



East Lothian Housing Association

Assurance Statement, 1 October 2020

We have now completed our assessment of compliance with the Regulatory Framework and the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management.

In undertaking our assessment, we established a Governance Standards Working Group (GSWG) in May 2019. The GSWG has met twice (in August and September 2020) in preparing this Statement, and reports directly to our Management Committee. The GSWG also prepares quarterly reports for our Audit & Assurance Committee to consider whether any changes or updates are required to the Statement during the course of the year.

In gaining assurance, the GSWG has overseen the review and updating of our Evidence Bank, using the Toolkit produced by the SFHA to assist the process. The Evidence Bank combines reports, policies, advice and information which the Management Committee monitors and oversees on an ongoing basis throughout the year to provide continuous assurance that we remain compliant. Additionally, the Evidence Bank incorporates relevant documents and information that contribute to our assurance and which form the structure of our business and governance activities.

Using our cloud-based IT infrastructure, we have given secure access to the Evidence Bank, including access to all linked documents within it, to all the members of our GSWG. We have also provided training to GSWG members about how to use the Evidence Bank. This means that all members of the GSWG can access every document within the Evidence Bank at any time of day, and from any location.

In addition, we also used the recently published Supplementary Coronavirus Guidance by the SFHA to inform this year's assessment. In considering our compliance with our legal and regulatory requirements in 2020, we have taken account of the considerable impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and consequent business, economic and social disruption. We have complied, and continue to comply fully, with the temporary changes to legislation, and continue to follow national requirements, for example in respect of Health & Safety, physical distancing, travel, office opening, use of PPE, application of Test and Protect requirements and indoor gatherings.

We are confident that the measures that we have put in place and the contingency planning that we have implemented have ensured that we are able to continue to meet our responsibilities to our tenants, service users, regulators and funders. We quickly restored services that had to be temporarily suspended as soon as restrictions were lifted and it was safe to do so. Our digital service provision ensured continuity of services for the 76% of tenants currently using their My Home accounts, whilst we extended opening hours of our online help and telephone repairs line services at the start of Lockdown, and we have maintained extended opening hours since. We have also continued to maintain all other telephone and postal services throughout the pandemic.

All our staff can login to our cloud-based IT from home, accessing their normal desktop and therefore all software and normal IT functionality associated with their role. Other than the obvious restrictions on visiting tenants and other service users at home, there has been little impact on the ability of staff to support normal service provision whilst working remotely.

We continue to monitor our Business Plan, Budget and financial assumptions in the context of the ongoing emergency situation and associated business interruption. Our current Business Plan reflects the regulatory guidance that was in place at the time of its preparation and we will take account of updated regulatory advice as we monitor and review our Business Plan in the context of the changed situation.

In reviewing the evidence and assessing compliance, we have taken account of good practice advice. We have also obtained external support from Linda Ewart of Ask Linda Ewart consultancy to provide us with additional assurance that our approach is effective and robust. Linda reported to the Management Committee as follows:

From the information that you have provided, it's clear that the process that has been adopted follows the good practice advice that is provided in the SFHA Toolkit which was published in 2019 and updated in 2020. Specific consideration has been given to SFHA's supplementary guidance on gaining evidence-based assurance about compliance in the context of Coronavirus.

The Evidence Bank refers to the periodic review undertaken by the Governance Standards Working Group and reported to the Management Committee throughout the year. The Evidence Bank is accessible to the GSWG members and has been the basis for the Working Group's consideration of elha's compliance assessment, the drafting of the Annual Assurance Statement and its report to the Management Committee.

Accordingly, the Management Committee confirms that having reviewed and assessed a comprehensive bank of evidence to support this Statement that, to the best of our knowledge, East Lothian Housing Association is compliant with the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management and the requirements of Chapter Three of the Regulatory Framework.

We recognise that we are required to notify the SHR of any changes in our compliance during the course of the year and are assured that we have effective arrangements in place to enable us to do so.

As Chair, I was authorised by the Management Committee at a meeting held on 24 September 2020 to sign and submit this Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator. I confirm that this Assurance Statement is being published on our website, elha.com, on the same date that it is submitted to the SHR.

Peter Ewart, Chair