

# **Southside Housing Association – Annual Assurance Statement**

**28 September 2023**

## **Annual Assurance Statement 2023**

Southside Housing Association is required by the Scottish Housing Regulator's revised Regulatory Framework to prepare and submit its Annual Assurance Statement by 31 October 2023. This document represents the statement that was considered and approved by the Association's Management Committee at its meeting on Thursday 28 September 2023.

Statement of the Southside Housing Association Management Committee:

We can advise that, to the best of our knowledge, we comply with:

1. All relevant regulatory requirements set out in Chapter 3 of the Regulatory Framework;
2. All relevant standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter;
3. All relevant legislative duties; and,
4. The Standards of Governance and Financial Management

The Management Committee confirm that we have seen and considered appropriate evidence to support our assurance of compliance with the above. This includes an independent review of the Association's Business Plan assumptions, Treasury Management Strategy review, our annual programme of internal audit, external audit, a large-scale Tenant Satisfaction Survey, Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter 2022/23, Management Committee reports, financial reports and tenant health and safety reports, external validation of landlord safety compliance and regular risk management reporting.

We would like to also highlight the following areas in our Annual Assurance Statement.

### **Cost of Living Crisis, economic pressures and rent affordability**

We recognise that it continues to be a very challenging environment currently in terms of relatively high inflation and interest rates and on-going costs of living pressures on our tenants and other customers. We continue to help mitigate some of these concerns within our communities, primarily with the Association's Financial Inclusion and Money and Debt Advice service, but also through a range of community support initiatives across our areas of operation. We recognise the on-going challenges in keeping our rents affordable for our tenants, while being able to deliver on all of our objectives within our Business Plan. We conducted a review in January 2023 of our Business Plan assumptions in the context of the challenging operating environment, and we continue to have a viable Business Plan which will deliver our objectives whilst keeping our homes warm, energy efficient and affordable for tenants.

### **Equality and Human Rights**

In reviewing our compliance with the requirement to collect equalities data set out in the Regulatory Framework, we are assured that we have appropriate systems in place for the collection of equalities data. We carried out a large-scale tenant survey during March and April 2023 which has provided us with valuable information across the nine protected

characteristics and about the diverse communities within which we operate. This will inform our revised Equality and Diversity Strategy Action Plan for the next three years. We have on-going plans in place to collect and refresh the data we collect in relation to our tenants, applicant for housing, Management Committee members and employees. We are assured that we use this data to take account of equality and human rights considerations when making decisions, in development and review of our policies and proposals, and in our day-to-day service delivery.

### **Landlord safety compliance**

The Management Committee continues to place a strong focus over the past year in obtaining specific assurance around the Association's landlord safety compliance obligations. This has included specific consultancy work, internal audit of landlord safety compliance, quarterly reporting to Management Committee, development and review of policies and internal procedures. Management Committee is assured that the Association has adequate processes in place to ensure we meet our statutory and regulatory obligations.

The Association adopts a proactive approach to the identification, remediation and prevention of dampness and mould within our homes. Our large-scale tenant survey this year contained specific questions around dampness and mould and any issues highlighted have been progressed. Our Asset Management Strategy, planned maintenance programme and future investment plans for our homes also form part of our strategy for alleviating dampness and mould.

We have appointed a new contractor to ensure that we continue to progress our compliance with regard to electrical safety and our obligations to carry out an Electrical Condition Inspection Report (EICR) in our homes.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (Tolerable Standard) (Extension of Criteria) Order came into effect on 1 February 2022. This meant every home in Scotland must have interlinked smoke and heat alarms and carbon monoxide detectors installed in each room of the property. As of 28 September 2023, we are fully compliant with this requirement within our social rented housing stock.

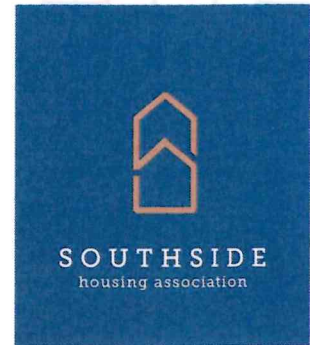
### **On-going Improvement Focus**

As part of the Association's commitment to continuous improvement a Governance and Financial Management Improvement Plan has been developed which focuses on areas for improvement identified from the various ways we have assessed the level of our compliance. This includes improvement actions we have identified but which do not constitute material non-compliance with Regulatory Standards and Requirements.

We will review the Association's continued compliance with all regulatory and legal requirements on an on-going basis throughout the year. In the event of any in-year incidences of material non-compliance which affects our level of assurance against any of the requirements of the Annual Assurance Statement, we will notify the Scottish Housing Regulator and our tenants and other customers.

Signed by:-----

Alex Cameron, Chair, Southside Housing Association.



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