

Agenda Item	13
Report No	HP/26/26

The Highland Council

Committee: **Housing and Property**

Date: **12 August 2026**

Report Title: **Annual Assurance Statement**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive – Place**

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 As part of the Scottish Housing Regulator’s Regulatory Framework, social housing providers must provide an Annual Assurance Statement by the end of October each year.
- 1.2 This report provides Highland Council’s Annual Assurance Statement for the calendar year 2026. The statement is in line with the updated guidance published by the Regulator in January 2025.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **approve** the Annual Assurance Statement for 2026 detailed in **Appendix 1** of this report which will be subsequently submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are no resource implications arising from this report.
- 3.2 **Legal** - There are no legal implications arising from this report. Submitting an Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator is a regulatory requirement.
- 3.3 **Risk** - Risk is managed through regular review and reporting to allow corrective action to be taken if necessary.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

- 4.2 This is an annual update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Background

- 5.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) was established in April 2012 and sets out the standards and outcomes that service users such as tenants, homeless people and Gypsy/Travellers can expect from social housing providers. As part of the regulation process, the Scottish Housing Regulator requires social landlords to provide it with an annual performance return, focused on the outcomes of the Charter.
- 5.2 In February 2019, the Scottish Housing Regulator published a new Regulatory Framework and associated guidance setting out how it would regulate social housing providers and its reporting requirements for the next five years; this Framework introduced a new requirement for landlords to provide an Annual Assurance Statement by the end of October each year, starting in October 2019.
- 5.3 The Regulator will use the Assurance Statements alongside the existing Annual Return on the Charter to guide its engagement with landlords and assist in the production of its Annual Engagement Plans for each landlord.
- 5.4 The Regulator verified the Council's Annual Return of Charter in Summer 2026 and the Highland Landlord Report, including the Engagement Plan, is available [here](#)
- 5.5 The Regulator requires that the Assurance Statement for local authorities be signed by the Committee Chair before the submission date of 31 October and that the statement is reported to the appropriate Council Committee.

6 Highland's Annual Assurance Statement 2026

- 6.1 The Council's draft Annual Assurance Statement for 2026 is attached as **Appendix 1** and is in line with the recommended Regulator guidance. This guidance was updated in January 2025 and included specific reference to a number of health and safety indicators which the Regulator added to the performance criteria for reporting in 2025/26.
- 6.2 There have been ongoing efforts to comply with updated legislation around electrical inspections, and these have been a feature of monthly updates to the Regulator. The current compliance at 1 July 2026 is 75.3%. 5.2% of the current stock is also defined as abeyances, recorded due to tenant non-access.
- 6.3 Single building assessments (SBAs) are a new legislative requirement around communal flatted blocks in Scotland. In Highland, there are 41 buildings that are currently considered in scope for the SBA ahead of detailed survey work. The survey specifications are currently being drafted in line with Government guidance. The outcomes of the SBAs are anticipated to have significant investment implications in future years, and this is detailed in the Housing Revenue Account Capital Plan 2027-2032 which is reported elsewhere to this Committee.

- 6.4 The content of the Statement was discussed at a meeting of tenant volunteers in July. There was useful feedback at the meeting, including discussion on issues such as communication with tenants around annual servicing and inspection visits, promoting health and safety among tenants with a particular focus on fire safety, and the promotion of the key changes to the Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) and Short Scottish Secure Tenancies (SSST) effective 01 August 2026. The Statement will be publicly available to tenants following agreement at Committee and submission to the Regulator.
- 6.5 The Council is required to undertake a comprehensive tenants' satisfaction survey every 3 years. It is intended to bring this forward by over 6 months to late August/early September and to include additional survey questions relating to housing services and affordability. Recognising that not all tenants contacted will participate, we will work to achieve a representative sample of tenants sufficient to achieve a final target of 10% completed interviews.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Date:	16 July 2026
Author:	Jane Ross, Service Lead Housing Policy & Customer Services
Background Papers:	Scottish Housing Regulator: Statutory Guidance on the Annual Assurance Statement.
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Annual Assurance Statement 2026

Annual Assurance Statement 2026

Legislative compliance

We can confirm that Highland Council achieves all the following standards and outcomes for tenants, people who are homeless and others who use our services:

- All relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework;
- All relevant standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter; and
- All relevant legislative duties.

Further to this, we can confirm that there were no individual health & safety breaches in 2025/26 resulting in intervention by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

Our compliance with the annual gas servicing requirements specified in the Framework was 100% for 2025/26.

All registered social landlords were notified by the Scottish Housing Regulator on 20 July 2022 that any property which has not had a 5-yearly electrical installation condition report by 31 March 2022 should now be considered as not complying fully with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

As part of the engagement process, Highland met with the Scottish Housing Regulator on 4 June 2026 and provided an update on progress.

There have been ongoing efforts to comply with updated legislation around electrical inspections, and these have been a feature of monthly updates to the Regulator. The current compliance on 1 July 2026 is 75.3%. 5.2% of the current stock is also defined as abeyances, recorded due to tenant non-access. A new servicing contract commenced in May 2026, and this will assist with efforts to reach full compliance over the coming months.

Single building assessments (SBAs) are a new legislative requirement around communal flatted blocks in Scotland. In Highland, there are 41 buildings that are currently considered in scope for the SBA ahead of detailed survey work. The survey specifications are currently being drafted in line with Government guidance. The outcomes of the SBAs are anticipated to have significant investment implications in future years, and this is detailed in the proposed Housing Revenue Account Capital Plan 2027-2032.

Highland will continue to conduct periodic reviews of its health and safety commitments in regard to a number of other issues such as water safety, fire safety and lift safety.

Awaab's Law will come into force in Scotland on 6 October 2026, introducing statutory requirements for landlords to respond to reports of damp and mould within defined timescales. Landlords will be required to:

1. Complete an investigation within 10 working days of becoming aware of a report of damp and/or mould.
2. Provide the tenant with a written summary of the investigation findings within 3 working days of the investigation being completed.
3. Commence any necessary remedial works within 5 working days where the investigation identifies repairs or other actions are required to address damp and mould.
4. Provide written reasons and an alternative timescale where the statutory timescales cannot be met.

The Council has developed processes, performance monitoring and reporting arrangements to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. These arrangements support the timely identification, investigation and resolution of damp and mould cases by addressing the underlying root causes. Tenants are kept informed and updated throughout the process.

Committee Reporting

We can confirm the following reporting structure within the Council: -

- Each of the 10 Area Committees receives quarterly or bi-annual housing performance reports and also reports on request of the Area Chair/Members;
- The Council's Housing & Property Committee receives quarterly performance reports on key performance indicators and monitoring reports on other housing policy issues; the Committee has been active in this form since January 2020;
- Quarterly financial reports on spend against the Housing Revenue Account, non-Housing Revenue Account housing expenditure and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme are submitted to the Housing & Property Committee;
- Reports are submitted annually (or on request of Members) to the Housing and Property Committee on the subjects of the Local Housing Strategy; the Highland Housing Register; Homelessness (Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan); and the Annual Assurance Statement;
- Reports relating to housing services will also be subject to full Council, Climate Change Committee and the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate; and
- Council Officers and tenant representatives will also meet during the year to identify policy review issues as appropriate.

The Area and Strategic Committee reporting is based almost exclusively on the performance indicators as established by the Scottish Housing Regulator in its Charter and by the Scottish Government in its Quarterly Homelessness Return.

From October 2018 there has been an opportunity for tenant-nominated tenant representatives at the Strategic Committee and at any associated workshops.

Priority has been given to identify and develop a new reporting mechanism to be effective from January 2027. This investment in IT and associated officer training will assist with the preparation of performance reports and will provide additional monitoring support for managers to evaluate data and improve performance.

Equalities and human rights

Highland collects data on each of the equalities aspects recommended in the Regulator guidance. Recent initiatives have focused on engagement with the gypsy/traveller community, and this work was recognised in the national Tenant Participation Advisory Services 2026 National Awards.

Highland is continuing to review how we can adopt a Human Rights Based Approach across various remits and policies. The Council's Integrated Impact Assessment process includes assessments for both children's rights and wellbeing and human rights, alongside existing duties related to equalities and socio-economic disadvantage. This approach is assisting in ensuring our policies and services take a broader rights approach.

Annual Customer Report for Tenants

The annual report for tenants will be provided to tenants in October 2026 as required by the Scottish Housing Regulator; this includes key performance information which is of interest to tenants.

As part of this annual process, the Council is asking the views of tenant volunteers ahead of publication and their views will be considered in producing the final document.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Council is required to undertake a comprehensive tenants' satisfaction survey every 3 years. A comprehensive survey will take place late August/early September with a representative sample of tenants which will give us a broad range of views and allow us to compare data from previous years on the core Charter questions.

A range of other customer satisfaction surveys are in place across the Service to assess the quality of the service on an ongoing basis. These include: -

- New tenants' survey regarding the quality of home and service.
- Repairs Satisfaction survey;
- Capital Improvements satisfaction survey; and
- Homelessness service questionnaire.

Other forms of tenant feedback include, but are not limited to, the following: -

- Highland Tenant Forum
- Value for Money Working Group
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Gypsy/Traveller Women's group.

Tenant involvement is a continually evolving process and Highland will explore how this can be reviewed and developed to best promote positive engagement with tenants making use of in person events as well as digital platforms to gather feedback.