

# Annual Customer Report 2025-26

Every year Highland Council submits a performance report, known as the Annual Return on the Charter to the Scottish Housing Regulator. This allows an assessment to be made on how Highland is performing against a set of outcomes, known as the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The full report can be found [Highland Council | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

We've asked our tenant volunteers what information they find interesting and important, so this year the report will look a bit different based on this feedback, and we are extremely grateful for this input.

As always if there are any areas that you would like more information about, then please get in touch.

## Highland Council as Landlord

### Comhairlena Gàidhealtachd mar Uachdaran

We provide housing and deliver housing related services across an area covering a third of the land area of Scotland, across some of the most remote and sparsely populated parts of the United Kingdom.

At 31 March 2026 we owned and managed **15,375** council homes in 223 communities in city, town, rural, remote and island locations.

### Number and Type of Lets

During the reporting year 2025-2026 there were a total of **1134** lets which can be broken down into the following areas:

|                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Homeless applicants | 664 (54%) |
| Housing applicants  | 221 (26%) |
| Existing tenants    | 249 (20%) |

In addition to the above lets there were **106** Mutual exchanges.

Highland Council have been offering advice and information to prevent homelessness which includes supporting households to sustain their tenancies, assessing and identifying any support need as well as routes into alternative tenures such as to move into mid-market rentals. The Housing service had recently appointed three Tenancy Sustainment Assistants based in Caithness, Mid-Ross and Inverness in response to listening and responding to feedback from tenants and staff.

Further information on homeless figures can be found in the report to [Housing and Property Committee](#).

There was a total of **364** offers refused in 2025- 2026, which could be for a number of reasons. The Housing Options team have reviewed this process to ensure that applicants were fully aware of the property and location they had selected, particularly in very remote and rural areas.

### **Average Rent 2025-2026**

|            | Number of properties | Average Weekly rent |
|------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Bedsit     | 218                  | £85.35              |
| 1 Bedroom  | 3986                 | £89.12              |
| 2 Bedroom  | 6351                 | £99.39              |
| 3 Bedroom  | 4373                 | £110.45             |
| 4+ Bedroom | 447                  | £123.59             |

If you'd like to see how our rent compares to other landlords across Highland or Scotland you can find the landlord comparison tool on the Regulators website:

[Comparison tool | Scottish Housing Regulator](#)

## **Rents and Value for Money**

### **Màil agus Luach an Airgid**

Money collected from tenant rent money is paid into the Housing Revenue Account which is protected by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. This account is dedicated to maintaining and improving housing stock to benefit current tenants and future tenants.

Despite wider budget pressures, the Council has worked hard to protect housing services by improving how we work, using technology more effectively, and reviewing how services are delivered. Making sure tenants get good value for money is a key part of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, and tenants play an important role in helping us achieve this.

To support this, Highland Council tenants have formed a Value for Money Group. This group helps shape how tenants are consulted about the HRA and ensures tenants have a strong voice in decisions about how rent money is spent.

### **Supporting Tenants and Managing Rent Income**

We know that many tenants have faced financial challenges due to the rising cost of living. The Council has responded by offering support and advice to help tenants manage their rent and avoid falling into arrears resulting in a progressive reduction in the gross rent arrears to 5.84% of overall rent due in 2025/26

Rent income is vital for funding key services like repairs and maintenance. In 2025/26, the total rent due to the Council was **£70,350,762**.

### **Rent Collected**

Total rent collected during the reporting year 2025/26 was **£69,999,982.16** . This is equivalent to 99.50% of the total rent due.

### Housing Revenue Account – Where your rent money is spent

| Budget heading and description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 2024/25 Annual Spend |             | 2025/26 Annual Spend |             | Increase/ Decrease from previous year |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | % of overall Spend   |             | % of overall Spend   |             | (£)                                   |
| <b>Supervision and Management</b><br>This covers the day to day costs of running the housing service i.e. staff wages, heating & lighting in offices, printing, postage etc. and includes our contribution to the funding of advice services such as CABs in Highland. | 12%                  | £8,760,000  | 12%                  | £8,913,000  | +£153,000                             |
| <b>Tenant Participation</b><br>Covers venue and catering costs for events, transport costs, supplies, reimbursement of tenant volunteer expenses and provision of ICT equipment and tenant training opportunities etc.                                                 | 0.4%                 | £279,000    | 0.4%                 | £287,000    | +8,000                                |
| <b>Sheltered Housing</b><br>This covers staffing costs, property utilities, transport, supplies and services such as helpcall alarms etc.                                                                                                                              | 0.9%                 | £667 ,000   | 0.9%                 | £521,000    | -£146,000                             |
| <b>Homelessness</b><br>This covers staffing costs, repairs to properties as well as utilities, rates and council tax and supplies such as furniture and storage.                                                                                                       | 0.8%                 | £616,000    | 0.8%                 | £713,000    | +£97,000                              |
| <b>Repairs and Maintenance</b><br>These are the costs of the day to day maintenance of council houses including grounds maintenance and work carried out on empty houses (voids).                                                                                      | 35%                  | £24,298,000 | 35%                  | £27,183,000 | +£2,885,000                           |
| <b>Central Support</b><br>This covers our service contribution to corporate service such as legal & IT services & business support.                                                                                                                                    | 6%                   | £4,409,000  | 6%                   | £4,625,000  | +£216,000                             |

|                                                                                         |             |                    |             |                    |                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Loan charges</b><br>These are related to money borrowed to improve or build housing. | 41%         | £28,835,000        | 41%         | £31,254,000        | +£2,419,000        |
| <b>Voids</b><br>This heading covers the rental loss from houses and other rent voids.   | 4%          | £1,399,000         | 4%          | £1,435,000         | +£36,000           |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                            | <b>100%</b> | <b>£69,263,000</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>£75,907,000</b> | <b>+£6,644,000</b> |

The final HRA expenditure was reported to the Housing & Property Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2026 and can be found on the Highland Council website - [HRA & Non HRA Budget](#)

## Rent Increases

|                      | Highland<br>2024/25 | Highland<br>2025/26 | Scottish<br>average<br>2025/26 | How we compare with<br>the Scottish average                                         |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Rent Increase</b> | 8%                  | 8%                  | 6.08%                          |  |

We understand that any increase in rent can be concerning, especially during times of financial pressure. However, after many years of below inflation increases, a substantial rise in rents is now essential to ensure we can continue delivering safe, high-quality homes and vital services to our tenants.

Over the past few years, the cost of maintaining and improving our housing stock has risen sharply: Inflation, higher energy prices, and increased costs for materials and labour have all had a major impact. At the same time, we are committed to meeting higher standards for energy efficiency, safety, and tenant wellbeing—standards that require significant investment.

Without an increase in rental income, we risk falling behind on essential repairs, upgrades, and new developments. This would affect the quality of our homes and the services we provide, and ultimately impact tenants' comfort, safety, and satisfaction.

We are committed to being transparent and fair. We will continue to offer support to tenants who may struggle with affordability, and we are working to ensure that every pound of rent delivers real value.

## Rent Arrears Management

|                                                                              | Highland<br>2024/25  | Highland<br>2025/26 | Scottish<br>average<br>2025/26 | How we compare with<br>the Scottish average                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 March each year as a % of rent due | 6.42 %<br>£4,365,540 | 5.84%<br>£4,354,497 | 6.05%                          |  |

### Supporting Tenants and Managing Rent Arrears

Over the past year, the Housing service has appointed three Tenancy Sustainment officers with further recruitment planned to ensure tenants through Highland can access this vital service to achieve positive outcomes. We strongly encourage anyone struggling to pay their rent to contact their Housing Officer as early as possible. Help is available and early engagement can make a real difference.

Thanks to these proactive efforts and the commitment of our tenants', rent arrears have reduced to **5.84% of rent due**, reflecting a positive step forward in sustaining tenancies and managing income effectively.

### Evictions and Legal Action

The Scottish Government's temporary ban on evictions ended on **31 March 2024**, which led to an increase in court actions during 2024/25. We want to reassure tenants that eviction is always a last resort. It is only pursued when all other avenues have been exhausted and a tenant has not engaged with support to resolve their situation.

In 2025/26 **16 evictions** were carried out:

- **14** were due to non-payment of rent
- **2** were related to serious anti-social behaviour

We remain committed to working with tenants to prevent eviction wherever possible and continue to offer advice, support, and referrals to financial assistance services. **If you are worried about money, you can get free, independent help and assistance from the Council's Welfare Support Team on 0800 090 1004 or from your local Citizen's Advice Bureau.**

### Empty Homes - average time taken to re-let properties

|                                              | Highland<br>2024/25 | Highland<br>2025/26 | Scottish<br>average<br>2025/26 | How we compare<br>with the Scottish<br>average                                        |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| % rent loss through properties becoming void | 0.9%<br>£604,420.   | 0.65%<br>£485,482   | 1.1%                           |  |

|                                                                    |            |         |           |                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Average length of time taken to re-let properties in the last year | 53.95 days | 44 days | 51.7 days |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## What We're Doing About It

It is important to get empty homes back into use quickly, however like many areas across Scotland, Highland has been facing challenges that are affecting how quickly we can re-let properties.

One major issue has been delays with utility companies, particularly around clearing meter debts and installing new gas and electricity meters. These problems have been raised at a national level by the Scottish Government and are affecting councils across the country.

Locally, we've also experienced difficulties with contractor availability and we are now bringing as much of the work in house as possible.

We're committed to improving performance in this area and will continue to keep tenants informed of progress.

## Quality of Homes

### Càileachd Dhachaighean

|                              | Highland<br>2024/25          | Highland<br>2025/26           | Scottish<br>average<br>2025/26 | How we compare<br>with the Scottish<br>average                                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| % of stock meeting the SHQS* | 58.6%<br>8,933<br>properties | 61.65%<br>9,478<br>properties | 89.5%                          |  |

- SHQS = Scottish Housing Quality Standard

We have been providing monthly updates to the Regulator on number of properties not meeting SHQS along with detailed plans to increase the number homes meeting this standard. In July 2022 the electrical inspection regime changed from 10 yearly to 5 yearly and those not meeting this would be deemed non-compliant of the SHQS. As of July 2026 75.3% of homes were compliant.

## Energy Efficiency for Scottish Social Housing (EESH)

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) now includes energy efficiency requirements as part of a new framework called the **Energy Efficiency Standard for Scottish Social Housing (EESH)**. EESH sets the minimum energy efficiency level that social housing must meet. It was created by the Scottish Government after speaking with landlords and tenants, and it supports Scotland's goal of becoming Net Zero.

The Scottish Government will be looking to introduce the Social Housing Net Zero Standard in the coming years as a replacement for EESSH, details are yet to be finalised but Highland Council will continue to prioritise energy efficiency measures such as insulation and new heating systems. In 2025-26, **£28.037m** was invested in upgrading homes, with 60% of this committed to heating upgrades, window and door replacements and insulation works. The Capital Team are working closely with Climate Change and Energy Team to maximise external sources of funding.

## Tenant Satisfaction

In line with regulatory requirements, Highland Council have been carrying out our 3 yearly comprehensive satisfaction survey during the months of August and September with a representative sample of tenants. The results will be reported to the Housing & Property Committee in November and will form part of the Charter return May 2027. Results will also be available on the website.

## Adaptations

We aim to help anyone wishing to stay in their home and the housing capital budget can help to support adaptations to enable people to maintain their independence in their home. During 2025-26 **435** medical adaptations were completed taking an average of **29.7 days** to complete, comparing to a national average of 46.6 days.

To find out more about how to arrange an assessment, details can be found on our website

[Home adaptations and equipment - Adapting your home to your needs - Highland Council](#)

## Maintenance of Homes

### Cumail Suas Dhachaighean

|                                                                                         | Highland<br>2024/25 | Highland<br>2025/26 | Scottish<br>average<br>2025/26 | How we compare<br>with the Scottish<br>average                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Average length of time<br>taken to complete<br>emergency repairs                        | 3.54 hours          | <b>4.7 hours</b>    | 3.5 hours                      |  |
| Average length of time<br>taken to complete non<br>-emergency repairs<br>(working days) | 7.65 days           | <b>8 days</b>       | 8.8 days                       |  |
| % of repairs carried<br>out in the last year<br>completed right<br>first time           | 86.6%               | <b>86.3%</b>        | 95.3%                          |  |

Performance against both emergency and non-emergency repairs compare well with the national average and given the additional challenges of Highland geography, we are delighted to report this.

Another service improvement has been the introduction of the repairs text messaging service to most of our areas. This updates when the repairs appointment is made, reminders before the appointment, notification when the repairs person is on their way and a post repair satisfaction survey. This has significantly improved the satisfaction levels.

|                                                                                                                       | Highland<br>2024/25 | Highland<br>2025/26 | Scottish<br>average<br>2025/26 | How we<br>compare with<br>the Scottish<br>average                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| % of tenants who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in the last 12 months satisfied with the repairs service | 94.4%               | 95%                 | 88.1%                          |  |

### Managing our estates, antisocial behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes

We want to make sure that our tenants live in neighbourhoods where they feel safe and that are well maintained. Responding to, investigating and managing antisocial behaviour can be complex and resource intensive. A range of partner organisations participate in managing antisocial behaviour on a case by case basis. In the coming year we will be working with key partners, including, Housing Associations, Victim Support Scotland, Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, NHS Highland, Highland Council’s Environmental Health, Care and Learning Services, Highlife Highland, Alcohol and Drug Partnership and other related third-party organisations to review and improve the strategy for dealing with ASB cases.

### Antisocial behaviour cases resolved within target timescales in 2025/26

|                                                                | Highland<br>2024/25 | Highland<br>2025/26 | Scottish<br>average<br>2025/26 | How we compare with<br>the Scottish average                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| % Antisocial behaviour cases resolved within target timescales | 86.9%               | 77.4%               | 93.1%                          |  |

If you are experiencing any problems please contact us immediately on **01349 886602**.

If you wish to report any criminal activity, telephone Police Scotland on 101 or if you want to pass on information about crime anonymously telephone Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

## Complaints & Comments

### Gearanan & Beachdan

We believe that every tenant has the right to raise concerns if they're not satisfied with the service we provide. Complaints are an important way for us to learn, improve, and ensure our services meet your expectations.

We take all complaints seriously and follow a clear and fair process based on the **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure**.

Your feedback helps us:

- Understand what's not working
- Make improvements to our services
- Prevent similar issues from happening again

You can find full details on how to make a complaint in the Council's Complaints leaflet. To request a copy, please contact us directly or visit the Council's website:

[How to make a complaint - Highland Council](#)

All complaints are logged in our corporate complaints system and are monitored closely. We categorise complaints into two stages:

- **Stage 1** – straightforward issues that can be resolved quickly with little or no investigation
- **Stage 2** – more complex or serious matters that require a detailed investigation

We're committed to resolving complaints fairly and promptly, and we use what we learn to improve the experience for all tenants.

|         | 2024/25                 |                                              | 2025/26                 |                                              | Scottish average 2025/26 | How we compare with the Scottish average                                              |
|---------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | No. complaints received | % Percentage complaints responded to in full | No. complaints received | % Percentage complaints responded to in full |                          |                                                                                       |
| Stage 1 | 149                     | 95.4%                                        | 174                     | 98.8%                                        | 98.1%                    |  |
| Stage 2 | 101                     | 85.59%                                       | 110                     | 86.18%                                       | 92.6%                    |  |

If you are still not satisfied you can take your complaint to the SPSO - [Making a complaint | SPSO](#)

## Getting Involved

### A' Gabhail Com-pàirt

If you find the information above of interest and you'd like to find out more about how you can influence decisions made about these aspects of the housing service you receive, please do get in touch with the Tenant Participation Team.

| If you live in:                  | Contact         | Contact details                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Caithness & Sutherland           | Leona Geddes    | 07785 932 517<br><a href="mailto:leona.geddes@highland.gov.uk">leona.geddes@highland.gov.uk</a>       |
| Mid and West Ross-shire & Nairn  | Justyna Leslie  | 07387 234 107<br><a href="mailto:justyna.leslie@highland.gov.uk">justyna.leslie@highland.gov.uk</a>   |
| Skye & Lochalsh                  | Adam Gordon     | 07557566235<br><a href="mailto:adam.gordon1@highland.gov.uk">adam.gordon1@highland.gov.uk</a>         |
| Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey | Kerri Macdonald | 07774 337 689<br><a href="mailto:Kerri.macdonald@highland.gov.uk">Kerri.macdonald@highland.gov.uk</a> |
| Lochaber                         | Karin McKay     | 07785 477 696<br><a href="mailto:karin.mckay@highland.gov.uk">karin.mckay@highland.gov.uk</a>         |
| Easter Ross                      | Suzy Boardman   | 07557 744 413<br><a href="mailto:Suzy.boardman@highland.gov.uk">Suzy.boardman@highland.gov.uk</a>     |
| General Enquiries                |                 | <a href="mailto:Tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk">Tenant.participation@highland.gov.uk</a>        |