



# **Annual Report to HBC Executive Board**

**November 2016**

## **1. Introduction**

### ***Brief history***

- 1.1 Halton Housing Trust (HHT) is a company limited by guarantee, a registered charity, and a Registered Provider of social housing that was formed to take transfer of the housing stock of Halton Borough Council on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2005. We operate in the Cheshire towns of Widnes and Runcorn. Almost all of our 6,767 homes (excludes Open Solutions UK) are for general needs rent to people on low incomes.

### ***Operating Environment***

- 1.2 The operating environment in which the Trust is working is becoming increasingly challenging. In July 2015 the Budget included a 1% reduction in rents for four years to March 2020, a benefits freeze and change to the benefits cap. These together with the extension of Right to Buy opportunities, will have a significant impact.
- 1.3 In response to the 14% reduction in our income (£10 million) over the next four years, we have undertaken a significant amount of work and analyse to understand the detailed impact of potential savings. This is enabling us to make some further changes to how we think and work.
- 1.4 We need to accept that our world has changed and there is no going back. The reduction in our rental income provides an opportunity to ask much harder questions on what value is being added by some of the work we are doing and whether we are actually best placed to continue to do this. Some things can be done when times are good but we are about to head into a much tougher financial and operating environment and we need to cut our cloth accordingly. This will fundamentally affect the services we are able to offer.

1.5 As part of our stress testing and scenario planning, we have identified a range of options to deal with unforeseen economic factors. These are invaluable in enabling us to respond to any further threats to our future financial viability.

### ***Key achievements***

1.6 We said it in 2015, but yet again, the 2015/16 financial year has been our best ever in terms of what we have achieved and performance across our core areas. Over the last 12 months we have delivered a number of significant achievements and outcomes. We are increasingly becoming a leading player in several areas as a result of our innovative approach and solutions to the challenges we face.

1.7 Some of our key organisational achievements include:

- Continued investment in our homes and neighbourhoods: In 2015/16 we invested a further £8m in improving our customers homes and neighbourhoods. This represents over £138m investment in the ten years since transfer and has radically improved the quality of our homes and neighbourhoods.
- Completed the construction of 146 new homes and one buy back to meet demand for homes in these areas. This has taken the number of new homes built to 818.
- Purchased sites and land for future development, ensuring we are well placed to provide a continued pipeline of homes.
- Purchased an additional 24 properties for market rent through our subsidiary company, Open Solutions (OSUK) Ltd.
- Continued the implementation of our Digital First Programme to change the way that our customers access our services, enabling us to provide more intensive support to those customers who really need it
- Outperformed our targets in all our key performance 'lifeblood' [measures](#).
- Secured value for money savings totalling £1.3 million.
- Contributed £560,427 to the Council from the VAT Shelter and Right to Buy Sharing Agreements.

## ***Key Partnerships***

- 1.8 We have continued to actively support and contribute to a wide range of local strategic partnerships and groups across Halton. We value the opportunity this involvement offers to influence and contribute to key local and regional strategic decision and policy making.
- 1.9 We also recognise the value of partnership working across Halton and appreciate how this contributes to the ongoing development of the Trust and its business as well as how it impacts so positively on the lives of our customers.
- 1.10 We enjoy a strong strategic relationship with Halton Borough Council and we continue to be represented and play an active role in contributing towards the Council's five strategic priorities. Appendix 4 demonstrates how our work is contributing to each of these.
- 1.11 The Trust's activities have enabled £560,427 to be paid to the Council under the arrangements agreed at transfer. This is comprised of £382,517 from the VAT Shelter and an additional £177,910 from Right to Buy sales.
- 1.12 Our other key partnerships include:
- Widnes Vikings RLFC
  - The Valhalla Foundation
  - Halton Credit Union
  - Riverside College Halton
  - Power in Partnership
  - Project Up/Groundwork Trust
  - Norton Priory Museum and Gardens
  - Halton Haven Hospice.

## 2. Our Direction (OD2.0)

### *Our vision*

- 2.1 Since 2012, [Our Direction](#) has provided the framework for how we run Halton Housing Trust. We have achieved a lot and we will continue to Improve People's Lives in the future.
- 2.2 External changes and better knowledge of our customers has led us to review our approach. Our Direction (OD2.0) is our framework for the next three years.
- 2.3 We expect the following trends will continue and have an impact on us: demand for good quality housing, cuts in government spending on welfare and housing, government support for home ownership, an ageing population, rising energy costs and advances in digital technology.

### *Strategic Priorities*

- 2.4 For Our Direction (OD2.0) three of our current priorities are as important now as they were in 2012:
  1. **Protect Current Income** - we haven't felt the full impact of Welfare Reform yet.
  2. **Reduce Costs and Drive Efficiency** - this will be an ongoing area of focus.
  3. **Focus Resources and Services** - to ensure those who need the most support receive it.
- 2.5 We want to improve more people's lives in future and to do that, we believe we need to invest to become more flexible so that we can adapt. This is the focus for our two new priorities:
  4. **Grow and Diversify**

- 2.6 We need more homes to achieve our vision. To achieve this we will focus on providing homes and new housing products for a wider group of people.
- 2.7 Almost all our properties are for social rent, which means that we are very dependent on government policy, grants and internal subsidy. It also means that we can't help those who have different needs, which limits our ability to generate income and provide more homes.
- 2.8 Our future focus will also be on providing innovative, attractive, energy-efficient, flexible homes - which cost significantly less to build. These will also be across a much wider range of tenures.

## 5. **Be more flexible**

- 2.9 There are a number of external factors, which are out of our control. Examples include the economy, both locally and nationally, Government Policy, as well as the changing nature of our customers and their expectations and requirements.
- 2.10 We need to invest to become more flexible so that we can adapt to those factors as and when required.
- 2.11 Our people are one of our biggest strengths, we need to keep evolving and we cannot expect our people or our systems to keep doing so without further investment.
- 2.12 We will invest to make the organisation more flexible for the future and build a community where people feel they belong, feel valued, and where they can grow.
- 2.13 Each of our Priorities has a clear Strategy. We use these Priorities to focus resources in the organisation. Our Priorities for 2016/17 are listed in Section 4.

2.14 There are two Principles, which remind us that (1) we all make choices and (2) we should all take responsibility. We use the Principles to make decisions and shape our culture.

2.15 We have six Behaviours, which we expect all of our colleagues to demonstrate.

1. Make decisions
2. Work with others
3. Adapt to change
4. Enjoy your job
5. Challenge how we do things
6. Take ownership

2.16 We have developed 10 Personas, which represent our existing and future customers. We use these to keep our customers at the centre of our thinking.

2.17 Our Direction (OD2.0) enables us to have the flexibility to improve more people's lives in the future.

### **3. Cross cutting themes**

#### *Governance*

3.1 We have a strong, challenging Board who drive the business forward and have been fundamental in setting the strategic direction of the organisation. We operate under the NHF Excellence in Governance Code and expectations and performance are monitored.

3.2 We have adopted the NHF Merger Code. Within this context the Trust continues to explore opportunities for enhanced collaboration and where appropriate, acquisitions.

3.3 We utilise a breadth of highly reputable consultants to advise us of good practice to ensure continuous improvement.

## *Value for Money (VFM)*

- 3.4 The Scenarios, Priorities and Principles within Our Direction (OD2.0) underpin our strategic approach to delivering VFM. By using Our Direction (OD2.0) our Board has a basis for making decisions using a framework that is cascaded, understood and utilised throughout all levels of our strategic, operational and decision making processes.
- 3.5 Achieving and demonstrating VFM is integrated into the way we work at the Trust. It is part of our values. We aim to deliver the best we can by making the best use of the resources available to us. We want to ensure we deliver VFM for our customers, our communities and neighbourhoods.
- 3.6 We aim to provide good services that are both affordable for ourselves and our customers. We asked our customers if they feel that the Trust offers value for money for the rent that they pay; 85% say that we do, and that 88% would recommend us as a landlord to a friend or family member.
- 3.7 We have developed our third VFM self-assessment report, which has been included within our Financial Statements and will be published in summary form on our website.
- 3.8 At £187m, the EUV-SH (Existing Use Value Social Housing) valuation of our secured stock has continued to increase. None of our new build stock is secured against our £130m bank loan facility.
- 3.9 We have plans to build a further 476 new homes by using our existing loans at a cost of £52.5m against which we have secured £7.8m of grant funding. We have also committed to invest £20m in our subsidiary company OSUK which specialises in market rent products.
- 3.10 Our operating performance compares favourably to the Global Accounts of our peer group:



- Our management costs have increased but they are still lower than average
- Our routine and planned maintenance costs have reduced and are significantly lower than average
- We recognise that our major repairs costs are still higher than average as a result of our continued policy of investing in our existing homes. However they have significantly reduced over the last two years.
- Our rent arrears and bad debt charges are significantly lower than the average. Our financial forecast anticipates that they will increase as a result of Welfare Reform.
- Void losses are exceptionally low and expected to continue to be so as strong demand for our properties continues.
- Our headline Social Housing Cost per Unit has reduced and is lower than average.
- Our operating surplus has increased following a review of our approach to capitalising major repairs costs and is higher than average

3.11 We continue to track this information on an annual basis to see how our actual and forecasts compare and change.

3.12 Our rents remain amongst the lowest in the Borough when compared to the other housing associations in Halton.

3.13 During 2015/16 we achieved value for money efficiency savings totalling £1.3 million.

#### *Health & Safety*

3.14 As a landlord and employer we have a duty of care to ensure all employees and customers are safe in the environments we provide, whether that is their place of work or their home. We use an independent Health and Safety advisor to ensure compliance with statutory obligations and to offer advice to employees who have any Health and Safety concerns. We employ a

construction-specific Health and Safety Officer who ensures safe working practices in the way we deliver our repairs and investment work.

3.15 We take action to undertake necessary investment work. Examples of this are the substantial works we have undertaken to a number of our flatted blocks to ensure a safe and agreeable living environment and the programme of cyclical electrical inspections undertaken to ensure all our properties are compliant with current regulatory standards.

### *Diversity*

3.16 We are committed to achieving a working environment, which provides equality of opportunity and freedom from unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability, religion or beliefs, age or sexual orientation. We also aim to provide a service that does not discriminate against its customers in the means by which they can access the services supplied by the Trust.

3.17 The Single Equality Scheme takes account of the requirements within the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The framework describes in a single document how the Trust will fulfil its statutory and regulatory requirements to promote equality of opportunity, avoid discrimination, demonstrating its commitment to placing the promotion of equality and diversity at the centre of every aspect of its work.

### *Environmental*

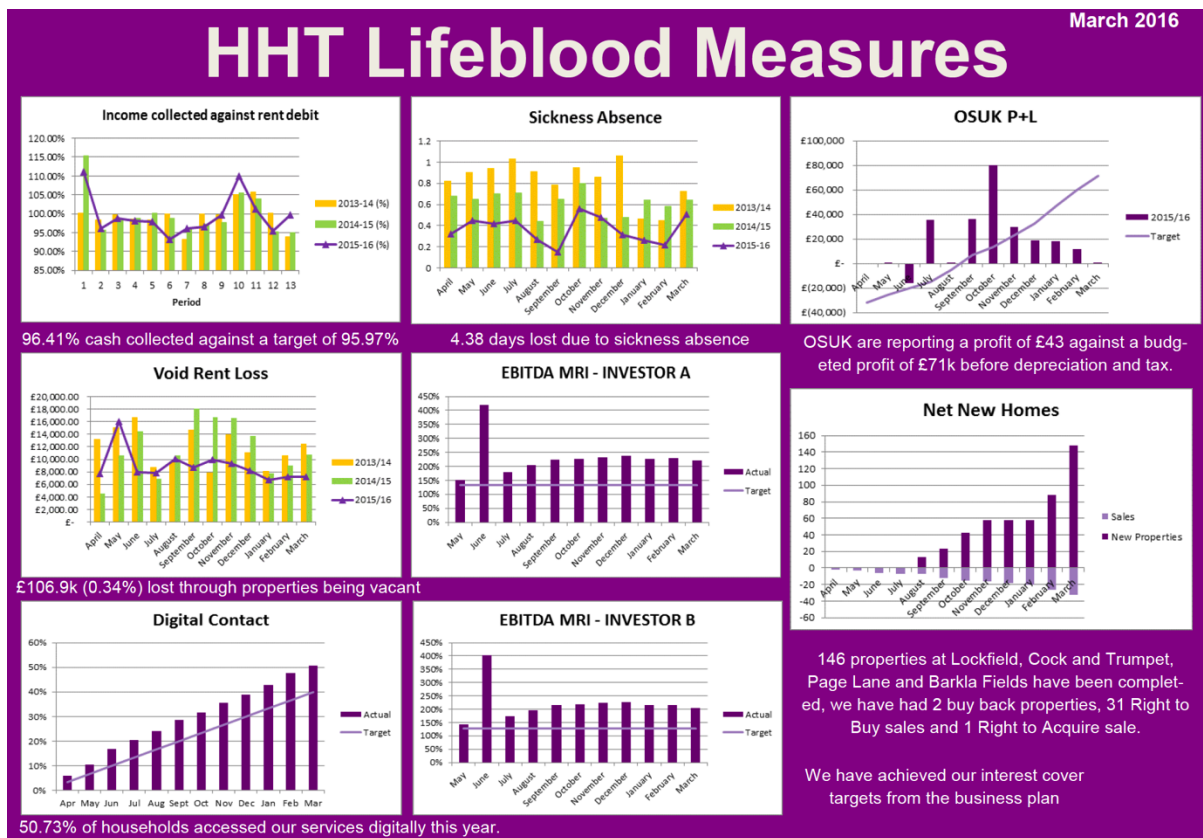
3.18 We aim to reduce the environmental impact of our activities. We acknowledge that sustained change at the Trust will be best achieved by the provision of facilities, information and guidelines to promote encourage and embed permanent behavioural change in all aspects of the business.

3.19 We operate an Environmental Sustainability Policy that shapes the way that the Trust considers its environmental impact across all of its business activities.

## 4. Key performance indicators

Actual performance for 2015/16 (Appendix 1)

4.1 We have seven key performance indicators that are reported to each Board meeting. These are our lifeblood measures, which are critical to the future wellbeing of the Trust.



4.2 During the year we outperformed the challenging targets that we set. Most notably we achieved the challenging targets in income collection and void rent loss.

4.3 Our sickness absence performance is the best that we have ever achieved.

NROSH data submission (Appendix 2)

4.4 Each year the Trust has to submit data to its Regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency. The submission for 2015/16 reflects our strong performance across a range of key measures. This has ensured the Trust has a strong foundation from which to respond to the ongoing challenges we face.

4.5 Some of the highlights of the data submission include:

- The number of homes owned and managed by the Trust has increased from 6,656 to 6,767. Just 479 (7%) of these homes are being let at an affordable rent, which is lower than anticipated.
- The average social rent for a general needs property is £84.80 (52 weeks). This reflects an increase of 2.3% over the previous year.
- The Trust had just 23 empty homes at the end of the year. This represents 0.3% of the total number of homes.
- The Trust relet 713 homes during the year. This represents a turnover rate of 10.5%.
- The Trust evicted 73 customers during the year. 68 of these evictions were for rent arrears and five for ASB. This is a decrease of 2 from the previous year.
- The Trust sold 32 homes during the year through the RTB and RTA initiatives.

#### *Targets for 2016/17 (Appendix 3)*

4.6 In line with the approach that has been taken with Our Direction (OD2.0), our framework is designed to report to Board the key activities that should be the focus of its attention.

4.7 The ongoing six monthly review of Our Direction (OD2.0) ensures that our goals are always current and aligned to the changes that are taking place both internally and externally. The Performance Framework continues to be reviewed and updated in line with this.

4.8 There are seven key Board measures, which are fundamentally the same as those measured in 2015/16. There is just one change to reflect our digital journey. The measure, which for the last 12 months has monitored the increase in the number of households who have accessed our services digitally will now move to focus on the proportion of overall customer led transactions that are being conducted digitally. The target is to achieve 70% of customer led digital transactions in March 2017.

4.9 Our key priorities for 2016/17 include:

- Deliver the Acquisitions Strategy for our subsidiary business, OSUK.
- Progress our Priority to “Grow and Diversify”
- Explore merger and acquisition opportunities
- Develop our approach to implementing Our Direction (OD2.0) Priority “Be more flexible”
- Review our approach in the delivery and future planning of our Investment Programme and the key principles for our Asset Management Strategy.
- Continued delivery of our Digital First Programme
- Continue to enhance the modules within our core systems and processes
- Continue with our programme to build new homes using new and innovative construction and design techniques.
- Explore the opportunities to use modern methods of construction and to develop ‘smart’ homes and use data to enable our Investment Programme to be bespoke to each individual home and how it is used/ occupied.
- Build our new office accommodation.
- Develop networks across Halton, which will assist in the delivery of wellbeing priorities
- Reduce our insurance claims through improved liability defence mechanisms.
- Implementation of our new job evaluation system, KPlan, and our new pay framework

4.10 The Performance Management Framework for 2016/17 is designed to ensure the delivery of measures against each of the five strategies that are linked to each of the Corporate Priorities.

## **5. Welfare Reform**

5.1 One of our most significant risks is Welfare Reform. We anticipate that our bad debts will increase and we continue to review the provision within our financial forecasts. We have included a bad debt provision of 2.25% for 2016/17 and 4% in our financial forecasts from 2017/18.

5.2 The review of our Housing Services Team has fundamentally changed the way we deliver our front line services to ensure we are able to focus on those customers who need our help and support the most. It is based around the three key areas of debt recovery, tenancy support and tenancy enforcement.

5.3 Through increased levels of automation and our renewed focus, we will be able to mitigate some of the increased costs from Universal Credit. Our Digital First Programme will also free up resources, which will be able to focus on debt recovery and support those customers who are more vulnerable. We have prudently provided additional costs in our financial plans to cover additional staffing, mobile technology and collection costs.

5.4 We have reviewed our policies and procedures to ensure that they are all fit for the future and where applicable have placed a greater emphasis on customers taking responsibility for the choices they make. Underpinning the review is the adoption of our two Principles: choice and responsibility.

5.5 We have already started to experience the impact of the Under Occupation Deduction, which has had an impact on approximately 900 of our customers and £700k of our income. This is having an impact on their arrears, demand for properties and the number of voids. We recognise and appreciate the significant investment made by the Council in providing £173k in Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) this financial year.

- 5.6 We are outperforming the arrears targets that we have set through our robust processes.
- 5.7 We are working hard with our customers to keep them informed and to help them to make changes and plan for the future. Our four Welfare Benefits Money Advisors have generated £1.7m potential annual gains for customers including £308k in back pay and lump sum payments in benefits.
- 5.8 We continue to develop partnerships and we have a place on the Board of our local Credit Union, into which we have invested £100k.

## Appendix 1- Halton Housing Trust KPI's 2015/16

| Measure   | Target   | Performance | Comments   |
|---|----------|-------------|--|
| Income collected from current customers                     | 95.97%   | 96.41%      | The Trust has collected £30.6m from a target of £30.4m which include the opening arrears due and the rent charge for the year.                                     |
| Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence | 7.5 days | 4.38 days   | This was an area of focus for 2015/16 and we had the best performance we have seen at the Trust.   |
| Void rent loss  | £168,400 | £106,900    | Average relet time has reduced to 15.97 days compared to target of 18 days.  |
| OSUK (before tax & depreciation)                            | £71,149  | £5,495      | OSUK made a profit (before tax and depreciation) of £6k against a budgeted profit of £71k  |
| Net new homes (HHT only)                                    | +128     | +116        | 146 properties at have been developed during the year and we have had 2 buy back properties. This was offset by 31 Right to Buy sales and 1 Right to Acquire sale. |
| Interest cover (prior to year-end adjustments)              | 132.3%   | 219.9%      | The Trust has comfortably achieved its interest cover target agreed with its funders.  |
| Digital Contact   | 40%      | 50.73%      | 50.73% of our households accessed the Trust's services digitally in 2015/16.   |



## Appendix 2: Headline NROSH+ Statistical Data Return Information with Annual Comparison

| Year as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March  | RSR        |        | NROSH+            |                      |         |                  |                 |
|--|------------|--------|-------------------|----------------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|
|  | 2010       | 2011   | 2012              | 2013                 | 2014    | 2015             | 2016            |
| Number of General Needs Properties<br><small>Excludes Affordable Rent Properties</small>                   | 6048       | 6046   | 6046              | 6158                 | 6115    | 6224             | 6113            |
| Number of General Needs Properties<br>Managed by HHT for other organisations                               | 3          | 3      | 3                 | 3                    | 3       | 3                | 3               |
| Number of Supported Housing Properties   | 97         | 97     | 97                | 128                  | 128     | 128              | 128             |
| Number of Shared Ownership Properties  | Not in RSR |        | 0                 | 13                   | 13      | 12               | 12              |
| Number of Intermediate Rent Properties<br><small>Not included in the General Needs Number</small>          | Not in RSR |        | 0                 | 12                   | 17      | 20               | 19              |
| Number of Affordable Rent Properties<br><small>Not included in the General Needs Number</small>            | Not in RSR |        | 28                | 82                   | 170     | 269 <sup>1</sup> | 479             |
| Number of Properties Developed for sale<br>but not yet sold as at year end.                                | 0          | 0      | 3                 | 0                    | 0       | 0                | 17 <sup>2</sup> |
| Average rent for General Needs properties  | £66.97     | £67.80 | £71.65            | £76.60               | £79.49  | £82.87           | £84.80          |
| Average rent for Supported Housing<br>Properties   | £58.03     | £58.51 | £55.05            | £67.26               | £69.81  | £73.67           | £75.65          |
| Average rent for General Needs Affordable<br>Rent Properties   | Not in RSR |        | £105.16           | £101.20 <sup>3</sup> | £103.02 | £104.81          | £105.58         |
| Average rent for Supported Housing<br>Affordable Rent Properties   |            |        |                   |                      |         | £96.77           | £102.60         |
| Number of general needs properties with<br>service charges eligible for housing benefit                    | 94         | 94     | 6046 <sup>4</sup> | 6157                 | 6115    | 6146             | 6113            |
| Average service charge of general needs<br>properties with service charges eligible for<br>housing benefit | £0.70      | £0.70  | £0.70             | £2.17                | £2.20   | £2.31            | £2.52           |

<sup>1</sup> 408 general needs and 71 supported housing (Brennan Lodge and Barkla Field)

<sup>2</sup> Barkla Fields. 5 outright sale, 12 Shared Ownership.

<sup>3</sup> The decrease in our average affordable rent is due to the majority of the affordable rent properties in 2011/12 being new build which are usually at a higher rent than properties we have converted to affordable rent from social rent.

<sup>4</sup> During the year the Trust completed disaggregation of all service charges over all its homes.

### Appendix 3 Halton Housing Trust KPI's 2016/17

| Measure   | Target                                      | Comments  |
|---|---|---|
| Income collected from current customers                     | Cash Collection: 95.94%<br><br>Arrears: £1m | The target includes the opening arrears due and the rent charge for the year.                                     |
| Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence | 4.8 days                                    | The target was set based on achieving similar levels to 2015/16 performance which was our best performing year.   |
| Void rent loss  | £147,206                                    | The target for the year is based on achieving an average relet time of 17 days.                                   |
| OSUK (profit before tax & depreciation)                     | £305,000                                    | This target is set based on the budget agreed by the OSUK board.  |
| Net new homes (HHT only)                                    | +107  | The number of new properties that will be completed in the year less those that are forecast to be sold under RTB |
| Interest cover  | 179.15%                                     | This target is based on the approved budget approved by Board in February 2015.                                   |
| Digital Contact/Activity                                    | 70%   | We aim to have 70% of customer led transactions being digital by March 2017.                                      |

## **Appendix 4: Contributing to the Council's Priorities**

The Trust has continued to actively contribute to the Council's five strategic priorities for the borough:

### *A Healthy Halton*

- HHT, NHS Halton CCG and Halton Borough Council's Director of Public Health agreed to develop a role with joint housing and health responsibilities. It was recognised that this strategic role will build upon the positive joint working approach developed over the last few years. The Director of Housing & Wellbeing took on this additional responsibility with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. The integrated role has enabled an understanding of housing as a wider determinant of health and the development of partnership work to reduce health inequalities. A number of key shared objectives have been agreed.
- The Director of Housing & Wellbeing is the housing representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board and a number of other strategic partner boards. The Trust has worked in conjunction with a number of partner organisations including HBC, CCG, and other Housing Associations to deliver a number of campaigns centred on Falls Prevention, Dementia and Keep Well Keep Warm. These aim to identify elderly residents at risk of falling, being socially isolated and/or in the early stages of Dementia to ensure they receive the necessary support and are able to access services required. The aim is to prevent residents getting into crisis intervention situations and will support them to live longer, independently in their own homes
- Trust employees, many of whom live in the borough have been offered free health checks delivered through the Health Improvement Team.
- We support a gardening club at the Naughton Fields Extra Care Scheme including the provision of a purpose built greenhouse in the communal garden area

- There are a number of wellbeing activities that have been organised and are delivered on a weekly basis across our extra care and sheltered housing schemes.
- The Trust's Amethyst Living Service offers housing related support to older customers living in our homes. It offers a focused but flexible tiered service for customers offering a package of support and accommodation depending on their assessed and agreed needs. The service meets individual needs to maintain customer's independence within the home and challenge the impact of social isolation and loneliness.
- The completion of our second extra care scheme Barkla Fields, has provided an additional 50 extra care homes and five supported bungalows.
- We have worked closely with the Council on continuing to reconfigure our approach to providing adaptations. Minor adaptations are done on demand and through self-referral. We introduced a Gateway service in partnership with the council over two years ago to ensure that we maximise our stock and put appropriate facilities in place for people needing major adaptations. We work closely with the Council's teams to ensure that national timescale targets for the delivery of adaptations are met.

### *Environment and Regeneration*

- The Trust has a 10 year programme of Investment Improvement Works that continue to deliver on an individual neighbourhood level both internal home and wider external improvement programmes. In 2015/16 we have invested a further £8m in improving our customer's homes and neighbourhoods. This represents over £138m investment in the ten years since transfer and has radically improved the quality of our homes and neighbourhoods.
- We ensure that our properties are repaired and relet quickly (16 days) to ensure that our estates remain vibrant and attractive.

- The 50 homes at Barkla Fields Extra Care Scheme and five supported bungalows, has now completed and all homes are occupied.
- As part of the HCA's Affordable Homes Guarantee Programme we have delivered the schemes at:
  - Brentfield, Widnes - 36 houses and apartments
  - Page Lane, Widnes – 30 Houses and apartments
  - Tan House Lane Phase 1 - 44 Houses, apartments and a bungalow.  
Further to this 10 houses for Private Rent
- As part of HCA's 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme, we will have delivered in 2016/17 the following schemes:
  - Yew Tree, Widnes – 19 Houses & Apartments
  - Queens Avenue – 12 Houses & Apartments
  - Crossway, Widnes – 12 House & Apartments
  - Crow Wood Lane, Widnes – 10 Apartments
  - Grange House, Runcorn – 4 houses
- Contracts have been entered into for the provision of further homes at Victoria House, Runcorn, Latham Avenue, Runcorn and Grangeway, Runcorn.
- The Trust has submitted a bid to the HCA's Shared Ownership Affordable Homes Programme (SOAHP) for 62 homes. The Allocation announcements are expected in December 2016.
- The Trust's Property Services continued to meet its target of recycling 100% of waste through working with a local recycling company.
- We have increased our investment in the Trust's Environmental Services Team (estate caretaking and grounds maintenance) to ensure that the condition of our estates and communal areas continues to be maintained and improved. A number of clean-up projects have already taken place, for example in the Halton

Lodge area, and we are committed to continuing to deliver projects that will enhance the overall look of the borough.

### *Employment Learning and Skills*

- The Trust continues to work closely with employment and skills partners in the Borough through the Halton Employment Partnership (HEP). These include:
  - Riverside College
  - Adult Learning Team
  - Connexions
  - Job Centre Plus
  - Halton People into Jobs
  - Citizens Advice
- We work closely with Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ) and Riverside College in the recruitment of our apprentices.
- There are a range of activities to support young people and others to experience work in the workplace environment in areas across the Trust through our apprenticeship programme and through our range of work experience opportunities.
- We were a key contributor in the development of the Employment and Skills elements of the tenders for the Mersey Gateway Project.
- We have worked with the GO On North West initiative to help increase digital skills in Halton. We have also worked with HBC and other associations towards the Liverpool City Region BBO Bid to support digital skills development in the area.
- We encourage our new build Contractors to use local labour and offer apprentice opportunities on all our building sites.

- Property Services works directly with Power in Partnership to create opportunities for young people in the borough who are not in employment, education or training to gain practical work experience, whilst continuing to develop key skills. Support is in place for workplace mentoring through our own maintenance technicians.
- We have worked with Groundwork Trust on Project Up! Through the provision of premises and resources to recycle and upgrade furniture from empty properties that can then benefit customers in need.

### *Children and Young People*

- The Director of Housing & Wellbeing has contributed to the Children's Trust Board and the Children and Families Commissioning Partnership.
- The Trust continues to support local groups working with children and young people through the provision of funding through its Community Sponsorship Fund.

### *A Safer Halton*

- The Trust has strengthened its Tenancy Enforcement Team. The team work closely with the Council, police and other agencies to address issues of anti-social behaviour across our management areas.
- The Trust has been working with the Police Commissioner in delivering "Kingsway Together" through which several local groups received funding to reduce crime and fear of crime on the Kingsway estate in Widnes.
- Involvement in Community Safety events i.e. Mischief Night and targeted Police/ community safety initiatives
- Attendance on the Police Tasking Vehicle to support the Police with ASB cases

- Active member of partnership forums including the Safer Halton Partnership and Domestic Abuse Forum and the Housing representative on the MARAC and Tasking and Coordination Group
- Ongoing provision of an ASB diversionary budget and delivery of our Diversionary Strategy
- Implementation of a “Local Offer” to address ASB across the Trust’s neighbourhoods with the outcomes monitored by our customers
- Contribute to the successful actions initiated as part of Halton Organised and Serious Crime Group
- Active member of the Inspiring Families Programme with our staff providing dedicated support on a number of cases to support customers in changing their lives
- We take our responsibility to ensure customers are safe in their own homes seriously and during 2015/16 annual gas servicing was undertaken for 100% of our properties. We have also tightened all our processes in relation to electrical safety, fire risk assessment and legionella testing to ensure our customers are kept safe.
- Provision of CCTV cameras at specific locations around some of our more prolific areas, including the shop parades at Alexandre Drive and Halton Lodge and flats at Bechers.