



Annual Report to HBC Executive Board

October 2024

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The operating environment in which we are working is increasingly challenging. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 is a new law aimed at improving services to customers. It is the most significant change to social housing regulation in a decade.
- 1.2 Our three-year Corporate Plan outlines our commitment to our customers and the wider borough. Our purpose at HH is “improving 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.
- 1.3 Our key achievements for 2023/24 include.
- We designed, developed, and implemented a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, customer portal and a Customer Support Hub.
 - As a part of the new Customer Support Hub structure, we have introduced a central complaint handling team.
 - The Listen, Learn, Act tracker has been implemented, capturing learning from complaints and customer feedback surveys.
 - Repairs service delivery is improving, the number of jobs completed in target time has increased and average repair wait times have reduced. Initiatives to improve repairs service delivery and overall satisfaction continue remain our key focus in 2024/25.
 - As members of the Safer Halton Partnership group and alongside, Halton Borough Council, Cheshire Police, and other key stakeholders, we have attended a series of workshops to develop the Safer Halton Partnership strategy 2024 – 2027.
 - We had our third In Depth Assessment (IDA) and maintained our G1/V2 rating from the Regulator.
 - We continue to deliver the development programme that we set out for the three-year plan. In total, 309 homes (44% of the programme) have been delivered and 66 homes (9% of the programme) are currently on site.

- 1.4 Our Tenant Satisfaction Measures results for 2023/24 are telling us that most of our customers are satisfied with the overall service that we provide to them, feel safe in their homes and feel that they are treated fairly and with respect. We need to continue to improve repairs and maintenance of our homes, how well we handle complaints and reports of anti-social behaviour.
- 1.5 We cannot deliver on our objectives alone and will need rely on the support of key partners. Likewise key partners will need to rely on us to deliver their objectives. We need to be clear on what our strategic partnerships are, their purpose, expected outcomes and who is taking the lead role in developing each relationship.

2. Introduction

- 1.6 The operating environment in which we are working is increasingly challenging. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 is a new law aimed at improving services to customers. It is the most significant change to social housing regulation in a decade.
- 1.7 The Act aims to improve the regulation of social housing by introducing new consumer standards and giving the government power to require landlords to investigate and rectify serious health hazards. It also removes the 'serious detriment' test, allowing the Regulator of Social Housing to take action against landlords before people are at risk. The Act emphasizes tenants' rights and sets clear expectations for landlords to deliver quality housing services.
- 1.8 The Act brings forward the following ground-breaking changes:
- Strengthening the Regulator of Social Housing to carry out regular inspections of the largest social housing providers and the power to issue unlimited fines to social landlords
 - Additional Housing Ombudsman powers to publish best practice guidance to landlords following investigations into tenant complaints
 - Powers to set strict time limits for social landlords to address hazards such as damp and mould
 - New qualification requirements for social housing managers
 - Introducing stronger economic powers to follow inappropriate money transactions outside of the sector.

3. Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025

- 3.1 Our three-year Corporate Plan outlines our commitment to our customers and the wider borough. Our purpose at HH is “improving 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 For more information about our Corporate Plan 2022 to 2025 use the link in Appendix 1.1: <https://www.haltonhousing.co.uk/about-us/corporate-plan>.

4. Key Achievements 2023/24

4.1 Customer

- We designed, developed, and implemented a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system & customer portal.
- We designed and developed a Customer Support Hub to provide all inbound and outbound customer contact services to support the delivery of a more holistic, customer focussed, effective and efficient repairs and maintenance service.
- As a part of the new Customer Support Hub structure, we have introduced a central complaint handling team. The purpose of this new team is to improve the quality and consistency of complaint handling.
- The Listen, Learn, Act tracker has been implemented, capturing learning from complaints and customer feedback surveys. The key themes and area

of focus are improved repairs service delivery and improved communication around repairs.

- A dedicated learning from complaints page has been created on the website and was also featured in the Autumn REACH magazine.
- The Welfare Benefits and Money Advice team have secured over £1.6m of additional income for customers which will help them to maintain their tenancies.

4.2 Homes

- Repairs service delivery is improving, the number of jobs completed in target time has increased and average repair wait times have reduced. Initiatives to improve repairs service delivery and overall satisfaction continue remain our key focus in 2024/25.
- We successfully completed a large capital programme at The Common, improving pathways, fencing and green spaces.
- Work has commenced on our property 'MOT' to target 'outlier' customers and properties (customers who report repairs frequently, and those who we have little engagement with us).
- Successful delivery of our first on site retro fit project on time to budget which has improved the EPC rating of the homes D to A.

4.3 Place

- As part of our 'Spruce up your Streets' campaign we delivered 19 local events
- As members of the Safer Halton Partnership group and alongside, Halton Borough Council, Cheshire Police, and other key stakeholders, we have attended a series of workshops to develop the Safer Halton Partnership strategy 2024 – 2027. The strategy identifies nine areas of priority for the borough with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) the top priority identified.
- We are working on a more targeted ASB communications plan that is insight led and targets areas where there are both higher and lower than average levels of ASB reported.

- The 'Big Halton Forest' initiative has commenced with the first tree planted and a pledge to plant 2500 trees in Halton in 2024.
- The newly relaunched 'HH Connect' newsletter reaffirmed our commitment to partnership working providing an update on key development projects and community initiatives as well as a dedicated feature on Property Pool Plus, Liverpool City Region's (LCR) common housing allocations scheme that HBC operates, and we are contracted to administer on its behalf.
- We used £45k of our hardship fund during the year to support vulnerable customers with food and fuel poverty or sudden financial shocks.
- Several initiatives where we are working in partnership with others to address inequality continue including working with charities, community groups and partners to support initiatives such as the school uniform campaign and local food banks.
- Represented on the One Halton and Health and Wellbeing boards; Working with HBC's health improvement team on affordable warmth and fall prevention initiatives specifically targeted at over 65's in the borough; Working with several organisations to support the "Healthy Homes" initiative with resource, data and insight; Partnered with HBC as part of our Destination Upton programme delivering a range of initiatives from sporting sessions to digital skills workshops.
- We lead the Halton Housing Partnership.
- We partnered with HBC's Halton People into Jobs.
- The helping hands budget has supported eight community projects with £10k of funding.

4.4 Business

- We continue to offer channels to hear the voice of our employees including undertaking a wellbeing survey. The survey has resulted in HBC providing health checks and trainings based on employee demand.
- We retained IIP Gold status following a successful review with no further recommendations.
- We celebrated National Apprenticeship week with our 12 Apprentices.

- We had our third In Depth Assessment (IDA) and maintained our G1/V2 rating from the Regulator.

4.5 Development

- We continue to deliver the programme that we set out for the three-year plan. In total, 309 homes (44% of the programme) have been delivered and 66 homes (9% of the programme) are currently on site.
- Our pipeline remains active with 270 homes (38% of the programme) across eight potential schemes. In the year 95 homes were delivered against a target of 70.
- Sales of shared ownership properties continues to be buoyant, and values are more than values budgeted.
- We secured and contracted our first social rent allocation on a new build scheme at High Street, Runcorn

5. Tenant Satisfaction Measures

5.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) are a new way for social housing tenants to understand how their landlord is performing against key service areas.

5.2 The TSM's were introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2023 for all social housing providers. There are 22 measures covering areas like repairs, safety and complaints. 12 of these measures come directly from customer feedback surveys.

5.3 Our TSM results for 2023/24, published on our website here [Tenant Satisfaction Measures | Halton Housing](#), are telling us that most of our customers are satisfied with the overall service that we provide to them, feel safe in their homes and feel that they are treated fairly and with respect.

5.4 We know from our TSM results and our own internal performance metrics that we need to continue to improve repairs and maintenance of our homes, how well we handle complaints and reports of anti-social behaviour.

6. Main Challenges

6.1 Our main challenges include:

- Increasing number of customer complaints
- Increased media spotlight and general negative sentiment around the sector
- Changing consumer regulatory framework
- Increasing legislation
- Continued budget pressures across repairs and maintenance, asset management and customer safety.
- Increased focus on property condition and understanding our homes.
- Systems and processes being fit for purpose to support colleagues.
- Impact of the cost of living and the increasing demand for crisis support.
- Low levels of customer engagement with community initiatives.
- Increased need for partnership working to develop a more joined up approach to tackling neighbourhood issues.
- Identifying a solid pipeline of development schemes at an affordable cost
- Construction market and contractor solvency
- Talent retention in competitive markets both inside and outside of sector
- Continuing data quality focus across all areas of the business to increase data confidence.

7. Key Priorities

7.1 Our key priorities over the 2024/25 include:

- Improve our customers' experience by building on our strengths and tackling recurring and consistent themes driving dissatisfaction e.g., Repairs, Communication, ASB.
- Improve the level of customer engagement to set the foundations for a more impactful, representative, and diverse approach. Our aim is to be able to measure and evidence the difference that our engagement activity is making to the decisions we make and the services we deliver. A move towards a more contemporary customer engagement model is proposed.

- Improve the standard of our homes. To do this we will adopt a fresh approach to asset investment and planning and create additional financial capacity to enable us to invest more.
- Improve the standard of our existing neighbourhoods as places to live. To do this we will develop a prioritised Regeneration and Placemaking Plan to deliver physical improvements across our neighbourhoods and schemes.
- Maintain the G1 / V2 status, remain financially strong and comply with all legal and regulatory standards. We will strive to achieve our lifeblood measure targets whilst continuing to effectively deliver business as usual activity.
- Increase our profile, reputation, and influence in our unique and core areas of activity and expertise. Re-positioning Halton's profile will help secure existing partnerships and attract new ones by developing an authentic reputation around our core purpose activities.
- Be an exemplary employer by developing a competitive employee offer and engendering a positive and proactive workplace culture.
- Develop (or confirm) a longer-term ambition for Halton Housing

7.2 The delivery of a number of these objectives will require additional investment of some kind. We need to create additional financial capacity to meet this requirement and to ensure we have the financial resilience in the event of future economic shocks.

7.3 We cannot deliver on our objectives alone and will need rely on the support of key partners. Likewise key partners will need to rely on HH to deliver their objectives. We need to be clear on what our strategic partnerships are, their purpose, expected outcomes and who is taking the lead role in developing each relationship.