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Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

Annual Report of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee 2024-25



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Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

To consider and report on matters relating to local government and planning falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, matters relating to housing and tenants' rights within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, and matters relating to local government boundaries, local governance review and democratic renewal.



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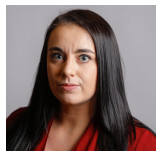
Committee Membership



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Scottish Green Party



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Introduction

1. This annual report covers the work of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee from 13 May 2024 to 12 May 2025.

Membership change

2. During this period the following membership changes took place—
 - On 18 June 2024 Emma Roddick replaced Stephanie Callaghan
 - On 18 June 2024 Fulton MacGregor replaced Gordon MacDonald
 - On 10 October 2024 Meghan Gallacher replaced Miles Briggs
 - On 10 October 2024 Alexander Stewart replaced Pam Gosal.

Meetings

3. The Committee held 34 meetings over this period. 33 took place partly in private. Items taken in private generally involved consideration of evidence heard earlier in the meeting, consideration of draft reports and approaches to inquiries and other work programme issues.

Committee meetings



Source: Scottish Parliament

Legislation Bills

Housing (Scotland) Bill

4. The [Housing \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced in March 2024. Its contents cover topics including rent controls and the prevention of homelessness.
5. This Committee was the lead committee for scrutiny of the Bill at Stage 1 and Stage 2. The Social Justice and Social Security Committee also considered certain aspects of the Bill with a particular focus on homelessness prevention. The committees issued a joint call for written views and received responses from 317 individuals and organisations. These responses and a summary report are available on the Bill webpage.
6. The Committee took oral evidence on the Bill in June and September 2024 from a wide range of witnesses representing all aspects of the housing sector. These included academics and researchers, tenants' organisations, organisations representing landlords, developers and agents, local authorities, equalities groups and social landlords. Oral evidence concluded with the Minister for Housing and his officials.
7. The Committee published its Stage 1 report in November 2024 supporting the general principles of the Bill. It welcomed the ambition in the Bill's provisions to re-balance the private rental sector and improve affordability for tenants, but called for further clarity about how the proposed rent controls would work in practice, noting that continued uncertainty could impact investment within the sector. The report also recognised that, in isolation, the Bill is not the answer to the ongoing housing emergency but has a role to play in better balancing tenants' rights with landlords' needs.
8. The Scottish Government indicated that before Stage 2 began it would provide more details about proposed amendments to the Bill on rent controls. In response the Committee held an additional evidence session in January 2025.
9. Stage 2 proceedings began in May 2025, and are expected to conclude in June.

Legislative Consent Memorandum

Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) for the Renters' Rights Bill

10. The Renters' Rights Bill was introduced to the House of Commons in September 2024. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice subsequently lodged a legislative consent memorandum (LCM) explaining why the Scottish Government considered that the Scottish Parliament should consent to the UK Parliament legislating for the relevant provisions in the Bill. Those provisions would prohibit discrimination and restrictions against people with children or in receipt of benefits seeking to let private rented sector properties.
11. The Committee sought the views of stakeholders on the LCM. It received 3 written responses and held an oral evidence session with the Minister for Housing. The Committee [reported](#) in December 2024 and recommended that the Scottish Parliament consent to the UK Parliament legislating for the relevant provisions in this Bill, noting that the provisions have the potential to reduce discrimination against vulnerable groups in the rental sector by improving their access to rental properties. The Committee noted stakeholders' concerns that the penalty which would apply to landlords convicted of discrimination may be insufficient in providing a suitable deterrent. The Committee therefore recommended that the Scottish Government keeps this under review.

Subordinate Legislation

12. The Committee considered 29 Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSI) during the reporting year, of which 3 were affirmative instruments, 22 were negative instruments and 4 were laid only/no procedure.

Number of SSIs considered



SSIs considered

Source: Scottish Parliament

Building (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2024

13. The [Building \(Scotland\) Amendment \(No. 2\) Regulations 2024](#) were laid on 12 December 2024. These extend the limits of the previously introduced standard for heating in new build homes. The Committee invited stakeholders to provide written views on the Regulations and received [30 responses](#).
14. The Committee then considered the Regulations on [21 January 2025](#) and agreed to make no recommendations in respect of the instrument.

Short-term lets

15. The Committee previously considered the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) Order 2022 ("the Licensing Order") which provided for the licensing of short-term lets in Scotland. The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 (Licensing of Short-term Lets) Amendment Order 2024 was laid on 16 May 2024 and the Committee took evidence on it from the Minister for Housing at its

meeting on 25 June.

16. The Committee [reported on the instrument](#) on 26 June 2024 and recommended (by division) that the instrument be approved.
17. The Committee [wrote to the Minister for Housing on 6 June 2024](#) requesting an indication of when the Scottish Government’s implementation update on the operation of the short-term lets licensing scheme was expected to be published.
18. The Minister for Housing [responded on 17 June 2024](#) to inform the Committee that the Scottish Government intended to publish its implementation update after the UK General Election had taken place.
19. The Scottish Government then published its [Short-Term Let Licensing Implementation Update Report 2024](#) on 30 August 2024. The Committee invited stakeholders to provide written views on the update report and [received nineteen responses](#). The Committee then took evidence on the update report from the Minister for Housing at its [meeting on 19 November 2024](#).

Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee

20. The Committee took evidence on the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee (SLARC)’s [Recommendations for Councillors’ Remuneration and Expenses](#) from the former chair of SLARC and COSLA on [28 May 2024](#).
21. The Committee then took evidence on SLARC’s Recommendations from former members of SLARC, COSLA and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government on [17 September 2024](#).
22. In its [pre-budget scrutiny letter](#) to the Cabinet Secretary the Committee recommended, “that the Scottish Government work with its partners in COSLA, in keeping with the principles laid out in the Verity House Agreement, to give effect to SLARC’s recommendations on councillor remuneration.”
23. [The Local Governance \(Scotland\) Act 2004 \(Remuneration\) Amendment Regulations 2025](#) were laid on 23 January 2025. [The Local Governance \(Scotland\) Act 2004 \(Remuneration\) Amendment \(Amendment\) Regulations 2025](#) were then laid on 19 February to correct an error in the original Regulations.
24. The Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government on the Regulations on [25 February 2025](#) and agreed to make no recommendations in respect of the negative instrument.

Inquiries

Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2025-26

25. The Committee focussed its pre-budget scrutiny on the sustainability of local government finance, which has been a key feature of the Committee's ongoing work on the New Deal for local government.
26. The Committee agreed on [3 September 2024](#) to appoint Hugh Dunn as adviser to the Committee on budget scrutiny 2025-26 and he continued in the role until January 2025.
27. The Committee took evidence as part of its pre-budget scrutiny for 2025-26 from the Accounts Commission, the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) and the UK National Audit Office on [24 September 2024](#).
28. The Committee then took further evidence from stakeholders at its meetings on [1 October 2024](#) and [8 October 2024](#).
29. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government setting out its conclusions and recommendations on [5 November 2025](#). A response was received from the Cabinet Secretary on [5 December 2024](#).
30. The Committee then took evidence on the Scottish Government's Budget for 2025-26 from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government on [21 January 2025](#) and the Minister for Housing, on [14 January 2025](#).

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

31. The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was adopted by Scottish Ministers on 13 February 2023 and the Committee agreed that it would review on an annual basis whether NPF4 was achieving its intended ambitions. To this end, the Committee invited stakeholders to provide written evidence and took evidence from stakeholders on [14 May 2024](#) and from the Minister for Public Finance on [21 May 2024](#).
32. The Committee subsequently [wrote to the Scottish Government](#) with its conclusions, noting that NPF4 had only been in place for one year and so it was difficult to draw many conclusions.
33. Nonetheless some issues arose during its scrutiny. These included concerns about the resourcing of planning departments, and the incentives for planning authorities and developers to pursue some NPF4 policy outcomes such as 20-minute neighbourhoods. The Committee was also disappointed to hear the experience of some witnesses that the new climate and biodiversity requirements in NPF4 were having little real impact on individual planning decisions. The Minister subsequently [responded to the Committee](#) on 30 August 2024. In his letter, he highlighted ongoing work by the Scottish Government including progress on resourcing the planning system, the National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) and local

authority progress in developing Local Development Plans. He also responded to the Committee's concerns on various policies within NPF4 during their first year of implementation (such as those on flooding and soils).

34. In February 2025 the Committee [wrote to a number of stakeholders](#) again seeking their views on the implementation and impact of NPF4, in order to inform its next annual review. The Committee received 37 responses. The Committee has agreed to take further oral evidence.

Housing Inquiry

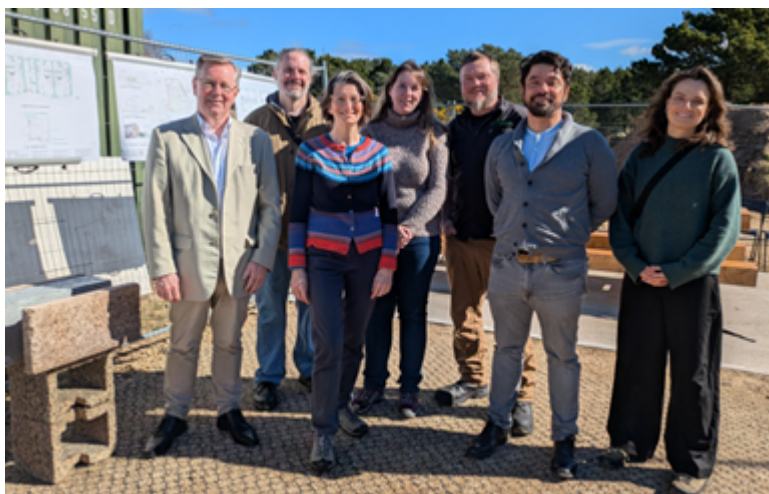
35. On 15 May 2024, the Scottish Parliament agreed to a motion supporting the declaration of a national housing emergency. Thirteen local authorities have also declared a local housing emergency.
36. The Committee agreed it was important that it should scrutinise how the housing emergency is being tackled by the Scottish Government and local authorities, and at the same time explore what a properly functioning housing system would look like. It held a short inquiry where it received written evidence from a range of organisations and held oral evidence sessions with stakeholders including academics, local authorities and representative bodies.
37. The [Committee's report](#) with its conclusions and recommendations was published on 15 May 2025, the anniversary of the declaration of the national housing emergency. Whilst recognising the complex causes of the emergency, the Committee's report highlights the need for the Scottish Government to develop a national action plan for tackling the emergency in order to avoid it drifting on indefinitely. The existing Housing to 2040 strategy should also be a key component in tackling the emergency, but currently lacks an implementation strategy which the Committee recommends is required.
38. Members of the Committee visited Argyll & Bute Council in November 2024 to explore their response to the housing emergency.



Source: Scottish Parliament

Heat in buildings

39. The Committee anticipates having a role in scrutinising the Scottish Government's proposed bill on heat in buildings. In March 2025 members of the Committee visited the Park Ecovillage at Findhorn to see examples of different housing technologies, including the use of heat pumps. [A report on that visit](#) is available online.



Source: Scottish Parliament 2025

Building safety and maintenance

40. The Committee has continued its oversight of building safety and maintenance issues: cladding on high-rise buildings, damp and mould in social and private housing, and the use of RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) in homes.

Cladding

41. The Committee asked the Minister for Housing about cladding remediation at its meeting of [10 December 2024](#). In February 2025 the provisions in the Housing (Cladding Remediation) (Scotland) Bill came into force, and the Scottish Government subsequently published a plan of action for accelerating the pace of progress towards removing or making safe flammable cladding on buildings. The Committee agreed to [write to the Scottish Government](#) requesting that it provides quarterly data on progress to allow the Committee to track developments.

Damp and mould and RAAC

42. The Committee [wrote to the Minister for Housing in June 2024](#) seeking updates on various damp and mould and RAAC issues, and received a response in [July that year](#). In its [tracker report in November 2024](#) the Committee noted that it was keen to see what progress is being made by the cross sector working group on RAAC and how those local authorities particularly impacted by this issue are responding as well as understanding the implications for those living in affected properties. The Committee's annual tracker report sought an improvement in data collection on damp and mould to enable the Committee to better understand the extent of this problem.
43. The views of stakeholders were sought via a targeted call for views which closed on 19 February 2025. [Responses](#) were received from 18 organisations, including local authorities, housing associations, professional bodies, tenants' groups, RAAC campaigners, and individuals. In March 2025 the Committee took evidence over two meetings from representatives of tenants, homeowners, architects, local authorities and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. In April 2025 the Committee held its [annual evidence session](#) on building safety and maintenance with the Minister for Housing.
44. The Committee will continue to monitor progress on all of these issues during the next reporting year.

Council Tax

45. At its meeting on [14 January 2025](#) the Committee agreed to hold a short inquiry on potential reforms to the council tax system in Scotland. The Committee also agreed to consider an approach to wider consideration of local taxation at a future meeting.
46. The Committee then took evidence from a range of stakeholders including academics, economists, valuers, assessors, tax specialists and an equalities organisation along with representatives of Welsh local government and the Welsh

Institute for Revenue, Ratings and Valuation (IRRV) (to discuss the experience of revaluation exercises in Wales) at its meetings on [18 February 2025](#) and [25 February 2025](#) before taking evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government and COSLA on [4 March 2025](#).

47. Following its evidence taking, the Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary and COSLA setting out its conclusions and recommendations on [29 April 2025](#).

Scrutiny of Ombudsman, Regulators, Commissions and Commissioner accountable to the Committee

Scottish Housing Regulator

48. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is directly accountable to the Scottish Parliament, and each year it is invited to provide oral evidence to the Committee about its annual report and performance. In previous years the Committee has considered the SHR's annual report, but this year it agreed to undertake more detailed scrutiny which included obtaining evidence from a range of stakeholders. The Committee issued a call for written views on the SHR, and subsequently held oral evidence sessions with stakeholders.
49. The Committee wrote to the SHR in March 2025 summarising the evidence it had received and making some recommendations for where the SHR should take further action. These include its engagement with housing providers, its impact on community-based housing associations, engagement with tenants, and the need for an independent appeals process. At the time of writing the Committee is awaiting a response from the SHR to its recommendations. The Scottish Government has however confirmed that it is [supporting legislative changes](#) to the Housing (Scotland) Bill to enable the creation of an independent appeals process.

Scrutiny of Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

50. The Committee considered its approach to its consideration of the annual report of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and agreed to a programme of oral evidence on [29 October 2024](#).
51. The Committee took evidence from stakeholders [26 November 2024](#) and the Ombudsman on [10 December 2024](#).
52. [The Committee wrote to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#) with its conclusions in February 2025. The Ombudsman [responded in April](#).
53. The SPSO also laid the [Statement of Complaint Handling Principles](#) in April which the Committee will consider before reporting to Parliament.

Annual Report of the Ethical Standards Commissioner 2023-24

54. The Committee took evidence from Ian Bruce, Ethical Standards Commissioner 19 November 2024 and wrote to him setting out its conclusions and recommendations on [18 December 2024](#). The Ethical Standards Commissioner responded on [25 February 2025](#).

Annual Report of the Standards Commission 2023-24

55. The Committee took evidence from Lorna Johnston, Executive Director and Suzanne Vestri, Convener, Standards Commission for Scotland on [19 November 2024](#).
56. Following its evidence taking the Committee wrote to the Standards Commission on [18 December 2024](#). A response was received from the Standards Commission on [6 January 2025](#).

Petitions

57. At its [meeting on 11 March 2025](#) the Committee considered three petitions which had previously been referred to the Committee:
- [PE1743](#) Amend the law to protect the rights of pre-1989 Scottish Secure Tenants - The Committee agreed to close the petition under Rule 15.7 of Standing Orders and to write to the Scottish Government highlighting the need for continued engagement with rented sector stakeholders on this issue.
 - [PE1778](#) Review the Landlords' Register Scheme - The Committee agreed to close the petition under Rule 15.7 of Standing Orders.
 - [PE1912](#) Funding for Council venues - The Committee agreed to close the petition under Rule 15.7 of Standing Orders.

Equalities, Engagement and Innovation

58. To inform its consideration of the Housing (Scotland) Bill, the Committee established two lived experience panels. One was made up of tenants in the private rental sector and the other of landlords in the private rental sector. Over the course of a series of meetings the panels agreed on recommendations to inform the Committee's scrutiny of the Bill. The agreed recommendations of both groups can be accessed via the links below.

- [Tenants in the private rental sector recommendations](#)
- [Landlords in the private rental sector recommendations](#)

Equalities

59. The Committee held a private briefing session with Dr May East whose expertise includes the gendered nature of planning in urban areas. This was to help inform the Committee's future consideration of the impact of the fourth National Planning Framework, to enable it to take a gender sensitive perspective in its scrutiny.

Tracker reports

60. Each year the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee publishes a tracker report highlighting progress on issues it has considered throughout the year and throughout the session. This allows the Committee to assess progress against its recommendations to the Scottish Government.
61. The Committee agreed its tracker report for 2023-2024 at its meeting on [12 November 2024](#) and [published it](#) on 15 November 2024.
62. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government on the Tracker Report on 2 May 2025.
63. The Committee will publish a report for 2024-25 following the summer recess.

Interparliamentary relations

64. The Committee has been keen to work collaboratively with its equivalent committees in other UK legislatures to learn from each other's experience of working on matters of shared interest.
65. In March 2025, the Convener met with Florence Eshalomi MP, Chair of the House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee to explore opportunities to learn from each others experiences and opportunities for collaborative working.

