



Annual Assurance Statement 2020

Basis of Assurance

The Management Committee 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.

This statement has been derived from a review of a comprehensive bank of evidence and from our ongoing quarterly reporting and evaluation and of the Associations performance throughout 2019/2020.

In considering our compliance with our legal and regulatory requirements in 2020, 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 and where this is not the case this has been the result of a further review following the increased prevalence of the virus during September and October 2020 eg mutual exchanges which were suspended for a second time during October 2020 and continue to be suspended in accordance with restrictions on visiting other households.

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 August 2020, 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 2020 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 2019 as a result of Covid 19) in areas such as:

- ✓ effective representative tenant engagement;
- ✓ closer involvement of other service users and
- ✓ providing further information to members about Committee Membership.

We aim to improve (or further improve) all of the areas identified for improvement during 2020/2021 and an Action Plan has been developed 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 Management Committee and during the period since the 2019 submission progress with Action Plan and further updating of the AAS evidence was introduced into the Associations Quarterly Management Reporting process and as such the Management Committee considered its position in terms of Annual Assurance Statement in November 2019, January 2020, May 2020 and July 2020.

During the period leading up to the 2020 submission (from July 2020) the Management Committee received monthly written reports on progress and therefore considered its evidence and overall compliance in August, September, October 2020 and finally signed off its 2020 Annual Assurance Statement on 26th November 2020.

At all of the meetings referred to above the Associations Senior Management Team, which consists of the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance & Corporate Services, the Housing Services Manager and the Property Services Manager, were present to assist Committee in their consideration of compliance.

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

- ✓ written report from Chief Executive;
- ✓ bank of evidence to support the 2020 Annual Assurance Statement (amounting to in excess of 700 documents);
- ✓ progress with the 2019 Action Plan;
- ✓ information and guidance published by Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR), Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), Social Housing Resilience Group (SHRG) and others.

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

All Management Committee 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.

Tenant Consultation

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.

Meetings, which involved the Chief Executive and the Chairperson took place on 24th and 25th November 2020 and the tenants present gave their support to the accuracy of the Associations Annual Assurance Statement.

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, since January 2020, assurance relating to compliance with Regulatory Standards;
- ✓ quarterly Management Accounts reports to Committee;
- ✓ monthly Covid 19 Impact Assessment Reports to Committee (since April 2020);
- ✓ 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 have also taken account of good practice advice we have obtained additional external assurance from our Internal Auditors that our approach is both effective and proportionate and that the evidence to support the outcome of our assessment is both comprehensive and robust.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit, undertaken by the Associations Internal Auditors in September 2020, which was aimed at validating our self-assessment of overall compliance with the SHR's Regulatory Standards and supporting guidance, concluded that:

"We have carried out a validation of Ochil View Housing Association's (Ochil View HA's) overall compliance with the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Standards and supporting guidance. We have identified several key strengths which demonstrate good governance and financial management. We have also identified three minor opportunities to improve the design of the controls in place further".

This followed the Internal Audit carried out in August 2019 which specifically considered the Associations approach to the Annual Assurance Statement which concluded that:

"We have gained assurance that, in general, Ochil View Housing Association ('Ochil View') complies with the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR's) Regulatory Framework. However, we have identified a small number of areas where controls could be strengthened in order to ensure the Management Committee receives sufficient assurance of compliance to produce the Annual Assurance Statement".

All recommendations contained in the above Internal Audit reports were approved and incorporated into our final assessment of assurance.

SHR Feedback on 2019 Annual Assurance Statement

The following feedback was provided by SHR on the Associations 2019 statement:

"Reviewing your statement, we found that your statement covered all of the areas required by the statutory guidance".

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 Management Committee 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 officer, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic.

Authority to Sign and Submit

As Chairperson I was authorised by the Management Committee at a meeting held on 26th November 2020 to sign and submit this Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

I confirm that this Assurance Statement is being published on our website on the same date that it is submitted to the SHR.

Margaret Baxter (Chairperson)

Date: 27th November 2020