



Annual Report to HBC Executive Board

October 2022

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Whilst financial performance is strong, there have been changes to the operating environment, such as the rent reductions announced in 2015, Brexit in 2019, the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022, which have added to mounting concerns of a sharp global slowdown, surging inflation and debt, and a spike in poverty levels. The economic impact has disrupted supply chains. The risk that inflation and higher interest rates could have an adverse impact on HH's financial viability has increased.

1.2 Some of our key organisational achievements for 2021/22 include:

- Neighbourhood Officers have completed 6,668 annual tenancy contacts.
- Continued to improve our performance in responding to and addressing customer complaints
- Destination Ditton Pilot completed working in partnership with Cheshire Police and HBC. Great feedback has been received from HBC leader and members.
- 31 new homes for affordable rent and 48 new homes for shared ownership have been completed with an ambition to build a further 1,000 new homes over the next five years
- Maintained strong operational performance in key operational areas of arrears and void rent loss in accordance with challenging top quartile KPI's
- Met all regulatory requirements and maintained G1/V1 status
- Continued to work with HBC hubs to support customers during the pandemic

1.3 We enjoy a strong strategic relationship with HBC, and we continue to be represented and play an active role in contributing towards the Council's strategic priorities including homelessness, care leavers, regeneration, crime and disorder and health.

- 1.4 Our Corporate Plan for the next three years outlines our commitment to our customers and the wider borough. Our purpose at Halton Housing is to “improve people’s lives.” We want to provide customers with a safe place to call home, and the opportunity to lead happier, healthier, and more fulfilled lives.
- 1.5 Our Corporate Plan sets out where we want our focus to be; on providing and maintaining quality homes and investing in thriving neighbourhoods, with strong values that underpin our ambition.
- 1.6 We continue to invest in improving the customer experience, making sure that customers receive the best possible service at every step of their journey with us. We will listen to and most importantly act upon feedback so that we can continue to improve.
- 1.7 With government targets for reducing the environmental impact of our homes, we have begun the journey for our homes to achieve these standards and for our new homes to have sustainability at their core.
- 1.8 At the centre of the Corporate Plan is our strong focus on innovation and technology; continually reviewing our systems and ways of working to underpin a successful business.
- 1.9 For more information about our new Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025 use the link: <https://www.haltonhousing.co.uk/about-us/corporate-plan>.

2. Introduction

Operating Environment

- 2.1 Whilst financial performance is strong, there have been changes to the operating environment, such as the rent reductions announced in 2015, Brexit in 2019, the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in 2020/21 and 2021/22 and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022, which have added to mounting concerns of a sharp global slowdown, surging inflation and debt, and a spike in poverty levels. The economic impact has disrupted supply chains.
- 2.2 The risk that inflation and higher interest rates could have an adverse impact on HH's financial viability has increased. The long-term financial plan is based on the premise that increases in costs will follow increases in rent. If cost inflation outstrips rent inflation choices would need to be made and priorities reviewed.
- 2.3 Our focus is to create places to be proud of by addressing inequalities across our neighbourhoods in relation to housing quality, fuel poverty, the environment, health, crime, employment, digital and financial inclusion.

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic

- 2.4 As well as serious implications for people's health, Covid-19 has significantly impacted businesses and the wider economy. We have responded well to the challenge presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and received positive feedback from key stakeholders including Halton Borough Council (HBC).

3. Our Direction (OD3)

3.1 Our Direction (OD3) has been the framework that underpins how we have run the organisation for the last three years. There are six Priorities. Each Priority has had a clear Strategy which sets out the why, the how, targets to March 2022, financial implications and the associated KPI's. The section below sets out the six Priorities and the key achievements in 2021/22:

1. **Customer Focus** - Customers are our key focus. We will listen to their views, understand their needs and preferences, and deliver services that are accessible, high performing and provide value for money. We will be a pioneer for innovative service delivery using insight, digital and Artificial Intelligence, whilst ensuring our visible presence within our neighbourhoods.

Key Achievements:

- New telephony system implemented, and new customer reception area completed at Waterfront Point
 - Neighbourhood Officers have completed 6,668 annual tenancy contacts.
 - Continued to improve our performance in responding to and addressing customer complaints
 - Developed our approach to using data and insight to drive continuous improvement and action
2. **Places to be Proud Of** - We will keep our customers safe and continue investing in our existing homes to make sure they are fit for the future and that we minimise our environmental impact. We will build on our role within our neighbourhoods, working with partners to tackle the challenges they face and create places to be proud of.

Key Achievements:

- Destination Ditton Pilot completed working in partnership with Cheshire Police and HBC. Great feedback has been received from HBC leader and members.
- Completed work via the Homes England Next Steps programme to convert two long term void properties into four flats to support the homeless
- Improved our EPC data and overall EPC C percentage
- Successfully secured funding from a Wave 1 bid to the SHDF

3. **Growth and Diversification** - We will continue to grow and diversify our business, developing a whole market housing offer which meets a range of needs including those of older people and those starting out on the housing ladder. We will grow our commercial arm, OSUK to generate profits which help protect our business and subsidise our social housing activity.

Key Achievements:

- 31 new homes for affordable rent and 48 new homes for shared ownership have been completed
- Using an MMC approach we are making good progress with the delivery of our new and largest independent living scheme of 100 homes in Sandymoor (Hazlehurst)
- Approved our ambition to build a further 1,000 new homes over the next five years

4. **Healthy Organisation** - We will deliver all of this through our people. We will create an environment where colleagues are valued and listened to, and where they have a strong voice which shapes our future direction. We will recruit and retain people with the right skills, but more importantly the right behaviours to help us deliver our plans. We will invest in our leaders, our people and our IT and create a healthy organisation where everyone can do an excellent job in an innovative, collaborative, and agile business.

Key Achievements:

- Shortlisted for IIP Best Company award with 250+ employees and achieved the Gold Award
- Continued to support the apprenticeship programme
- Redesigned Waterfront Point to make it more accessible for our field workers including the establishment of a dedicated area, “Pit Stop” for them to complete work for which they need to access a PC.

5. **Well Governed & Financially Viable** - Our plans can only be delivered if we maintain our strong foundations. This means being as efficient and productive as we can be, maximising our income and delivering great performance. It means being well governed, compliant with regulatory and legal requirements and having the financial capacity to fund our plans.

Key Achievements:

- Improved diversity of Board with new recruits, appointing four new Board Members
- Completed and published our first ESG report
- Maintained strong operational performance in key operational areas of arrears and void rent loss in accordance with challenging top quartile KPI's
- Met all regulatory requirements and maintained G1/V1 status

6. **Brand and Reputation** - We will build on our brand and reputation with our customers, our colleagues, local partners and within the sector. We will be the first choice for people looking for a home within the borough and beyond and a partner of choice for those who invest in our neighbourhoods and provide services to our customers. We will continue to be regarded in the sector as a forward thinking, innovative housing provider.

Key Achievements:

- Awards – Innovation RIISE awards, WISH and the Gas Team,
- Awards - IIP and Women in housing shortlists
- Published Reach magazine for all our customers
- Continued to work with HBC hubs to support customers during the pandemic

3.2 Customers remain at the heart of all that we do, we will continue to innovate, maintain a strong focus on our homes (and build new ones), and further strengthen our brand and reputation as a landlord of choice in Halton and beyond.

4. Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025

4.1 Our Corporate Plan for the next three years outlines our commitment to our customers and the wider borough. Our purpose at Halton Housing is to “improve people’s lives.” We want to provide customers with a safe place to call home, and the opportunity to lead happier, healthier, and more fulfilled lives.

4.2 Our Corporate Plan sets out where we want our focus to be; on providing and maintaining quality homes and investing in thriving neighbourhoods, with strong values that underpin our ambition.

4.3 We embark on our new Corporate Plan having emerged from what has been the toughest of years with the pandemic and its far-reaching impact. However, the ongoing challenge is an opportunity to support customers, communities, and our people, as we rebuild together.

4.4 We continue to invest in improving the customer experience, making sure that customers receive the best possible service at every step of their journey with us. We will listen to and most importantly act upon feedback so that we can continue to improve.

- 4.5 The challenge doesn't end there. With government targets for reducing the environmental impact of our homes, we have begun the journey for our homes to achieve these standards and for our new homes to have sustainability at their core.
- 4.6 Our commitment to revitalising the neighbourhoods we serve is integral to this plan, whether that's environmental improvements, health, and employment opportunities and more. We will build thriving communities that we can all be proud of.
- 4.7 At the centre of the Corporate Plan is our strong focus on innovation and technology; continually reviewing our systems and ways of working to underpin a successful business.
- 4.8 Our five themes are summarised below:
1. **Customer:** Customers are our priority. By listening and being easy to deal with, we will support them to make a success of living in their home.
 2. **Homes:** Our homes will be safe, warm, and secure, supported by a reliable repairs service. Using innovation, we will make homes as efficient as possible and minimise our carbon footprint.
 3. **Place:** Working with customers we will create thriving neighbourhoods, and tackle issues that matter. Working with partners, we will create opportunities that improve our customers' health and wellbeing.
 4. **Business:** We will run our business well, providing best value for money for customers. Our social purpose remains at our heart. Our services will be delivered by engaged and empowered colleagues.
 5. **Development:** As a key developer in the borough, working with partners, we will build homes across the whole range of tenures, to meet the needs of people at all stages of life.

4.9 For more information about our new Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025 use the link:
<https://www.haltonhousing.co.uk/about-us/corporate-plan>.

4.10 Our key priorities for 2022/23 include:

- Develop and implement the 'Halton Housing Deal' with colleagues and customers.
- Develop initiatives to tackle fuel poverty for our most vulnerable customers
- Develop a blueprint for future neighbourhoods, learning from our pilot in Ditton
- Identify opportunities and develop our plans to increase biodiversity and sustainability of our places.
- Contribute to regeneration of Runcorn Town Centre
- Continue our partnerships with Halton into Jobs, programme via HBC and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), to support our customers into employment.
- Continue with the retrofit programme of works to achieve EPC C 2030
- Implementation of digital document delivery to support increased digital engagement.
- Delivery of 195 homes including the Hazlehurst independent living scheme