

Item: 11

Education Leisure and Housing Committee: 6 February 2019.

Housing Services – Performance Monitoring.

Report by Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To advise on the performance of Housing Services during financial year 2017 to 2018.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That housing organisations are required to report performance against a number of service areas and indicators within the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

2.2.

Performance in relation to the undernoted range of service areas within Housing Services, for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, as detailed in Appendix 1 to attached to this report:

- Customer Satisfaction.
- Housing Quality and Maintenance.
- Access to Housing and Support.
- Homelessness.
- Rent Collection.
- Housing Revenue Account.

2.3.

Areas of positive performance within Housing Services for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, as follows:

- High levels of customer satisfaction.
- Low levels of repairs reported as emergencies.
- Low levels of repairs per property.
- Low levels of abandonments/evictions.
- Homeless cases completed in reasonable timescale.
- Low repeat presentations.

- Low levels of cases where contact has been lost.
- Low levels of former tenant arrears written off.

2.4.

Areas where performance within Housing Services could potentially be improved or continue to be improved, as follows:

- Low levels of energy efficiency in properties.
- High levels of properties recorded as being exemptions or abeyances from the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.
- High percentage of tenancies ending in arrears and rising debt.
- Rising rent arrears.
- Length of void periods.
- Level of void rent loss.

3. Background

3.1.

The Council is a member of Scotland's Housing Network, previously known as Scottish Housing Best Value Network having joined a number of years ago.

3.2.

Scotland's Housing Network 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.

3.3.

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.

3.4.

Scotland's Housing Network undertakes a benchmarking service amongst all member councils. This is useful as it allows a comparison and identification of each council's 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.

3.5.

Shetland Islands Council is not a member of Scotland's Housing Network, though is in the process of joining and Western Isles Council, being an authority which has transferred its housing stock, is part of a separate group. While Shetland is not yet a member, they have provided their data for comparison purposes.

3.6.

The service areas covered include void management, stock turnover, rent arrears, homelessness, repairs and Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

3.7.

Members were previously advised of offers made to the Council in relation to making the best use of membership of Scotland's Housing Network, including training opportunities.

3.8.

Representatives from Scotland's Housing Network visited Orkney most recently in September 2018 and presented a report on the Council's performance relative to other councils during 2017 to 2018 and also gave their analysis of the findings.

3.9.

Scotland's Housing Network 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.

3.10.

In light of the current economic climate, Scotland's Housing Network 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.

4. Scottish Social Housing Charter

4.1.

Housing organisations are required to report against the Scottish Social Housing Charter which was introduced in 2012 and reviewed in 2017. This is the fifth year of reporting against the charter.

4.2.

Councils are required to publish an Annual Report against the Charter and this was done in October 2018. The Annual Report is available from

http://www.orkney.gov.uk/Files/Housing/Housing%20Options/OIC_Housing_Report_2017-18_Accessible.pdf

4.3.

Information on the Scottish Social Housing Charter is available from

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/publication/2017/03/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017/documents/00515058-pdf/00515058-pdf/govscot%3Adocument>

5. Orkney's Performance by Comparison

5.1.

As well as looking at comparison in performance between Orkney and the other members outlined at section 5.4 below, it is important to assess performance for various other reasons, including:

- To ensure that 'the direction of travel' is towards improvement.
- To critically assess and analyse where further improvements could be made.
- Where another Council has performed better, to consider whether any of their practices would assist in this area.
- 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.
- 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.

5.2.

The following areas have been covered:

- Customer Satisfaction.
- Housing Quality and Maintenance.
- Access to Housing and Support.
- Homelessness.
- Neighbourhood and Community.
- Getting Good Value from Rents.
- Re-lets and voids.
- Customer/Landlord Relationship.

5.3.

Scotland's Housing Network 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.

5.4.

The peer group includes:

- Angus Council.
- Clackmannanshire Council.
- East Dunbartonshire Council.
- East Lothian Council.
- East Renfrewshire Council.

- Midlothian Council.
- Perth and Kinross Council.
- Shetland Islands Council.
- South Ayrshire Council.
- Stirling Council.
- The Moray Council.
- Hebridean Housing Partnership.
- Orkney Housing Association Limited.

5.5.

The performance information is detailed in Appendix 1 to this report. Where available, data is displayed for a three-year period.

6. Direction of Travel

6.1.

Scotland's Housing Network provides a summary outlining good performance and areas where improvements could be made.

6.2.

Positive performance for 2017 to 2018 includes:

- High levels of customer satisfaction.
- Low levels of repairs reported as emergencies.
- Low levels of repairs per property.
- Low levels of abandonments/evictions.
- Homeless cases completed in reasonable timescale.
- Low repeat presentations.
- Low levels of cases where contact has been lost.
- Low level of arrears.
- Low levels of former tenant arrears written off.

6.3.

Areas where performance could potentially be improved or continue to be improved are as follows:

- Low levels of energy efficiency in properties.
- High levels of properties recorded as being exemptions or abeyances from the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.
- High percentage of tenancies ending in arrears and rising debt.
- Rising rent arrears.
- Reductions in re-let times.

- Length of void periods.
- Level of void rent loss.

7. Anticipated Changes

7.1.

The Scottish Housing Regulator has been consulting on changes to the regulatory process surrounding housing, which are expected to result in the introduction of a certificate of assurance.

7.2.

This is a process whereby the Scottish Housing Regulator will look for assurances from local authorities that Elected Members have been informed of performance across the Housing Service and are satisfied that the governance process is sufficiently robust to allow them to sign off the certificate of assurance.

7.3.

It is anticipated that this process will change from financial year 2019 to 2020 and will be the topic of a future report to Committee in due course.

8. Corporate Governance

This report relates to governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

9. Financial Implications

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

10. Legal Aspects

10.1.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, Section 31, 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.

10.2.

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

10.3.

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.

11. Contact Officers

Wilfred Weir, Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, extension 2436, Email wilf.weir@orkney.gov.uk.

Frances Troup, Head of Housing, Homelessness and Schoolcare Accommodation Services, extension 2177, Email frances.troup@orkney.gov.uk.

12. Appendix

Appendix 1: Performance Information.

Appendix 1: Performance Information

1. Customer Satisfaction

1.1.

Members were previously advised of the outcome of the wholesale tenant satisfaction survey that the Council is required to do every three years. The Council has undertaken to do this every two years in order to ensure the data is more current.

1.2.

The table below shows the level of tenant satisfaction relating to key charter outcomes in comparison to Scotland's Housing Network and peer group averages:

Indicator from the Scottish Social Housing Charter at time of Survey	Orkney level	Scotland's Housing Network average	Peer Group Average
Overall service provided by landlord (indicator 1).	84.3%	90.7%	84.5%
Percentage of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about their services and decisions (charter indicator 3).	87.3%	92.2%	86.4%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision making processes.	63.2%	86.4%	78.4%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the condition of their home when moving in (charter indicator 9).	73.3%	90.2%	83.3%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the quality of their home (charter indicator 10).	76.0%	88.4%	85.3%
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).	83.1%	92.1%	86.9%
Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in (charter indicator 17).	76.4%	88.5%	83.7%

Percentage of tenants who feel the rent for their property represents good value for money (charter indicator 29).	73.2%	83.4%	81.8%
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------	-------	-------

1.3.

While the above satisfaction figures relate to the wholesale tenant satisfaction survey of 2018 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.

2. Housing Quality

2.1.

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.

2.2.

The number of repairs per property is as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	1.7	3.4	3.3
2016 to 2017	1.5	3.5	3.4
2015 to 2016	1.4	3.8	3.6

2.3.

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

2.4.

The level of repairs raised as emergencies is as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	16.3%	32.1%	26.8%
2016 to 2017	16.4%	26.8%	31.8%
2015 to 2016	18.2%	32.8%	31.3%

2.5.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	7.3	4.0	3.9
2016 to 2017	8.3	4.7	4.3
2015 to 2016	6.9	5.8	4.9

2.6.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	92.9%	96.8%	92.9%
2016 to 2017	93.9%	94.2%	96.6%
2015 to 2016	99.1%	96.7%	94.9%

2.7.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	10.9	6.4	7.7
2016 to 2017	11.7	7.1	9.0
2015 to 2016	11.2	9.1	8.6

2.8.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	95.2%	92.9%	94.3%
2016 to 2017	89.5%	93.4%	94.9%
2015 to 2016	94.8%	93.4%	89.4%

2.9.

Non-emergency repairs completed Right First Time were:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	88.6%	92.2%	91.4%
2016 to 2017	88.5%	92.4%	89.9%
2015 to 2016	93.7%	91.3%	88%

2.10.

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. From 1 April 2016 a new computer system, working systems and a new Measured Term Contractor were all set in place. While this represented an extremely challenging level of change, it should allow certain efficiencies. Initially there was a settling in process and this included a developmental stage for monitoring performance and involvement of the contractor in the process. This affected performance in respect of reactive repairs. With recent improvements to the repairs service and better response from the main Measured Term Contractor, small but significant improvements have been made on these performance figures. It is anticipated that further planned improvement systems will be implemented next reporting year. Island contractors continue to be encouraged to improve their performance but with restricted resources, this can be challenging.

2.11.

While the contractor operates an appointments system for repairs, this is not within the control of the Council and consequently the Council states that it does not offer a repairs appointments system. Ideally the Council should be fully involved in this process. Many landlords do offer an appointments system and report against this accordingly. We are considering how to further develop this process.

2.12.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	30.2	48.1	41.8
2016 to 2017	40.2	48.5	44.4
2015 to 2016	37.5	40	38

2.13.

The Council was required to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by March 2015 and maintain the standard thereafter. The Council must also ensure that its properties meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing by 2020. Consequently Committee receives an annual update report at the June cycle of meetings, regarding progress towards this.

2.14.

The level of stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard is as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	91.8%	94.2%	96.5%
2016 to 2017	89.5%	94.1%	96%
2015 to 2016	85.8%	93.1%	95%

2.15.

Notably Orkney does have a higher proportion of properties recorded as an exemption or abeyance being 6.8% of the Council's stock in comparison to a peer group average of 3.5% and a Scotland's Housing Network average of 4.6%.

2.16.

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.

2.17.

A property can be classified as an exemption where the property is capable of meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard 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.

2.18.

Monitoring progress towards meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing has begun. The level of stock meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing is as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	81.5%	79.9%	73.7%
2016 to 2017	80.5%	76.0%	72.7%
2015 to 2016	69.3%	68.3%	63.1%
2014 to 2015	66%	61%	64%

2.19.

Overall for the category of housing quality, the Council is showing positive performance towards meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing, the Council scores positively in respect of the timescale for medical 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 Scottish Housing Quality Standard is higher than the national average and energy efficiency presents some challenges.

3. Access to Housing and Support

3.1.

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

Year	Homeless Households	Waiting List Applicants	Transfer Applicants	Other
2017 to 2018	31%	55%	14%	0%
2016 to 2017	29.7%	49%	20%	1.4%
2015 to 2016	30%	43%	27%	0%

3.2.

Lets to homeless households were 35% across Scotland's Housing Network and 41% in respect of the peer group average.

3.3.

The turnover of properties is shown in the table below:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	14.3%	8.6%	8.5%
2016 to 2017	14.4%	8.4%	7.8%
2015 to 2016	13.6%	8.4%	7.3%

3.4.

In financial year 2013 to 2014 the turnover of properties increased considerably, rising to 17.5%, and consequently this information became the subject of regular analysis, focusing particularly on differences between stock built more recently than 2011 and stock built before 2011. It initially appeared that the performance figures were affected by the level of new build in rural areas, while the areas of housing became established. It is no longer the case that there are differences in property turnover between stock pre and post 2011 and therefore this monitoring has been reduced in general terms. Where a newly built scheme becomes available for let, its turnover rates will be monitored initially to ensure any issues are identified to allow them to be addressed accordingly.

3.5.

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

3.6.

The percentage of tenancy offers refused is as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	49.3%	35.9%	33.7%
2016 to 2017	39.2%	37.3%	42.8%
2015 to 2016	43.2%	40.7%	44.8%

3.7.

Tenancy offers may be refused for various reasons. In 2017 to 2018 50.5% either was withdrawn due to the offer being made in error, the applicant failed to respond to the offer, no longer required accommodation, was unable to move at present or their circumstances had changed and they had failed to notify Housing Services. A further 8.5% were unable to accept the property due to medical issues. The remainder all referred to minor issues such as determining they did not like the area concerned after all, it required too much decoration or they wanted a different type, size or area of property.

3.8.

Abandonments as a percentage of housing stock is as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%
2016 to 2017	0.2%	0.6%	0.5%
2015 to 2016	0.35%	0.67%	0.54%

3.9.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	90.3%	88.7%	89.9%
2016 to 2017	91.3%	89.0%	90.1%
2015 to 2016	89.6%	88.3%	89.7%

3.10.

The reasons for some tenancies not being sustained included households leaving Orkney, households being rehoused by Orkney Housing Association Ltd or in the private sector or the household going into residential care or having passed away.

3.11.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	88.4%	87.5%	87.4%
2016 to 2017	97.6%	88.4%	89.5%
2015 to 2016	78.6%	86.6%	86.4%

3.12.

In 2015 to 2016 the percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year where the applicant was statutorily homeless declined, the overall percentage was 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. This improved significantly in 2016 to 2017. Because the data for 2016 to 2017 relates to just one household, the reason for the failure to sustain the tenancy has not been stipulated due to data protection. In 2017 to 2018 it declined again. This time 5 households were affected. Of these three were rehoused either by the Council or in the private sector and two households left Orkney.

3.13.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%
2016 to 2017	0%	0.4%	0.2%
2015 to 2016	0%	0.38%	0.24%

3.14.

Overall for the category for Access to Housing and Support, the level of evictions and abandonments remain very low. While tenancy sustainment has declined in respect of both all new tenancies and new homeless tenancies the reasons for this are justifiable, the level of refusal of offers has declined and the turnover of tenancies has improved very slightly. No areas show cause for concern.

4. Homelessness

4.1.

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.

4.2.

The number of homeless presentations was as follows:

Year	No of homelessness presentations
2017 to 2018	119
2016 to 2017	127
2015 to 2016	97

4.3.

As a national comparator, the national average for homeless presentations per 1,000 people is 6.5 cases. In Orkney there are 5.4 cases per 1,000 people.

4.4.

Locally the number of homelessness presentations peaked at 208 in 2004 to 2005 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. Further changes are anticipated as a result of the introduction of a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and this is the subject of another report to this committee.

4.5.

From 1 April to 8 January 2019, homeless presentations totalled 101. If it continues at that level until 31 March 2019, a total of 129 presentations could be expected. This may suggest another 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.

4.6.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network
2017 to 2018	24	34
2016 to 2017	20	34
2015 to 2016	17	33

4.7.

The assessment outcomes were as follows:

Outcome	Orkney		Scotland's Housing Network	
	2016 to 2017	2017 to 2018	2016 to 2017	2017 to 2018
Housed by Council.	62%	44.4%	40%	40.7%
Housing by Housing Association.	23%	38.9%	23%	23.4%
Private Rented Sector.	0%	5.6%	5%	5.1%
Returned to friends etc.	8%	11.2%	8%	8.5%
Lost Contact.	0%	0%	16%	14%
Other outcomes.	8%	5.6%	8%	7.2%

4.8.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network
2017 to 2018	138	171
2016 to 2017	140	238
2015 to 2016	109	159

4.9.

As regards customer satisfaction with temporary accommodation Orkney recorded 72.7% satisfaction in comparison to the peer group average of 84.2% and Scotland's Housing Network average of 85.3%.

4.10.

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

5. Neighbourhood and Community

5.1.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer group
2017 to 2018	1.9	7.5	6.8
2016 to 2017	2.2	8.4	9.1
2015 to 2016	4.0	8.4	9.5

5.2.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer group
2017 to 2018	55.6%	83.5%	76.1%
2016 to 2017	76.2%	87.2%	83.7%
2015 to 2016	81.6%	86.4%	89.2%

5.3.

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

5.4.

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.

6. Getting Good Value from Rents

6.1.

The average weekly rent is as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer group
2017 to 2018	£75.50	£76.20	£67.10
2016 to 2017	£74.38	£70.28	£65.39
2015 to 2016	£72.54	£68.71	£63.20

6.2.

The annual rental increase at 3.0% was broadly comparable with the Scotland's Housing Network average of 3.2 % and peer group average of 3.3%.

6.3.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	98.8%	99.4%	99.2%
2016 to 2017	98.1%	99.4%	99.5%
2015 to 2016	99.4%	99.4%	99.4%

6.4.

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.

6.5.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	8.4%	5.2%	7.0%
2016 to 2017	8.0%	6.1%	7.3%
2015 to 2016	6.7%	6.0%	7.0%

6.6.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	3.4%	3.4%	4.3%
2016 to 2017	3.0%	3.7%	4.2%
2015 to 2016	2.6%	2.5%	4.1%

6.7.

Generally, Orkney's performance in relation to collecting current tenant rents remains above average across Scotland as a whole.

6.8.

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

Date	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network
31 March 2018	17.5%	32%
31 March 2017	15.9%	26.4%
31 March 2016	15.7%	29.7%

6.9.

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

Year	Number of Notices Served	Number proceeding to court	Number of eviction decrees obtained
2017 to 2018	39	16	0
2016 to 2017	23	11	0
2015 to 2016	29	10	1

6.10.

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

6.11.

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.

6.12.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network
2017 to 2018	45.2%	36.4%
2016 to 2017	40%	38.6%
2015 to 2016	40.6%	43.8%

6.13.

The average debt at termination of tenancy was as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network
2017 to 2018	£786	£667
2016 to 2017	£895	£656
2015 to 2016	£582	£678

6.14.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	5.0%	2.1%	2.9%
2016 to 2017	5.0%	2.9%	3.6%
2015 to 2016	4.1%	2.4%	2.9%

6.15.

Nationally there are high levels of former tenant arrears written-off. Orkney adopts a prudent approach to write-offs and endeavours to collect former tenant arrears. The figures are as follows:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	17.0%	34.8%	22.7%
2016 to 2017	10.6%	33.3%	23.5%
2015 to 2016	7.3%	40.0%	14.2%

6.16.

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.

7. Re-Lets and Voids

7.1.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	49.1	30.7	36.6
2016 to 2017	50.3	31.5	40.2
2015 to 2016	40.6	38.6	35.8

7.2.

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

7.3.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	43.2	36.2	28.1
2016 to 2017	45.3	34.6	38.7
2015 to 2016	32.4	25.4	33.9

7.4.

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

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	87.7	49.3	47.9
2016 to 2017	87.9	50.32	43.8
2015 to 2016	94.5	80.04	51.11

7.5.

In December 2015, the Council delegated powers to the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing to dispose of properties, held on the Housing Revenue Account, 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.

7.6.

Void rental loss percentages are shown in the table below:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer Group
2017 to 2018	1.8%	0.7%	0.9%
2016 to 2017	2.1%	0.9%	0.9%
2015 to 2016	1.55%	0.96%	0.80%

7.7.

As regards 2015 to 2016, there was an improvement in void rental loss and time taken to re-let properties. 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). 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 and this can lead to fluctuations given the small overall sample.

7.8.

As regards 2016 to 2017, there were a number of factors affecting the indicators outlined at sections 7.3 to 7.6 above. This included delays in provision of keys to the Council for newly built properties resulting in delays in starting tenancies, two properties which had been void for more than one year (one a sheltered property and another a low demand property) were relet. In addition there were four properties empty for between six months and one year (two sheltered properties and two properties in low demand areas). Although it is positive that it was possible to find a tenant for the properties concerned, this impacts negatively on the performance indicators concerned.

7.9.

For financial year 2017 to 2018, there were no newly built properties becoming available to let and further improvements were notable in respect of joint working arrangements between Housing Services and Development and Infrastructure.

7.10.

As regards the category of Value for Money, the Council can evidence positive performance in respect of the level of its annual rental increase and level of former tenant arrears written off. 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.

8. Customer/Landlord Relationship

8.1.

In 2016 to 2017, the Council had a budget of £22,900 assigned to tenant participation. During 2015 to 2016 the part-time post of Tenant Participation Officer was created, following the end of an arrangement with Orkney Housing Association Limited to jointly deliver this service. The budget covers 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.

8.2.

Orkney's level of spend on tenant participation is compared to the Scotland's Housing Network and peer group average in the table below:

Year	Orkney	Scotland's Housing Network	Peer group
2017 to 2018	£27.29	£10.18	£11.92
2016 to 2017	£26.02	£9.64	£7.55
2015 to 2016	£11.31	£8.85	£8.84

8.3.

As regards responses to complaints, this is as follows:

	First Stage Complaints			Second Stage Complaints		
	Orkney	National Average	Peer Group Average	Orkney	National Average	Peer Group Average
Number responded to.	38	124	127	6	18	25
Stage.	86.4%	87.3%	83.6%	13.6%	12.7%	16.4%
Percentage upheld.	55.3%	54.0%	43.0%	60.0%	48.0%	45.2%
Responded to within timescale.	86.8%	86.3%	74.8%	60.0%	83.4%	79.9%
Average days taken to respond.	6.0	5.3	4.5	28.0	18.5	18.0