March 2013
<b>On-site</b>	SHR/Audit Scotland Scrutiny activity at WDC	18 -22 March 2013
<b>Reporting</b>	SHR Issue draft Inquiry report to WDC	17 May 2013
	Formal response from WDC	31 May 2013
	SHR Issue final report to WDC and publicise findings.	By 14 June 2013

## ***Keeping Staff Informed***

Look out for a weekly update each Friday which will keep all staff updated on the Scottish Housing Regualtor Inquiry.

For further information contact:

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