

# Inspection report

---

## Easthall Park Housing Co-operative

June 2005

# Contents

Summary .....		
1.	Introduction .....	1
2.	Context .....	3
3.	Housing management.....	4
4.	Property maintenance .....	15
5.	Governance and financial management .....	22
6.	Recommendations for improvement action .....	27
7.	Next steps .....	28
Appendix 1	Sources of evidence	
Appendix 2	Examples of positive practice	
Glossary		

## Summary

The inspection of Easthall Park Housing Co-operative took place in February 2005 . We awarded Easthall Park Housing Co-operative the following grades:

Housing management	A	Excellent	Major strengths.
Property maintenance	B	Good	Many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed.

### Inspection Findings

Easthall Park Housing Co-operative owns 471 houses in the Easthall area of Greater Easterhouse, Glasgow. It has grown in size since the early 1990s by taking ownership of housing previously owned by Glasgow City Council and by building new houses.

Easthall Park is run by a committee, and most members are tenants of the Co-operative. The committee works constructively with staff and has a clear view of its role in overseeing the Co-operative's business. The Co-operative is financially viable and has an excellent financial management framework.

#### Key strengths in Easthall Park's services:

- its houses are in good condition;
- it lets its houses to people in housing need;
- it works to help people with difficulties to stay in their homes;
- it works hard towards ensuring the local area is safe and attractive, and is committed to tackling antisocial behaviour;
- there is a clear trend of increasing tenant satisfaction with the Co-operative's services;
- its services are accessible;
- the Co-operative is very effective at maximising its income – it has low rent arrears and lets its houses quickly; and
- it has improved its overall performance in completing repairs.

#### Key areas for improvement in Easthall Park's services:

- significant weakness in its management of gas safety in its houses;
- the information given to applicants who have been suspended from receiving offers;
- involving tenants in developing its services; and
- how it monitors the time taken to carry out emergency repairs.

**Next steps**

Easthall Park should respond to our findings. It does not need to submit an improvement plan.

**How to get more information and contact details**

If you would like to find out how Easthall Park plans to respond to the findings of this inspection you should contact:

Easthall Park Housing Co-operative  
6 Glenburnie Place  
Easthall  
Glasgow, G34 9AN  
Telephone: 0141 781 2277  
E-mail: [enquiries@easthallpark.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@easthallpark.org.uk)

The full report is on our website at <http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk>.  
This Summary can also be made available on tape, in Braille, large print and community languages. For information please contact Janette Campbell on 0131 479 5163 or email: [janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:janette.campbell@communitiesscotland.gsi.gov.uk).

# 1. Introduction

## About this inspection

1.1 This inspection was carried out by Communities Scotland under section 69 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Our purpose in inspection is to provide an independent external assessment of the effectiveness of housing service delivery and make recommendations to help improvement. Inspections are conducted within a published framework of Performance Standards.

## How we assessed performance

1.2 Our inspectors asked two key questions:

- How good are the services we have inspected?
- How well are these services being managed for improvement?

1.3 In order to answer these questions inspectors:

- spoke to tenants, staff and members of the governing body;
- asked other partner organisations for their views;
- visited homes and local areas;
- saw and tested first hand how well services were being delivered;
- examined key policies, publications, information and the organisation's self-assessment submitted for this inspection; and
- analysed published performance and financial information.

1.4 We have awarded grades for housing management and property maintenance. This is what our grades mean:

A	Excellent	Major strengths
B	Good	Many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed
C	Fair	Some strengths, but with many areas where improvement is required or with a small number of significant weaknesses
D	Poor	Major areas where improvement is needed or where a number of very significant weaknesses are found.

## The inspection team

1.5 The inspection was managed by Iain Muirhead (Inspection Manager). The lead inspector was Joyce Stewart, supported by Louise Irving (Inspection Officer) and Murray Smith (Financial Analyst). We were on site between 1 February 2005 and 11 February 2005. We would like to thank everyone involved in the

inspection, particularly the Management Committee, staff and tenants for their time and co-operation.

### **Responding to this inspection**

- 1.6 We expect all inspected bodies to make the summary of this report available to anyone that wants it, report our findings to tenants and other stakeholders and respond to the issues raised in this report.

## 2. Context

### About the organisation

- 2.1 Easthall Park Housing Co-operative was registered with Scottish Homes as a fully mutual housing co-operative in 1991. The first houses were transferred in 1992. The number of houses it owns grew as a result of two further transfers and an ongoing programme of new housing developments, some of which was linked to the demolition of existing housing. The Co-operative currently owns 471 houses, and operates in the Easthall area of Greater Easterhouse.
- 2.2 As a fully mutual co-operative, Easthall Park's management committee must be drawn from its tenant members, although it does have the ability to co-opt up to a third of the management committee from non-members. It currently has 11 committee members.
- 2.3 For the last two years, the Co-operative's management committee and the director have been involved in work to establish a local housing organisation (LHO). The LHO has been set up as a subsidiary of Easthall Park and provides housing management services to the tenants of Glasgow Housing Association in the Kildermorie area.
- 2.4 The Annual Performance and Statistical Return asks RSLs to select a peer group which best describes their organisation. Easthall selected the peer group 3 described as RSLs that operate in an urban area with more than 250 units. This is the group we use to compare Easthall's performance.
- 2.5 The table below gives background information about Easthall Park, and shows trends over the last three financial years.

	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Houses owned	383	437	471
Employees	6	7	7
Annual turnover	£740,000	£886,000	£992,000
Total possible rental income	£686,000	£778,000	£905,000
% Rental income from housing benefit	75.6%	80.6%	73%
Average weekly rent	N/A	£41.83	£43.80
Average rent increase	4%	1.8%	4.0%
Houses re-let	4	45	22
Responsive repairs carried out	682	847	1003
Maintenance spend per house	£453	£211	£199
Right To Buy sales	0	0	0

### 3. Housing management

3.1 The grade awarded for housing management is:

A	Excellent	Major strengths
---	-----------	-----------------

We explain at the end of this section how the assessments and judgements we have made result in this grade.

#### How good is the service?

##### **Access**

*Social landlords should provide open, fair and equal access to their housing lists and should work with partners to simplify and maximise access to housing.*

- 3.2 We found that the Co-operative operates an open housing list and people aged 16 or over can apply at any time. The Co-operative advertises its housing list in the reception area at its office, in other RSLs' offices in the Greater Easterhouse area and its own newsletters. We found that staff offer applicants helpful information verbally on the application process.
- 3.3 In 2002/3 and 2003/04 the Co-operative let more than 40% of its new and vacant houses to people nominated by Glasgow City Council. During this period the Co-operative has been working with the Council to rehouse residents of housing which is to be demolished. This programme is now complete. Following the transfer of its stock to Glasgow Housing Association, Glasgow City Council no longer maintains a housing list and has no nominations arrangements with RSLs for mainstream lets.
- 3.4 Easthall Park has, for a number of years, operated a common application form in partnership with six other RSLs in Greater Easterhouse. Through this initiative people looking for RSL housing in the area need fill in only one form. All RSLs involved in the scheme give out an application form and comprehensive information leaflet that explains where each landlord's housing is as well as including other useful information. This is a very positive initiative which has simplified access to housing in the local area. The RSLs are currently working on further internet-based developments to the process, which should allow more sharing of electronic information and let applicants go into any office to find out where they are on each landlord's list.
- 3.5 The Co-operative reviewed its housing list in late 2004, to ensure it was up to date. This resulted in a drop in the number of applicants from 439 to 231.
- 3.6 The Co-operative has a target timescale of 15 days for assessing applicants and placing them on the housing list. Its performance reports to committee indicate that it achieves this comfortably and processes applications in five days. The Co-operative recognises that its approach to calculating how long

this process takes is not systematic, but its reported performance is consistent with the time taken in the cases we looked at, and reflects a responsive approach to dealing with applications. The Co-operative told us that the ongoing developments in the common application form will allow it to collect performance information more accurately in future.

- 3.7 The information the Co-operative gave us at the start of the inspection indicated that seven applicants on its housing list were suspended from receiving offers. This had fallen to four by the time we reviewed cases during the inspection. We found some gaps in how the Co-operative deals with suspension:
- it had not advised suspended applicants of the right of appeal against suspension, set out the length of the suspension or contacted applicants at the end of the suspension period to highlight the change in status;
  - two applicants had been suspended incorrectly for non tenancy-related debt (the Co-operative rectified this as soon as we identified it); and
  - one case had not been reviewed by two staff members, in line with its policy.
- 3.8 The Co-operative collects equalities information on its applicants and allocations. It achieves a response rate of 80% and reports the information regularly to the Management Committee.
- 3.9 The Co-operative is good at ensuring fair, open and equal access to its housing list. It needs to provide clear information to applicants suspended from receiving offers.

### **Meeting need and maximising choice**

*Social landlords should meet housing need through lettings and should maximise choice for applicants.*

- 3.10 The Co-operative prioritises allocations based on a range of housing needs which clearly reflect the statutory reasonable preference categories; all the allocations we reviewed were to people with one or more of these needs. The Co-operative has a draft protocol in place with Glasgow City Council to help both parties meet their duties to homeless people. The number of formal referrals from the Council, under section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, was 6 to June 2004. The Co-operative is working well to meet its new duty in partnership with the Council and has housed all households referred to it.
- 3.11 Easthall Park gives applicants an excellent level of information about their application and housing options. It:
- provides a summary of the applicant's overall points level and a breakdown of points by category;
  - produces useful information about the turnover of housing that became available in the previous year, by house size, from which applicants can see how likely they are to be offered a house; and
  - informs applicants of their wider housing options and advises them about the right to appeal.

- 3.12 Two members of staff check each application and allocation, and the Co-operative verifies each applicant's circumstances before making an offer. There is no further routine quality assurance monitoring of this process from senior staff. In a small number of the cases we reviewed the pointing decisions were not clear and transparent around points awarded for 'social' and 'care/support' needs. The Co-operative has recognised that it does not currently have procedures for staff regarding the award of discretionary points and that its policy does not set out criteria for awarding different points levels. It is working to address this lack of clarity by producing an appendix to the policy which will give better guidance to staff and clearer information to applicants.
- 3.13 The Co-operative allocates its houses on a quota basis between its housing list and transfer applicants, nominations and other categories. It monitors the outcomes of its quotas, in terms of the proportion of lets to each category and reports this quarterly to committee. It uses this to inform the size of quotas for subsequent years. We found that the quota system does not disadvantage any particular category of applicant, although there is no clear guidance for staff on how to allocate houses between categories of applicant. The Co-operative has also recently begun to analyse the types of housing needs it is meeting through its allocations; this will allow it to assess in future whether its allocations policy is achieving its intended outcomes.
- 3.14 The Co-operative's approach to allocations has a positive emphasis on applicant choice: the allocations policy places no limits on the number of offers that can be made to an applicant; and, as highlighted earlier, the common application form allows applicants to apply to seven local landlords by filling in only one form.
- 3.15 The Co-operative is achieving good outcomes in meeting housing need and promoting choice through its allocations. It has shown a willingness to address weaker areas, and minor improvements would further strengthen its performance.

### **Sustaining tenancies and preventing homelessness**

*Social landlords should maximise security of tenure for all residents of their accommodation, and should work to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness through their delivery of housing management services.*

- 3.16 Easthall Park has signed up all of its tenants to Scottish secure tenancy agreements (SSTs). At the time of our inspection no tenants had a short SST. The Co-operative does not have a procedure for staff that sets out the circumstances in which it will grant short SSTs.
- 3.17 The provision of good information and access to appropriate support are important ways in which landlords can help people sustain their tenancies. Easthall Park provides good information to new tenants at the start of their tenancy and encourages tenants to use the local welfare rights service which holds a weekly surgery in the adjoining community centre. Easthall Park visits

new tenants within 6 weeks of the start of their tenancy to reinforce their rights and responsibilities and to identify any early difficulties in maintaining tenancies. The Co-operative provides tenants with an informative handbook at the start of their tenancy.

- 3.18 The Co-operative works in partnership with a local project established to help young people obtain and sustain tenancies within the local community. The project operates as a dispersed foyer across Greater Easterhouse, Easthall Park currently provides one of its houses to the project, and refers young applicants to it who would benefit from support. Seven former residents of the foyer project have moved into unsupported co-operative tenancies. In this way the Co-operative is making a positive contribution to help young people sustain tenancies.
- 3.19 Almost all the legal action Easthall Park takes to recover possession of its houses is in response to rent arrears. The Co-operative issued notices of proceedings to 53 of its tenants in 2003/04: 51 in response to rent arrears and 2 for antisocial behaviour. It initiated court action against nine of its tenants and obtained two court orders for recovery of possession, both for rent arrears. The Co-operative recovered vacant possession of 2 houses in 2003/04. This equates to eviction of 0.46% of its tenants compared with a peer figure of 0.29%. No tenants abandoned their property before recovery of vacant possession, compared with a peer figure of 0.16%. In the first six months of 2004/05, Easthall Park had issued 40 notices of proceedings, initiated court action against 2 tenants and been granted no orders for recovery of possession.
- 3.20 Easthall Park has a clear framework for authorising the escalation of legal action against its tenants and it is good at advising the Council's homeless team of its legal actions and at directing tenants to specialist advice agencies. We found that the Co-operative seeks to recover vacant possession only as a last resort, and tries to find alternative solutions where it can. It does not always keep a clear record of the actions taken by staff.
- 3.21 There are major strengths in Easthall Park's approach to maximising security of tenure for residents and providing support and information to help people maintain their tenancies. It uses legal action only as a last resort.

### **Quality of neighbourhoods**

*Social landlords should deliver services to ensure that neighbourhoods are attractive, well maintained and safe places to live. They should deal appropriately with antisocial behaviour.*

- 3.22 All of Easthall Park's properties have been built or refurbished in the last 13 years. The Co-operative's last major tenant satisfaction survey, carried out in 2002, found that 76% of tenants were satisfied with their neighbourhood. This was the same as the average of 46 landlords that used the same survey method and slightly higher than the findings for similar size landlords working in peripheral estates using the same approach. A higher percentage of tenants – 94% - feel secure in their homes.

- 3.23 The Co-operative's office is very close to all its houses, which means that the Co-operative has a high profile locally and staff are able to identify and respond quickly to issues. The Co-operative uses an estate warden to carry out estate management duties such as grass cutting, litter removal and minor repairs, which makes a positive contribution to the local area. During our inspection we found that there was little graffiti, vandalism and litter in the area. Tenants we spoke to expressed positive views about their homes and the surrounding area. Turnover of housing has fallen significantly recently and was relatively low, at 5%, in 2003/04.
- 3.24 The Co-operative has recently moved to new office premises. The office is part of the Glenburn Centre, which the Co-operative owns. The Centre is a joint initiative which incorporates high quality premises for the Co-operative as well as refurbished community facilities. The next phase of the joint work involves the creation of a public park close to the Co-operative's office. These initiatives are an excellent contribution to the local neighbourhood.
- 3.25 Easthall Park has a relatively high level of reported antisocial behaviour. In the first 6 months of 2004-05 the Co-operative received 88 complaints relating to nuisance and anti-social behaviour; 70 of these were categorised as minor and the remainder as serious. It has a target of responding to serious complaints within 1 day and minor complaints within 10 days, and reported that it has achieved this target for all cases. The cases we examined confirmed that it had responded effectively and within its target timescales. It has recently initiated a court action as a result of antisocial behaviour, although it has not used other legal remedies such as antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) or mediation services. It intends to work alongside a new antisocial behaviour team being established by Glasgow Housing Association in April 2005.
- 3.26 The Co-operative has recently installed its own CCTV system to record images which it can then use as evidence of antisocial behaviour. It told us that this system has proved very successful and that it has been able to use images as evidence in cases involving antisocial behaviour. It works closely with the local community police, who gave us positive feedback both on the impact of the CCTV system in tackling antisocial behaviour as well as more generally about effective partnership working with Easthall Park. The Co-operative recently funded the purchase of two bicycles for the community police to use whilst patrolling the area. It has also established a formal agreement with the police to share information and carry out joint working.
- 3.27 We also found that the Co-operative could further develop some elements of its service in this area:
- it has not sought structured views from tenants how well they feel their antisocial behaviour complaint has been dealt with; and
  - there are gaps in how staff record information about individual reported cases of antisocial behaviour.

- 3.28 There are major strengths, the Co-operative works towards ensuring the local area is safe and attractive. The area is generally well-maintained, and the Co-operative is working hard to help improve its amenities. Its use of CCTV and partnership working show a clear commitment to tackling antisocial behaviour, and it responds quickly to individual cases. It could improve how it monitors elements of its work.

### **Responsiveness to tenants**

*Social landlords should place the people they serve at the heart of their work, treat them with respect and be responsive to their views and priorities.*

- 3.29 Easthall Park's most recent survey of tenants in 2002 found that 87% were happy with the Co-operative as a landlord. Since then it has used a consultant to carry out a regular 'continuous monitoring' telephone survey of a random selection of tenants. This survey includes questions on customer care, communications and repairs. The most recently-available findings, covering the period to June 2004, indicate that all tenants surveyed had expressed satisfaction with the Co-operative as a landlord. The more recent continuous monitoring survey findings generally show higher levels of satisfaction than the 2002 survey.
- 3.30 Beyond these surveys, Easthall Park has had limited success in involving tenants with the committee in developing its housing management service. It has twice set up working groups to review and develop its rent policy, but it found it difficult to stimulate broader tenant involvement in the process. It has a policy aim of establishing further focus groups to consider specific issues, although at the time of our inspection it had not set up any of these groups. It has informed tenants through its newsletter of proposed policy reviews and rent increase, though again with limited response.
- 3.31 The Co-operative deals well with complaints. The complaints process is well publicised, and we found that the Co-operative responds effectively to individual complaints and reports the outcomes to the committee.
- 3.32 Easthall Park's new office accommodation is completely accessible to people with physical disabilities. The Co-operative can make information available in alternative formats, although it does not publicise this routinely in its newsletters or the tenant handbook.
- 3.33 Easthall Park's feedback from surveys shows that most tenants are satisfied with it as a landlord. Its attempts to involve tenants more directly in influencing housing management service have had limited successes. It deals responsively with complaints, but needs to improve how it publicises making material available in different formats.

## **Is the service managed for improvement?**

### **Resource management and efficiency**

*Social landlords should maximise their income, in a way that is fair to service users, and manages costs effectively.*

- 3.34 Easthall Park offers tenants a variety of ways to pay rent, including direct debit, standing order, homevisits if the tenant is housebound, at paypoints and through the 'Allpay' swipe card. Its 2002 survey found that all the respondents were satisfied with rent payment methods.
- 3.35 Easthall Park's total arrears as a percentage of its total rental income is lower than its peer group and the national RSL median:
- at March 2004 its total arrears figure was the 13th lowest amongst its 51 peers and in the top quartile of all Scottish RSLs for total arrears; and
  - the level of total arrears fell further in the first six months of 2004/05.
- 3.36 Easthall Park's current non technical arrears<sup>1</sup> level has also shown a consistent downward trend. At March 2004 it was 2.6%, down from 3.9% in March 2003, and remained at this level in the first six months of 2004/05. Its March 2004 level was 16th lowest amongst its peers and in the second quartile nationally. The percentage of current tenants in serious arrears also fell significantly, from 5.7% at March 2003 to 1.2% at March 2004; this is substantially lower than the peer performance of 6.3%. The figure has increased slightly to 1.7% during the first six months of 2004.
- 3.37 Former tenant arrears as a percentage of total gross rental income fell from 1.29% at March 2003 to 0.95% by the following year. This is lower than the peer average of 1.87%, and fell further in the first six months of 2004/05 to 0.82%.

---

<sup>1</sup> Non-technical arrears exclude outstanding housing benefit not yet received by the landlord.

3.38 The table below summarises Easthall Park's performance in collecting rent arrears.

	At March 2003	At March 2004			April to Sept. 04
	Easthall Park	Easthall Park	Peer Group	National Median	Easthall Park
Total arrears as % of total gross rental income	5.2%	4.1%	6.8%	6.2%	3.6%
Total current arrears as % of total gross rental income	3.9%	3.2%	4.9%	4.4%	2.8%
Current arrears (non technical) as % of total gross rental income	3.8%	2.6%	3.29%	3.0%	2.6%
Current arrears (technical) as % of total gross rental income	0.1%	0.6%	1.63%	1.4%	0.2%
% of current tenants in serious arrears	5.7%	1.2%	6.3%	-	1.7%
Total former tenant arrears.	£10,157	£8,617	-	-	£8,647
Former tenants arrears as % of total gross rental income.	1.3%	1.0%	1.8%	1.7%	0.8%
Rent arrears written off	£3,488	£3,720	-	-	-

3.39 Easthall Park pursues rent arrears very effectively. It has good procedures for managing arrears which provide staff with clear guidance, although it could improve the consistency of recording its actions. Strengths in Easthall Park's handling of tenants in arrears include:

- its early, regular and sustained contact with tenants in arrears;
- clear and informative advice to tenants, including a user-friendly information leaflet and referrals to specialist advice services such as the local money advice service;
- an appropriate use of suspension of legal action to negotiate repayment arrangements.

3.40 The table below shows Easthall Park's reported performance in letting houses that have become empty.

	2002-03	2003-04			April to Sept. 04
	Easthall	Easthall	Peer Group	National Median	Easthall
Rental income lost due to empty houses	£12,144	£5,117	-	-	£1,821
As % of total rental income	1.5%	0.6%	1.6%	0.9%	0.18%
Total no. of re-lets	45	22	-	-	11
% re-let in <2 weeks	48.9%	81.8%	44.4%	39.1%	45%
% re-let in 2-4 weeks	17.8%	13.6%	23.9%	24.0%	45%
% re-let in >4 weeks	33.3%	4.5%	31.7%	36.6%	10%
Average time to re-let (days)	10	5	32	25	9

3.41 In 2003/04 Easthall Park lost 0.6% of its income because of houses lying empty, which represents a 50% reduction in lost income on the previous year.

It ranks as the 23<sup>rd</sup> lowest income loss of the 51 RSLs in its peer group and is in the second quartile of all Scottish RSLs.

- 3.42 Easthall Park's average relet time in 2003/04 of 5 days represents a significant improvement on its performance in the previous year, and is considerably better than the peer performance and is in the top quartile of all Scottish RSLs. The Co-operative had more new lets than relets in 2003/04, and its turnaround time here was also better than its peers and the national performance. The first six months of 2004/05 has seen a decline in performance in both new lets and relets, which the Co-operative told us is a short term dip caused by a combination of staff changes and a large volume of lets.
- 3.43 The Co-operative is successful at letting empty houses and minimising rent loss. It co-ordinates the repairs and housing management elements effectively. It has developed useful monitoring processes to ensure a smooth transition between tenancies. As with some other areas of housing management, it does not always record and monitor its actions systematically, which restricts its ability to fully understand its performance and how it could be further improved.
- 3.44 Easthall Park's costs for managing its houses were £327 per unit for 2003/04, down from £433 in the previous year. This is significantly lower than the peer group average of £525 per unit for 2002/03. Easthall Park's 2002 tenant satisfaction survey found that 80% of tenants who responded viewed the houses and services as good value for money.
- 3.45 Easthall Park's performance in collecting rent and minimising losses through empty houses is a major strength. It has effective frameworks for managing both activities, arrears levels and void turnaround times are better than its peer group and national RSL level, and the overall trend is one of further improvement. Its performance in maximising its income through housing management activities is a major strength.

### **Performance management**

*Social landlords should have clear objectives, standards and targets for housing management services, should monitor achievement of these, and should work to continuously improve services.*

- 3.46 Easthall Park's Internal Management Plan (IMP) sets out in broad terms the aims of its housing management services. It has a separate housing management plan within the IMP which expands these into SMART<sup>2</sup> short and medium term objectives and standards for the full range of its housing management activities. It has performance targets for all key operational areas of housing management, and these are included in its plans. Overall, it has a very effective planning framework for its housing management service.

---

<sup>2</sup> SMART objectives are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound.

- 3.47 Easthall Park also has an effective approach to performance monitoring and reporting. The Committee receives a good range of reports on its housing management service and regular reports on performance against targets. Reports include information on trends over time, benchmark performance against other local RSLs and summarise tenant survey findings.
- 3.48 There is a good policy framework in housing management, and the Co-operative generally provides staff with excellent and comprehensive guidance on how to implement policies. It is working to improve on one specific gap around discretionary points in allocations. It has an effective approach to reviewing policies and procedures.
- 3.49 Easthall Park is committed to continually improving its services. It has a good awareness of its strengths and strives to improve performance further in these areas. We also saw examples where it had identified areas for improvement and taken action to change its approach. As highlighted earlier, the Co-operative does not always record its actions consistently, which limits its ability to fully understand and learn from its performance in some areas.

### **Grade and overall assessment of housing management**

- 3.50 Our overall assessment is that Easthall Park's housing management service is excellent.
- 3.51 In coming to our overall assessment we have taken account of the number of major strengths in key areas of the Co-operative's service. It provides open, fair and equal access to its list; its allocations meet housing need and it promotes choice to applicants. It maximises security of tenure, provides effective support and information to help people maintain their tenancies, and uses legal action only as a last resort. We found major strengths in the Co-operative's work towards ensuring the local area is safe and attractive, and also in its commitment to tackling antisocial behaviour. There is a clear trend of increasing levels of tenant satisfaction with the service, and the Co-operative deals responsively with complaints.
- 3.52 Easthall Park is very effective at maximising its income from its housing management activities: it has low arrears; it lets its houses quickly and loses a relatively low level of rent from empty houses; and it has effective processes that support this performance.
- 3.53 There is a very effective planning framework, an appropriate range of policies and an effective approach to performance monitoring and reporting. We also found that the Co-operative is committed to continuous improvement and we saw examples of this in practice.
- 3.54 We found a small number of weaknesses in Easthall Park's housing management services. It does not fully inform applicants suspended from receiving offers of housing about the circumstances of their suspension; it could be more systematic in recording its actions; and it has had only limited success in involving tenants directly in developing its housing management

service. Overall, its weaknesses do not detract significantly from the many strengths we saw across the service.

## 4. Property maintenance

4.1 The grade awarded for property maintenance is:

B	Good	Many strengths and some areas where improvement is needed.
---	------	--

We explain at the end of this section how the assessments and judgements we have made result in this grade.

### How good is the service?

#### **Access to the repairs service**

*Social landlords should have arrangements in place that make it easy for tenants to report repairs and to have them carried out.*

- 4.2 Easthall Park's tenants can report repairs during office hours by telephone, in writing, by calling in person at the office, by fax and by e-mail. Tenants can also report repairs when its office is closed by using an easily accessed out-of-hours service. The Co-operative's 2002 tenant survey showed that 96% of tenants found it easy to report a repair.
- 4.3 Easthall Park provides good information on the repairs service to its tenants and can make this available in other languages and formats on request. The Co-operative's regular newsletters and the tenant handbook provide a good range of informative material on repairs responsibilities and key elements of the service. Staff are very knowledgeable and provide good advice to tenants on all aspects of the repairs service.
- 4.4 The Co-operative retains agreed details of relatives and carers of tenants with particular needs so it can provide assistance in the case of emergencies, for example around access for repairs. This demonstrates a responsive approach to supporting tenants.
- 4.5 While the Co-operative does not operate a formal repairs appointment system it passes tenants' access preferences to its contractors and expects the contractor to finalise arrangements. It does not seek feedback from tenants on how convenient they find these arrangements, although its regular surveys do ask specifically whether contractors arrive at the correct time. Its most recent survey found an 87% satisfaction rating with this aspect of the service.
- 4.6 Overall, Easthall Park provides an accessible repairs service.

## Speed and quality of response repairs service

*Social Landlords should set challenging targets for completing repairs, strive to achieve them and ensure repairs are completed to a high quality.*

- 4.7 The target timescale Easthall Park sets itself for completing emergency repairs is longer than the national median; the target for urgent repairs is in line with the median; and the target for routine repairs is more challenging than the median.
- 4.8 The Co-operative's reported performance in completing repairs against its target timescales has improved overall over the last three years. Its performance in 2003/04 was better than the national median and its peer group performance in all categories. Of the 51 RSLs in its peer group, Easthall Park is ranked 26<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, respectively for emergency, urgent and routine repairs. Performance in the early part of 2004/05 was similar overall to what it achieved in the previous year. This performance needs to be viewed in the context of how the Co-operative's targets compare to the targets across RSLs, as we have outlined. The table below summarises the Co-operative's targets and performance over the last three years.

	EHP target response time	Performance				
		Easthall Park			National median 2003/04	RSL peer group 2003/04
		2001/02	2002/03	2003/04		
<b>Emergency Repairs</b>	24 hours	96%	100%	99.5%	99.2%	98.3%%
<b>Urgent Repairs</b>	3 working days	95%	97.5%	98.0%	96.0%	95.8%%
<b>Routine Repairs</b>	7 working days	95%	98.3%	98.7%	95.7%	95.7%%

- 4.9 The Co-operative does not verify its emergency repairs completion time against its 24 hour target, but instead records whether the repair is completed the following day. This means that its actual performance against target may be lower than its reported figure.
- 4.10 Easthall Park's own tenant feedback shows varying levels of satisfaction with the repairs service. The 2002 tenant survey found that 79% of tenants were satisfied with the quality of repairs, while the Co-operative's continuous monitoring survey indicates a more recent satisfaction rating of 93%. The 2002 survey indicated that 83% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs service, an improvement from the previous survey in 1999 of 71%. Again, the continuous monitoring survey shows that more recent satisfaction levels have increased significantly, to 96%. Overall, there is a clear trend of increasing levels of satisfaction with the service.
- 4.11 Pre and post inspections are important tools for ensuring repairs are targeted accurately and carried out to a high standard. The Co-operative has a target to pre inspect approximately 15% of all repairs; it pre-inspected 9% of all its

repairs last year. It has recently appointed a clerk of works, and it anticipates that this new post will allow it to achieve its target for pre-inspections. Its target for post inspections is also 15%, and it carried out slightly more than this figure in 2003-04. It has a good selection criteria for post-inspections, uses them effectively to monitor contractors' work, takes action where necessary and reports outcomes on an exception basis to committee.

- 4.12 Easthall Park operates a Right to Repair scheme which complies with statutory requirements. The Co-operative identifies qualifying repairs appropriately and all repairs that we reviewed had been completed within the required timescales. Easthall Park promotes the Right to Repair scheme through its tenant newsletters and in its handbook.
- 4.13 Easthall Park's repairs service has many strengths, and tenant feedback is increasingly positive. It needs to improve how it verifies its performance in completing emergency repairs.

### **Physical quality of houses**

*Social landlords should have good information about the condition of their houses and should deliver effective maintenance programmes that take account of housing quality and home safety needs.*

- 4.14 Scottish Ministers have set a target that all social landlords' houses should meet the new Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by 2015. Landlords are required to prepare a plan showing how they will achieve this by April 2005. As the Co-operative had not completed its plan at the time of the inspection, it is too early to assess how it will be implemented. Easthall Park's housing is a combination of new houses and properties that have been improved since the early 1990s, and the Co-operative is confident that all its houses will meet the standard by 2015.
- 4.15 The Co-operative has a very good understanding of the current condition of its houses and their future maintenance needs. It undertook a stock condition survey in November 2002, and plans to carry out a further survey in 2005. It uses information from the survey effectively to plan for future major repairs and the regular cyclical maintenance of its houses. Its maintenance planning is well integrated with its financial planning.
- 4.16 Easthall Park's houses are a combination of new-build properties or houses that have been improved following their transfer from the Council. As a result, the Co-operative has not yet begun its planned maintenance programme. It has recently fine-tuned its maintenance proposals by bringing forward the proposed start date of a kitchen replacement programme by three years, in response to tenant feedback about problems with existing units. The committee discussed and agreed this change, although the proposal was not put in writing to the committee nor the decision recorded in the Co-operative's minutes. Staff altered the life cycle costings to reflect the decision. Overall, this process demonstrates a responsive approach to future planning. We discuss the transparency of this further in section five.

- 4.17 Easthall Park has designed its new-build houses to a good standard. Its recent developments:
- are built to Secure by Design standards to create safe homes and minimise the risk of crime and anti social behaviour;
  - are almost all flexible enough to accommodate the range of housing needs that people may have through their lifetime; and
  - have good levels of energy efficiency.
- 4.18 The Co-operative's housing does not contain lead pipes. All flats have controlled-entry systems. All houses have double glazing, central heating and smoke alarms. Overall, Easthall Park's housing is in good physical condition.
- 4.19 Easthall Park is required to carry out safety checks every 12 months on all gas appliances and flues which it provides for its tenants' use. The Co-operative is not meeting this statutory duty for a large number of its houses; its performance is poor and represents a significant weakness in its property maintenance service. The Co-operative's summary of its performance in its inspection submission showed that 69, or 15.6%, of the 443 houses with gas appliances did not have a valid certificate in place. In the last year, the Co-operative did not do gas safety checks within one year of the previous check for 68% of its houses with gas appliances and flues. The table below summarises Easthall Park's performance in carrying out gas safety checks.

	September 2004	
	Number of houses	%
<b>Houses with gas appliances</b>	443	
<b>Houses with current gas safety certificates</b>	374	84.4%
<b>Houses where safety check was carried out within 12 months of previous check*</b>	96	32%
<b>Houses where safety check was up to 1 month late*</b>	63	21%
<b>Houses where safety check was between 1 and 3 months late*</b>	126	42%
<b>Houses where safety check was more than 3 months late*</b>	14	5%

Note: the figures in the rows marked with an \* reflect the fact that a number of the Co-operative's houses with gas are newly-built and therefore do not have a previous safety certificate. For this reason the % figures in these rows is derived from a calculation of the number in that row as a percentage of the houses which have had previous safety checks done.

- 4.20 We looked at a sample of 30 cases and found that the level of failure to carry out safety checks within 12 months was at a level similar to that reported in the table above. We found that the Co-operative did not begin the process of initiating checks early enough, did not monitor contractor performance regularly and did not report performance to its committee. The Co-operative acknowledges that it only became fully aware of its performance when preparing for this inspection. Since then it has taken early steps to improve its management and planning of gas safety checks, by developing new procedures based on a 10 month cycle of visits to properties and improving its monitoring of performance. This improvement was reflected in a reduction in

the number of properties without safety certificates. By February 2005 the number of houses without a current safety certificate was two. It also acknowledges that it has not carried out any post inspections of safety checks, and it has plans to do this for the current round of checks.

- 4.21 From April 2004 social landlords have had a statutory duty to manage asbestos in the common areas of their properties. Easthall Park has taken appropriate action to comply with the management of asbestos legislation and has an asbestos management plan. It confirmed to us that there is no asbestos in any of its houses.
- 4.22 The Co-operative does not have a formal relet standard on the condition it expects its houses to be in at the start of a new tenancy. Staff have no formal guidance, and no information is made available to prospective tenants on the standards they can expect. As highlighted in the previous section, the Co-operative does let its houses quickly.
- 4.23 Easthall Park has an effective approach to planning and funding the future maintenance needs of its houses. Its houses are in good condition and generally well-maintained. Its performance in complying with its statutory duty on gas safety is a significant weakness.

### **Responsiveness to tenants in repairs and maintenance**

*Social landlords should place the people they serve at the heart of their work, treat them with respect and be responsive to their views.*

- 4.24 Easthall Park is committed to seeking feedback from tenants on its repairs service. We have highlighted findings from the 2002 survey and the ongoing survey work earlier in this section. As noted already, tenant feedback is increasingly positive. Tenants that we spoke to were generally very positive about the service.
- 4.25 The Co-operative also requests feedback from tenants after each repair through a postal monitoring form, though it achieves only a low response from this. It does investigate each case where a tenant has given negative feedback, and reports the outcome of this to the committee.
- 4.26 The Co-operative has shown a willingness to respond to tenant feedback. We saw examples where it has altered the programming of future work, including the kitchen contract discussed earlier, in response to feedback and repairs trends. As its programme of planned maintenance work has not begun the Co-operative has not yet engaged directly with tenants about issues such as timing, planning arrangements and specification choices. More broadly, it has not directly involved tenants in setting standards or reviewing policies across the service.
- 4.27 The Co-operative is clearly committed to seeking tenant feedback about its property maintenance service. It deals with feedback in a constructive and responsive way. It could do more to involve tenants in developing the service.

## **Is the service managed for improvement?**

### **Resource management and efficiency**

*Social Landlords should manage the cost of their services effectively and procure repairs and maintenance services in a way that takes account of quality.*

- 4.28 Easthall Park's management costs for delivering its property maintenance services in 2002/03 were £211 for each of its houses, marginally higher than the figure for its peer group of £206. Its costs for 2003/2004 fell slightly to £199.
- 4.29 In 2003/2004 the Co-operative recovered only 5.6% of the costs of rechargeable repairs although it issued invoices for all such repairs. It recognised that its performance in recovering its costs could be improved, and changed its approach by moving responsibility to the finance section. A clear early improvement is evident: in the first six months of 2004/2005 its recovery rate increased to 27.9%, though it is too early to identify whether this is a sustained improvement.
- 4.30 Easthall Park manages the procurement of its property maintenance services well. It uses an approved list of contractors for response repairs, which it reviews every two years, and lets its larger contracts, such as cyclical maintenance, through competitive tendering. It has an effective approach to monitoring and reviewing contractor performance. It ensures that its maintenance contractors provide good services, give value for money and meet legislative requirements.

### **Performance management**

*Social landlords should have clear objectives, standards and targets for property maintenance services, should monitor achievement of these, and should work to continuously improve services.*

- 4.31 Easthall Park's property maintenance services are generally well managed. Its Internal Management Plan sets out objectives for its property maintenance service which are linked to specific actions with target dates. Its policies and procedures provide staff with good direction, and these are reviewed regularly. Easthall Park has a good awareness of its current performance and its service action plans identify areas for improvement, with the exception of its performance in gas safety.
- 4.32 The Co-operative's committee is provided with regular reports which generally give a good range of performance and financial information as well as providing a summary of tenant feedback. It is developing further the range of information it reports on: it has acknowledged a lack of reporting on gas safety and has now begun to report on its performance; and it has recently begun to present useful summary information about rechargeable repairs. It does not routinely compare its performance in key areas with its peers or the wider RSL sector.

## **Grade and overall assessment of property maintenance**

- 4.33 Our overall assessment is that Easthall Park's property maintenance service is good. We found many strengths in the service, as well as some areas where improvement is needed, one of which represents a significant weakness.
- 4.34 In coming to our overall assessment we have taken account of the balance of the strengths and areas for improvement across the key areas in the property maintenance service. A number of Easthall Park's strengths impact directly on tenants, such as:
- the accessibility of the service;
  - the good quality of its houses;
  - the improved performance in completing repairs and the effective system for monitoring the quality of work; and
  - the commitment to seek feedback, along with a recent satisfaction rating of 96% with the repairs service.
- 4.35 The Co-operative also has an effective planning framework, a sound understanding of its houses' future maintenance needs, and a good monitoring and reporting framework which it is in the process of improving further.
- 4.36 Easthall Park's s significant weakness on gas safety checks affect a relatively high proportion of its houses. The Co-operative has accepted our early findings on gas safety and has shown a clear intention to address this weakness. It also needs to get better at verifying its emergency repairs performance, and it has not succeeded in involving tenants directly in developing the service.

## **5. Governance and financial management**

### **Leadership and direction**

*A clear vision or purpose and an inclusive, well informed planning process are key to effectively delivering the services that tenants want.*

- 5.1 Easthall Park sets out its vision for the future of the Co-operative in its Internal Management Plan (IMP). The IMP covers a three year period. The IMP is reviewed annually, based around the outcome of an annual planning committee and staff. The committee monitors progress against the plan's objectives quarterly. This framework ensures that the committee has good control over the Co-operative's overall direction.
- 5.2 The Co-operative's IMP clearly communicates what the organisation aims to achieve and how it intends to do this. It sets out clear strategic priorities and objectives for both the short and medium term; the current plan runs from 2004 to 2007. The IMP is supported by departmental plans which link to the Co-operative's corporate priorities and cover the same time period. Each of the departmental plans has SMART objectives which clearly set out what it will do to deliver key areas of service. There are a range of performance targets for the current financial year. The IMP also has clear links with the Co-operative's long term financial plans.

### **Clear functions and proper control**

*Social landlords should be clear about the functions of the governing body, and take informed, transparent decisions within a framework of controls.*

- 5.3 The Co-operative's management committee has a clear view of its role in setting the strategic direction, monitoring performance and exercising control. It works constructively with staff.
- 5.4 As noted in the previous two sections, the committee gets regular performance reports for the Co-operative's key service areas. With the exception of a few gaps which the Co-operative identified and was addressing, reports give a very good level of information on performance. The good quality of reporting provides a good platform for the Co-operative's decision making process.

### **Developing capacity**

*Social landlords should ensure that their governing bodies have the skills and experience they need to perform well, develop their capacity and evaluate performance.*

- 5.5 Easthall Park's committee members have a wide range of skills and experiences that help to guide and control its activities. The Co-operative has good support arrangements in place for new members joining the committee which include an induction package and support from an experienced Committee member.

- 5.6 The Co-operative has an effective approach to ensuring committee members have access to training to support them in their role. It does this by:
- carrying out an annual review of members' training needs, which informs the content of the training programme;
  - arranging good quality training, both through the local RSL forum and via external trainers; and
  - committing budgets for the delivery of training.

### **Group Structures**

*Social landlords in group structures should be able to operate independently, have clear and separate identities, control potential conflicts of interest and ensure that their assets are not put at risk by subsidiaries.*

- 5.7 Easthall Park has established one subsidiary organisation, Moriehall Housing Association Limited. Moriehall is registered with Communities Scotland as an RSL, and recently took responsibility for managing around 450 houses owned by Glasgow Housing Association in the local area. Easthall Park provides housing management services to Moriehall. The constitutional arrangements and management agreement in place are intended to ensure that Easthall Park and Moriehall retain separate identities and that that the relationship does not put Easthall Park's assets at risk.

### **Accountability**

*Engaging stakeholders, public reporting and making accountability real.*

- 5.8 A strong membership and good levels of participation at annual general meetings (AGMs) are important ways for a landlord to ensure accountability. Easthall Park is a fully mutual co-operative, and as such all tenants are required to become members of the Co-operative. At the time of our inspection Easthall Park had 477 members. Forty eight, or just over 10%, of members attended the Co-operative's last AGM. This is lower than the average attendance, in percentage terms, of its peers and the national average. However, the Co-operative's fully mutual status means that its membership level is high compared with its peers and the national figure, and the attendance level needs to be viewed in this context.
- 5.9 Easthall Park has 11 committee members out of a possible 15. Nine current members are tenants; the other two are partners of tenants. The Co-operative has recognised the committee's gender imbalance and is actively trying to address this. The attendance level at committee meetings was similar to the peer and national figure in 2003/04, and has increased in the first half of 2004/05.
- 5.10 Social landlords should treat people with respect and be responsive to their views and priorities. The 2002 tenant survey found that only seventy percent of tenants felt the Co-operative was good at taking their views into account, although more recent ongoing survey work indicates much higher satisfaction levels. We have highlighted already that Easthall Park has made some effort to encourage tenants to participate in its activities, for example through the rents working group and newsletter articles. But these initiatives have had

limited success. It is currently working on a positive initiative to try to attract young residents to join a youth committee, which would identify issues of particular relevance to young people locally. The aim is that members of this group could ultimately become full committee members. This work is still at an early stage. There are no registered tenants' organisations or other tenants' groups within Easthall Park's area of operation.

- 5.11 Social landlords should give stakeholders the information they need about the organisation and its plans, services and performance. Easthall Park's survey in 2002 found that 92% of respondents felt that it was good at keeping them informed about its services and activities. The Co-operative's public reporting on key information is good, and it produces excellent, informative newsletters and annual reports and a well-designed and useful tenant handbook. The Co-operative can make much of its information available in alternative formats on request although, as noted earlier, it does not routinely publicise this service in the material itself.

### **Ethical standards**

*Staff and governing body members should promote values that underpin good governance and should act with honesty and integrity, focusing on the best interest of the organisation and its service users.*

- 5.12 Easthall Park is aware of the importance of both staff and committee members maintaining the highest ethical standards. We found that the Co-operative acts in accordance with statutory requirements relating to the granting of benefits in Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, and it generally achieves high standards in managing potential conflicts of interest.
- 5.13 We discussed in paragraph 4.16 the Co-operative's decision to bring forward the proposed start date of a kitchen replacement contract. The proposal was made because the Co-operative had identified problems with existing kitchens. It was discussed and agreed by the committee with input from staff, although the proposal was not supported by a paper and the decision was not formally recorded. The Co-operative will be taking decisions about its planned maintenance priorities more regularly in the future because its programme will begin shortly. It needs to adopt a more documented approach which ensures that it can demonstrate the transparency of its decision-making on this and other similar issues. The approach it adopts also needs to take account of the tenant base of the committee.

### **Managing risk**

*Social landlords should be aware of all risks they face and put into place robust arrangements to minimise these risks and to deal with them if they do occur.*

- 5.14 Easthall Park is good at monitoring, reviewing and reporting on the risks it faces and it clearly assigns responsibility for managing these risks. It assesses the range of areas where strategic and operational risks may arise, along with the likelihood of risk events occurring and their potential impact. The outcomes from this are reported to the committee and incorporated into the Co-operative's strategic planning process. This approach generally gives

Easthall Park a clear view of the risks it faces, with the exception that the it did not identify the risks to the organisation in its management of gas safety.

- 5.15 The Co-operative has a well developed internal audit process that reduces the possibility of risk materialising. It has a rolling programme of internal audits in place which are integrated with the risk assessment process, and it responds well to issues arising from audits and develops appropriate action plans.
- 5.16 Easthall Park has many strengths in governance. Its management committee has a clear understanding of its role, an effective involvement in planning and controls the organisation effectively. Its planning and performance management framework is effective, and it publicises its services and performance very well. It has had limited success in actively involving tenants other than those on the committee in participating actively in developing its services. It has demonstrated a good awareness of the importance of high ethical standards, and needs to ensure it follows this principle in all areas and has a transparent approach to decision-making.

### Financial viability and management

*Social landlords should be financially viable in the medium term and sustainable in the longer term. They should have a robust financial management framework*

- 5.17 The Co-operative's financial performance is consistently good, with operating surpluses increasing year on year over recent times. The medium term financial plans indicate that this trend will continue and although the net surplus budgeted for 2004/05 is around £114,000 less than 2003/04, this is due to significantly higher than forecasted loan interest costs.
- 5.18 The Co-operative has prepared comprehensive thirty year financial plans. These incorporate recently revised life cycle costings and include detailed analysis, which allows the Co-operative to look at the potential effect of changes in a number of key variables. The plans are reviewed on an annual basis and are based around a robust set of assumptions. They demonstrate that the Co-operative is sustainable in the long term. The committee receives informative reports on the Co-operative's financial planning.
- 5.19 Past results, together with the forecast for 2004/05 reflect a period of rapid growth. The Co-operative's turnover has doubled since 1999 and its financial performance is evidence of very effective operating cost control.

Financial Performance	£000's 2000/01	£000's 2001/02	£000's 2002/03	£000's 2003/04	£000's 2004/05
Turnover	555.7	740.2	886.1	991.8	1,134.7
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	226.8	317.5	386.8	443.6	502.0
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	139.1	177.1	202.2	240.2	126.3

- 5.20 There are a number of strengths in the co-operative's approach to the budget setting process. These include:
- the level of detail made available,
  - the use of comparisons from previous years; and

- how its procedures and timescales allow the committee's views to be sought and the budget approved in advance of the start of the financial year.
- 5.21 Quarterly financial monitoring reports provide the committee with an appropriate level of detail from which to review actual performance against budget. The Co-operative has also established its own financial performance indicators and reports against these. This gives a more accurate picture of its financial position and better informs the decision-making process.
- 5.22 Easthall Park is financially viable in the medium term and has a low exposure to financial risk. It has an excellent financial management framework.

## **6. Recommendations for improvement action**

These are the key areas that need to be targeted for improvement action. They are broadly in order of priority:

Across all its activities, Easthall Park should:

- widen the opportunities for tenants to be involved in the development of its services.

In housing management, Easthall Park should:

- give better information to applicants who have been suspended from receiving offers with information; and
- keep more systematic records of its actions so that it can better understand its performance.

In property management, Easthall Park should:

- ensure that it complies with its legislative duties relating to gas safety; and
- improve its monitoring of completion times for emergency repairs.

## **7. Next steps**

- 7.1 This report highlights our findings following this housing inspection. We expect all organisations to respond effectively to our recommendations using their own improvement planning processes. We ask organisations that receive fair or poor assessments overall in their housing management, property maintenance or governance and financial management to submit an improvement plan to us within eight weeks of the publication of this report. We do not require Easthall Park to submit and improvement plan. We will inspect once every five years.
- 7.2 If you would like to find out how Easthall Park plans to respond to the findings of this inspection you should contact:

Easthall Park Housing Co-operative  
6 Glenburnie Place  
Easthall  
Glasgow, G34 9AN  
Telephone 0141 781 2277  
E-mail [enquiries@easthallpark.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@easthallpark.org.uk)

# Appendix 1

## Sources of evidence

### Groups and third parties consulted

- Communities Scotland Tenant Participation Team
- Glasgow City Council
- Glasgow Housing Association Ltd
- Glasgow Social Work Department
- Easthall Community Planning Group

### Interviews / meetings

- Members of the Co-operative's Committee
- Director
- Core Services Manager
- Finance Manager
- Frontline staff
- Discussions with a range of tenants and service users.
- Community Police

### Reality checks

- Review of arrears cases
- Review of legal actions against tenants
- Review of anti-social behaviour cases
- Review of gas safety documents
- Review of complaints
- Review of reported repairs
- Review of housing list applications and allocations
- Review of section 5 referrals
- Review of empty house management records
- Review of information for applicants and tenants
- Shadowing arrears interview
- Estate visits
- Empty property visits
- Observation of the provision of information and advice
- Observation of committee meeting

### Key documents reviewed

- Inspection submission
- Risk management strategy

- Register of benefits to committee members (schedule 7 Register)
- Strategic Management Plan 2004/05 -2006/07
- Internal audit reports
- Resident participation strategy
- Customer feedback and complaints policy
- Allocations policy
- Anti-social behaviour policy
- Estate management policy
- Maintenance policy
- Arrears policy
- Annual Report 2003-04
- Annual performance and statistical returns to Communities Scotland
- Performance monitoring reports for arrears, allocation and repairs response times
- Committee meeting reports and minutes
- Tenant newsletters
- Annual accounts for year ending 31 March 2004
- Budget 2004/05
- Management accounts

### Examples of positive practice

This is an area we would highlight as working particularly well, taking account of the organisation's operating context;

#### ***Quality of neighbourhoods***

Easthall Park is working hard to ensure the local area is safe and attractive. In particular, it:

- has recently completed a new office in the heart of its local community, which incorporates refurbished community facilities;
- is working on the next stage of this development, which will create a public park close to the Co-operative's office;
- has developed its own CCTV system which allows the Co-operative to use images as evidence when dealing with anti social behaviour; and
- works well in partnership with the local community police.

#### ***Informative written information to service users to support the housing management service***

Easthall Park provides service users with good quality written information to support some of its key housing management activities. It participates in a common application form initiative with other local landlords, and the material for applicants includes useful details on the location of each landlord's houses and as well as a map of the area. It sends informative letters to applicants which help to manage expectations by incorporating information on the number and type of allocations from the previous year. This allows applicants to compare the number of points they have been awarded with the points of successful applicants who were allocated houses in particular areas. The Co-operative's arrears information leaflet, issued with standard arrears letters, provides clear advice on where tenants can obtain specialist advice regarding rent arrears.

## Glossary

<b>Annual Statistical and Performance Return (APSR)</b>	Annual questionnaire completed by RSLs and sent to Communities Scotland. Used to keep the Register of Social Landlords up to date and to track the performance of RSLs.
<b>Average</b>	The arithmetic mean – the sum of all the values divided by the number of values.
<b>Benchmarking</b>	A process used by organisations to systematically compare service processes and performance to identify best practice.
<b>Common housing register</b>	A register of all applicants for social housing used by two or more landlords within an area.
<b>Cyclical maintenance</b>	Planned programme of work to deal with predictable deterioration of building components, for example regular painting of window frames.
<b>Housing list</b>	A list of applicants for housing which is used by the RSL to allocate its housing stock.
<b>Inspection submission</b>	Documents submitted by the landlord at the start of the inspection to provide information to on its performance, context and how it is structured.
<b>Life cycle costing</b>	A method of calculating the cost and timing of the repairs to, and replacement of, major building components.
<b>National median</b>	The central value of the ordered performance of all Scottish RSLs.

<b>Peer group</b>	A group of organisations facing similar tasks and challenges with which comparisons can be made. RSLs choose which peer group they belong to when they submit their APSRs.
<b>Performance indicator</b>	A measure of how a RSL is achieving its objectives. Performance Indicators can be compared with a pre-set standard (a benchmark) or with other organisations.
<b>Performance Standards</b>	Housing standards for all social landlords in Scotland.
<b>Planned maintenance</b>	The planned renewal or maintenance of key property components.
<b>Quartile</b>	The range represented by one quarter of the ordered performance of all Scottish RSLs. So for example, the upper quartile is the top 25% of RSLs.
<b>Serious arrears</b>	Where a tenant owes more than 13 weeks rent payments and this is more than £250
<b>Statutory reasonable preference categories</b>	People who have one of these housing needs: homelessness, overcrowding, large families, living in below tolerable standard housing or unsatisfactory living conditions.
<b>Rechargeable repairs</b>	Work that is the responsibility of the tenant but has been done by the landlord.
<b>Registered social landlord (RSL)</b>	A landlord providing social rented housing that is registered and regulated by Communities Scotland.
<b>Re-lets</b>	Lets made to the second or subsequent tenant. Distinguished from new lets that are made when the property is first built or modernised.
<b>Right to Repair</b>	A scheme which gives tenants legal rights to have certain repairs in defined times.
<b>Scottish secure tenancy (SST)</b>	The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 establishes the Scottish Secure Tenancy as the tenancy for all tenants of social landlords in Scotland.

**Shadowing**

An inspection technique that involves accompanying and observing staff while they carried out their day-to-day tasks.

## Regulation & Inspection

### **EDINBURGH**

Rosebery House  
9 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh EH12 5YA  
Tel: 0131 313 3700

### **GLASGOW**

Highlander House  
58 Waterloo Street  
Glasgow G2 7DA  
Tel: 0141 226 4611