

Housing Strategy

2022-2024



Executive summary



Our Housing Strategy developed in 2018 redefined our Housing Services offer and the way in which we deliver services to our customers, ensuring there is a consistency of approach to experience regardless of the geography of our Homes. We have made excellent progress with the launch of the Community Housing model at the beginning of September 2021, introducing 30 Community Housing Officers managing communities of between 500 and 700 homes. This model is designed to safeguard and build upon our strong community focus as we grow across the Midlands. By working with customers using strengths-based approaches, we will sustain tenancies and build successful communities across our whole geography. Community Housing Officers will take 'ownership' of their community and will have a greater presence. Being visible to customers, they will create greater opportunities for conversations, recognising strengths and building capacity alongside our customers. This will demonstrate our commitment to being 'more than a landlord'.

The recent coronavirus pandemic has resulted in accelerating the way in which services are delivered, moving to more remote ways of working. We have embraced digital transformation that has seen the introduction of a new Choose and Move low code platform for customers to apply for housing. Project Wizard has enabled our income collection teams to focus on those customers that need our support coupled with the introduction of Voicescape that has increased the direct messaging facility to our customers. The new flexibility of our services has made them more inclusive and will allow us to better engage with our furthest to reach customers.

The pandemic also saw the introduction of a period of no evictions. Through our Corporate Plan success measures we are already committed to not evicting anyone into homelessness, and this will continue to be a priority throughout the life of the current Corporate Plan and this Housing Strategy.

The introduction of the Social Housing White Paper reinforces the need for greater customer involvement in the way services are delivered and standards that we need to achieve. Through support for Building Safety and refurbishment we will work with other teams to provide an improved environment for customers to live in. We will work with customers to redefine our Neighbourhood Plans and define what place making means to us both.

In order to create greater capacity to deliver Housing Services, the Customer First project has been established. It is made up of three workstreams, firstly an IT technical build for our Community Housing Officers by transitioning our CHO colleagues to digital means of working such as MIS Mobile CRM, forms and documents. Secondly redesigning and delivering a brand new Customer Services Recruitment and Training approach and thirdly processes will be automated, where agreed, to free up time and resource as specified within the Business Requirements.

There will continue to be a focus on sustaining tenancies through embedding our new Sustainability Team throughout Housing Services, ensuring we are at the forefront of providing excellent money advice, independent living services and community safety. We will work with other teams to provide an improved, inclusive environment for customers to live in. The ability of our CHOs and Sustainability team to support our diverse customers will be reinforced through ongoing dedicated equality learning programmes.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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

Development Strategy; Our growth plans continue to increase the number of homes we manage in the regions and we are developing strong strategic relationships across our other key areas of operation. We will continue to develop and implement our new Community Housing model 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. Our Neighbourhood Impact Officers/ Neighbourhood Community Officers complete building safety checks and our CHOs encourage customers to recycle, be responsible for their homes and neighbourhoods and not harm the environment.

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.

Customer Voice Strategy; we will give customers an influential voice, providing a range of ways for customers to purposefully engage with us, offering modern ways to engage that suit the needs of our diverse customer base.

Health and Well Being Strategy; We know that great health and wellbeing is the route to resilient communities, the foundation of happiness and a key enabler of a strong successful economy

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.

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 deliver Housing First, Domestic Abuse Strategy, Community Safety Plans, Environmental initiatives and Afghan resettlement.

We have redesigned our services so that there is an assumption of self-sufficiency and not of dependency. We have changed 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.

Aim 1



We will use the voice of our customers to provide great housing services that contribute to place shaping.

Actions needed to achieve this aim:



Work with customers to develop and promote widely neighbourhood plans that identify and address local priorities, recognising the diversity of our customers



Deliver the new Community Housing Model consistently across all communities



Work with customers to redefine our service standards



Use our data and customer insight to target our resources



Through the implementation of our Customer First project, all of our housing processes will be reviewed and redesigned where necessary to ensure that the best customer experience is achieved



Be at the forefront of developments to Universal Credit and other Policy changes in regards to benefits linking with influential networks

Aim 2

Grow and extend our services.



Actions needed to achieve this aim:



Promote social, environmental and inclusive wellbeing by providing and maintaining communal spaces in our ownership



Embedding the Tenancy Sustainability Team and Tenancy Sustainability approach throughout Housing Services



Use Customer Voice and a place-based approach to develop our Service Offer Linked to requirements within the Housing White Paper



Review of our commercial housing services to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our non-social housing customers



Build strong links with our key Local Authority partners beyond Walsall (e.g. Cannock / Telford and Wolverhampton)

Aim 3



Deliver Tenancy Sustainability across all our homes.

Actions needed to achieve this aim:



Delivery and Review of the Homelessness Prevention Action Plan



Encouraging customers to take responsibility for their homes and making neighbourhoods work, pulling together to solve problems and strengthen communities



Through coaching and a strengths based approach to managing our homes help customers to sustain their tenancies



Expand the collection with care initiative



Create a mechanism to identify customers who have risk factors that may result in a failed tenancy to target support

Thank you

For more information please contact Gary Brookes