

Housing Services Annual Report

2015 - 2016



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Contents

Introduction (Page 2), Annual Report (Page 4), Your Home (Page 5), Value for Money (Page 9), Your Tenancy (Page 11), Your Neighbourhood (Page 15), Tenant Engagement (Page 16)

Introduction



The process of publishing our ‘Annual Report against the Charter’ has become well established and I am delighted to introduce the third Annual Report from the Council’s Housing Service.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter was developed by the Scottish Government and it aims to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide, and support the Scottish Government’s long-term aim of creating a safer and stronger Scotland. It will do so by:

- Stating clearly what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords, and helping them to hold landlords to account.
- Focusing the efforts of social landlords on achieving outcomes that matter to their customers.
- Establishing a basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to assess and report on how well landlords are performing. This assessment will enable the Regulator, social landlords, tenants and other customers to identify areas of strong performance and areas needing improvement.

The Regulator’s reports will also help the Scottish Government ensure that public investment in new social housing goes only to landlords assessed as performing well.

The Council report has grown and developed over the last few years and will continue to do so over the coming years. In developing this report we’ve compared performance over the last three years and have highlighted trends.

Orkney Islands Council has shown strong performance in many areas – a significant programme of newly built housing has been delivered, performance in respect of rent arrears collection and property condition is good and tenants have expressed satisfaction with the quality of their neighbourhoods.

Of course the Council also faces significant challenges in the form of restricted budgets and areas where performance could be improved such as the time it takes to return empty properties to an appropriate standard so they can be re-let, repairs and meeting energy efficiency targets in an area off the gas grid and with a relatively harsh climate.

I'd like to thank staff for their commitment and our tenants for taking the time to contribute to the development of this report. We really appreciate all of your feedback regarding the style of the report, and on the information contained within. This helps us to improve our services.

I hope you find this report interesting and informative. If, however, you feel there is room for improvement please let us know.

As always this information is available in a range of formats and languages on request. It is also available on our website which in turn allows the report to be translated, and features such as Browse Aloud to be used.

Yours

Harvey Johnston

Chair of Education, Leisure and Housing Committee.



Performance figures for 2015-2016 are shown first with figures for 2014-2015 and 2013-2014 shown below to allow comparison. This information allows you as a Council tenant to see the work we are doing to improve housing services and how we are doing in comparison to some similar Scottish Councils. We have chosen both Highland and Shetland Islands Councils. Although Western Isles and Argyll and Bute Councils would be broadly comparable, both have transferred their housing stock to a Housing Association which represents a significant difference and therefore they have not been included.

We are required to carry out a wholesale tenants' satisfaction survey every three years. The section on Tenant Engagement is based on the survey which was undertaken earlier this year.

Throughout this report we have used both thumbs up / thumbs down symbols for highlighting performance. In addition we have used a coloured traffic light system. This is as follows:



Good progress made; action plans continue to show how further improvement will be achieved.



Evidence of progress and understanding of the issues but with more to do to achieve real impact.



Poor performance where improvements could be made.

A web accessible version of this report is available from www.orkney.gov.uk In order to allow the web accessible version to be read with a reader, such as Browse Aloud, a full stop has been inserted after every figure to ensure a pause is inserted.



Our Housing Stock

At 31 March 2016 the Council owned 952 homes, having increased from 927 the year before. The Council began a programme of building additional social rented houses in 2009-2010 and to 31 March 2016 had completed 206 new houses representing an increase in stock of 27.6%. The total rent due to your landlord for the year was £3,178,531. The Council increased its weekly rent on average by 1.4% from the previous year.

We are committed to continuing to build new houses and working in partnership with Orkney Housing Association Ltd in order to address housing need.

Size of home	Number owned		
	March 2016	March 2015	March 2014
Bedsit	25	28	28
1 Bedroom	346	321	303
2 Bedroom	311	308	303
3 Bedroom	250	253	253
4 Bedroom and larger	20	17	19

Where properties have declined in number, this is generally as a result of properties being sold under the Right to Buy. The Right to Buy ended with effect from 1 August 2016.



Quality of Housing

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) is a challenging standard which ensures a property is in a good standard of repair, meets challenging energy efficiency standards, is provided with modern facilities and services and is healthy, safe and secure. The Council was required to meet this standard by March 2015 and continue to do so thereafter.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Percentage of stock meeting the SHQS.	2015-2016	85.82%	99.89%	90.83%	93.26%
	2014-2015	85.11%	89.04%	85.15%	90.96%
	2013-2014	80.35%	75.98%	70.21%	85.40%
Percentage of stock regarded as exempt, in abeyance or fail.	2015-2016	14.18%	0.02%	9.17%	6.74%
	2014-2015	14.89%	10.96%	14.85%	9.04%
	2013-2014	19.65%	24.02%	29.79%	14.60%

Notably Orkney does have a higher proportion of properties as an exemption or in abeyance than is true for Scotland generally. A property may be classified as being in abeyance when work cannot be done for 'social' reasons relating to tenants' or owner-occupiers' behaviour. For example, in a block of flats in which some are owned by the Council and others are privately owned, owner-occupiers may not wish to pay a share of a secure door entry system or consider it necessary. Another example would be where the tenant is elderly or suffering from a medical condition such that they do not wish work to be undertaken on their home at this time.

A property can be classified as an exemption where the property is capable of meeting the SHQS on a particular element but the landlord believes it is not possible to meet it for technical or legal reasons or because cost is considered disproportionate.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Properties brought up to SHQS in year.	2015-2016	39	192	1045	10462
	2014-2015	42	237	853	50836
	2013-2014	134	131	1155	36682
Percentage of properties brought up to standard this year.	2015-2016	4.10%	11.03%	7.52%	3.31%
	2014-2015	4.53%	13.39%	6.18%	8.55%
	2013-2014	14.79%	7.30%	8.51%	12.60%

Various works were scheduled to coincide with the summer months of 2016, both for operational reasons and those of tenant involvement and comfort. These included replacing heating systems and installing photovoltaic panels.

A new standard has been introduced which social landlords are required to meet by 2020. This is the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) which is a challenging standard to meet and is in addition to the Scottish Housing Quality

Standard. The Council has begun the process of planning to meet the standard and initial figures are as follows.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Properties meeting EESSH.	2015-2016	69.34%	43.19%	65.81%	65.17%

Currently we are in a positive position for delivering the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing and are relatively well placed nationally in this respect. We are committed to continuing to improve the quality of our housing stock through our housing investment programme. Investment in repairs and maintenance totals £1.3m this year. This makes sure our tenants homes, as a minimum, continue to meet the SHQS, those that are currently in abeyance are gradually brought up to the SHQS as the issues allow and that we are on target to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing by 2020.

Our tenants told us:

- That 87.5% of tenants were satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in.
- That 82.6% of tenants were satisfied with the quality of their home.



Repairs, Maintenance and Improvement

The area of repairs is one where context is particularly relevant with some Councils setting very challenging timescales for completion well ahead of the legislative requirement. Orkney's geography does present some challenges in that respect.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Average number of hours to complete emergency repairs.	2015-2016	6.89	5.01	7.88	5.14
	2014-2015	12.56	5.86	9.06	5.85
	2013-2014	13.65	5.56	14.50	6.90
Number of emergency repairs per house.	2015-2016	0.23	0.33	0.85	1.01
	2014-2015	0.18	0.36	0.90	1.00
	2013-2014	0.18	0.38	0.90	1.01
Average working days to complete non-emergency repairs.	2015-2016	11.24	18.68	7.53	7.52
	2014-2015	11.26	14.60	7.32	7.88
	2013-2014	10.66	12.32	8.74	8.20
Number of non-emergency repairs per house.	2015-2016	1.02	2.71	1.99	2.56
	2014-2015	0.93	3.05	2.09	2.56
	2013-2014	0.97	2.95	2.09	2.64

The Council records low numbers of repairs per house and this is an example of positive performance. The Council's housing stock is subject to significant investment and therefore is in good condition, leading to a low number of repairs

being raised. The Council has made significant progress in reducing its timescales relating to emergency repairs.

When we asked tenants, during 2015-2016 about their experience of repairs undertaken, 84% were satisfied with the repair and 9% were dissatisfied with the time to undertake the work. This compares to the 2013 satisfaction survey results which recorded 83% of tenants being satisfied with the repair and 10% of tenants being dissatisfied with repair timescales. Therefore this performance has improved.

The tenants' panel will be focussing on repairs and reporting back in due course. An article will be published in Housing News.



Rents

Orkney is Scotland's smallest Local Authority Housing Service and as such economies of scale are a factor in the rental charges. However, its rental charges are broadly comparable to other similar areas.

Size of home	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Bedsit.	2015-2016	£54.22	£43.02	£55.32	£65.94
	2014-2015	£53.05	£45.99	£56.62	£64.03
	2013-2014	£51.48	£43.96	£50.08	£59.56
1 Bedroom.	2015-2016	£65.06	£57.82	£61.11	£70.39
	2014-2015	£62.35	£57.63	£64.96	£68.55
	2013-2014	£57.56	£54.59	£57.66	£65.18
2 Bedroom.	2015-2016	£77.77	£71.80	£66.78	£71.75
	2014-2015	£75.51	£70.62	£70.85	£69.61
	2013-2014	£70.50	£66.81	£63.27	£67.19
3 Bedroom.	2015-2016	£77.07	£84.53	£74.95	£77.60
	2014-2015	£75.32	£84.24	£79.67	£75.70
	2013-2014	£72.18	£79.05	£71.21	£73.07
4 Bedroom.	2015-2016	£87.50	£102.60	£83.53	£85.98
	2014-2015	£81.61	£102.42	£88.87	£84.04
	2013-2014	£89.20	£95.20	£78.79	£81.63

The cost of providing Council housing and maintaining that housing is funded by our tenants' rents. The chart below shows how every £1 in rent you pay is spent.



The percentage of tenants who feel their rent represents good value for money is 76.97% compared with the Scottish average of 78.96%.

Generally Orkney's performance in relation to rent collection has been very good, frequently being highly placed across Scotland as a whole. Rent collection is very important to the Council. We are committed to being as efficient as possible in this respect and have processes in place to help us collect as much rent as possible.

The Council has introduced new procedures to try and improve the efficiency of making empty properties ready for re-let. There have been improvements in respect of the level of rent lost due to empty properties during the last year and we will continue to try and improve performance in this area.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Rent collected as a percentage of the total rent due in the reporting year.	2015-2016	99.43%	100.04%	98.52%	99.51%
	2014-2015	98.84%	98.18%	99.82%	99.46%
	2013-2014	99.63%	96.00%	100%	98.85%
Percentage of rent due lost through properties being empty during the last year.	2015-2016	1.55%	1.32%	1.02%	0.99%
	2014-2015	1.61%	1.62%	0.92%	1.14%
	2013-2014	3.48%	2.72%	1.19%	1.43%



Access to Social Housing

Housing allocations to household by type are as follows:

	Reporting Year	Homeless Households	Waiting List Applicants	Transfer Applicants	Other
Orkney Islands Council.	2015-2016	29.71%	43.48%	26.81%	0.00%
	2014-2015	20.74%	64.44%	14.82%	0.00%
	2013-2014	34%	53%	14%	0%
Scotland Average.	2015-2016	37.74%	40.96%	20.93%	0.37%
	2014-2015	22.27%	51.96%	21.78%	3.62%
	2013-2014	25%	50%	19%	7%

In some situations a household may refuse an offer of accommodation. For example, their circumstances have changed and they no longer wish to live in that area. The percentage of tenancy offers refused in 2015-2016 was 43.24%. In 2014-2015 the percentage of offers refused was 34.33% therefore performance in this area has declined slightly. We continue to monitor the reasons for refusal in an attempt to reduce the number of refusals.

The number of transfer applicants being housed increased in 2015-2016. We had 115 properties become available for re-let in 2015-2016. Around 10% of these were in new builds and a further 10% on isles properties. During 2015-2016 29 general needs new builds became available for let for the first time. Consequently this allowed transfers between stock for those who wished to downsize or needed a larger house.

Tenancy Sustainment



We also consider how many tenancies are sustained longer than a year. This is affected by a household's personal choices. Tenancy sustainment shows a decline in performance over the last year. To some degree this is affected by our small numbers. The reasons for tenancies not being sustained for longer than a year, relating to our existing tenants, included the tenancy ending due to death, reconciliation of a relationship and receiving another offer of rehousing from an alternative provider.

As regards tenancies not being sustained for longer than a year, where the tenant was previously homeless, the issues were very similar including leaving Orkney as a result of employment or family reasons, reconciliation of a relationship and moving either as a result of an issue or a personal choice.

We have a small housing support service which aims to assist households who may need some additional help to enable them to manage their tenancies.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Tenancies began in previous year remaining for more than a year - existing tenants.	2015-2016	85.00%	85.00%	91.14%	92.91%
	2014-2015	94.73%	80.95%	93.80%	93.16%
	2013-2014	83.87%	93.33%	93.60%	94.74%
Tenancies began in previous year remaining for more than a year - applicants who were assessed as statutory homeless.	2015-2016	78.57%	87.88%	87.91%	85.43%
	2014-2015	91.30%	88.00%	85.46%	87.19%
	2013-2014	88.20%	86.67%	86.84%	84.18%
Tenancies began in previous year remaining for more than a year - applicants from your organisation's housing list.	2015-2016	94.25%	83.19%	75.71%	88.84%
	2014-2015	86.30%	81.00%	86.67%	87.95%
	2013-2014	84.88%	86.02%	81.24%	88.41%

Empty Homes



The time taken to re-let properties includes factors such as properties undergoing works, the level of demand for a property in that area and Orkney's geography. Properties must meet a certain standard before being re-let.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Number of let-able self-contained houses that became vacant in year.	2015-2016	115	118	1511	25971
	2014-2015	111	146	1548	26654
	2013-2014	141	175	1558	25909
Percentage becoming vacant in year.	2015-2016	13.56%	7.20%	11.04%	8.33%
	2014-2015	13.47%	8.76%	11.30%	8.85%
	2013-2014	15.56%	9.75%	11.43%	8.92%
Average number of days to re-let property.	2015-2016	40.55	64.23	47.10	41.62
	2014-2015	46.99	48.80	42.01	36.85
	2013-2014	60.70	76.67	37.62	35.70

The Council has a relatively high level of stock becoming vacant during the year, partially due to newly built stock becoming available and existing tenants transferring to more suitable sized housing. While generally a high turnover of stock is less than ideal, there are significant positives in respect of a household being in a position to move to a larger or smaller house as required, and there has been an increased ability to transfer due to our programme of newly built housing.

Changes to our procedures in respect of managing empty properties and our methods of recording this information should reduce the number of days to re-let for the next reporting year.



Homelessness

We are committed to ensuring that homeless people get prompt and easy access to help and advice and are offered good quality temporary accommodation where this is needed. In addition we are committed to continuing to offer support to help them get and keep the home they are entitled to.

We work in partnership with Orkney Housing Association Ltd in respect of offering permanent accommodation to homeless households.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Number of Homeless Presentations.	2015-2016	99	122	997	34662
	2014-2015	87	152	1011	35674
	2013-2014	108	145	1016	N/A
Number of cases where landlord was required to make an offer of temporary or emergency accommodation.	2015-2016	89	130	682	40600
	2014-2015	84	154	692	43610
	2013-2014	101	143	677	36065
Average length of time (days) in temporary accommodation.	2015-2016	87.26	302.75	105.53	107.7
	2014-2015	141.64	327.56	112.43	90.15
	2013-2014	187.54	300.60	118.53	104.08
Number of Lets to Homeless Applicants.	2015-2016	41	26	403	9911
	2014-2015	28	33	428	10393
	2013-2014	46	50	429	10630



Estate Management and Anti-social Behaviour



We endeavour to ensure our schemes and residential streets remain attractive and safe places to live.

Our reports of anti-social behaviour are very low at 38 cases and these reports have fallen from 57 in 2014-2015 (22 in 2013-2014). Predominantly this refers to low-level anti-social behaviour including noisy parties and nuisance relating to pets, parking and shared areas. The number of complaints raised can vary significantly from year to year. Our performance in respect of resolving the issue is very good.

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland
Percentage of reported anti-social behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets.	2015-2016	81.58%	70.00%	80.97%	84.24%
	2014-2015	92.98%	116.67%	76.33%	83.16%
	2013-2014	90.91%	83.33%	67.45%	74.79%
Percentage satisfied with management of the neighbourhood they live in.**	2016	80.84%	68.17%	69.01%	80.91%
	2013	81.85%	71.83%	67.24%	84.91%

** Figures obtained from the surveys carried out in 2013 and 2016.



The Council offers various opportunities to enable tenants to participate in the decisions which affect them. There are a range of opportunities available in respect of membership of residents' groups or being part of the tenants' panel. We also use a range of surveys including that on our annual rental increase.

The Council undertook a wholesale tenant satisfaction survey during 2016 which allowed tenants to let us know their views relating to a wide range of service areas.

We have regular events for our tenants to attend in which we are able to listen to their feedback on the service they receive from us. The tenants' panel, set up in 2014 has attracted an encouraging level of interest from tenants. It has looked at a number of areas including the standard of property at the stage it is re-let and repairs. Their feedback has a direct influence on any improvements made to these services.

Your views are important to us and allow us to assess whether there are things we could do to improve our services. We look closely at the information you provide and consider this alongside relevant policies and service areas.

If you are interested in joining the tenants' panel or otherwise being involved, please let us know.



Satisfaction

Our tenants told us:

	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall service provided.	2016	87.65%	74.76%	74.00%	83.05%
	2013	87.74%	77.86%	79.46%	88.09%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the Council keeping you informed.	2016	90.80%	67.41%	62.96%	81.23%
	2013	88.67%	69.05%	75.00%	89.33%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with opportunities to participate.	2016	65.97%	50.00%	46.01%	71.25%
	2013	61.51%	47.78%	55.27%	79.58%

Communication and Participation

Our tenants told us:

	2016	2013
We are happy to be kept informed with what's happening.	64%	74%
We would like to have our say before decisions are made.	6%	14%
We would like to be one of the people making decisions.	2%	2%
Don't know / not answered.	4%	10%
Don't wish to have any involvement at all.	25%	N/A

Complaints and compliments

Complaints concerning our Housing Service are dealt with using the Model Complaints Handling procedure which is used by all Local Authorities and Housing Associations. It consists of two stages:

Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution

These complaints are dealt with as close to point of service delivery and as promptly as possible. The target for completion is 5 working days.

Stage 2 – Investigation

In these complaints and independent investigation is undertaken by an allocated Investigating Officer. The target for completion is 20 working days. The Council performs well in this respect.

Stage 1 Complaints	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Complaints received.	2015-2016	30	7	418	8831
	2014-2015	35	7	323	23,271
Percentage of complaints upheld.	2015-2016	59.38%	28.51%	44.77%	45.02%
	2014-2015	57.14%	28.57%	65.44%	58.58%
Percentage of complaints responded to within Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's recommended timescales.	2015-2016	84.38%	57.14%	51.34%	77.07%
	2014-2015	62.86%	71.43%	58.72%	82.94%

Stage 2 Complaints	Reporting Year	Orkney Islands Council	Shetland Islands Council	Highland Council	Scotland Average
Complaints received.	2015-2016	6	11	20	1407
	2014-2015	1	18	32	3,723
Percentage of complaints upheld.	2015-2016	60.00%	14.29%	42.86%	46.33%
	2014-2015	0.00%	11.11%	40.62%	48.56%
Percentage of complaints responded to within Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's recommended timescales.	2015-2016	100.00%	71.43%	47.62%	70.58%
	2014-2015	100.00%	50.00%	28.00%	79.10%

Complaints by Topic	Total	Complaints Upheld
Repair timescales.	19	13
Quality of Repair.	5	3
Council policy/procedure.	2	0
Condition of property.	1	1
Staff conduct/attitude.	2	1
Quality of service.	2	1
Failure to provide a service.	1	0

In 2016/17 we aim to continue to improve the number of complaints responded to within the target timescales and our monitoring of these.

Compliments

We also record the number of compliments we receive. For 2015-2016 there were 19 and these were:

- Quality of Service (12)
- Response to delivering a service (2)
- Staff Conduct/attitude (5)

Looking Forward

Overall our performance is generally positive and shows improvements on the previous year. We are committed to further improvements and will endeavour to evidence this over future years.

Future Plans for improvements:

- Heating Upgrades.
- Energy Efficiency Measures.
- Continue to improve voids (empty properties) performance to minimise rental loss.
- Continuing to expand the role of the tenants' panel.
- Continue to improve our performance regarding monitoring of repairs.
- Continue to improve our performance regarding rent arrears collection.

Accessibility

This document has been created with accessibility standards applied. This means that best efforts have been made with the goal that every person, no matter what their abilities, can access the information included effectively.

This document uses a clearly laid out design, using the Arial font with a minimum size of 12pt. Clear paragraph spacing has been applied to the document to enable readers to clearly follow the order in which the information included is best read.

The web based, electronic version of this document has passed accessibility tests so that assistive software such as “Browse Around” for people with visual impairments will read out all information included correctly. All images included within the document also contain alternative text so that they will be described by assistive software.

The contents section of this page has been created with hyperlinks to each section of the document to make the navigation of the document easier. At the end of each section there is a link back to the contents section to reduce the amount of scrolling required to find relevant information.

If you have accessibility issues when reading documents, Orkney Islands Council Housing would encourage any feedback you would like to submit regarding the accessibility of this document. This feedback can be sent in a number of ways with details available in the ‘Contact Information’ section.

If you require this document in another language or format, please let us know.

Contact Us – Housing and Homelessness

Address.	Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1NY
Telephone.	01856873535.
Email.	housing@orkney.gov.uk Please state ‘Annual Report’ in the email title if you are sending accessibility feedback for this document.
Website.	www.orkney.gov.uk/housing

If you have any views or ideas as to how we could improve the design and content of this report for next year please either complete the form overleaf or contact Housing Services



Question 1: How did you find the length of the report? (Please tick)

Too long. Just right. Not long enough.

Question 2: How satisfied are you with the following? (Please tick)

	Very satisfied.	Fairly satisfied.	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.	Fairly dissatisfied.	Very dissatisfied.
Format.					
Information.					
Layout.					
Comparison with previous year's performance.					
Comparison with other local authorities.					
Comparison with the Scottish national average.					

Question 3: How easy or difficult did you find understanding the following? (Please tick)

	Very easy.	Fairly easy.	Neither easy nor difficult.	Fairly difficult.	Very difficult.
Performance information.					
Traffic light thumbs up/down.					

Question 4: Is there anything you would like to see included in future or general comments on this year's performance report?

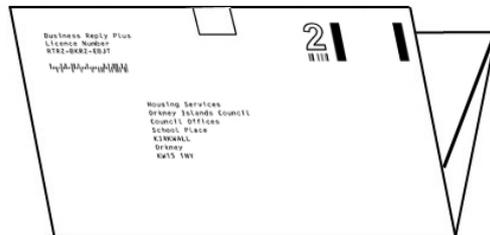
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Licence Number
RTRZ-BKRZ-EBJT



Housing Services
Orkney Islands Council
Council Offices
School Place
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Orkney
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