



# **Annual Report to HBC Executive Board**

**September 2015**

## **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 6,653 homes 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 caps. These together with the extension of Right to Buy opportunities, will have a significant impact on the sector as a whole.
- 1.3 The housing sector will be under significant scrutiny over the next few years. How we respond to these challenges will determine what happens next and to our longer term future.
- 1.4 In response to the 14% reduction in our income (£10 million) over the next four years, we are undertaking a significant amount of work and analysis to understand the detailed impact and potential savings. This will provide us with an opportunity to follow the Council's example by targeting our resources more effectively. It will also enable us to make some further changes to how we think and work.
- 1.5 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 what services we are able to offer.

- 1.6 As part of our stress testing and scenario planning, we have identified a range of options to deal with unforeseen economic factors. These will be invaluable in enabling us to respond to any further threats to our future financial viability.
- 1.7 The social housing sector is no longer seen as an area for further growth by the Government. It's likely that the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review will see a shift in funding to home ownership. There are also clear indications that existing social housing will become increasingly used as a transitory form of tenure, with people moving on as and when their circumstances change.
- 1.8 If we are to have any type of future we need to demonstrate how we are helping to deliver the Government's housing priorities, through increasing housing supply and providing routes into home ownership. We also need to demonstrate how we are working much harder to deliver a value for money service.
- 1.9 We have taken the opportunity following Noel Sharpe's departure to undertake a review of our Executive Team structure. The initial outcome of this review has been to conclude that what we have now isn't going to get us to where we need to be. The review has enabled us to clarify roles and responsibilities as well as ensure we have the right resources to deliver the next phase of our journey.

### ***Key achievements***

- 1.10 The last 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.

1.11 Some of the key organisational achievements include:

- Continued investment in our homes and neighbourhoods: In 2014/15 we have invested a further £9m in improving our customer's homes and neighbourhoods. This represents over £130m investment in the nine years since transfer and has radically improved the quality of our homes and neighbourhoods.
- Completed the construction of 49 new homes and three empty homes to meet demand for homes in these areas.
- Completed building the 39 room hostel accommodation in Widnes as part of a significant improvement in the way homelessness is dealt with across the borough.
- Secured funding through the HCA's Affordable Housing Programme bidding round for an additional 290 new homes. These will provide much needed high quality affordable housing to people on our waiting lists.
- Purchased sites and land for future development, ensuring we are well placed to provide a continued pipeline of homes.
- Entered into Building Contracts for the delivery of a further 255 Affordable Homes, again in response to the demand for homes.
- Acquired an additional 148 homes in Runcorn and Widnes from the Sanctuary Group to support the Council's stated preference to work with a smaller number of housing associations in the borough.
- Purchased an additional 57 properties for market rent through our subsidiary company, Open Solutions (OSUK) Ltd. These homes will be used to help deliver the £12m investment by OSUK in the Trust over the next 20 years.
- Continued the implementation of our Digital First Programme to change the way that our customers access our services, enabling us to move resources to provide more intensive support to those customers who really need it

- Implemented two new modules into our core housing management system, a document management system and upgraded our finance system to deliver internal efficiencies and improved customer services.
- Introduced mobile working across the Trust, ensuring we maximise the investment in our ICT systems and working processes to increase our working efficiency and further enhance the service offered to our customers.
- Launched our customer App, our updated web portal and a new community service to enable customers to access services online as part of our move for 90% of transactions to be via a self-service route by 2018.
- Commenced the roll-out of devices to customers without internet access, following comprehensive customer research with over half of all our customers.
- Established a Defined Contribution Scheme for pension auto enrolment for those who have previously chosen not to be part of the Trust's existing pension scheme.
- Strengthened the way in which we manage absence and the performance of our employees.
- Outperformed our targets in all our key performance 'lifeblood' measures.

### ***Key partnerships***

1.12 Throughout the last year 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. 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.

1.13 We enjoy a strong strategic relationship with Halton Borough Council and we continue to be represented and play an active role in the following local groups:

- Halton Strategic Partnership Board
- SSP Chairs Group

- Halton Housing Partnership
- Safer Halton Partnership
- Children's Trust Board
- Safeguarding Adults Board
- Early Intervention Strategic Partnership Board System Resilience Group
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Halton Employment Partnership
- Employment Learning and Skills SSP
- Environment & Urban Renewal SSP
- Thematic Partnership (SSP) Group on Domestic Abuse
- Inspiring Families Strategy Group and the operational working group.
- Child Poverty Group
- One Halton Programme Board

1.14 The Council has five strategic priorities, which are helping to build a better future for Halton. Appendix 4 demonstrates how our work is contributing to each of these.

1.15 Our other key partnerships include:

- Widnes Vikings RLFC
- The Valhalla Foundation
- Runcorn and Widnes Cancer Support
- Halton Credit Union
- Riverside College Halton
- Power in Partnership
- Project Up/Groundwork Trust
- Norton Priory Museum and Gardens
- Salvation Army (at the recently completed Brennan Lodge hostel)
- Halton Haven Hospice.

## 2. Our Direction

### *Our vision*

- 2.1 Since 2012, Our Direction has provided the framework for how we run Halton Housing Trust.
- 2.2 We have achieved a lot and we will continue to Improve People's Lives in the future.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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, the ageing population, rising energy costs and advances in digital technology.

### *Strategic priorities*

- 2.5 For 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.
- 2.6 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**

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 Almost all of 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.
- 2.9 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**

- 2.10 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. 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 2015/16 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 OD2.0 will enable 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. We have a framework comprising a breadth of highly reputable consultants to advise us of good practice to ensure continuous improvement.

#### *Value for money (VFM)*

3.2 We have decided not to produce a separate VFM Strategy. The Scenarios, Priorities and Principles within OD2.0 underpin our strategic approach to

delivering VFM. By using 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.

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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. We are proud that 91% say that we do, and that 93% would recommend us as a landlord to a friend or family member.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 At £181m 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. We have plans to build a further 650 new homes by using our existing loans at a cost of £74m against which we have secured £10m of grant funding. We have committed to invest £10.7m in our subsidiary company OSUK to acquire 180 properties.
- 3.7 Our headline statutory results; current, past and future compare favourably to the Global Accounts of English housing associations.
- 3.8 We have used our statutory accounts to compare our key operating performance to the global accounts of English housing associations.
  - We recognise that our major repairs costs are high as a result of our continued policy of investing in our existing homes.

- We have reviewed how we allocate our overhead costs between management and repairs
- Our rent arrears 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.
- Our operating surplus has increased following a review of our approach to capitalising major repairs costs.

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

3.10 We continue to subscribe to the HouseMark benchmarking club. Overall our 2013/14 report showed an improvement in how our costs and quality of services benchmarked with others in our peer group.

3.11 Our rents remain amongst the lowest in the Borough when compared to the other housing associations in Halton:

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Average Weekly Rent (with service charge) 2013/14 (52 weeks)</b>
Affinity Sutton Homes Limited	£86.62
Arena Housing Group Limited	£85.70
Halton Housing Trust Limited	£81.69
Liverpool Housing Trust Limited	£83.60
Places for People Homes Limited	£86.06
Plus Dane (Merseyside) Housing Association	£90.59
Regenda Homes Limited	£85.01
Sanctuary (North West) Housing Association	£80.36
The Guinness Partnership Limited	£85.29
The Riverside Group Limited	£86.05

3.12 We have achieved VFM gains of £1.1m during 2014/15 and have plans to achieve an additional £3.0m of gains in the future.

## *Health & Safety*

- 3.13 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.
- 3.14 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.
- 3.15 The Health and Safety Committee meets every two months with an open invitation to the Lead Board Member to attend.

## *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 Equality Framework 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. We have 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 2014/15 (Appendix 1)*

4.1 We have six 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 were set for all six indicators. 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. This was a key focus area for the year.

### *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 2014/15 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 6,443 to 6,655. Just 269 (4%) 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 £82.37 (52 weeks). This reflects an increase of 3.6% over the previous year.
- The Trust had 25 empty homes at the end of the year. This represents 0.4% of the total number of homes.
- The Trust relet 712 homes during the year. This represents a turnover rate of 10.7%.
- The Trust evicted 75 customers during the year. 66 evictions for rent arrears and nine for ASB. This is an increase of 23 from the previous year.
- The Trust sold 24 homes during the year through the RTB and RTA initiatives.

#### *Targets for 2015/16 (Appendix 3)*

- 4.6 In line with the approach that has been taken with 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 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 We have introduced one new key measure this year in line with our aim to transform our services. Our aim is that 40% of households will access our services digitally by the end of the year.
- 4.9 Our key priorities for 2015/16 include:
- Reconfigure our housing services to focus on the three strands of:
    1. debt recovery

2. tenancy enforcement

3. tenancy support

- Delivery of our Digital First Programme. This Programme will fundamentally change how we deliver services to our customers and release resources to provide more intensive support to a fewer number of people who require this.
- Establish a Development Company to enable the Trust to recover VAT on its new build rented development programme. These savings will then be reinvested to provide more new homes.
- Review our cost structure and consider areas where it is possible to re-prioritise expenditure in order to mitigate the impact of the changes announced in the Budget in July 2015.
- Continue to explore new business opportunities through OSUK and the Trust.
- Deliver our Investment Programme, completing most of the work through our own in house teams.
- Continue to develop and streamline policies, procedures and systems that underpin the delivery of our strategies.
- Continue to enhance the modules within our Housing Management system (QL), our mobile working solution (1<sup>st</sup> Touch) and our Electronic Management System (Docuware).
- 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.
- Review our future office accommodation requirements.
- Reduce our insurance claims through improved liability defence mechanisms.
- Deliver the Acquisitions Strategy for our subsidiary business, OSUK.

4.10 The Performance Management Framework for 2015/16 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% for 2015/16 and 4% in our financial forecasts from 2016/17.

5.2 To mitigate the potential increase in costs we have undertaken a review of our arrears processes. We have automated as much of our process as possible to make better use of systems and introduced digital technology to increase the ability of our teams to do more.

5.3 The ongoing review of our Housing Services Team to fundamentally change the way we deliver our front line services will provide us with the right foundations to ensure we are able to focus on those customers who need our help and support the most. This is based around the three key areas of debt recovery, tenancy support and tenancy enforcement.

5.4 This review has not been about saving money. The outcome has actually resulted in more roles in the structure than before as well as additional staffing costs. Whilst the new structure will become fully effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016, the new working methods will be introduced in advance of this as soon as is practically possible.

5.5 Through increased levels of automation and our renewed focus, we will be able to mitigate some of the increased costs that we anticipate from Universal Credit, which began to be introduced in autumn 2014. 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.

- 5.6 Added to this we are reviewing our policies and procedures including lettings, rent setting, rechargeable repairs, rent and arrears collection and write offs to ensure that they are all fit for the future. Underpinning the review is the adoption of our two principles: choice and responsibility.
- 5.7 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 £162k in Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) in 2014/15 and £173k to the end of this financial year.
- 5.8 We are outperforming the arrears targets that we have set through our robust processes.
- 5.9 We are working hard with our customers to keep them informed and to help them to make changes and plan for the future. Our three Welfare Benefits Money Advisors have generated £1.2m potential annual gains for customers including £319k in back pay and lump sum payments in benefits.
- 5.10 We continue to develop partnerships and we have a place on the Board of our local Credit Union, into which we have invested £100k. We are working with them to develop payment accounts and have provided further funds to on lend to Credit Union members, as loans, to provide essential household items and to support tenancy sustainability.

## Appendix 1: Halton Housing Trust KPI's 2014/15

Measure	Target	Performance	Comments
Income collected from current customers	95.8%	96.09%	The Trust has collected £28.8m from a possible £28.7m, which include the opening arrears due and the rent charge for the year.
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence	9 days	7.46 days	This was an area of focus for 2014/15 and we had the best performance we have seen at the Trust.
Void rent loss	£166,000	£139,900	Average relet time has reduced to 17.24 days compared to target of 19 days.
OSUK (before tax & depreciation)	£1,795 profit	£40,866 profit	135 properties were acquired against a target of 169. 106 were let against a target of 103. Of the 135 properties acquired 22 are under construction and not ready to let.
Net new homes (HHT only)	+172	+211	86 new homes have been developed during the year, which has been offset by 24 sold through the RTB and RTA schemes. We also acquired 144 properties.
Interest cover (prior to year-end adjustments)	151.3%	173.6%	The Trust achieved its interest cover target agreed with its funders.

## Appendix 2: Summary of NROSH data for year ended 31st March 2015

Year as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March	2013	2014	2015
Number of General Needs Properties <small>Excludes Affordable Rent Properties</small>	6158	6115	6226
Number of Supported Housing Properties	128	128	128
Number of Shared Ownership Properties	13	13	12
Number of Intermediate Rent Properties <small>Not included in the General Needs Number</small>	12	17	20
Number of Affordable Rent Properties <small>Not included in the General Needs Number</small>	82	170	269
Average rent for General Needs properties	£76.60	£79.49	£82.87
Average rent for Supported Housing Properties	£67.26	£69.81	£73.67
Average rent for General Needs Affordable Rent Properties	£101.20	£103.02	£104.81
Average rent for Supported Housing Affordable Rent Properties	-	-	£96.77
Number of Leaseholders	113	117	123
Number of homes vacant as 31 <sup>st</sup> March of specific year	55	47	25
Number of homes vacant but available to let	33	22	24
Number of homes vacant but unavailable to let	22	25	1
Number of lettings	581	689	712
Number of lettings to general needs housing	537	665	694
Number of lettings to supported housing	44	24	18
Number of lettings made through mutual exchanges	82	101	52
Number of evictions	38	52	75
Number of Sales	28	25	24
The number of homes failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard	0	0	0

### Appendix 3: Halton Housing Trust KPI's 2015/16

Measure	Target	Comments
Income collected from current customers	Cash Collection: 95.41%  Arrears: £1.15m	The target includes the opening arrears due and the rent charge for the year.
Average number of working days lost due to sickness absence	7.5 days	The target was set based on achieving similar levels to 2014/15 performance, which was our best performing year.
Void rent loss	£168,409	The target for the year is based on achieving an average relet time of 18 days.
OSUK (profit before tax & depreciation)	£6,010 profit	This target is set based on the budget agreed by the OSUK Board.
Net new homes (HHT only)	+140	The number of new properties that will be completed in the year less those that are forecast to be sold under RTB
Interest cover	131.3%	This target is based on the approved Business Plan approved by Board in March 2015.
Digital Contact/Activity	40%	We aim to have 40% of households access our services digitally by March 2016.

## **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*

- The Executive Director of Customer Services is the housing representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Urgent Care Board. As this post is currently vacant this role is being picked up by the Trust's Chief Executive.
- The Trust has worked in conjunction with a number of partner organisations including HBC, CCG, Alzheimer's Society and other Housing Associations to deliver The Living Well in Halton project. This aims 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
- 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, which will provide an additional 50 extra care homes and five supported bungalows, is due for completion in January 2016
- 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 to ensure that we maximise our stock and put appropriate facilities in place for people needing major adaptations. There is currently no backlog of approved adaptations.

- In March 2015, the Trust undertook a major refurbishment of the Widnes and Runcorn Cancer Support Centre, which was our nominated charity for the year.

### *Environment and Regeneration*

- The Trust has a five year programme of Investment and Environmental Improvement Works that continue to deliver on an individual neighbourhood level both internal home and wider external improvement programmes. In the last 18 months, we have undertaken considerable improvement works to the internal and external communal areas of many of our flatted blocks, improving the quality of life for residents. Significantly, we have invested £1.8m in the overhaul of Clapgate Crescent (Halebank Apartments), which has changed the look and feel of the entire area.
- We ensure that our properties are repaired and relet quickly (18 days) to ensure that our estates remain vibrant and attractive.
- As part of the Homes and Communities Agency's Affordable Homes Programme 2011–15, the Trust has delivered the 17 apartments at Queens Hall, 18 houses and two bungalows at Festival Way and three Empty Homes. In addition the 39 bed-space homeless hostel has been completed in Widnes.
- The 50 homes at Barkla Fields Extra Care Scheme and five supported bungalows, which are also currently on site.
- We have entered into building contracts to deliver all the 170 homes within the HCA's Affordable Homes Guarantee Programme.
- Of the 290 homes within the HCA's 2015-18 Affordable Homes Programme, we are already on site delivering 110 homes at Tanhouse Lane, Yew Tree and Queens Avenue.
- Our focus is currently on getting the remaining Affordable Homes Programme schemes on site and in terms of new business are currently reviewing the impact of the latest Budget announcements.

- The Trust's Construction Services continued to meet its target of recycling 100% of waste through working with a local recycling company.

### *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.
- The Trust is a member of the Halton Employment Learning and Skills LSP sub-group.
- 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 are providing an apprentice trade placement for a care leaver supported by HBC.
- We were a key contributor in the development of the Employment and Skills elements of the tenders for the new Mersey Gateway Project.
- We have worked with the GO On North West initiative to help increase digital skills in Halton
- We encourage our new build Contractors to use local labour and offer apprentice opportunities on all our building sites.
- Construction Services are working 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.
- As a result of our £8.83 million investment:
  - 23 people were employed who have a Halton Post Code
  - Eight apprentices have been moved into full time paid employment
  - Six local schoolchildren have experienced work place training or placements

### *Children and Young People*

- The Executive Director Customer Services 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*

- A comprehensive programme of Neighbourhood Walkabouts
- The Trust has been working with the Police Commissioner in delivering "Change the Grange Project" through which ten groups received funding to reduce crime and fear of crime on the Grange estate in Runcorn.
- 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