



Corporate plan 2018-23







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Who we are

Housing Plus Group is committed to being an excellent provider of homes and services in and around Shropshire and Staffordshire. The Group comprises Severnside Housing, South Staffordshire Housing Association (SSHA), Care Plus, Property Plus and Severn Homes.



Housing Plus Group builds new homes for rent, sale and shared ownership and provides the central services for the Group which include treasury, accounts, legal, HR, marketing and IT services.

Severnside Housing and South Staffordshire Housing Association (SSHA) own and manage the affordable and social housing portfolio across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Staffordshire.



Care Plus provides a range of support and care services across Shropshire and Staffordshire, as well as managing the 31 retirement living communities and four retirement living schemes with care and support for our more vulnerable and elderly customers.

Property Plus provides the repairs, improvements, grounds maintenance and compliance services which ensure our stock and estates are well maintained, safe and secure.



Severn Homes provides and manages a portfolio of market rented properties as well as managing the outright sale and shared ownership programmes.



What we want to do

Our vision, values and strategic priorities are heartfelt statements of intent and set a clear direction of travel. Housing Plus Group has the skills and expertise needed to deliver these priorities in a difficult and ever changing operating environment.

Our vision

To be an excellent provider of homes and services, enhancing the quality of life for our customers.

Our strategic priorities

Resilient and growing business

- Dynamic and strong; a group of growing perpetuity businesses
- Developing more homes to meet a range of needs
- Efficient, effective and compliant business

Focused on customers, communities and homes

- Providing excellent homes and services
- Working with our partners and investing in our communities
- Listening to, engaging and supporting customers

Developing and supporting our people

- Using technology to enhance communication and agile working
- Knowledgeable, trusted and caring staff
- Enhancing the skills of our people

Our values

Trust

Ensuring we always communicate and act with respect, honesty and integrity

Partnerships

Working creatively and collaboratively to excel

Innovation

Learning and changing to continuously improve

Accountable

Being transparent and responsible for our actions and performance

Inclusive

Respecting and valuing diversity in our workplace and communities



A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing bright pink scrubs and black pants, is walking a small black and white dog on a leash down a paved path. The dog is wearing a green harness. The background is a lush green outdoor setting with trees and bushes. A dark red semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

What we will achieve

Resilient and
growing business

Dynamic and strong; a growing perpetuity business

The Group wants to keep growing, enabling it to be as efficient as possible and to have a louder voice in the region. However, the boards will not risk the Group's viability and thus its ability to keep providing excellent homes and services in the future.

Further growth of the Group through mergers with housing associations or charities would be positively considered by the board if shared values, priorities and culture are demonstrable and future efficiencies can be achieved.

Growth is not restricted to property numbers and geography; the boards also wish to see growth in the range of services provided from within the Group. This could include expanding the services currently provided by Property Plus and Care Plus.

2023 targets

Delivering more care to support people to stay in their own homes by growing our domiciliary care services, in both counties, to 2,000 hours per week by March 2019 and thereafter

Core services provided in house by a group company enabling quality of delivery and local employment - ground maintenance 2018, gas servicing 2023

Treasury strategy and Group funding and security arrangements reviewed and actioned in order to fund the Group's growth ambition - March 2019

Through merger and/or transfer to have achieved an enlarged group of 15-20,000 homes by 2023

Developing more homes to meet a range of needs

The boards share an appetite to offer a range of homes and services to meet a range of needs; it will not just provide homes at social or affordable rent. Many homes currently available within Shropshire and Staffordshire to buy or rent privately are considered unaffordable by our communities and it is essential to offer a wider range of products that includes properties for market or near market rent, shared ownership and open market sales. The development programme will be balanced to ensure that there is a strong, evidenced demand for the homes that we build, whatever the tenure and that the programme reflects the Group's financial capacity and risk appetite.

2023 targets

Delivering 300 property starts on site per annum with effect from 2019/20



Efficient, effective and compliant business

An efficient business is essential in these challenging times. The 2016 merger case set out a number of efficiencies, targeting savings of up to £3m per annum. Equally important is the continued excellent performance in income collection, particularly as the roll out of the government's Welfare Reform measures continue to build momentum and impact our customers.

The Group's offices strategy recognises the need to rationalize office accommodation in order to become more efficient and embed the Group's cultural and transformational aims by both bringing central teams together in one location and developing a practice and culture of agile working.

The boards have expressed no appetite for risk in the areas of landlord compliance and health & safety. Working to the highest industry standards and mindful of potential post-Grenfell legislative change, they require excellent records of compliance and high standards of inspection to be maintained.

2023 targets

Sustain merger integration efficiencies of £3m per annum and prioritise the reinvestment of savings to deliver corporate priorities

'Good' ratings in all areas from the CQC and maintain the G1 V1 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) 2018/19

Maintain landlord statutory compliance standards - 100% every year

Review Group governance structures to improve efficiency and respond to the Group's business needs 2018/19

Protect rental income against the threat of Welfare Reform including Universal Credit, by containing rent arrears at a maximum of 2.5% of rent debit per annum

Optimise income collected through service charges by the delivery and implementation of a service charges project - project and opportunity scoping during 2018/19 and then a phased implementation from April 2019

Sustain an operating margin of 30% or better



What we will achieve

Focused on customers,
communities and homes

Providing excellent homes and services

The Group wishes to provide excellent homes and to do so expects to understand the condition of its housing stock and its ability to meet the needs of its current and future customers. The asset management strategy ensures investment is maintained not only for new homes but also in our existing homes and that repairs services are responsive and timely. We have shared with customers our fully funded five year area-based property investment plans. These sit within our asset management strategy and work in harmony with the Fair Landlord approach.

Care Plus will undertake an analysis of future demand patterns for the sheltered bedsit accommodation in Staffordshire in parallel with a review of the potential future investment and/or redevelopment costs of those flats. This will inform a review of the future use of these assets. Demographic and health analysis will be used to inform Care Plus' strategic and growth priorities as we seek to address the growing needs of an ageing population and ensure that the most vulnerable people in our community receive support and care.

Often the first point of contact for a customer is our customer service centre which is structured to offer a single point of contact for housing related enquiries. There is a programme of technical improvements to this service rolling out during 2018/19 which will help customers to manage telephone transactions with their landlord more easily.

2018/19 will see the development of our digital transformation and the plan to introduce more efficient and effective customer contact channels, simplifying our processes and systems to enable self-service and digital transactions. This will free up our resources to focus on the more complex enquiries and our more vulnerable customers.

2023 targets

Asset management strategy delivered to provide £40m of quality improvements and repairs for current and future customers by 2023

To contain expenditure associated with empty properties at a maximum of 0.85% to include rent loss and utilities costs whilst increasing customer satisfaction with condition of the home to at least 75%

Undertake a review of bedsit accommodation to inform decision on future use options 2019

High-quality services recognised by high satisfaction levels from customers with homes, rent levels, repairs and value for money. Target of 80% satisfaction with repairs service by 2020

To introduce customer self-service through alternative (digital) channels to reduce call volumes by at least 20% by 2023

Working with our partners and investing in our communities

Maintaining vibrant, self-reliant and sustainable communities is a priority for the Group. Helping customers to either remain in work or enable them to move into work will maintain strong tenancies which assists the business in its other ambitions.

Working closely with our partners and stakeholders, the use of Digital Dens and job clubs to enhance the skills of customers, across the two counties, is seen as a way to achieve this as is the work undertaken with the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) project which offers pre-employment advice to combat poverty and promote social inclusion. A targeted Learning Programme and a partnership with the Prince's Trust in Shropshire also support these ambitions

2023 targets

Customer learning programme targets and input in place during 2017/18 will be reviewed in July 2019 with homes board setting social value measures against a revised programme from autumn 2018. Social value targets include:

- Number of customers engaged with the employment and learning teams - 1,098
- Number of customers supported into work or a better/more permanent job - 21 customers per year
- Adult skills courses being delivered in every priority community - 316 per year
- Number of customers supported with specialist debt advice delivered by Housing Plus Group directly or through our work with partners - £1.5m value of customer debt reduced
- Number of customers accessing our Digital Dens and supported to access technology - £275,439 funding secured for 2019 - 2022

BBO existing funding of £275,439 is in place with associated targets until December 2019. We will seek to continue this work by securing at least this level of funding and target outputs to 2023.

Listening to, engaging and supporting customers

The boards are keen to hear the customer voice and through a variety of customer engagement methods the homes board wishes to understand levels of satisfaction with the services delivered and use them to help shape improvements to future services.

A customer engagement strategy has been developed with customers and has resulted in a new involvement structure which includes a customer panel, a scrutiny panel and the introduction of transactional surveys to complement the biennial STAR Surveys

2023 targets

Customer engagement – we will have fully embedded our model of customer involvement and engagement. We will:

- Conduct targeted customer led scrutiny projects which add real value to board and to the wider customer base – a minimum of two projects agreed with board and completed each year.
- Demonstrate the value for money and impact of actions resulting from our programme of transactional surveys with an annual report to board.
- Expand and diversify the customer and virtual panel input into our service and policy reviews to ensure that all age groups are heard – all age groups to be engaged by 2020
- Undertake six-monthly impact and value for money sessions with board, customers and officers – continuing from May 2018.
- Review our approach to STAR and have in place a plan which adds value to the board and enables comparison with others in the sector. Review by August 2018 and embed by 2020.

Recognising that a range of communication methods are needed, we will demonstrate that we are effectively engaging with customers through a variety of channels as we deliver our programme of service standards, policy and business improvement activities.



What we will achieve

Developing and
supporting our people

The Group employs over 500 staff across the two counties and acknowledges the importance of structured and informal development for staff, especially as our businesses grow.

The boards recognise that to succeed in their ambitions and to deliver their vision they need talented and committed people. They wish to encourage apprenticeships, professional development and learning at all levels to ensure we have the skills needed for the future and to support our staff to achieve their ambition.

We must ensure that our staff are aided and supported by robust, reliable and tailored IT and telephone solutions across the Group to facilitate working in any of the offices or in any community.

Using technology to enhance communication and agile working across the Group

The Group's IT strategy has been developed to support the Group to deliver improvements in services for customers, in compliance, communication and more flexible, agile working. It recognizes the rurality of many of our homes as well as our urban properties where there may be more easily accessible solutions.

2023 targets

Enable engagement with customers through the use of digital channels that allow choice in how services are consumed. April 2021

Provide equipment for employees that enables agile working in all our communities, however rural and across office locations. April 2020

Provide a set of functional, accurate and accessible systems that ensure we are an informed, efficient and compliant business. April 2022

Ensure IT systems are readily available and secure, transitioning to cloud-based services to support engagement and agile working objectives. April 2021

Deliver IT services and training in an effective and supportive manner that allows IT to be an enabler of business change and service delivery. March 2020

Virtual telephony and contact centre operating from both Shropshire and Staffordshire 2018/19

Knowledgeable, trusted and caring staff

Our people are our key asset in every part of the Group. To provide excellent services, homes and communities we must ensure that we support and empower each other, setting clear expectations to enable colleagues to deliver their day-to-day responsibilities in the knowledge that they are trusted and valued.

2023 targets

Develop a reward and recognition scheme that supports the delivery of our corporate priorities and offers something for everyone - 2018/19

Create an employee engagement plan to prioritise and deliver against identified areas for improvement arising from the 2018 Staff Survey - 2018/19

Develop and implement new Group appraisal and bonus systems - 2018/19

Enhancing the skills of our people

We work in a rapidly changing world and must ensure that our people receive the best possible training so they are able to work in a safe, compliant, legal and appropriate manner with our customers, partners and colleagues. As an employer, we will work to encourage and enable our people to achieve against both the business and their own personal aspirations.

2023 targets

Develop and implement a workforce and organisation development strategy by 2021

Develop and implement targets for the delivery of employee development and training – 2019/20

Implement a 'Grow our own' programme for apprenticeships, graduates and other structured progression programmes for staff – 2020/21

Establish and commence delivery of training for managers in all aspects of performance management – 2019/20

Create a workforce plan for each Group business so that we can better understand and target attraction and development activity to meet forecast demand – 2019/20



Delivering the corporate plan

How will we know when we have delivered the corporate plan?

Performance against all of these corporate targets will be reported six-monthly to the Housing Plus Group board, with the other Group boards responsible for delivery and monitoring of progress against the targets that are specific to their area of the business.

In this way we will ensure that the boards, executive team and staff are fully accountable for the delivery of Housing Plus Group's Corporate Plan ambitions.

What are the risks?

Ambition, change and growth carry risks which we will manage and mitigate against to ensure the delivery of the Group's corporate priorities. The board has considered and agreed its risk appetite as the Group moves forward, delivering the strategic priorities. Board concluded that:

- It is hungry for future business growth
- It has zero risk appetite in the areas of health and safety, landlord compliance and staff skills
- It will adopt a cautious approach to growing care services
- It is enthusiastic about growing the programme of new homes within the constraints of maintaining a viable and resilient business

Risk is closely managed by the Housing Plus Group board and audit and risk committee, who receive quarterly risk updates. The executive team meet quarterly to review the risk and mitigation measures and consider emerging risks.

The key strategic risks identified in the risk and assurance map are:

Business resilience

- Inability to attract or retain people with the right skills to meet current and future business needs
- Major IT operational or security failure which adversely affects the Group
- A failure to manage the Group's reputation, including an inadequate response to adverse publicity

Financial viability

- Failure to manage income, expenditure or cashflow threatens the achievement of the Group's covenants and liquidity requirements and results in a negative impact on the Group's viability
- Failure to let or sell homes in a timely way threatens the Group's income and financial viability
- Pension risks are not managed effectively to ensure future contribution levels are affordable, sustainable and fair

Health and safety compliance

- The condition and how we maintain the Group's property causes death or injury to a customer or colleague which could result in a corporate manslaughter claim or HSE prosecution
- A member of staff lone working is subjected to threats, violence or infection, which results in death or injury
- Care Plus fails to provide adequate care to its customers, resulting in death, injury or harm to a vulnerable customer
- Effective health and safety policies are not in place or are not followed by staff or contractors which results in injury and/or prosecution of the Group
- The Group fails in its duty of care to our employees which results in legal action

Government initiatives

- The introduction of a suite of welfare reforms by government and/or further rent increase restrictions will have a negative effect on the Group's income streams, affecting financial viability
- The Voluntary Right to Buy pilot may not be able to meet customer demand, resulting in disproportionate administration time and cost, managing expectations and the principles of portable discounts.

Regulatory intervention

- Major governance, financial or service delivery failures result in regulatory intervention and a downgrading in regulatory judgements which could impact on the Group's ability to secure funding and delivery of its corporate priorities
- Care Plus does not comply with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards resulting in enforcement action

Business Transformation

- The integration priorities and strategic outcomes may not be delivered at sufficient pace or to the correct standard, so that the merger benefits are not realised for customers or the organisation





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