

# **HOUSING STRATEGY**

**2018-2021**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

whg is an ambitious and growing regional housing business that serves a wide range of customers across the Midlands. We have a large and increasing range of housing products and services on offer and are keen to increase the reach and range of our services across all of our areas of operation. We pride ourselves on delivering a high quality service.

We are a very successful business having consistently achieved strong financial performance results and are proud that individual service areas, such as housing operations, have achieved some of the strongest levels of operating efficiency in the sector. We are in a good place and we want to capitalise on this strength to further develop and improve our services to our customers.

As we grow further beyond our traditional boundaries, our services need to grow too. We will, through the implementation of this Strategy, redefine our housing services offer and the way in which we deliver services so that customers have a consistent experience regardless of where they live.

This future vision for housing services will take full advantage of the technological advances that have been made to enable mobile working and home working; providing services directly in and to the communities we serve.



To maintain our strong operating and financial performance, current external challenges cannot be ignored and we must continue to provide services that are as efficient and effective as possible.

Continued welfare reform changes are an ongoing concern. Many of our customers are struggling with the changes and there is an increased risk of rent arrears. Our focus will therefore continue to be on sustaining tenancies through the provision of excellent

income collection, money advice and independent living support services.

Anticipating an increase in the demand on our services, we must target our resources where they are needed most; supporting our vulnerable customers. Tapping into our Digital First Strategy and the launch of our customer self-service portal, customers who can do more for themselves will be encouraged to do so.

We will redesign our services so that there is an assumption of self-sufficiency and not of dependency. We will change our focus from simply resolving problems as they arise to working with our customers to empower them to resolve problems themselves, providing it is appropriate to do so.

**Fay Shanahan**  
**Corporate Director of Operations**

# STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This Strategy supports the delivery of our Corporate Plan, but also the following key strategies from across the organisation:

- **Development Growth Strategy;** we will develop a new housing services offer that is consistent across all our areas of operation.
- **Asset Management Strategy;** understanding that housing management problems, if not dealt with quickly, can affect the desirability of our properties. We will continue to manage our tenancies and neighbourhoods effectively; taking action quickly and working in partnership with statutory agencies. We will build on Your Home Your World, emphasising the rights and responsibilities of our tenants.
- Through our neighbourhood plans we will continue to work in partnership with asset management colleagues to make best use of our stock.
- **Digital First Strategy;** we will make full use of mobile working technology to enable our colleagues to work remotely as effectively as if they were in the office.



- **VFM Strategy;** we will continue to provide housing services efficiently and cost effectively, whilst also delivering high performance and great customer satisfaction.
- **People Strategy;** as a regional business we will also look to recruit new colleagues from across our geography and base them in the local community when we have achieved the appropriate levels of stock density.
- **Community Investment Strategy;** through our Health and Wellbeing and Employment and Skills teams we will work to create sustainable communities, as well as sustaining tenancies.

## Partnership working

Accepting that our role in communities is not limited to supporting our customers, we also play an important role strategically by working with our partners.

Some of the key strategies we support:

- Community Safety
- Safeguarding Children and Adults
- Homelessness
- Health and Wellbeing.

We recognise that without us, many of our partners cannot fulfil their statutory and regulatory responsibilities without significant additional expense. We already have strong links with Walsall Council and are working in partnership with them to pilot Housing First, a service that aims to help rough sleepers get off the streets by providing accommodation and support.

Our growth plans move us towards becoming a regional housing business, we will now work to develop similarly strong strategic relationships across our other key areas of operation.

# AIM 1. Create a regional housing service delivery model; ensure a consistency of service that reflects our geography

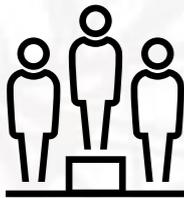
Actions needed to achieve this aim:



Develop a community-based service delivery model that supports regional housing services



Use technology to enable a more seamless housing service



Recruit and retain local talent



Increase automation of key housing processes and create new case management functionality



Roll out mobile working technology that supports colleagues to work remotely/to be based from home



Create a new service that is clear and widely communicated to all customers, including clarity on what can be expected of us as a landlord, regardless of where you live or the tenure you have



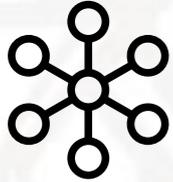
Review policies, procedures and working practices to ensure services are consistently delivered across all areas of operation

## Success Measures

- By 2020: Our operational costs will be a minimum of medium quartile
- By 2024: Our housing offer will be the best in the local market place
- By 2024: Technology will be used across the business to drive down cost, eliminate waste and improve the customer experience

# AIM 2. Sustain tenancies and create resilient communities

Actions needed to achieve this aim:



Launch a culture change programme for colleagues



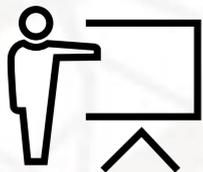
Use data intelligently to focus resources where needed (support for vulnerable tenants)



Launch a behavioural change campaign for customers



Complete 7,000 tenancy visits a year and complete financial health checks



Move towards a more coaching style of relationship between customers and colleagues



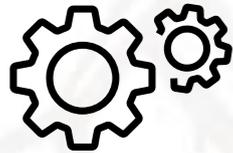
Expand and develop My Home, My World; emphasise to our tenants their rights but also their responsibilities

## Success Measures

- By 2020: 7,000 customers will receive a tenancy visit each year to sustain their tenancies
- By 2020: A behavioural change campaign will take place each year
- By 2020: We will be a 'landlord for life', providing homes to suit customer's needs.

# AIM 3. Support whg's growth ambition

Actions needed to achieve this aim:



Drive efficiency



Build strong relationships with local authority partners beyond our Walsall boundaries



Create additional value from existing resources and adopt a business-like approach



Redesign services to increase first point of contact resolution



Review and redesign operational processes so that resolution is achieved at the lowest cost

## Success Measures

- By 2020: Our operating margin will be over 30%
- By 2020: We will achieve best quartile performance in the housing industry efficiency measures
- By 2024: We will have a reputation for delivering great customer service

# Housing Strategy Delivery Plan

CORPORATE PLAN SUCCESS MEASURES	ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	WHEN	LEAD TEAM
<p>Deliver high quality homes and services to our customers.</p> <p>By 2020;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data science and customer insight will drive our service design.</li> <li>Customer contact due to service failure will be less than 5%.</li> <li>7,000 customers will receive a visit each year to sustain their tenancies.</li> <li>A behavioural change campaign will take place each year.</li> <li>A modern housing offer will be established for older people.</li> </ul> <p>BY 2024;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our housing offer will be the best in the local market place.</li> <li>We will have a reputation for delivering great customer service.</li> <li>90% of customers would recommend us.</li> <li>We will be a 'landlord for life' providing homes to suit customers needs.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use customer insight data to identify areas for improvement; complete at least two service area reviews.</li> <li>Create a programme of 7,000 tenancy visits each year; use customer insight data to target resources to those tenancies showing signs of stress/vulnerability.</li> <li>Create a new and consistent service offer that is widely promoted to customers.</li> <li>Design and launch a new behavioural change campaign that starts to build community resilience.</li> <li>Develop and relaunch My Home, My World; ensure conversation at every Fixed Tenancy visit to increase customer awareness of their rights and responsibilities.</li> <li>Use technology to enhance first point of contact resolution.</li> </ol>	<p>Services are clear and consistent across all areas of operation; data drives service delivery priorities and vulnerable customers are supported to sustain tenancies.</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>April 2019</p> <p>2019/20</p> <p>March 2019</p> <p>July 2019</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Corporate Director/GEXEC</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Customer Services</p>



# Housing Strategy Delivery Plan

CORPORATE PLAN SUCCESS MEASURES	ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	WHEN	LEAD TEAM
<p>Be an exceptional place to work that attracts, develops and retains talent. By 2020;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colleagues will be equipped with the right technology to meet the future needs of the business.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All visiting officers will have a mobile working solution that supports them in their role.</li> <li>Casework functionality will be created for key housing processes and launched, further supporting mobile working.</li> <li>Local talent will be recruited to deliver services to new and emerging local communities where we have stock density.</li> <li>Develop a new community-based service delivery model that supports regional housing services.</li> </ol>	<p>Reduced waste and duplication; officers will not need to come back to the office after visits to upload their notes onto the system.</p> <p>Safeguarding our community focus by recruiting local talent and equipping them with the right technology to do their role remotely from the office.</p>	<p>June 2019</p> <p>June 2019</p> <p>2020/21</p> <p>2020/21</p>	<p>IT</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Corporate Director</p>
<p>Grow and expand our services, our reach and our range. By 2020;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported housing income will be secured to double our service provision.</li> <li>At least two innovative opportunities will be explored each year to further our work.</li> </ul> <p>By 2024;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will be known as a provider of quality homes and services across the</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase by 40% (£82k) funding from external contracts for Health and Wellbeing services.</li> <li>Develop four new wellbeing schemes.</li> <li>Lead and manage the delivery of our homeless rough sleeping support service; working closely in partnership with Walsall Council.</li> <li>Explore two new innovative opportunities.</li> </ol>	<p>Development and expansion of our Health and Wellbeing services; report and promote outcomes and satisfaction achieved.</p>	<p>June 2019</p> <p>March 2021</p> <p>March 2019</p> <p>March 2019</p>	<p>Health &amp; Wellbeing</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellbeing</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellbeing</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellbeing</p>

# Housing Strategy Delivery Plan

CORPORATE PLAN SUCCESS MEASURES	ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	WHEN	LEAD TEAM
Midlands	5. Complete a customer satisfaction review for all our Wellbeing Services and within the first 12 months of all new schemes being handed over.		March 2019	Health & Wellbeing
Promote health and prosperity where we can make a difference. By 2020; 1. 2,000 people will have accessed our Health and Wellbeing services. 2. All of our customers will be offered a financial health check at least once every three years. 3. 100 wellbeing case studies will demonstrate the benefits of the service. By 2024; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An integrated employment and health offer will improve tenancy sustainment.</li> <li>• Partnerships will be used to improve health in the areas where we work.</li> </ul>	1. Measure the outcomes achieved through our Wellbeing Services and promote successes internally and externally.	A fully integrated Health and Wellbeing service that supports tenancy sustainment. Using innovative approaches, customers are encouraged to live healthier lives; successes are widely promoted.	October 2018	Health & Wellbeing
	2. Measure and report the reach and impact of our Health and Wellbeing services.		October 2018	Health & Wellbeing
	3. Create a programme of customers who are to be prioritised for a financial health check.		October 2018	Health & Wellbeing
	4. Use technology to empower customers to do their own financial health check; make available on our website.		March 2019	Housing, IT & Business Excellence
	5. Add into Call Centre scripts, the offer of a financial health check; ensure this is reportable.		March 2019	Customer Services
	6. Measure and report the outcomes achieved by our Independent Living Team (cashable and non-cashable savings).		October 2018	Health & Wellbeing
	7. Improve internal referrals to Independent Living.		October 2018	Health & Wellbeing

# Housing Strategy Delivery Plan

CORPORATE PLAN SUCCESS MEASURES	ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	WHEN	LEAD TEAM
<p>Deliver a strong business, fit for today and prepared for tomorrow By 2020;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our operational costs will be a minimum of median quartile compared to our peers.</li> <li>• Our operating margin will be over 30%.</li> <li>• Achieve best quartile performance in the housing industry efficiency measures.</li> </ul> <p>BY 2024;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology will be used across the business to drive down cost, eliminate waste and improve the customer experience.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement the Housing Customer First project; review all key housing processes, streamline services and re-designate responsibilities (20% of current tasks will be delivered more cost effectively).</li> <li>2. Create a programme for reviewing all policies and procures.</li> <li>3. Review policies, procedures and working practices to ensure services are consistently delivered across all areas of operation.</li> <li>4. Review the allocations policy, including Choose &amp; Move; are our practices regional or local?</li> <li>5. Build strong relationships with local authority partners beyond our Walsall boundaries.</li> </ol>		<p>October 2020</p> <p>December 2018</p> <p>May 2020</p> <p>December 2018</p> <p>March 2019</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>Housing, Legal Services Team</p> <p>All</p>