



## Annual Assurance Statement 2021

### **Basis of Assurance**

The Board of Management confirms that, to the best of our knowledge we have reviewed and assessed a comprehensive bank of evidence to support this Statement that Ochil View Housing Association Ltd is compliant with:

- ✓ all relevant regulatory requirements as set out in Section 3 of the Regulatory Framework;
- ✓ the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management;
- ✓ the relevant standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter;
- ✓ our statutory obligations in respect of tenant and resident safety, housing and homelessness and equalities and human rights;
- ✓ all other relevant legislative duties.

This statement has been derived from a review of the comprehensive bank of evidence and from our ongoing quarterly reporting and evaluation and of the Associations performance throughout 2020/2021.

In considering our compliance with our legal and regulatory requirements in 2021, we have taken account of the considerable impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent business, economic and social disruption.

We have complied/continue to comply fully with the temporary changes to legislation and continue to follow national and local policy and requirements e.g. in respect of health and safety, physical distancing, travel, office opening, use of PPE, application of Test and Protect requirements and indoor gatherings.

We are confident that the measures that we have put in place and the contingency planning that we have implemented have ensured that we are able to continue to meet our responsibilities to our tenants, service users, regulators and funders.

Where we have adopted revised standards of service delivery, we have communicated changes clearly to our tenants and although being undertaken in a different way the majority of services have now resumed.

As a result of Covid-19 we had a period where some properties did not have a valid gas safety certificate because the tenant(s) would not provide access because of fears about potential transmission of coronavirus to a vulnerable member of their household.

All of these were completed as soon as it was possible to do so and since June 2021, we have had 100% compliance.

During the period where the service was disrupted as a result of the pandemic, we kept in touch with the tenants affected who were regularly reminded throughout to report any emergency gas repair to the Association immediately in order that their safety could be assured.

This represents the only area of non-compliance in the Associations Annual Assurance Statement 2021 and this was wholly a result of the pandemic.

In assessing the evidence, we have continued to adopt the approach of continuous improvement which has again resulted in the identification of a small number of non-material improvements (some of which have been carried forward from 2020 as a result of Covid 19) in areas such as:

- ✓ effective representative tenant engagement;
- ✓ closer involvement of other service users

In addition to these areas and following the recent publication of guidance in relation to collecting equality information, we are assured that we are working towards improving the systems we have in place for the collection of equalities data and improving the use of this data to continue to take account of equalities and human rights issues in our decisions, policy-making and service delivery.

We aim to improve (or further improve) all of the areas identified for improvement during 2021/2022 and an Action Plan is in place to monitor progress during the course of the year.

We have reviewed the areas identified for improvement and are satisfied that all are intended to deliver effective improvement and that none are material to our current compliance with the Regulatory Framework.

### **Process**

The process commenced and ended with full approval of the Board of Management, and during the period since the 2020 submission, progress with the Action Plan and further updating of the Annual Assurance Statement evidence bank for consideration by the Board continues to be part of the Association's Quarterly Management Reporting process.

The Board of Management considered the most recent update to the bank of evidence at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and finally signed off on this 2021 Annual Assurance Statement on this date.

At all of the meetings referred to above the Associations Senior Management Team to assist the Board in their consideration of compliance.

Included in the paperwork provided at each meeting was the following;

- ✓ written report from Chief Executive or Acting Chief Executive;
- ✓ bank of evidence to support the 2021 AAS;
- ✓ progress with the 2020 Action Plan;
- ✓ information and guidance published by SHR, SFHA and others

During the process there was an opportunity for the full Board of Management to review each of the regulatory requirements and standards and confirm compliance (or otherwise) and / or identify any non-material areas for improvement.

All Board of Management members have access to the full bank of evidence (actual documents) via the Associations secure electronic board papers "portal" which they are able to access at any time.

The final aspect of the process involved sharing and discussing the contents of the draft statement and summary outcomes and non-material issues identified for improvement with service users via a virtual focus group, in order to ensure that the statement could be endorsed by those most affected by the services provided by the Association.

### **Gaining Assurance**

The evidence which supports this Statement includes:

- ✓ various strategic documents including our Corporate Management Plan and Departmental Service Plans; Risk Management Framework Asset Management Strategy and 30 Year Financial Projections;

- ✓ quarterly management reports to Committee on performance in key areas including finance, service delivery, asset management, development and risk and assurance relating to compliance with Regulatory Standards;
- ✓ quarterly Management Accounts reports to Committee;
- ✓ monthly Covid 19 Impact Assessment Reports to Committee;
- ✓ internal and external audit reports;
- ✓ advice from external and specialist advisers;
- ✓ tenant consultation reports and outcomes;
- ✓ data analysis about our tenants and service user satisfaction results;
- ✓ benchmarking;
- ✓ reports, advice and information from senior staff.

In reviewing the evidence and assessing compliance, we continue to take account of good practice advice obtained from our Internal Auditors in 2019 and 2020 that our approach is both effective and proportionate and that the evidence to support the outcome of our assessment is both comprehensive and robust.

**Ongoing Monitoring**

We are assured that we have the necessary arrangements in place to identify any risks to compliance in the course of the conduct of our business and governance arrangements.

As indicated above, the process of reviewing our compliance has been embedded into our Quarterly Management Reporting to the Board of Management who have been actively involved in the development and assessment of the evidence bank and monitoring regulatory and legal compliance on a regular and ongoing basis.

We also recognise that we are required to notify the Scottish Housing Regulator of any changes in our compliance during the year and during the pandemic were in regular contact with our SHR lead officers, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic.

**Authority to Sign and Submit**

*As Chairperson I was authorised by the Board of Management at a meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to sign and submit this Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator.*

*I confirm that this Assurance Statement will be published on our website on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021.*

Signed ..... Date: 28.10.21

**Margaret Baxter (Chairperson)**