

EDUCATION, LEISURE AND HOUSING COMMITTEE: 16 NOVEMBER 2016

HOUSING SERVICES - PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2015/16

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, LEISURE AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise on the performance of Housing Services during financial year 2015/16.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is invited to note:-

- 2.1 that housing organisations are required to report performance against a number of services areas and indicators within the Scottish Social Housing Charter;
- 2.2 performance in relation to the undernoted range of services areas within Housing Services for 2015/16, as detailed in sections 7 to 14 of this report:-
- 2.2.1 Customer Satisfaction;
 - 2.2.2 Housing Quality
 - 2.2.3 Access to Housing and Support;
 - 2.2.4 Homelessness;
 - 2.2.5 Neighbourhood and Community;
 - 2.2.6 Getting Good Value from Rents;
 - 2.2.7 Re-Let and Voids; and
 - 2.2.8 Customer/Landlord Relationship;
- 2.3 areas of positive performance for 2015/16, as follows:-
- 2.3.1 high levels of customer satisfaction;
 - 2.3.2 low levels of repairs reported as emergencies;
 - 2.3.3 low levels of repairs per property;
 - 2.3.4 low levels of abandonments/evictions;
 - 2.3.5 homeless cases completed in reasonable timescale;
 - 2.3.6 low repeat presentations;
 - 2.3.7 low levels of cases where contact has been lost;
 - 2.3.8 low level of arrears;
 - 2.3.9 low levels of former tenant arrears written off;
 - 2.3.10 improvements in respect of the level of tenancy sustainment and turnover of tenancies;
 - 2.3.11 reduction of current rent arrears; and
 - 2.3.12 improvements in re-let time and void loss; and

- 2.4 areas where performance could potentially be improved or continue to be improved, as follows:-
- 2.4.1 low levels of energy efficiency in properties;
 - 2.4.2 high levels of properties recorded as being exemptions or abeyances from the Scottish Housing Quality Standard;
 - 2.4.3 high percentage of tenancies ending in arrears and rising debt;
 - 2.4.4 higher void periods; and
 - 2.4.5 higher void rent loss.

3. POLICY ASPECTS

- 3.1 This report reflects targets and actions from the Council Plan 2013-2018, particularly priority target 3 - "housing to meet the needs of Orkney's people".
- 3.2 In relation to the Council's values, it links through working to provide better services – "to improve the planning and delivery of services through performance management".

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council is a member of Scotland's Housing Network (SHN), previously known as Scottish Housing Best Value Network (SHBVN) having joined a number of years ago.
- 4.2 SHN is an organisation that offers a benchmarking service to Councils who wish to be members. It also offers other related services including sub-groups to discuss good practice and peer review to use council staff to assess services offered by other Councils as a reciprocal arrangement.
- 4.3 Membership is optional, as is attendance at sub-groups and taking part in peer reviews. However, in order to benefit from the service, each Council must provide detailed data on its performance in relation to a range of service areas.
- 4.4 SHN undertakes a benchmarking service amongst all member Councils. This is useful as it allows a comparison and identification of each Councils weaker areas and also allows identification of top performers which can be beneficial when seeking to improve service areas. Most members are happy to share information and provide guidance in areas where their performance is good.
- 4.5 Shetland Islands Council is not a member of SHN and Western Isles Council, being an authority which has transferred its housing stock, is part of a separate group. While Shetland is not a member of SHN, they have provided their data to SHN for comparison purposes.
- 4.6 The service areas covered include void management, stock turnover, rent arrears, homelessness, repairs and Scottish Housing Quality Standard.
- 4.7 Members were previously advised of offers made to the Council in relation to making the best use of membership of SHN, including training opportunities.

- 4.8 SHN visited Orkney most recently in September 2016 and presented a report on the Council's performance relative to other Councils during 2015/16 and also gave their analysis of the findings.
- 4.9 SHN also offer discussion forums online and is in the process of developing an assessment toolkit to assist member authorities to make progress in relation to adopting a greater emphasis on performance management and to improve services accordingly.
- 4.10 In light of the current economic climate, SHN is working with the Council to maximise use of membership in order to minimise travel costs. This includes video conferencing where possible, a regular update meeting to provide details of main issues arising from regional meetings, training for staff and possible involvement in peer reviews.

5. SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER

- 5.1 Housing organisations are required to report against the Scottish Social Housing Charter which was introduced in 2012. This is the third year of reporting since this change took place.
- 5.2 As a result, some indicators have changed. Councils are required to publish an Annual Report against the Charter and this was done in October 2016. The Annual Report is available from <http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/H/housing-services-annual-reports.htm>
- 5.3 Information on the Scottish Social Housing Charter is available from <http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/media/34241/the%20scottish%20social%20housing%20charter.pdf>

6. ORKNEY'S PERFORMANCE BY COMPARISON

- 6.1 As well as looking at comparison in performance between Orkney and the other member Councils outlined at section 6.4 below, it is important to assess performance for various other reasons, including:-
- 6.1.1 to ensure that 'the direction of travel' is towards improvement;
- 6.1.2 to critically assess and analyse where further improvements could be made;
- 6.1.3 where another Council has performed better, to consider whether any of their practices would assist in this area;
- 6.1.4 to ensure that, in Orkney, the Council continues to look at the areas where performance can be assessed and a determination made as to whether there are other areas that could be included; and

6.1.5 to ensure that assessment is continual, but equally to ensure that this information is used for valid purposes, being to consistently improve the services offered.

6.2 The following areas have been covered:-

- 6.2.1 Customer Satisfaction;
- 6.2.2 Housing Quality
- 6.2.3 Property Maintenance;
- 6.2.4 Access to Housing and Support;
- 6.2.5 Homelessness;
- 6.2.6 Neighbourhood and Community;
- 6.2.7 Getting Good Value from Rents;
- 6.2.8 Re-lets and voids; and
- 6.2.9 Customer/Landlord Relationship.

6.3 SHN has implemented a system of peer groups in order to compare performance with other relevant Councils. Orkney's peer group includes "all small Councils" which is deemed to be those which hold housing stock of less than 10,000. Previously purely the SHN average was used, so peer group information for previous years is not reported specifically. However, it will be reported in future years.

6.4 The peer group includes:-

- 6.4.1 Angus Council;
- 6.4.2 East Dunbartonshire Council;
- 6.4.3 East Lothian Council;
- 6.4.4 East Renfrewshire Council;
- 6.4.5 Midlothian Council;
- 6.4.6 Perth and Kinross Council;
- 6.4.7 Stirling Council;
- 6.4.8 The Moray Council;
- 6.4.9 South Ayrshire; and
- 6.4.10 Clackmannanshire Council.

6.5 Data is displayed for a three year period where available.

7. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

7.1 Members were previously advised of the outcome of the wholesale tenant satisfaction survey that the Council is now required to do every 3 years.

7.2 The table below shows the level of tenant satisfaction relating to key charter outcomes in comparison to SHN and peer group averages:-

Indicator from the Scottish Social Housing Charter at time of Survey	OIC level of satisfaction	SHN average	Peer Group Average
Overall service provided by landlord (indicator 1)	87.7%	83.3%	81.6%
Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions (charter indicator 3)	90.8%	81.5%	80.9%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making processes (charter indicator 6)	66%	71.3%	69.7%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the condition of their home when moving in (charter indicator 9)	88%	84.3%	83%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home (charter indicator 10)	82.6%	83.8%	84.6%
Percentage of tenants who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in the last 12 months satisfied with repairs and maintenance service (charter indicator 16)	84.3%	88%	84.3%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in (charter indicator 17)	80.8%	81.2%	79.8%
Percentage of tenants who feel the rent for	77%	79%	79.3%

Indicator from the Scottish Social Housing Charter at time of Survey	OIC level of satisfaction	SHN average	Peer Group Average
their property represents good value for money (charter indicator 29)			

7.3 While the above satisfaction figures relate to the wholesale tenant satisfaction survey of 2016 and are therefore current, consideration needs to be given to updating tenant satisfaction information between major surveys which some councils have done. In Orkney, while information is collected in various forms, response rates are generally low which may result in statistical distortions. The wholesale tenant satisfaction survey requires a 40% response rate.

8. HOUSING QUALITY

8.1 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 presents some challenges in that respect.

8.2 The number of repairs per property is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	1.4	3.8	3.6
2014/15	1.2	3.8	3.5
2013/14	1.3	3.5	3.6

8.3 The figures above are positive and would indicate that the Council's stock is in good condition.

8.4 The level of repairs raised as emergencies is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	18.2%	32.8%	31.3%
2014/15	16%	34%	33%
2013/14	16%	24%	32%

8.5 The time taken to complete emergency repairs in hours is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	6.9	5.8	4.9
2014/15	12.6	6.3	4.5
2013/14	13.7	5.0	7.2

8.6 The percentage of emergency repairs completed on time are as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	99.1%	96.7%	94.9%
2014/15	94%	96%	93%

2013/14	94.4%	95%	92.3%
---------	-------	-----	-------

8.7 The time taken to complete non-emergency repairs in days is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	11.2	9.1	8.6
2014/15	11.3	8.6	8.5
2013/14	10.7	6.6	10.5

8.8 The percentage of all categories of repairs completed on time is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	94.8%	93.4%	89.4%
2014/15	92.2%	93.6%	89.2%
2013/14	94.5%	92.3%	86.7%

8.9 Members were previously advised that the Council was introducing some improvements to its service in line with requirements in the Scottish Social Housing Charter and this included responding to the need to report against the proportion of repairs which were right first time and also how often repairs appointments were met by contractors. Following introduction of a new Measured Term Contract in April 2014, arrangements were made to allow monitoring of Right First Time and access by agreement on the Orkney Mainland and linked south isles.

8.10 Non-emergency repairs completed Right First Time were:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	93.7%	91.3%	88%
2014/15	91.1%	86.9%	65.4%
2013/14	100%	89%	88%

8.11 Repairs appointments kept were:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	100%	94.2%	94.7%
2014/15	100%	92%	79%

8.12 The average time to complete a medical adaptation in days is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	37.5	40	38
2014/15	31	45	41
2013/14	53	81	81

8.13 The Council was required to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by March 2015 and Committee receives an annual report accordingly, with the most recent in March 2015. The Council must ensure that it continues to meet the SHQS thereafter and will also require to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by 2020, consequently Committee receives an annual update report at the June cycle of meetings, regarding progress towards this.

8.14 The level of stock meeting the SHQS is as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	85.8%	93.1%	95%
2014/15	85%	91%	91%
2013/14	80%	88%	84%

8.15 Notably Orkney does have a higher proportion of properties recorded as an exemption or abeyance being 14.2% of the Council's stock in comparison to a peer group average of 4.5% and an SHN average of 6.5%.

8.16 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 where owner-occupiers in a mixed ownership block do not wish to pay a share of a secure door entry system and do not consider it to be necessary. Another example would be where the tenant is elderly or suffering from a medical condition that has led them to feel that they do not wish work to be undertaken on their home at this point in time.

8.17 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 the cost is considered disproportionate.

8.18 Monitoring progress towards meeting the EESSH has begun but a limited number of councils have submitted data in this respect. The level of stock meeting the EESSH is as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	69.3%	68.3%	63.1%
2014/15	66%	61%	64%

8.19 Overall for the category of housing quality, the Council is good at repair appointments, the timescale for aids and adaptations and a low number of repairs are undertaken per property. Its delivery of emergency repairs has improved since last year. Delivery of the repairs service generally is broadly average with some repairs taking longer than the average across Scotland. The level of exemptions for SHQS is higher than the national average and energy efficiency presents some challenges.

9. ACCESS TO HOUSING AND SUPPORT

9.1 Lets to households by type are shown in the table below:-

Year	Homeless Households	Waiting List Applicants	Transfer Applicants	Other
2015/16	30%	43%	27%	0%
2014/15	21%	64%	15%	0%
2013/14	34%	53%	14%	0%

9.2 Lets to homeless households were 36% across SHN and 44.7% in respect of the peer group average.

9.3 The turnover of properties is shown in the table below:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	13.6%	8.4%	7.3%
2014/15	13.5%	8.6%	7.8%
2013/14	17.5%	9.5%	8.8%

9.4 In financial year 2013/14 the turnover of properties increased considerably and consequently this information has been the subject of analysis. In 2013/14 the analysis looked at the turnover of tenants in new stock built after 2011 and older stock built before 2011. The initial analysis showed the following:-

9.4.1 there was a 33.3% chance that new stock would have turned over whereas older stock recorded a 25% chance;

9.4.2 new stock that had the highest turnover rates were sited in Dounby, Orphir and Holm;

9.4.3 the older stock which recorded the highest rate of turnover is mainly in the isles (Flotta, Shapinsay and Stronsay) although Holm is also represented; and

9.4.4 the difference between turnover of new and older stock in Kirkwall and Stromness was negligible.

9.5 Tenancy turnover impacts on void rental loss, former tenant arrears and tenancy sustainment.

9.6 Further analysis considered whether tenants who moved out of the new stock had been housed in the area of their first choice. Kirkwall, Stromness and extra care housing were disregarded for this purpose. Findings were as follows:-

9.6.1 there were 32 cases where tenants moved out of new stock (2011- 2014) for which 24 (75%) the location was not their first choice; and

9.6.2 of those 24, Kirkwall was the first choice for 13 (54.1%) of them.

9.7 It would appear that the performance figures were affected by the level of new build in rural areas, while the areas of housing became established.

9.8 If voids for financial year 2014/15 are compared in the same way, five areas show a level of turnover of 25% of total stock or above. These are Deerness, Holm, Westray, Flotta and Sanday.

9.9 However, there was an element of statistical distortion in the figures. For instance, during 2014/15, Deerness had one property become vacant from a stock of three and consequently this recorded a percentage of 33.3%.

- 9.10 The same comparison for financial year 2015/16 shows most areas have a level of turnover well below 25% with the exception of Orphir and Sanday, both of which have recorded a turnover of 50%. However, the total number of properties in the area is just 4 and 12 respectively.
- 9.11 When consideration was given to differences between older stock (pre-2011) and newly built stock, this shows that the turnover previously recorded in Finstown had declined significantly and that there is no longer a higher turnover of new properties in Holm, with older stock now showing the higher level of turnover.
- 9.12 The percentage of tenancy offers refused is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	43.2%	40.7%	44.8%
2014/15	34.3%	45.5%	44.3%
2013/14	38.3%	33%	45%

- 9.13 Tenancy offers may be refused for various reasons. In 2015/16 22% referred to offers which were withdrawn. A further 39% either failed to respond to the offer, no longer required accommodation, were unable to move at present or their circumstances had changed and they had failed to notify Housing Services. 11% refused an offer of accommodation unreasonably and 9% refused but this was deemed to be reasonable. The remainder all referred to minor issues such as changing their area choices, determining they did not like the area concerned after all, or financial reasons.
- 9.14 Abandonments as a percentage of housing stock is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	0.35%	0.67%	0.54%
2014/15	0.5%	0.7%	0.4%
2013/14	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%

- 9.15 The percentage of all new tenancies sustained from the previous year was as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	89.6%	88.3%	89.7%
2014/15	87.9%	88.8%	94.7%
2013/14	83%	88.8%	91%

- 9.16 As regards the level of sustainment of new homeless tenancies, this was as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	78.6%	86.6%	86.4%
2014/15	91.3%	86.4%	84.6%
2013/14	88.2%	85%	89%

- 9.17 As regards the percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year where the applicant was statutorily homeless, the overall percentage is 78.57%. The

reasons for 6 cases not being sustained include leaving Orkney for employment / family reasons; reconciliation with partner, imprisonment, rehoused as tenancy management issue (noise) and chose to move to private rented accommodation which afforded options not available through our lettings policy.

9.18 The level of evictions as a percentage of housing stock was as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	0%	0.38%	0.24%
2014/15	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%
2013/14	0%	0.3%	0.2%

9.13 Overall for the category for Access to Housing and Support, the level of evictions and abandonments remain very low. Tenancy sustainment in respect of new homeless tenancies has declined, the level of refusal of offers has increased and the turnover of tenancies has increased slightly. No areas show cause for concern.

10. HOMELESSNESS

10.1 The Committee receives an update report on the level of homelessness in Orkney annually at the June cycle. That report contains significant levels of performance information. Consequently only key indicators are covered below.

10.2 The number of homeless presentations was as follows:-

Year	No of homelessness presentations
2015/16	97
2014/15	87
2013/14	108

10.3 As a national comparator, the national average for homeless presentations was 1083 cases.

10.4 Locally the number of homelessness presentations peaked at 208 in 2004/05 and annual figures have been lower since then. It is unlikely this trend will continue when legislative changes affecting people's entitlements are factored in. However, a housing options approach is being used to try and reduce the number of homelessness presentations and the impact of this is difficult to quantify.

10.5 From 1 April to 19 October 2016, homeless presentations totalled 69. If it continues at that level until 31 March 2017, a total of 127 presentations could be expected. This may suggest a slight increase in homeless presentations. However, it is important to remember that homelessness may not happen at a continuous pace throughout the year, instead there can be periods with higher and lower presentations so this calculation may or may not be accurate.

10.6 The average time from homeless presentations to completion of duty in weeks was as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN
2015/16	17	33
2014/15	26	37
2013/14	29	35

10.7 The assessment outcomes were as follows:-

Outcome	Orkney		SHN	
	2014/15	2015/16	2014/15	2015/16
Housed by Council	46%	44%	46%	41%
Housing by Housing Association	31%	31%	31%	23%
Private Rented Sector	0%	0%	0%	5%
Returned to friends etc	7%	6%	7%	5%
Lost Contact	8%	0%	8%	14%
Other outcomes	8%	12%	8%	6%

10.8 The length of stay (in days) in the Council's furnished temporary accommodation is as detailed below:-

Year	Orkney	SHN
2015/16	109	159
2014/15	173	154
2013/14	197	136

10.9 As regards customer satisfaction with temporary accommodation Orkney recorded 83% satisfaction in comparison to the peer group average of 84.5% and SHN average of 86.9%. Disappointingly Orkney's figure had declined from 100% the previous year. This was due to the small numbers involved. Of 6 people surveyed, 5 answered that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality of the accommodation, one answered that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of the accommodation, resulting in the percentage distortion shown above.

10.10 Overall for the category of Homelessness, the Council is good at tenancy outcomes, the average time to close a case and repeat presentations. No areas show cause for concern.

11. NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

11.1 The prevalence of anti-social behaviour is determined by the number of complaints per 100 tenancies, as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer group
2015/16	4.0	8.4	9.5
2014/15	6.1	9.0	11.5
2013/14	2.4	8.3	10.5

11.2 The level of anti-social behaviour cases resolved within locally agreed targets is as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer group
2015/16	81.6%	86.4%	89.2%
2014/15	93%	82.7%	87.9%
2013/14	91%	80%	84%

11.3 This indicator is slightly problematic in that “locally agreed targets” may differ significantly from each other.

11.4 Orkney generally has a low level of anti-social behaviour and issues arising generally constitute complaints of noise including parties, disposal of waste or failure to dispose of waste appropriately and disputes regarding parking and shared gardens.

12. GETTING GOOD VALUE FROM RENTS

12.1 The average weekly rent is as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer group
2015/16	£72.54	£68.71	£63.20
2014/15	£70.32	£67.23	£63.40
2013/14	£66.46	£71.08	£60.30

12.2 The annual rental increase at 1.4% was very competitive in comparison to the SHN average of 2.8% and peer group average of 3.2%

12.3 The level of rent collected as a percentage of rent due is as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	99.4%	99.4%	99.4%
2014/15	98.8%	99.2%	98.9%
2013/14	99.6%	98.8%	98.8%

12.4 The information outlined above represents the total amount of rent collected over the year from both current and former tenants for the current and previous years as a percentage of rent due in the reporting year.

12.5 The gross rent arrears (including both current and former tenants) as a percentage of rent due is as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	6.7%	6.0%	7.0%
2014/15	6.6%	5.5%	7.0%
2013/14	5.8%	4.8%	6.1%

12.6 Current rent arrears as a percentage of annual gross rent due is as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	2.6%	2.5%	4.1%
2014/15	2.3%	3.4%	3.6%
2013/14	2.7%	3.3%	3.4%

12.7 Generally, Orkney's performance in relation to rent collection has been very good, frequently being highly placed across Scotland as a whole.

12.8 The table below shows the percentage of tenants in arrears annually at 31 March:-

Date	Orkney	SHN
31 March 2016	15.7%	29.7%
31 March 2015	16.1%	29.1%
31 March 2014	16.6%	24.33%

12.9 As regards the service of notices of proceedings for recovery of possession (NOP), the data is as follows:

Year	No of NOPs Served	No proceeding to court	No of eviction decrees obtained
2015/16	29	10	1
2014/15	15	9	2
2013/14	15	8	0

12.10 The level of NOPs served has changed in recent years due to pre-action requirements being introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.

12.11 Obtaining an eviction decree does not always result in the tenant being evicted. For instance, the tenant may clear their arrears or begin making regular payments towards the debt and the decision may be taken to offer a new tenancy instead. The Council may have duties under the homelessness legislation to re-house households they have previously evicted.

12.12 The percentage of tenants who had arrears at the point their tenancy ended was as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN
2015/16	40.6%	43.8%
2014/15	55.3%	43.8%
2013/14	56.1%	46.37%

12.13 The average debt at termination of tenancy was as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN
2015/16	£582	£678
2014/15	£667	£728
2013/14	£599	£594

12.14 The level of former tenant arrears as a percentage of rent due was as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	4.1%	2.4%	2.9%
2014/15	4.3%	2.4%	3.3%
2013/14	3.1%	1.7%	2.9%

12.15 Nationally there is a strong focus on former tenant arrears written off. Orkney endeavours to collect former tenant arrears and operates a prudent approach to write off. The figures are as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	7.3%	40.0%	14.2%
2014/15	2.1%	30.0%	15.8%
2013/14	4.2%	27.6%%	23.9%

12.16 It remains important to ensure that former tenant arrears are continually reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate action continues to be taken to recover the debts outstanding and to analyse procedures to see if improvements can be made. These are difficult types of debt to recover and in some instances may take many years to clear.

13. **RE-LETS AND VOIDS**

13.1 Overall the average time in days for re-let of properties was as follows:

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	40.6	38.6	35.8
2014/15	47	39	44
2013/14	61	42	40

13.2 The information outlined above is broken down between properties which were classified as being not low demand and low demand.

13.3 The average time in days for re-let of properties which were not low demand was as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	32.4	25.37	33.9
2014/15	31	34	35
2013/14	55	31	39

13.4 The average time in days for re-let of properties which were low demand was as follows:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	94.5	80.04	51.11
2014/15	92	90	71
2013/14	88	74	52

13.5 In December 2015, the Council delegated powers to the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing to dispose of HRA properties in areas of low demand. While sale will not be considered lightly, some reduction in stock in some areas may assist in improving the figures in this respect.

13.6 Void rental loss percentages are shown in the table below:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer Group
2015/16	1.55%	0.96%	0.80%
2014/15	1.6%	1.2%	0.9%
2013/14	3.5%	1.0%	1.4%

13.7 There are two factors affecting the improvement in void rental loss and time taken to re-let properties. Firstly, in 2014/15 there were fewer properties which took over 200 days to re-let - four properties in comparison to nine the year before. Secondly, new procedures were introduced in respect of the management of void properties to endeavour to expedite the process. This included changes such as allocating a property during the renunciation period and undertaking viewings with the prospective tenant while the vacating tenant remains in situ (where possible). These changes continue to record improvements in 2015/16. However, care needs to be taken as the number of properties which have been vacant for 200 days or more may be subject to variation from one year to another.

13.8 As regards the category of Value for Money, the Council can evidence positive improvements in reducing its current arrears, a reduction in its re-let time and consequently a reduction in its void rental loss. As regards the situation with re-lets and voids however, it is important to remember that these can be affected by a small sample size being disproportionately affected by a differential in respect of longer term vacancies in low demand and sheltered stock. A small differential in respect of sample size can lead to potentially large percentage increases in this figure.

14. CUSTOMER/LANDLORD RELATIONSHIP

14.1 In 2015/16 the Council had a budget of £22,900 assigned to tenant participation. This budget funded the part-time post of Resident Participation Co-ordinator which was at that time jointly provided with Orkney Housing Association Limited (OHAL). In addition, it covered costs of setting up tenants meetings and focus groups, providing grants to tenants groups and attending meetings. Orkney's small size creates a distortion in terms of the level of spend per tenant.

- 14.2 More recently the arrangement with Orkney Housing Association Ltd has come to an end and steps have been taken to establish a similar post within the Council's staffing establishment.
- 14.3 Orkney's level of spend on tenant participation is compared to the SHN and peer group average in the table below:-

Year	Orkney	SHN	Peer group
2015/16	£11.31	£8.85	£8.84
2014/15	£13.02	£8.70	£10.85
2013/14	£27.99	£7.65	£11.30

- 14.4 As regards responses to complaints, this is as follows:

	First Stage Complaints		Second Stage Complaints	
	OIC	SHN Average	OIC	SHN Average
Responded to	32		5	
Stage	86%	86%	14%	14%
Upheld	59%	55%	60%	51%
In timescale	84%	86%	100%	85%

15. DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

- 15.1 The SHN provides a summary outlining good performance and areas where improvements could be made.
- 15.2 Positive performance for 2015/16 includes:-
- 15.2.1 high levels of customer satisfaction;
 - 15.2.2 low levels of repairs reported as emergencies;
 - 15.2.3 low levels of repairs per property;
 - 15.2.4 low levels of abandonments/evictions;
 - 15.2.5 homeless cases completed in reasonable timescale;
 - 15.2.6 low repeat presentations;
 - 15.2.7 low levels of cases where contact has been lost;
 - 15.2.8 low level of arrears;
 - 15.2.9 low levels of former tenant arrears written off;
 - 15.2.10 improvements in respect of the level of tenancy sustainment and turnover of tenancies;
 - 15.2.11 reduction of current rent arrears; and
 - 15.2.12 improvements in re-let time and void loss.
- 15.3 Areas where performance could potentially be improved or continue to be improved are as follows:-
- 15.3.1 low levels of energy efficiency in properties;
 - 15.3.2 high levels of properties recorded as being exemptions or abeyances from SHQS;
 - 15.3.3 high percentage of tenancies ending in arrears and rising debt;
 - 15.3.4 higher void periods; and

15.3.5 higher void rent loss.

16. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

16.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations to this report.

17. LEGAL ASPECTS

17.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 provides Scottish Ministers with the power to set standards for social landlords. The standards are enforced by the Scottish Housing Regulator through such actions as their inspections of Local Authorities.

17.2 Various national performance indicators are set and all Local Authorities are required to report against these on an annual basis.

17.3 In terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 the Council has a duty to deliver services in terms of best value principles, and an aspect of best value is continuous improvement. An integral part of complying with the above is performance monitoring.

18. CONTACT OFFICERS

18.1 Wilfred Weir, Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, Ext 2436,
e-mail - wilf.weir@orkney.gov.uk

18.2 Frances Troup, Head of Housing and Homelessness, Ext 2177,
e-mail - frances.troup@orkney.gov.uk